



By the R&TC Pro Shop

The 2022 Silver Racquet Weekend was another smashing success. The Club hosted eleven draws in three sports with nearly 180 matches being played in front of packed and animated galleries. In addition to its usual impressive slate of events, the U.S. Amateur Racquets added an additional layer of class to the weekend.

Court Tennis draws were bigger than ever with play running non-stop from lunch on Wednesday right through to Sunday's finals. Customarily each of the handicap draws were packed with 32 players in each. The Invitational Tennis remains a cornerstone of the amateur game in the United States and brings a level of play rarely assembled domestically.

New York Open Handicap "A"

This year saw a full 32 man draw in the New York Open Handicap "A" division. Handicaps ranged from 3 to 38, with several first round matches being played off unforgivingly large handicaps. The professional contingent bore the brunt of the handicapping, with more than one match being played with "one serve, banned tambour". Recent Etchebaster Cup finalist, George Wheatley, looked to be in good form as he made his way through to the Semi Finals where he met fellow R&TC up-and-comer, Will Fantini. Both players were serving tight railroads and stepping up to take the ball on the volley as much as possible. It was Wheatley, who managed to win a couple of game balls in an otherwise tight match, and who progressed to the final with an 8/5 win. Andrew Peabody had made his way through qualifying for the Silver Racquet Invitational with a couple of big wins over more established players. He was proving that this was no fluke as he battled through to the Semi Finals of the handicap division as well, defeating former winner Billy Connors, on the way. Peabody ran into Winston C. Simone, who had made big improvements this year and was competing in the "A" division for the first time. Simone's steady and measured approach was in contrast to the hard-hitting Peabody, and he was able to force enough errors to take a comfortable 8/4 win.

The Final saw two young R&TC members, Simone and Wheatley, go up against each other. They are regular playing partners and from the initial stages it was clear that they

both know each other game's well. Both players played some exceptional Tennis, with a mixture of precision hitting and incredible retrieving delighting the home crowd. Neither player was able to establish dominance over the other and the score was tight throughout. It seemed somewhat inevitable that the match would require a deciding game and at 7-7 both players looked stay concentrated and clinch the title. In the end it was the steadiness of Simone that allowed him to close out the final crucial points and the home the New York Open Handicap "A" title.

#### New York Open Handicap "B"

As is quite often the case in this division, all competitors are around a very similar handicap and therefore, little, if any handicap points are given. This often makes it very hard for the pundits and this year did not disappoint.

On the top half of the draw, one of the tournaments youngest and most recently decorated players, Henry Wilson got off to a flying start, dispatching his opponents and entertaining his cheering squad whilst doing so. Henry was poised to continue his run to the finals, before meeting a crafty Chris Heffernan, who enjoys using his experience and creative angles to put his opposition under pressure. The match proved to be a nail biter, leaving Henry's loyal supporters and the rest of the crowd with their noses pressed to the netting of the dedans. With the game tied at six games all, Henry had to dig deep and use his speed and unmatched reach to claw his way to a victory, to await the finalist on the other half of the draw.

Browning Platt, a recently anointed R&TC member and former collegiate squash player turned Court Tennis enthusiast fought his way through the early stages of the division. Unlike Henry his road through to the final consisted of multiple close matches, one even being decided by one point. Unfazed, Browning continued to improve throughout and looked more and more like a seasoned Court Tennis player from one match to the next. Spectators began to wonder if he had what it took to go all the way!

One match stood between crowning the winner and both Henry and Browning seemed equally eager to make their earlier than usual departure from the dinner worthwhile. Again, very little handicap was in play and rightly so, there was very little between them. We saw the first half of the match going to 40/40 one point on multiple occasions and the crowd couldn't get enough. Browning managed to ride the wave of consecutive tight games and got himself off to a considerable lead. Despite Henry's relentless retrieving his opponent seemed fully in the groove and couldn't miss his targets. Browning triumphed 8/3 and both players seemed somewhat relieved that it was finally over. It's important to note that top talent and sportsmanship was displayed by the finalists, and we expect to see them in the lower division next year. Another hugely entertaining New York Handicap "B" Division!

#### New York Open Handicap "C"

This division is unquestionably the toughest to win. The emerging players coming in from other games as well as a plethora of young enthusiastic one make the ascent to the top formidable.

This year, the "C" saw a number of serious contenders emerging through the rounds including the likes of Kip Gould, Anthony Lago, Alden Corbett, Dave Christensen, Stephen Merwin and Keech Turner.

William Berkowitz cemented his place into the Final with an impressive Sunday morning showing against Anthony Lago, 8/4. Andrew Beacham also triumphed that morning against Kip Gould 8/6 in a coin flip of a match. Berkowitz looked to improve his luck having just lost in the Final of the All-Comers Summer Handicap, (the largest singles draw in the world) 10/9.

It was nip and tuck all the way through and inevitably 7 all saw the crowd in a frenzy. It was Beacham who emerged victorious and again Berkowitz who suffered from bad luck.

### Invitational Tennis Singles

The Invitational draw continues to attract the top amateurs from across the country as well as several of the younger stars in the game. The hotly contested qualifier brought several players from outside of the city to the club early to battle for a shot in the Main Draw. Boston's Andrew Peabody earned his spot by taking down both John Beam and John Motz while his fellow club member Ben Hudson bested Kenny Soffer for his spot in the draw.

First round matches deviated from the Vegas line with Ben Hudson upsetting Bill Barker and Charlie Hurstel chopping down Pete Dickinson. That trend seemingly continued with Hurstel putting the fear of god into Noah Motz, and Zach Sacks doing the same to Jon Crowell. Both men succumbed 6/5 6/4 but their performances in defeat shouldn't be overlooked. Ben Stein, never a stranger to some theater, had two very tightly contested three set victories, on against young Erik Barker (Quarter Final) and the other against a highly decorated Jon Crowell (Semi Final).

The story of the event was again Freddie Bristowe. Freddie continued his success from the Below Zero a month before and breezed through the draw, dropping just thirteen games in his three matches on route to the title. His meteoric emergence as the top U.S. amateur has been impressive and decisive. It's likely his bags will stay heavy with trophies until some of the top foreign amateurs reemerge in the states top events again.