

# 2012 US Carrom National Singles Championships

Report by Shreenivas Malliseti, September 2012

The **United States Carrom Association** (USCA) hosted the 2012 National Carrom Championships in association with **TV Asia** in Edison, NJ during September 14-16 weekend. This attracted about 60 Carrom players from all around the country, and from Canada, with a player as young as 10 to a player over 80 years old. This prestigious annual event was held at the TV Asia Auditorium with over 30 Carrom tables arranged in grid fashion, with a bright light illuminating each table, with chairs positioned perfectly around the table, and a coinset, a brush, and powder bottle placed conveniently, setting up an atmosphere that had the magnetism of drawing onlookers to come and play. Among those were Juhi Jain, an actress from TV Asia, and HR Shah, Chairman of TV Asia, playing several rounds of friendly Carrom. Mr. Lal Dandely and Mr. Pankaj Brahmabhat of TV Asia helped support the arrangements. Delicious Breakfast and Lunch/Dinner were arranged throughout the weekend, with some directly cooked at Palani Sundar's home, who is one of the longest standing members of the USCA.

Saravanan Chandra Babu of Cleveland, OH, set a new record by winning the Singles Championship and the DD Mehta Rolling Trophy for the sixth time in succession. On top of this astounding achievement, he won the Doubles Championship for the first time teaming up with Neil Khatu of NJ. Saravanan defeated Sekhar Challa of NJ in straight games in the Singles Finals, while Saravanan & Neil defeated perennial Doubles Champions, Sekhar Challa & Vishal Karangutkar, also of NJ, in thrilling Finals.

After the tournament was inaugurated by Mr. HR Shah on Friday morning, all of the participants immersed themselves in the Doubles Championship. When the Round Robin matches were in progress, the 8,000 square feet hall plunged into silence, only punctuated by the ticks and tocks of the Carrom pieces bouncing off of the wooden frames. After five rounds, the top eight teams qualified for the knockouts. The winners of the Quarterfinals played for the Championship while the losing four teams played for the Group B. While Saravanan & Neil and Sekhar & Vishal took the first and second spots, Dr. Prakash Kagal & Shibu Jose of Dallas, TX clinched the third place edging out Dr. Shivaram Gowdagere, Dallas TX, & Subbu Laxminarayanapuram, Cary NC. The Group B Finals was an all-California event. Vamshi Boinpalli & Mani Chandrasekar from San Jose CA defeated the seasoned pair of Bala Parthasarathy (San Jose CA) & Srikanth Bangalore (Los Angeles CA) in an exciting match.

The Singles Round Robin matches started on Saturday morning with 58 players vying for the top spot. After 7 Rounds, Saravanan, the 5-time defending champion took the #1 rank by winning all of his 7 matches. What may be considered a more stellar achievement, 82-year old Mr. Narayan Paranjape of Cleveland, OH, captured the #2 rank by winning 6 out of 7 matches, with his only loss to top-ranked Saravanan. The top 16 ranked players qualified for the Championship knockouts, while the next 16 entered the Group C knockouts. Of notable mention is Neil Patel who made the Group C after a long layoff from Carrom. Neil is a home-grown player from NJ who learned Carrom at age 14 and participated in several USCA events as a child prodigy. Also

10-year old Kartik Challa participated in his first Carrom tournament. The honor of being the only woman player of the event goes to 68-year old Mrs. Pandit whose enthusiasm is only matched by the energy and fervor of her son Parag Pandit in his volunteering efforts for the USCA. Special mention is deserved by the Canadian contingent who travelled a long way and brought their passion and dedication to the game with them. Led by Mr. Fancis D'Costa the Canadian players did very well in both Doubles and Singles.

In the knockouts, Saravanan displayed his command over all aspects of the Carrom game by defeating all the other top players, including three of the four players who would be representing the USCA at the upcoming World Carrom Championships in Sri Lanka during Oct 30 – Nov 3: Vishal Karangutkar, Neil Khatu, and Sekhar Challa. The fourth player, Jayadev Suryadevara of Dallas TX, lost the Pre-Quarterfinals match and played in the Group B event. Madhu Rao took the 3<sup>rd</sup> place by defeating Neil Khatu in close match. Bala Parthasarathy from San Jose CA won the Group C event by defeating Devang Shah of NJ in the Finals. Despite changing his grip in the middle of the tournament, Bala performed very well to clinch this honorable award worth \$100 in cash. The Best New Player trophy was clinched by Balaji Murali from Tennessee, who braved many odds to participate in the event. The next tournament, Western Open, would be in February 2013 in the Bay Area to be organized by Bala. Please look for more details for this exciting event at the USCA website [www.USCarrom.org](http://www.USCarrom.org) .