



What: The Grand Opening of Two Championship Grade Croquet Courts & Exhibition Match featuring National Ranking Croquet Players

Where: The Lakewood Club at Grand Hotel Golf Resort & Spa, Croquet Lawns located at 6525 Battles Road, Fairhope, AL 36532

When: Friday, October 21, 2022 @ 4:00 PM

Members and guests will be greeted with a traditional croquet cocktail called a Pimm's Cup as they arrive. A brief ceremony will take place to commemorate this historic event of the Grand Opening of the Two Championship Grade Croquet Lawns and The Lakewood Club's 75th anniversary before a Mixed Exhibition Match will be played for a spectating crowd of 200 Lakewood Club members featuring Sherif Abdelwahab from North Carolina and Sandra Knuth Walsh from Florida.

Sherif was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 2020, he reached the USA national finals in the record of 39 times, winning 19 national championships, Sherif is has proudly represented the USA in over than 20 world championship many as team captain. He is the croquet director at Wildcat Cliffs in North Carolina and also the croquet Pro at Indian Creek Country club in Florida. Sandra is a champion player who has competed Nationally, and also Internationally for the US Team in New Zealand in 2019.

While recreational croquet has been a longstanding tradition at the Grand Hotel, these new courts at The Lakewood Club put Coastal Alabama on the croquet map for those more serious players.

The courts are laser leveled golf greens which must be cut every day in summer months. They are the same tifeagle bermuda, an ultra-dwarf grass which is the same used on the Lakewood Club golf courses.

"We wish to provide championship level Golf Croquet to our membership and Grand Hotel guests. Golf Croquet is a version of the game that is very popular due to the fact that new players can be introduced to the game rather quickly and can begin playing after learning just a few basic concepts and skills. For that reason, and because Golf Croquet engages a broad range of ages and skill levels, it is a great fit for our club's needs and our operations since formal croquet is brand new amenity to Lakewood Club. Golf Croquet will enable us to develop our program as our members learn and advance in their ability." – says Pam Spillyards, Club Manager of The Lakewood Club.

We expect to spend the first year introducing croquet to the broad membership. We will offer beginner lessons and regular social events such as monthly Wine in Whites on Wednesday to our members. Croquet is a social sport, so there will be a food & beverage facet to all croquet events. For an entry fee, we will plan Beginner Clinics and events such as Two-Day Men's & Women's Golf Croquet Academies taught by high-ranking Croquet Players from across the country. These types of offerings will allow our members to grow their game, and ultimately be able to compete in club championships, represent our club at inter-club events up to national tournaments.

The addition of croquet will also be another great amenity for Grand Hotel guests of all ages.

Visiting other croquet clubs is an important part of strong croquet programs. Clubs plan group outings to other croquet clubs that include hotels nights stays, and meals. The quality of our lawns and the prestige of the Grand Hotel will be a major draw for these destination seekers, which feeds revenue into Fairhope and Baldwin County since these guests will also be seeking shopping, dining and entertainment options in the local area during their stay.

The inclusion of croquet to the amenities offered at The Lakewood Club is also a great club retention offering. While people may join our club for tennis or golf, they may stay engaged members for longer periods of time having croquet as something to transition to when they become physically unable to continue playing golf or tennis. Croquet is also a great sport for those who have little athletic ability and for those with disabilities.

The location of the croquet courts will be on the Northeast side of the Lakewood Club Aquatics Center overlooking serene Sweetwater Lake.