

## करम स्पर्धा

Maharashtra Mandal of Detroit held Carrom Tournament on Saturday Oct 22, 2011. Amit Mehta led the organization as Program Manager. Even though we finalized the date merely 2 weeks in advance, grass-roots enthusiasm prompted more than 25 entries under a very tight deadline.

On the D-Day, by 1PM, many of the players and organizers gathered at the make-shift stadium. If there were amateur warriors, there also were some experienced gladiators that came to the stadium with winning attitude. Tournament was played under the rules that forbid any "thumb" usage. It made the matches even more hard-fought. Games started with much fan-fare in the earnest by players including Shirish, Vivek , Yash , Prasanna Aigalikar, Vinayak Alate, Ms. Rajeshwari Bhagwat etc.

Early favorites Sachin Bidkar, Satish Ketkar and Kiran Ingle soon moved on to 2nd round after defeating their respective opponents. As matches progressed from 1st round into 2nd and then to quarterfinals, a tapestry of offensive & defensive strategies started to emerge, Just as matches set in rhythm, it was like 1975 and Zanjeer all over again.. A newcomer named Vijay (Nannaware) had stormed the tournament!

His flawless shots and strategy exploited the rules by pushing the opponents in their own backyard. His tactics ensured battles were always being played in his opponent's territory! With his superior gameplay and take-no-prisoners attitude, Vijay vanquished Ashutosh Khuperkar, Amit Mehta, Kiran Ingle to reach the Finals!

On the other side Sachin Bidkar fought back from 23-7 score against Satish Ketkar to write the saga of greatest comebacks in the MMD Carrom History! This was the finest Marathi spirit of "Never Say Die" on the display. Imagine the pressure cooker situation of semi-finals, trailing the last set 23-7 and then win the game with 23-29 score!! Almost makes us wish we had Sachin Bidkar facing Miandad in that historic Sharjah match.

And such was the stage set for the epic battle of Carrom Titans between Vijay Nannaware and Sachin Bidkar! Vijay's wily stroke plays against Sachin's flawless execution of controlled aggression. The select lucky few spectators that witnessed those sets were seeing 2 worthy opponents going after the title with everything they had. It was a treat for Carrom fans. In the end, Vijay's Juggernaut of Carrom Prowess won the finals 29-23 to clinch Championship.

As the epic battle for the supremacy was being held for Carrom Singles Championship, there was impromptu demand to set-up doubles tournament, President Bhusari coupled with Amit Mehta met their formidable opponents in Mahesh Kotnis and Satish Ketkar for finals. It was hard-fought but in the end, Amit and Abhijeet won the title of Doubles Championship.

All the winners were awarded trophies at the MMD Diwali 2011 Dhamaka.

All through this excitement, participants and viewers enjoyed fine Batata-wada and Vada-Pav that was provided by MMD along with water and soft drinks! Planning was made very easy by offers to help organize and participate from MMD members!

Abhijeet Bhusari provided his home as venue. Anant Kendale, Vikram Gokhale, Ms. Hema Rachmale and Kiran Ingle graciously provided their carrom boards for tournament. Shardul Athalye and Aditya Inamdar also helped in transportation of the boards and stands.

We also received entries from Non-Members, It was also great to have MMD ladies participants. Most importantly during the course of this tournament, we were able to attract new MMD member(s) for 2012 (Warm welcome to Ms. Manjiri Dani from 2012 Committee).

In the end many participants helped MMD committee clean up and left the stadium with triumphant feeling of having delivered another knock-out punch for 2011 MMD Sports Roster.

अमित मेहता