



Oct, 2018

Recap of 2018 Red Hoffman Cup Matches

The story of the 2018 Red Hoffman Cup Matches follows, based heavily on the content presented during the event on www.hoffmancup.org. The first article below covers the Finals, then jumps to a chronological description of what happened in the trenches of the 2018 Matches leading up to the Final. Team vs team results are listed in the Appendix.



An Arcola Repeat – The 2018 Hoffman Cup



The 2018 Red Hoffman Cup Champions, from Arcola CC (L to R): Dan Macdonald, Xavier Dailly, Captain Brian Celiberti, Co-Captain Michael O'Connell, Brandon Jonlan Trevor Randolph, Ryan Chin, and Grant Sturgeon

Of the four clubs left standing after the semifinals in the 2018 Red Hoffman Cup Matches, **Arcola CC** was viewed by many as a clear favorite. Not only were they the defending champions, the

Paramus club had a "murderers' row" of a lineup, averaging an under-scratch average handicap index and an impressive trophy collection from 2017 events. Well, the favorite won it, but not without some anxiety right to the end.

Arcola scored an impressive 7-under 281 at near-perfect **Plainfield CC**, holding back three-time champ **Baltusrol GC**, which came in with a solid 284. The defending champs took advantage of the new rule requiring all four scores to count by turning in three par-or-better scores. Arcola's consistency, led by an excellent 69 from Captain Brian Celiberti and newcomer Xavier Dailly, was key to the winning recipe.

The low round of the event rested with Baltusrol's Roger Hoit and Ryan Fountaine, with a brilliant 67. On a course that had been subject to a deluge in the morning, but that still sported surprisingly fast greens, their 5-under round left folks talking to themselves.

Third place went to **Manasquan River GC**, a club that returned to the Final Four for the first time in a few years. While generally considered a young team, it was the "mature" duos of Mike Stamberger / Chris Farren and Tom Hassel / Captain Chris Dymek that led the scoring with 70s, and a total of 291. It's good to see MRGC back in the saddle!

Rumson CC, playing in the Finals in just its third year in the Hoffman Cup, came away with plenty to be pleased about. Jack Skirkanich and Brett Flynn teamed for an impressive 68 to lead their team to a 294 total. Expect Rumson to take the court at more than a few future Hoffman Cup Final Fours.

Plainfield Excelled

One of the winners of the 2018 Hoffman Cup Finals was Plainfield CC, in many ways. The Hoffman Cup Matches, now completing its 14th year, were named in honor of Plainfield member Arthur K. "Red" Hoffman, the New Jersey State Golf Association Hall of Fame golf writer who covered many of the players and courses that comprise the Matches today.

We did our best to honor Red at his home club and were pleased that his daughters Lisa and Loren were able to join us from across the country.

Despite an ugly, pouring morning, Plainfield's course responded through extraordinary conditioning. The emphasis that its Green Committee and Superintendent, Travis Pauley, placed on effective drainage showed, with invariably great lies and fast, fast greens. Very impressive.

Plainfield's Director of Golf Scott Paris continued the great support of the Hoffman Cup that he started in 2006, when they joined the event. He and his staff -- particularly First Assistant Scott Golden -- went out of their way to make the Hoffman Cup Final Four a success. Thank you!

These Finals are the capstone to the 2018 Red Hoffman Cup Matches, which included over 400 low-handicap regional golfers and professionals and accounted for 864 individual rounds of early spring golf, more than \$60,000 in caddie fees, and over \$20,000 in donations to the four First Tee chapters of New Jersey. Thank you to the team captains, who prove every year that it is their passion that makes the Hoffman Cup a success.

2018 Hoffman Cup Finals
At Plainfield Country Club on Saturday, May 12
Results

Arcola Country Club – 281
Baltusrol Golf Club -- 284
Manasquan River Golf Club -- 291
Rumson Country Club – 294

2018 Red Hoffman Cup Finals (All four team scores count) May 12, 2018 Plainfield Country Club		
Club	Players	Score
Baltusrol GC	Ryan Fontaine / Roger Hoit	67
Rumson CC	Brett Flynn / Jack Skirkanich	68
Arcola CC	Xavier Dailly / Capt. Brian Celiberti	69
Baltusrol GC	Rod McRae / DJ Stewart	70
Manasquan River GC	Mike Stamberger / Chris Farren	70
Arcola CC	Dan Macdonald / Ryan Chin	70
Manasquan River GC	Chris Dymek / Tom Hassel	70
Arcola CC	Grant Sturgeon / Brendan Jonland	70
Rumson CC	Mort Gotterup / Jimmy Dengler	71
Manasquan River GC	Jack Wall / Andrew Kelly	71
Baltusrol GC	Nick Desai / Jeff Werring	72
Arcola CC	Trevor Randolph / Michael O'Connell	72
Baltusrol GC	Nick Mullen / Gregg Angelillo	75
Rumson CC	Tyler Duke / Dennis Devine	77
Rumson CC	Adam Williamson / Mike Smigie	78
Manasquan River GC	Ethan Wall / Jeff Wall	80



2018 Red Hoffman Cup Matches: A Preview

Over the next few days, all 32 member clubs will take their first shots of the 2018 Red Hoffman Cup Matches, which will identify the club with the best cadre of golfers in northern New Jersey. Over 400 low-handicap amateurs and club professionals will compete over the next five weekends, culminating in the four-team Hoffman Cup Finals at historic **Plainfield Country Club** on May 12.

The team most would pick to win in 2018 is defending champion **Arcola Country Club**, which first tasted success with its Hoffman Cup championship in 2015. Last year, Arcola sailed through the intragroup matches with a record 32.5 (of 36 possible) points. However, its playoff performance was not *Arcolaesque*. **Morris County Golf Club** almost took out Arcola, tying them in the semifinals but losing on a tiebreaker. Then, on its home course for the Finals, Arcola won by a slim two-shot margin over surging Plainfield. Still, Arcola won, and no doubt learned from its playoff experience. Don't expect a drop off in performance in 2018.

A still-young team that hasn't changed much over the last few years, **Plainfield** seemingly improves its performance every year through teamwork. Runner-up in 2017, and one of only two clubs to make the playoffs every year, 2014-17, Plainfield has come unto its own, and is poised to hoist the Cup – especially with the Finals on its home turf. To get there, though, PCC must get past a talented and determined **Fairmount Country Club**, a team weary of coming up just short and looking to make a change.

Essex County Country Club is always knocking, as evidenced by its fifth-highest Hoffman Cup point average (since 2006). Its best finish -- a strong third last year – may be the sign that Essex County is ready to go all the way. Its high seed didn't help it much in the 2018 group pairings, though. It will have to wade through three good teams to make it back to the Finals.

Another perennial playoff team, **Knickerbocker Country Club** simply attacks the Hoffman Cup Matches. Proof? Its 23.6 average points (third), 80% wins (T3) over the past five years, and a 2017 semifinal upset of perennial power **Black Oak Golf Club** all speak to a club that doesn't back down. However, Knickerbocker will be tested this year, with – like Essex County – an unexpectedly tough draw.

Speaking of Black Oak, until last year's semifinals loss, the Long Valley club had never finished lower than second since it joined in 2012, quaffing from the Cup in both 2013 and 2014. This talented team has lost a couple of fine players over the past few years, but its 26.8-point average (first), 87%-win rate (first), and long list of NJSGA championships won by current team members speaks for itself. Don't mess with Black Oak!

And, it goes without saying that **Baltusrol Golf Club** expects to return to the playoffs. Hoffman Cup champs in 2011, 2012 and 2016, the iconic Springfield team with plus-handicappers galore slipped in 2017, missing the playoffs for only the second time since 2010. This year, as a lower seed, they will have to get past Knickerbocker and dangerous newcomer **Somerset Hills Country Club** to make the big dance. Group D should be fun to watch.

Especially after this never-ending winter, in this first weekend of matches, little will be obvious. Nothing will be cast in stone. Upsets will be the order of the day. *All* the groups will be fun to watch!

2018 Hoffman Cup Groups

Group A	Group B	Group C	Group D	Group E	Group F	Group G	Group H
Arcola CC	Plainfield CC	Essex County CC	Knickerbocker CC	Black Oak GC	Mendham GTC	Morris County GC	Navesink CC
Upper Montclair CC	Fairmount CC	Ridgewood CC	Baltusrol GC	Metedeconk Nat'l GC	Spring Brook CC	Hamilton Farm GC	Rockaway River CC
Bayonne GC	Echo Lake CC	Rumson CC	Spring Lake GC	Montclair GC	Trump National GC	Manasquan River GC	Canoe Brook CC
Bedens Brook CC	Mountain Ridge CC	Hackensack GC	Somerset Hills CC	Roxiticus GC	Essex Fells CC	Alpine CC	Hollywood GC

2018 Red Hoffman Cup Matches: Intragroup Play

Intragroup Play – First Weekend

In what has become a typically tumultuous first weekend of Hoffman Cup play, some great story lines have emerged, while some old standbys reasserted themselves.

In Group A, **Arcola CC** reminded us all that they are a highly skilled set of golfers. The defending champs fought off both the **Bedens Brook C** and **Bayonne GC** to capture wins. **Upper Montclair CC** is next up for the defending champs, and still has the chance to upset the Arcola applecart.

Group B is really interesting. Top seed **Plainfield CC** knew it was a tough crowd, but few expected **Mountain Ridge CC** to provide the heckling. MRCC, a team that has never been to the Hoffman Cup playoffs, tied the 2017 runners up, then beat a confident, strong **Fairmount CC** squad. There are some make-up points to be had in this group, with **Echo Lake CC** and Plainfield still to play. This group is officially in the air, but Mountain Ridge is already up in the catbird seat.

#3 seed **Rumson CC** is behind the steering wheel in Group C, with two quality wins over **Ridgewood CC** and **Essex County CC**. On Sunday, a tie between Ridgewood

and **Hackensack GC** further strengthened Rumson's lead, but the NJ Shore team -- now in only its third Hoffman Cup season -- is poised to enter the playoffs.

Two heavyweights, top-seeded **Knickerbocker CC** and always-dangerous **Baltusrol GC** are due to go toe-to-toe on Saturday for the Group D title, both having earned wins over always-solid **Spring Lake GC** and newcomer **Somerset Hills CC**. SHCC lost both days by the closest of margins (6.5 to 5.5) to the Baltusrol and Knickerbocker teams, who must feel like they have been introduced to a strong left hook.

Speaking of perennial horses, **Black Oak GC** is racing through Group E like they are at Churchill Downs. The Long Valley team has already accumulated 22 points against **Roxiticus GC** and **Montclair GC**. Still, they have to get past an always dangerous **Metedeconk National GC** on Saturday to capture the group.

Mendham GTC has quietly become one of the elite teams in the Hoffman Cup, and is showing it again in Group F, with consecutive 8-4 wins over **Essex Fells CC** and **Trump National GC**. Even this solid play is not going to be enough if they can't put away pesky **Spring Brook CC**, a wildly unpredictable team that has a history of beating the Hoffman Cup's best squads. This match on Saturday will be fun to watch.

Surprising third-seed **Manasquan River GC** is playing as in days of old and is in the top position in Group G, having dispatched both 2017 playoff team **Morris County GC** and **Hamilton Farm GC**. It'll be up to **Alpine CC** to play the spoiler on Saturday.

Another relatively new team from the Shore has taken Group H by the neck. Sophomore squad **Hollywood GC** has accumulated 18 points so far in wins over #1 seed **Navesink CC** and a tough-to-beat **Rockaway River CC** squad. That said, they still must get by the wily veterans on **Canoe Brook CC's** team next weekend to get into the playoffs. Should be interesting!

Be sure not to assume the obvious will happen on the road to the playoffs. There's bound to be some fascinating turns next weekend.



Intragroup Play -- The Semis are Set

Little seems holy in the 2018 Hoffman Cup this year. After three rounds of four-ball match play, some of our usually strong teams are reasserting themselves, while three clubs who have never made the playoffs before are flexing some muscle. Uncertainty seems to be the new norm.

Eight teams move on to the playoffs, but only one 2017 Finalist – defending champ **Arcola CC**. Typically strong **Black Oak GC** returns to the playoffs, sucking all oxygen from its group with an impressive 31.5 points. Three more teams with considerable playoff experience – **Baltusrol GC**, **Manasquan River GC** and **Spring Brook CC** – rejoin the playoff fray after a year or two of

vacation. Two relatively new teams enter the playoffs for the first time in their short Hoffman Cup careers: **Hollywood CC** and **Rumson CC**.

In perhaps the best story line, **Mountain Ridge CC** earned a spot in the playoffs for the first time since it joined the Hoffman Cup in 2006. On the backs of one of the most experienced golfers in the region, a great new junior, and a captain who birdied #17 and #18 in the cold to gain a tie with **Plainfield CC**, Mountain Ridge is the 2018 Hoffman Cup Most Improved Club.

Here's how each Group went down

Group A – Defending champ **Arcola CC** seems determined not to suffer the letdown it experienced after its first Hoffman Cup championship in 2015, when it missed the playoffs. They handily managed each of their intragroup matches. **Bayonne GC** had another good year with 22 points and seems just about ready to jump into the playoff picture starting next year.

Group B – This group had lots drama, right to the end. To kick off the excitement, #4-seeded **Mountain Ridge CC** tied **Plainfield CC**, surprising all but themselves. Still, both Plainfield and **Echo Lake CC** were lurking, waiting for MRCC to slip; they never did, becoming the “oldest” playoff rookies. Congrats to Captain Michael Kopelman and HP Len Siter for pulling together what looks to be the nucleus of an annual contender.

Group C – **Rumson CC** came into group play with guns blazing, taking down three good opponents in what was possibly the toughest group. The third-year, #3-seeded team showed few indicators of this kind of dominance, but it seems ready to keep going. #1-seed **Essex County CC** came in second with 20.5 points in slight step back for this talented team.

Group D – **Baltusrol GC** did what it is accustomed to doing, making the playoffs for the seventh time in nine years – but it wasn't a cakewalk. Its poor 2017 performance resulted in a low 2018 seed and set the table for a battle royal in its third match with #1 seed **Knickerbocker CC**, a perennial playoff performer. While Baltusrol won the match, some eyebrows were raised when rookie team **Somerset Hills CC** refused to simply carry the water in this group, barely losing to both BGC and KCC and finishing second with 22.5 points.

Group E – This group seemed pre-ordained, even with two strong, experienced playoff teams, **Metedeconk National GC** and Montclair GC, in the mix. **Black Oak GC**, after a surprising loss in the 2017 Semis, decided to take nothing for granted this year. It marched like Sherman through Georgia, winning a total of 31.5 of 36 possible points.

Group F – It looked like **Mendham GTC** would continue to dominate this group, but at the last minute, up popped **Spring Brook CC**! The Morristown club, with an impressive 8-4 do-or-die victory over Mendham in the last match, continued its long-time role as the Joker, confounding all who try to predict SBCC matches.

Group G – **Manasquan River GC** has one of the best all-time records in the Hoffman Cup, but has been largely absent from the playoffs for a while now. With a 3-0 record in this group, MRGC is announcing its return. Congrats to **Hamilton Farm GC** in its best showing in years, closing to just two points of the lead.

Group H – Hollywood GC proved to be the class of this group, with an impressive 28 points in earning its first trip to the Semifinals. Captain Devin Drobbin deserves credit for taking this second-year team to the playoffs. **Rockaway River CC** again showed that it is right on the edge of the top tier, with 20 points.

The 2018 semifinal matches next weekend will pit **Arcola vs Hollywood; Mountain Ridge vs. Manasquan River; Rumson vs. Spring Brook** and **Baltusrol vs. Black Oak**. These eight teams will meet to determine which four will converge on **Plainfield CC** for the Finals on May 12.



Hoffman Cup Semis – the Surprises Keep Coming

With wins in the semifinals, four clubs move on to the 2018 Red Hoffman Cup Finals at Plainfield CC: Arcola CC, Manasquan River GC, Rumson CC and Baltusrol GC.

Group A - **Arcola CC (9.5)** vs. Group H - Hollywood GC (2.5)
Group B - Mountain Ridge CC (3.5) vs. Group G - **Manasquan River GC (8.5)**
Group C - **Rumson CC (10)** vs. Group F - Spring Brook CC (2)
Group D - **Baltusrol GC (7.5)** vs. Group E - Black Oak GC (4.5)

Here's a closer look at how these teams got here. Maybe we'll have some insight into how they will fare in the Finals.

Arcola CC– (Captains Brian Celiberti and Michael O'Connell) Winners of the Cup in 2015 and 2017, they played this year like they are still trying to erase the memory of their 2016 let down by easily taking their Group and then Hollywood CC in the semifinals. While they are a great collection of players, their Finals play has been spotty – but good enough to win. Maybe this year, all cylinders will be chugging.

Manasquan River GC – (Captain Chris Dymek). An especially dangerous team, MRGC has plenty of horses, with several players (including three with the last name of Wall) sporting plus handicaps and maybe more recent tournament experience than any other club in the Finals. Based on their great play so far (including a semifinal win over Mountain Ridge GC), it wouldn't be too surprising to see MRGC hoist the cup in 2018.

Rumson CC – (Captain Tyler Duke). In only its third year of Hoffman Cup play, Rumson is breathing rarified air by making the Finals. They have sneaked up on everyone so far, including semifinal opponent Spring Brook CC, but expect them to push hard in the Finals.

Baltusrol GC – (Captain Nick Desai) Balty is back, and sitting in its accustomed spot heading into the Finals. After a year off, the two-time champs and deepest cadre of good golfers in the state are showing a focus that has been missing lately. Proof lies in their convincing 7.5-4.5 semifinal win over Black Oak GC, the first non-naillbiter in five years of bloody battle between the two rivals. These Hoffman Cup vets have their “Ray Floyd” on and are expecting to win it all.

The 2018 Hoffman Cup season has been marked by upsets and surprises. The Finals, which for the first time will demand that all four scores count, will be more demanding than ever. The surprises are not likely to end.



Appendix – 2018 Intragroup Match Results

First Day of Matches, Saturday, April 21

	Results of April 21 Matches	Playoff Points Earned
Group A	Arcola (7.5) vs Bedens Brook (4.5) Upper Montclair (4) vs Bayonne (8)	Arcola - 2; Bayonne - 2; Bedens Brook - 0; Upper Montclair - 0
Group B	Plainfield (6) vs Mountain Ridge (6) Fairmount (5.5) vs Echo Lake (6.5)	Echo Lake - 2; Mountain Ridge - 1; Plainfield - 1; Fairmount - 0
Group C	Essex County (10.5) vs Hackensack (1.5) Ridgewood (4) vs Rumson (8)	Rumson - 2; Ridgewood - 0; Essex County 2; Hackensack - 0
Group D	Knickerbocker (6.5) vs Somerset Hills (5.5) Baltusrol (9.5) vs Spring Lake (2.5)	Baltusrol - 2; Knickerbocker - 2; Somerset Hills - 0; Spring Lake - 0
Group E	Black Oak (10.5) vs Roxiticus (1.5) Metedeconk National (4.5) vs Montclair (7.5)	Black Oak - 2; Montclair - 2; Metedeconk - 0; Roxiticus - 0
Group F	Mendham (8) vs Essex Fells (4) Spring Brook (9.5) vs Trump National (2.5)	Mendham - 2; Spring Brook - 2; Essex Fells - 0; Trump National - 0
Group G	Morris County (11.5) vs Alpine (.5) Hamilton Farm (5) vs Manasquan River (7)	Manasquan River - 2; Morris County - 2; Alpine - 0; Hamilton Farm - 0
Group H	Navesink (2.5) vs Hollywood (9.5) Rockaway River (7.5) vs Canoe Brook (4.5)	Rockaway River - 2; Hollywood - 2; Canoe Brook - 0; Navesink - 0
* win - 2 points, loss - 0 points, tie - 1 point		

Second Day of Matches, Sunday, April 22

	Results of April 22 Matches	Cumulative Playoff Points Earned
Group A	Arcola (9) vs Bayonne (3) Upper Montclair (8.5) vs Bedens Brook (3.5)	Arcola - 4; Bayonne - 2; Upper Montclair - 2; Bedens Brook - 0
Group B	Plainfield (4) vs Echo Lake (8) Fairmount (5) vs Mountain Ridge (7)	Mountain Ridge - 3; Echo Lake - 2; Plainfield - 1; Fairmount - 0
Group C	Essex County (4.5) vs Rumson (7.5) Ridgewood (6) vs Hackensack (6)	Rumson - 4; Ridgewood - 1; Hackensack - 1; Essex County - 3
Group D	Knickerbocker (7) vs Spring Lake (5) Baltusrol (6.5) vs Somerset Hills (5.5)	Baltusrol - 4; Knickerbocker - 4; Somerset Hills - 0; Spring Lake - 0
Group E	Black Oak (11.5) vs Montclair (.5) Metedeconk National (10.5) vs Roxiticus (1.5)	Black Oak - 4; Montclair - 2; Metedeconk - 2; Roxiticus - 0
Group F	Mendham (8) vs Trump National (4) Spring Brook (5.5) vs Essex Fells (6.5)	Mendham - 4; Spring Brook - 2; Essex Fells - 2; Trump National - 0
Group G	Morris County (5.5) vs Manasquan River (6.5) Hamilton Farm (9) vs Alpine (3)	Manasquan River - 4; Hamilton Farm - 2; Morris County - 2; Alpine - 0;
Group H	Navesink (5) vs Canoe Brook (7) Rockaway River (3.5) vs Hollywood (8.5)	Hollywood - 4; Canoe Brook - 2; Rockaway River - 2; Navesink - 0
* win - 2 points, loss - 0 points, tie - 1 point		

Third Day of Matches, Saturday, April 28

	Results of April 28 Matches	Cumulative Playoff Points Earned
Group A	Arcola (11) vs Upper Montclair (1) Bedens Brook (1) vs Bayonne (11)	Arcola - 6; Bayonne - 4; Upper Montclair - 2; Bedens Brook - 0
Group B	Plainfield (7) vs Fairmount (5) Mountain Ridge (7.5) vs Echo Lake (4.5)	Mountain Ridge - 5; Echo Lake - 4; Plainfield - 3; Fairmount - 0
Group C	Essex County (5.5) vs Ridgewood (6.5) Hackensack (3.5) vs Rumson (8.5)	Rumson - 6; Ridgewood - 3; Essex County 2 Hackensack - 1
Group D	Knickerbocker (4) vs Baltusrol (8) Somerset Hills (10.5) vs Spring Lake (1.5)	Baltusrol - 6; Knickerbocker - 4; Somerset Hills - 2; Spring Lake - 0
Group E	Black Oak (9.5) vs Metedeconk National (2.5) Roxiticus (4) vs Montclair (8)	Black Oak - 6; Montclair - 4; Metedeconk - 2; Roxiticus - 0
Group F	Mendham (4) vs Spring Brook (8) Essex Fells (1.5) vs Trump National (10.5)	Spring Brook - 4; Mendham - 4; Essex Fells - 2; Trump National - 2
Group G	Morris County (3) vs Hamilton Farm (9) Alpine (.5) vs Manasquan River (11.5)	Manasquan River - 6; Hamilton Farm - 2; Morris County - 2; Alpine - 0;
Group H	Navesink (3) vs Rockaway River (9) Hollywood (10) vs Canoe Brook (2)	Hollywood - 6; Canoe Brook - 2; Rockaway River - 4; Navesink - 0
* win - 2 points, loss - 0 points, tie - 1 point		