

## Captain Ken's Loppet Reflection

Posted by eric anderson on Tuesday, February 4, 2014

What a beautiful day on a lake in the middle of Minneapolis, MN. 32 pitches were set up and then the sun came out. If you were not there, pictures would not tell the story. We were playing on pitches 29 and 30. The pitches next to us and behind us were littered with people yelling, screaming, laughing, and having a great time. You can seldom capture that energy in a picture, and it was constant. Before the tournament started the tournament director, Eric Goplin, asked people to raise their hands if this was their first kubb tournament. Instantly a sea of hands were raised in the air. Again, the largest outdoor winter tournament in the world kicked off the kubb season in amazing fashion. As a player and spectator, a few of the things I experienced.

- First and foremost, I really hope The Loppet Foundation appreciates this kubb tournament. 64 teams. 220+ players. I am guessing that is more than double the number of participants of the bike racers and the skiers being pulled by dogs...combined. We as kubb players and kubb spectators are adding a lot to that event, just like we are adding a lot to a lot of things. Kubbnation invaded the Loppet. Yes we did.

- With that many players, you just cannot see and talk to everyone. Wow. I finally saw my Planet Kubb friends in the early afternoon, and my Berserker Kubb mates Dark Side of the Kubbsicles, I only saw Luke. I never even saw the other three. I didn't get to see or talk to a lot of people I would have liked to talk with. Eric Goplin and his crew has created an absolute Kubb Fest at this event.

- I observed a few players that were good last year, and now they are approaching really good. I am not going to name names here, but we played against a couple players in the Group Play that really impressed me at how they have improved their game. I would guess that was the case in most groups.

- King Pin. The three players from King Pin split up and played with other players. They finished, 4th, 3rd, and 2nd. Not only that, but from the limited amount that I saw them, all of them looked better than last year, as did their teammates. I am trying to type something here, but i don't know what to type, so that deserves only one word, I guess...speechless.

- I might be the only one that feels this way, but some players are getting so good that they are at or approaching great (I don't use that word much), that if they are on a two player team and their teammate is even "just" good, it is hard for me to imagine any three or more player team to have much of a chance against them. If the three or four player team did take them down, and another one is in the way, the law of averages are going to take you down sooner or later. I don't want this to sound like an excuse for any three or more player team (mine included) that did not make it to the semifinal, quarterfinal, etc., but just an observation as a spectator.

- Oman Bros. and Kubb Snipers made the Final. Again, it was very difficult to watch anyone play a whole lot during the day, but what a Final. This is to take nothing away from John Oman's teammate, his brother, Mark and Chad Bevers' teammate Joe Pendleton, as they had to have played well all day, they did when I watched, and obviously each threw half batons all day, and when I watched them, they were hitting shots at big times. But John and Chad, from the times I watched them play, played at just an amazing level. I mean amazing. I think both look even more fluid and comfortable in the big, pressure situations. Johnny O is just so smooth when he throws that baton, even when he wants to blast a group it is a thing of beauty. Smooth as silk. Silky smooth. And Chad, Chad is a beast. Four for four at eight meters in Game 2 of the Final. I think it is safe to say that nobody has more focus and desire than Bevers right now. You can argue someone might match him. OK, fine, but I cannot imagine someone that has more fight in them right now. He has it, and is getting it done. And he does it from when the tournament starts to when it ends, and at the Loppet, Chad and Joe could have not played a better Game 2, when it all mattered.

- Mark Oman. He started playing this fall, played in the 1 v. 1 tournament in Chaska, but this was his first team tournament. After losing the Final (in Game 2, they were able to get two baselines down after Chad and Joe started with four), he looked at his brother John and said, "When is the next tournament John? Sign me up!" Looking back, I am sure John and Mark thought the day was a great success. And as Kubbnation, we can all look back and find a host of successes for kubb as a whole. That, my kubb friends, is what the sport of kubb can do. Look out 2014, a host of new players are coming, and more of the Johns, Marks, Chads, and Joes of Kubbnation are coming as well. It will be a great year.

Thanks to everyone that put on the tournament. What a great day.