

## Tyr's Tre - One Player's Inside Look Of Winning The Rockford, IL Tournament

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By: Eric Anderson

### Background:

Rockford, IL is my hometown. Born in Swedish American Hospital and raised one block off Broadway. Left in 2001 to pursue some other things, have never called it home since, but Rockford will always be part of me. I have lots of family and friends that still live there, most of which I unfortunately seldom see. A few years ago, I approached the Swedish Historical Society to see if they would like to host a kubb tournament. The idea was to use it for a fundraiser for the SHS, get more people familiar with the SHS and kubb, try to give something back to the City, and add a tournament to the U.S. Circuit, as at that time, there were very few tournaments in the U.S. For four years, I helped organize and directed the tournament. This year was the first year I was able to play.

Living in Eau Claire, trying to find a team to play on can be easy and hard at the same time. It seems like the norm is that people are always moving in and out with different teams when they travel. With that, after several discussions and figuring out who was playing with who on other teams, being able to play in a three-person tournament (I am a big fan), we formed the team Tyr's Tre. It consisted of myself, Aaron Ellringer (Ringers), and Scott Graham (Team Kubboom). If I remember correctly, six Eau Claire teams made the trip to Rockford. [Tyr](#) is a Norse god, and his arrow rune is the symbols of Berserker Kubb. Tre is three in Swedish.

For me, I knew this would be the only three-person team tournament that I would for sure be able to play in 2014, so for me, this was my U.S. Championship. Actually, it was the first ever minimum three-person team tournament that I have ever had the opportunity to play in. I had worked on a variety of things over the fall and winter, specifically four mental philosophies of the game and sport (two individually and two as a team) and focused on my throw again, and again, and again. I invited my teammates into my home to practice and just hangout, and other players as well, if they were interested...as all are invited. For those that were interested or seemed like they might be interested, if time presented itself, I shared some of my mental philosophies of the game with them. It seems like some people take it in, and some people think I am taking things too serious. That is ok, but now I am a little more reserved with it. I am not pretending to know everything about kubb. Nor am I pretending to be the best player in the world, my country, my state, my city, or even my neighborhood. However, I have given the game and sport a lot of thought and time. I do think I have things to offer, and I thoroughly enjoy discussing things with people that want to discuss what I like to call graduate level kubb.

For months, I worked to get my game better, both physically and between the ears. For those of us that not only want to play well, but also finish well, we are all being pushed by people with the last names of Oman, Blazel, Feathers, Hodges, Scott, Bevers, Ellringer, Jochimsen and more...and that is good. Weather didn't cooperate before Rockford. Cold, wet, wind, snow, sleet, freezing rain...you name it, that was the weather in Eau Claire before Rockford. But I stuck to my game plan. I knew our team had the ability to be not just good, but great. We had never played on a three-person team together, but we all lived in the same neighborhood, wanted to excel at different positions, were well rounded, and I knew we would play for each other on the baseline. Knowing the teams that were coming to Rockford, I figured we needed to all three play to our capabilities and that our baseline would need to be as cohesive and stick to what we do best as much or more than any other baseline. I knew the second part would not be an issue, but one never knows what kubb game they will wake up with on tournament day.

### The Tournament:

The weekend started with a Friday departure from Eau Claire to Rockford. Six of us were in the van together. Us three from Tyr's Tre and also Dave Ellringer, Gregg Jochimsen, and Ryan Kolden (from Thief River Falls, MN) who played as Ringers. We purposefully left Eau Claire at a time that would ensure us making it to Capri Restaurant in downtown Rockford for a pizza lunch, then allow us a little time to go to the park to play some kubb. We played a little in the cool wind. We went to the pre-tournament party, then played some more kubb in the evening before bed. We were joined at Berserker Kubb camp also by the team Kubbarate.

The tournament included four rounds of the Klassic system. We won our first match 2-0. We played a family from the church I grew up going to and taught Sunday school to the kids. Father is Mexican. Mother is Swedish. Kids have grown up with both cultures. That equals super cool. They finished the Klassic system in 31<sup>st</sup> place. Our second match was against our van-pool friends Ringers. We won the first game and the second ended in a tie...so our record was two match wins and zero match losses. They finished the Klassic system in 6<sup>th</sup> place. Match three found us playing against Kubb Snipers. They won Game 1 and we won Game 2. They won Game 3. I don't remember much of this match, but if you play well against Kubb Snipers, sometimes it is not enough, and if you

play well against them, one should not be disappointed in a loss. They finished the Klassic system in 1<sup>st</sup>. We then played the Boy Scouts team that also serves food. We won that match 2-0. They finished in 14<sup>th</sup> after the four-round Klassic system.

End of Game 1 versus Ringers. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xyf1g6SgROU&feature=youtu.be>

Here is where I should mention the wind and you can get a little feel for it in the video. Perhaps as windy as any tournament I have played in. Most of the time, it was coming straight from the west, which gave a distinct advantage to the team throwing from that side of the pitch, but it would often come at an angle and/or swirl. Inkasting, going into the wind, my goal was just not make a big mistake, as I knew little mistakes were going to happen.

#### Playoffs:

With the one loss, we finished in 7<sup>th</sup> place. One spot behind Ringers and one spot above King Kung. One cannot help but notice who a team will play in a bracket. That just goes with the territory. If we got past the round of 16, we were to play Team Knockerheads from Des Moines, IA. A team that most everyone would consider one of the top two teams in the U.S. Our round of 16 match was against Zorbaz Berzerkerz, and we won that 2-0. I didn't feel like we were playing at all like the 7<sup>th</sup> best team there that day, so to play the likes of Team Knockerheads in the quarterfinals was a surprise that tested my mind.

This match was one of the matches that you had to trust everything that you had been working on and have 100 percent trust and faith in your teammates. I did and we did. Team Knockerheads won Game 1 in the second or third turn, but with the wind, that is what we 100 percent expected. We were able to win Game 2. It came down to a Game 3. All the other quarterfinals were over, and a lot of people were watching the match. In the end, we were able to come away with the victory. As I said, I have never had the opportunity to play Team Knockerheads, or any other team, in a three-person tournament. This was a special victory for me...real special. Not many teams beat Team Knockerheads at all, let alone in a three-person team tournament. It just doesn't happen often. After Game 1, we had to regroup and have faith in ourselves and our team, and we did just that. After the king was knocked down, I found myself bending down with my knees on the ground with my head in my hands. It was a very emotional, hard fought, and satisfying victory.

In the semifinals, we played Ringers. After beating a team like Team Knockerheads, a team has to be careful not to think that is the end of a tournament. It could be easy to do, but we talked about it, and discussed the job was not over. We still had more fight in us. Again, we went down 0-1 against the 2010 U.S. Champion (David Ellringer), easily one of the best handful of kubbers in Eau Claire (Gregg Jochimsen), and the best player from Thief River Falls (Ryan Kolden). Again, we were able to win Game 2. If we are all playing in someone's backyard in Eau Claire, I am not sure how much we even care to win a game or match, and we are talking and just hanging out. Here, yes there were "good groups" and "nice shots" here and there, but both teams wanted to reach the Final and play the waiting back-to-back U.S. Champions Kubbsicles from Eau Claire, as they beat Kubb Snipers in the semifinals. We were able to win Game 3 and advance to the Final and play Kubbsicles. I should say 2/3 of Kubbsicles, as Zach was not there and Luke from Dark Side of the Kubb was on the team, but we all know he is a very good player as well.

As was with the previous two matches, they won Game 1 with the wind. We were able to win Game 2.



Playing against Kubbsicles means inkasting against the great Mark Blazel. Against any team he plays on, one has to have great groups. Here is one of Tyr's Tre's groups in Game 2.

In Game 3, we were against the wind, and we knew we had to come out strong. We huddled together, and told each other that we needed to dig deep and knock baseline kubbs down, as they were not going to make any mistakes...and we did just that. Not overly quickly, but efficiently, we were able to eliminate all their baseline kubbs. I threw a solid group into the wind. Scott Graham knocked all but one down. He then knocked the last kubb down. I motioned to Aaron to take the king shot. He shook his head and said, "No, this is your tournament." I moved to a straight shot at the king. I looked at the Swedish flag painted king, thought about my dad, as I had all day from beginning to end, and knocked down the last king of the day.

*The preparation and journey to the weekend was a very enjoyable, but long one. Could all these hours of practice be worth anything if we were to lose in the quarterfinals I found myself thinking. I knew I wanted to be on the top of a U.S. podium again in 2014, and this is the one I wanted...wanted more than any other. The tournament consisted of me constantly looking out and thinking I saw my dad playing or picking up sets, hearing his name, seeing an old friend of his come out to cheer me on as he would do for my dad's teams in the past. I found myself wearing sunglasses a lot more that day to hide tears and emotions. The mental battles of feeling like you have to play perfect to not just have a chance against top teams there, but not be embarrassed by a top team there (specifically the top two teams in the country: Kubbsicles and Team Knockerheads), but also the likes of the other two top teams we played, Ringers and Kubb Snipers. The mental and physical battles of inkasting with and especially against the strong wind was as challenging as any other tournament I have been in. The inkastares on the other top-teams had the last names: Jochimsen, Bevers, Feathers, Jochimsen again, and waiting in the Final was Blazel. The day was unquestionably purely mentally and emotionally draining.*

After the last king fell and hit the grass in downtown Rockford, I turned around, and found Aaron right behind me. I gave him a hug...a huge hug, and a couple seconds later Scott joined us. Tyr's Tre had won the fifth annual Rockford Swedish Historical Society Tournament. More important than winning, we never stopped believing in ourselves, each other, our team, and our strategy and system. This time, winning came along with it, and it meant a lot.



Yes, I cried during the hug, before they gave out the trophies, when they gave me my trophy, at a time on the way home, again the next day, and when I think back to May 3, 2014, it is not uncommon that I still find myself with some tears.



Scott Graham, Aaron Ellringer, and Eric Anderson



Top Four Teams