

Grebmorts Family Horseshoe Tournament

When you grow up in a rural area with eight siblings (and six of them are brothers), you are destined to play horseshoes. And so began the Stromberg Family Tournament with the inaugural games on July 2, 1972. It may say something about my family that we named the tournament "Grebmorts" which is "Stromberg" spelled backwards. Every summer, our relatives and a few friends would get together for a family horseshoe tournament in the backyard of my parent's home in New Prague, MN.

Each year, the number of family and friends that participated grew. It wasn't long before we decided to give out trophies and charge a small entry fee to cover the costs of the trophies. Everyone had so much fun! However, the tournament took all day because we only had two pits in the backyard. Later, we moved the tournament to my brother's home in North Branch, MN. We were able to put eight horseshoe pits in his backyard, so the tournament could be completed in one day.

We've made the tournament somewhat "official" too. The pits are sand courts and close to regulation size and dimensions. We all use the same brand of horseshoes, - Champs, and no one is allowed to bring their own. The tournament is double elimination and we try to limit it to 32 teams. The teams are a random draw (the morning of the tournament) and consist of one man and one woman. Juniors (age 13 and older) can also participate.

For 44 years, we have held the invitation-only Grebmorts Tournament – rain or shine! One highlight of the tournament is the "Hulgar Award". Named after my wonderful Swedish father, Hulgar Samuel Elof Stromberg. The Hulgar award is the consolation trophy and is made to look like an outhouse. The Hulgar Award winners are responsible for making the outhouse trophy for the next year. (Each year these trophies get more creative – truly a sight to see!).



The family tournament was the incentive for me and my sister to join a horseshoe league. We wanted to beat our brothers so bad, that we decided we needed to play every week to get better. We joined Montgomery Horseshoe League in 2001. Over time, we became more actively involved; - I was the league statistician from 2002-2010. As my sister and I improved, we took the game more seriously. We played in many tournaments over the years, including State and World Tournaments. We improved, and I can safely say that we can out-shoot all of our brothers now. Colleen Szabo (my sister) holds the family record of 46 ringers in one tournament!

Our family horseshoe tournament spurred other relatives to join leagues and become involved with the MGSHPA. You may recognize some of my relatives or have even played against them in tournaments. Pictured below: Cheri Newcombe, Cyndi Stepka, Tera Shusted (*like a relative*), Colleen Szabo, Cathy Ziemann, and Robyn Holien. Not pictured are Jackie Johnson, and Mick Ziemann (just to name a few).



The interest in this sport is increasing, and I believe the handicap league program is very successful because it allows beginners as well as seasoned players to pitch together. It's not the game itself that keeps me coming back, it is the friendships that I have made within our league and the tournaments. Horseshoe players are family, whether related or not.

Respectfully submitted by:
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