

## U.S. Championship: Experiences and teachings

Posted by eric anderson on Wednesday, July 17, 2013

What a two days at the U.S. Championship. Actually, what a Championship Week, and if you were in Eau Claire, more like a Championship Two Weeks. We here at Kubbnation Magazine were not able to watch as many kubb matches as we would have liked, but we caught some great matches, amazing team shirts, and experienced an amazing Kubb Party.

On Sunday night, we reflected a little on some of the things that seemed to never leave our head. Yet again, it seems like we learned something about kubb and life this weekend. In no particular order, here are some experiences and teachings that we had.

Saturday afternoon we saw two amazing things. First, Tad Kubbler vs. Dark Side of the Kubb. A rematch from last year. What we think are early 30 somethings versus early 20 somethings and both brought crowds to cheer them on. These two teams wanted this match bad. Both had their eyes set on Sunday. The match went to Game 3 (which only one match did on Sunday). Just as many people watching that match, as the sun was going down in the sky, that probably almost any other Final outside of Eau Claire. This was a gut-wrenching match to watch. While watching it, we had flashbacks of the rounds of 16 and 8 when we were at the 2011 World Championship. The intensity, the passion, the want, the focus, the ups, the downs. There had to have been as much pressure and stress in that match than most matches on Sunday, especially after fighting all day to get to the round of 16. Truly epic.



Second, was the Rakkubbski versus Leinenkubbels Light match. We can probably all agree that LL was not playing their best match, but a match is a match and it went to Game 3. With two batons in his hand the 10 year old player on Rakkubbski, that has spent his summer in Eau Claire with his mom's family, had one advance line baseline and one king shot to advance to Sunday and send the 2012 Third Place team home on Saturday. He calmly knocked down the baseline kubb. He went back to the baseline and threw at the king...you could feel the tension in the air.....and...miss. You could feel the whole crowd (yes a crowd was watching this one as well) sigh and feel for this 10 year old from Flagstaff, AZ. LL threw their kubbs over, knocked over a bunch of kubbs, and the 10 year old (who had been inkasting all day) went out to pick up the eight or so kubbs to start throwing. But then a crazy thing happened, that perhaps we can all take something from. The 10 year old kid was smiling while he was inkasting. Smiling like a 10 year old playing kubb in his backyard with his family, or perhaps like when he was with his grandpa and cousin a few weeks before at a tournament in Kasson, MN when he got to play with The Ringers. Here he was, a missed king shot only five minutes before, inkasting against one of the better in inkastares in EC, with dozens of people watching, and he was smiling while playing kubb. We will take that with us.

On Sunday, most everyone thought the Final would include either Kubbsicles or Team Knockerheads and many people thought a 2012 rematch would happen. Three guys that did not believe that were Jason, John, and Phil. In a simply amazing semifinal match, the team King Pin shocked a lot of the kubb world, but we have to believe that they did not shock themselves. Before the tournament, we here at Kubbnation Magazine thought that there were

no more than a handful of teams that could step on a pitch with Team Knockerheads and have a legitimate chance of beating them. Teams need to be mentally and physically able to beat them, and quite frankly, there are not that many that can do it. King Pin found themselves starting the 2013 Championship in the Group of Death and had to play absolute top teams Saturday and the elite on Sunday.



That match showed us a couple great things. It reinforced the idea that if you work hard (yes, King Pin has been working really, really hard) and believe in yourself, you can accomplish things. Never once in that match could a person look at King Pin and think that they looked nervous, afraid to take a big shot, or out of place. They were jumping around, high-fiving, laughing, and enjoying their place in the late Sunday morning spotlight in Eau Claire. Each player wanted the shots they were taking, simple as that. They were hungry to take those shots. They looked like one of the top teams in the Country, which people have to say they are now. This match, similar to the 2012 Final was amazing for kubb. It showed 100 percent that this is a sport of skill, strategy, and hard work. We love how both of these two teams play. They look at baton angles for field kubbs, they analyze inkasting, they work as a team, they are a team.



The joy of King Pin is also a result of how great of a team Team Knockerheads is. Was King Pin happy only because they won the semifinal and made it to the Final for the waiting Kubbsicles? We believe no. They were battling a Giant, an absolute 2013 freight train. And when you prepare hard, work hard, fight hard, and work to believe in yourself as individuals and a team, and you are able to put that all together and succeed in not only playing well, but beat a team that is one of the best and that you know has worked just as hard as you, that is when you see the passion we saw after that semifinal win of King Pin.



On to Team Knockerheads. They will be the first to tell you that they did not come to Eau Claire for 3rd place.

Perhaps in another couple weeks they can look back and say that they gave it a good go and be satisfied with their finish. However, it does not feel that way after a match like that. They had their eyes set on The Stapp King. They work hard all year for the opportunity, and when you come up short, it hurts. But when the match was over, we saw three men that were very disappointed in their loss, but at the exact same time very happy for their opponents victory. That says more than something, that says a lot. Team Knockerheads win with class and they lose with class.



Kubbsicles. They did not lose a game all weekend. That makes it only losing one game in two years at the U.S. Championship. It seems when the stage gets bigger, they get stronger. When one of the local TV stations came and started videoing close to them and putting the camera close to field kubbs, they did not miss a beat, some would say they got better. These young guys are great for the game, and great for Eau Claire.





There were a lot of kids at the Championship on Saturday and Sunday. A lot playing and a lot watching. It might seem crazy to hear it, but there are a lot more than a few of these kids look up to Max, Mark, and Zach and other teams like Dark Side of the Kubb. They want their jerseys, they want to play like them, they want to congratulate them, they want to high-five them. If you think we are joking, we are not. Older kids in middle school and high school are out there as well and they see Kubbsicles and Dark Side of the Kubb and the other college aged EC teams and they see that, yes, that can be them too. Will they win back to back US Championships? Maybe not, but they can get out there and play for fun and/or as competitively as they want. And you know what, some of them went home Saturday and Sunday nights thinking that maybe, just maybe they too can take off their shoes, wear tank-top jerseys and white shorts, and win not one, but two US Championships. And some of them went home and dreamed of someday lining up against Kubbsicles in the U.S. Championship Final...and winning.



Great photos: Willis Sullivan  
OK photos: Eric Anderson