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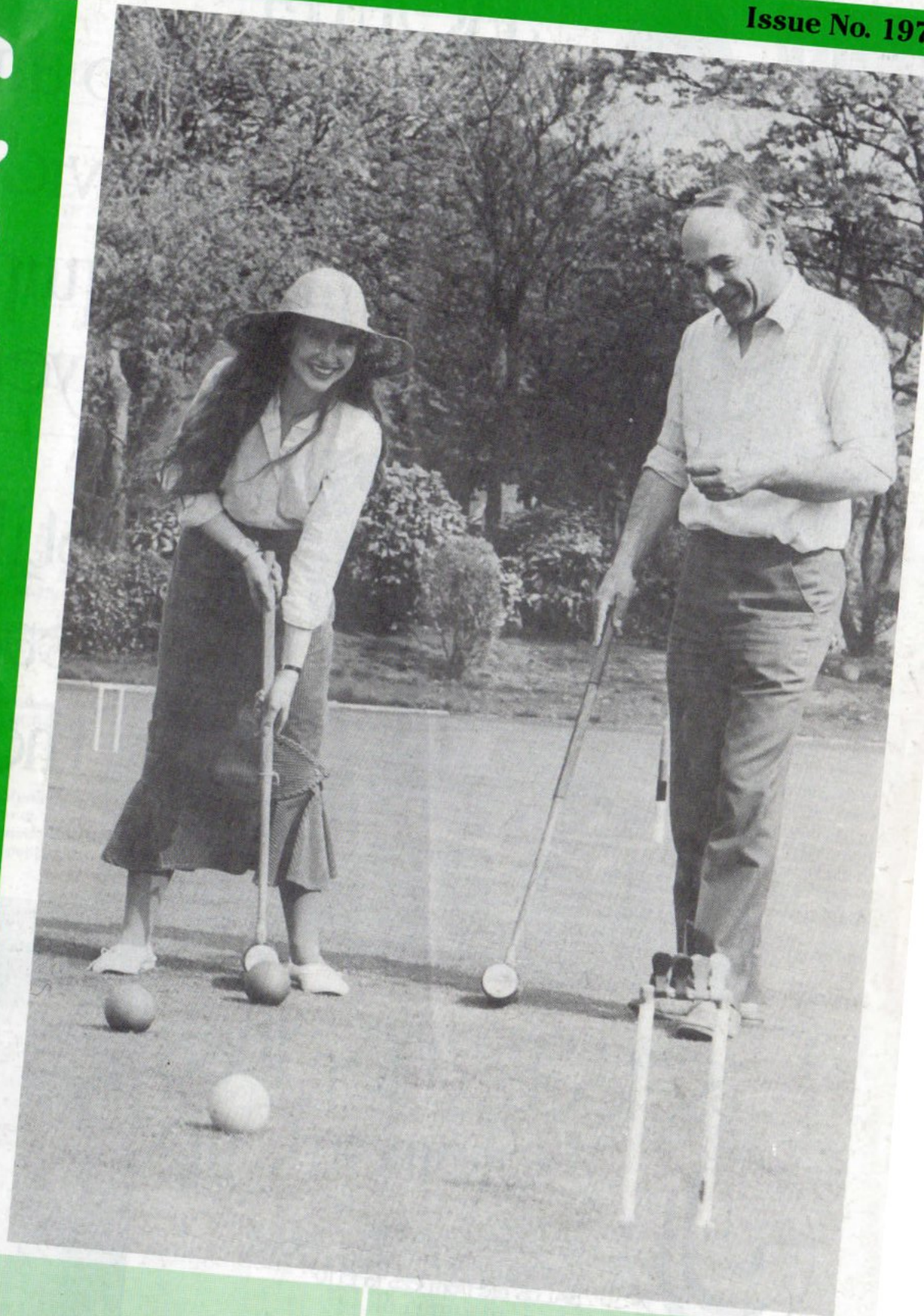
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May 1988

Issue No. 197

CROQUET



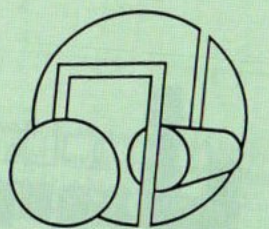
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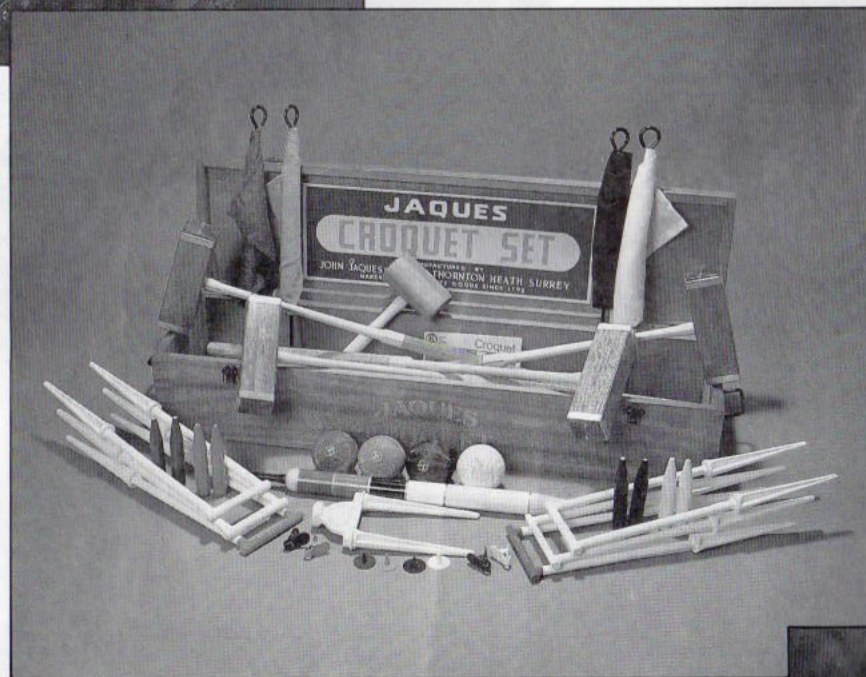
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'CROQUET'

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Editorial

A FIRST STEP TAKEN

The CA Council's recent approval of a £6000 Grant to Surbiton Croquet Club is a first step towards implementing one of our major objectives - the provision of more four-lawn clubs where major tournaments can take place.

The members of Surbiton have worked wonders to achieve so much in the short time that the club has been in existence. The CA's Grant, plus their own fund-raising activities over the past few seasons and the generosity of their own members, will enable them to match a major Grant from the Sports Council, and so provide the funds required for erecting a substantial pavilion with all the necessary services.

This development at Surbiton is particularly important, because at present there is no major croquet tournament centre in London other than the private clubs at Hurlingham and Rotherhampton. I hope to report in a future issue in more detail on Surbiton's achievements but in the meantime, croquet players might like to try out the facilities themselves by entering Surbiton's tournaments and giving the Club their practical support.

Our last issue outlined the new CA performance awards that come into being this season. Having long ago contemplated the triple peel and decided against it, the prospect of a gold award has made me think again about performing something that has so far eluded me. I hope that these awards will have the same effect on others, at all levels of ability, and look forward to seeing Tournament Managers presenting performance badges at many tournaments this summer.

The CA publishes a number of publicity leaflets, modest quantities of which are available free of charge to registered clubs to help in recruiting and general publicity. It may not be generally known that there is now a CA leaflet outlining the rules of Golf Croquet, and also a CA coaching wallchart, which outlines the basic tactics and shows how to make the shots. Full details of the leaflets available can be obtained



Debbie Cornelius guides Henry Cooper through the hoops at Clacton.

from the CA Office.

Help from clubs in recruiting CA members over past seasons has been much appreciated, and I hope that all clubs will want to support our recruitment drive again this year. A number of clubs have already registered for the new scheme, conditions for which were outlined in the previous issue (page 6). Registration establishes the date from which new members count towards the three required to gain a prize, so to avoid disappointment, please get in touch as soon as possible.

And now for Croquet! I hope everyone has a happy and successful season.

CHRIS HUDSON

THE CROQUET CLASSIC

If your handicap is greater than 18, why don't YOU enter the Croquet Classic!

The Group Entry date has been extended to 1st June to give clubs more time to organise competitions for new and existing members eligible to compete.

Photographs in this issue by: Lancashire Evening Post, Miss Roy McCormick, Jeff Bowdon, Andrew Bennet, Deborah Latham, Chris Hudson, James Kellaway, John Warren Photography, Associated Kent Newspapers, Peter Danks, Paul Henderson, Rosemary Guggan and

Ivor Brand.

Front Cover: Chris Hudson and Fiona Linning, Women's Editor of the Lancashire Evening Post, enjoy a game of croquet at Moor Park, Preston. (Photo: Lancashire Evening Post)

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RAMSGATE: Bigger Premises!

From Eileen Shaw

The Ramsgate Croquet Club was formed in 1983 by Dennis and myself with one lawn and later two at the Montefiore Games Centre on land originally given to Ramsgate by the late Sir Moses Montefiore.

Last year, the club moved to its present site on the Royal Esplanade, with four lawns and its own pavilion, and this year it has recruited enough Kent players to enter the Inter-Counties for the first time.

Ramsgate will this year hold (again for the first time) two 3-day Tournaments; the first on 3rd-5th June (a Handicap knockout and Swiss) and the second on 15th-17th July (an American). All CA members would be most welcome to both events.

Accommodation has been reserved for both players and spouses at very reasonable prices should it be required and non-players can take one of the many day trips to France and stock up on 'Duty



Eileen & Dennis Shaw with the Mayor of Ramsgate, Richard Taylor, and some of the many members at the opening of the new club premises in June 1987.

Frees', while Canterbury is just a short 15 miles away! Little did we think in 1983, with

just Dennis and myself as members, just how much could be achieved in such a short time.

PENDLE: League Success & Townsend Award

From John Beech

Thank you Mr Townsend for presenting the Club with a new set of Championship hoops. They are now in regular use on the Club lawns at Nelson and Colne College, but the honour to be the first club to win this new award for 'the club, less than 3 years old, that has made the greatest advancement in its development during the season' is the best prize of all. This success, so soon after winning £100 in the CA recruiting competition and the Apps Heley Award for 1986 is confirmation that Pendle isn't just a 'flash in the pan' or a nine day wonder.

The article appearing in 'Croquet' September 1987, issue no 193, gave the history of the Club to the beginning of the 1987 season and describes the first season's achievements. So what could Pendle do in 1987 to build on that great year of progress?

Competitive croquet was high on the agenda. The first year had concentrated on finding lawns, members and equipment and getting organised. 1987 was to launch the Club into the tough world of leagues and tournaments. The Club entered three competitions. These were the North West Short Croquet league, the National Short Croquet team event and the North-

ern Federation league.

We won the Short Croquet League, with Southport and QEGS 3 points behind us, and were runners-up to Nailsea in the National Short Croquet team event. In the Northern League, we finished halfway up the table.

Twelve of the club's 39 members took part in one or both of the short croquet competitions. Eleven of those 12 also played in the Northern league. Eight members entered the Observer/Lassalle Croquet Classic, and three of them qualified for one of the Regional finals held at Castle Howard, with Vincent George going on to the National final at Braxted Park in Essex. Several members played in fixture tournaments at other clubs during the season.

The long winter croquet pause was broken by the first inter club indoor tournament at Manchester Grammar School and Pendle emerged as overall winners on the day. David Hopkins also represented the North West in an indoor match against the North East at Teeside.

The recruiting record of the Club is encouraging. From 13 founder members in December 1985 we ended our first season with 27. Despite the inevitable falling away of some, the 1987 season closed

with 39 members. Chairman Norman Hicks has set the target at 50 for 1988.



John Beech in play at Southport.

The two full sized lawns have seen considerable improvement in the last year. With regular mowing as well as feeding, weeding and worming. A lot of the work is voluntary but we have benefitted

IPSWICH: Coaching Courses

From Robert Jones

During 1987, the Ipswich Croquet Club ran a successful weekend coaching course for beginners. The course was attended by 17 players from all over Suffolk and Essex. Instruction was provided by the Ipswich Club's CA approved coaches. The course began on Friday evening with an introduction to the basics of the game, and was concluded on Sunday afternoon by a tournament. The intermediate sessions took the players through such topics as hoop running, foul strokes, four ball breaks and the taking of bisques.

The course will be repeated this year on 14th-15th May, this time slightly shortened to Saturday and Sunday only. The cost will be £12.50. Any beginners, or other players wishing to refresh their knowledge of the game, please write to me at 3 Green Lane, Martlesham, Woodbridge, Suffolk. (Tel: 0473-623556.)

from the Community Service Scheme and have a 'Groundsman' who mows the lawns twice weekly at no cost to the Club.

An instant clubhouse was acquired during last season in the form of a large static caravan and provides a clubroom, changing accommodation and refreshment facilities, which has been appreciated by visiting teams as well as our own members.

The club meets on two evenings per week in addition to matches and tournaments at weekends but the arrangement with the landlord, the Lancashire Education Authority, is such that members have access to the club at all times between March and October.

The geographical position of the Club is ideal, situated just off the M65 giving easy access from Lancashire and Yorkshire. The membership already includes several very active 'country members'.

Members from other clubs considering holidaying in the South Pennines or the Yorkshire Dales will be made most welcome for a game on the lawns at Nelson.

PLYMOUTH: New Club

From Peter Danks

Last summer saw the opening of the new club at Plymouth, actually over the Hartley reservoir. About 10 inches of soil was spread over the concrete roof, and it has produced a very level surface large enough to take 3 full-size and one short croquet courts.

The opening demonstration day saw Martin Murray and Ray Stevens walking and playing croquet on water for the first time ever! Then came some taster sessions for the public. After a public meeting in the Council House, a club was formed under the Chairmanship of Alan Backway. As a Far Country member of the Budleigh Salterton Club, he has ready access to brains ripe for picking.

In July an intensive fortnight of coaching was provided from members of Budleigh Salterton. Twenty

four hours of it in all.

During the winter, a wooden sectional pavilion (40ft x 12ft) has been acquired. With a membership of over 40 and help from Plymouth City Council, the club is full of western promise.

David Purdon, a Grade I coach from Budleigh, has agreed to cope with the coaching needs during the coming season.



General view of Court 1 at Plymouth. The new pavilion will be sited in the left background.

CASSIOBURY: More members

From Robert Bateson

Membership rose from 19 to 25 in 1987, with 20 members playing Association Croquet. Short Croquet has not yet been taken up, but might have advantages for beginners. I have become the club's first Grade I coach, and now sport the CA's blue enamelled brooch.

A membership drive was held last year in June & July with help from Officers of the East Anglian Federation. The annual Club Handicap Singles competition was run as a two-life event, but this year it will take the form of an American block, all-play-all.

10 members played in 7 matches

in 1987, four of which were in the SW Division of the East Anglian League. Thanks to Watford Borough Council, we have better playing facilities than some clubs and so we played all our league matches at home.

The Club Hut is now under the Club's jurisdiction, and the Borough will carry out any maintenance work at our request. More equipment has been purchased, and the 1988 membership drive will be directed at residents of Watford, particularly those in the general neighbourhood.

STOCKEY FURZEN: New full-size courts

From Paul Henderson

Here is a snapshot of the new courts (2 full size lawns), and the pavilion (somewhat in need of repair!). We now have nearly completed levelling an area 62yds x 40yds, and will be sowing it within the next fortnight or so.

Our half court is already set up, and if you plan to be in the South West anytime soon, why don't you come by. The chap on the bulldozer is just about the only person I know who isn't a vice-president.



New courts under construction at Stockey Furzen.

THE SOLOMON TROPHY Great Britain & Ireland to field strong team against USA

By Bernard Neal

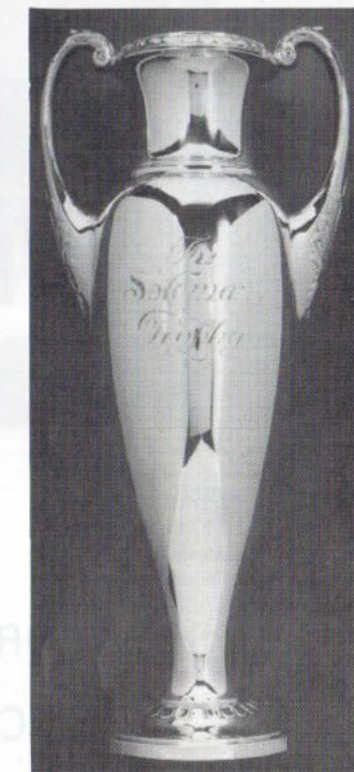
The inaugural match for the Solomon Trophy will be held at Cheltenham from July 9-13. This will be the first of a regular series of matches between the United States and Great Britain & Ireland, held alternately in this country and in the USA. The trophy, provided by the Croquet Association, is appropriately an American silver two handed cup, dated circa 1910.

Most croquet in the USA is played according to USCA rules. In this version of the game the court and setting are the same as for Association Croquet (known in the USA as the International Rules game). However, there are major differences in the laws which have a profound effect on tactics.

In USCA rules the balls are played in the sequence blue, red, black, yellow. When a roquet is made, the striker's ball becomes dead on the roqueted ball, which cannot be roqueted again before the next hoop in order is run, as in Association Croquet. However, in USCA Rules the deadness is recorded and is carried through to subsequent turns. The 'yard' line is only 9 inches from the boundary, and if a roqueted ball is sent off the court the turn ends. The rover hoop ('wicket' in the USA) is run in the same direction as hoop 5, and this leads to hilarious (to the opponent!) errors when an unsuspecting Association Croquet devotee expects to peg out in a USCA Rules game after making rover the wrong way. By the way, the peg becomes a 'stake' on the other side of the Atlantic.

All matches in the Solomon Trophy are to be Association Croquet. This contrasts with the annual matches which have taken place in Palm Beach since 1981 between the USA and a variety of international teams, which are 50% USCA Rules and 50% Association Croquet. During the five days of play at Cheltenham there will be 9 doubles and 12 singles matches, each the best of 3 games.

The United States team will be led by John Osborn, the current US National Champion. John, Ray Bell, the 1987 runner-up, and Kiley Jones all played against Great Britain in Nottingham in 1985, when Kiley scored a noticeable win against Keith Wylie. Also in the team will be Bob Kroeger, winner of the 1987 US International Rules championship, Tremaine Arkley, International Rules doubles winner, and Archie Burchfield,



The Solomon Trophy. By July, the spelling mistake will have been corrected!

USCA National Doubles champion. Jack Osborn, the USCA President, who has master-minded the dramatic upsurge of interest in croquet in the USA, will be the non-playing captain.

Their opponents will be Mark Avery, 1987 Open Champion, Steve Mulliner, winner of the President's Cup, Nigel Aspinall, whose regular visits to Palm Beach have done much to develop playing standards in the USA, David Openshaw, Great Britain's MacRobertson Shield captain, William Prichard and Phil Cordingley.

This powerful team will have the advantages of their greater tactical knowledge of the Association game, and will also be playing at home. They are likely to win, but the fighting spirit of an American team in any sport is not to be underestimated.

The USCA team will stay on to compete in our Open Championships at Hurlingham from July 16th-23rd. Their tour will be rounded off by playing a one-day match at Hurlingham on July 15th against the President's team, selected by John Solomon, in which all the games will be to USCA Rules. There should be some fun at the rover wicket.

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His designs have certainly stood the test of time as most seats currently being built by Green Brothers are still based on those original Lister styles.

Outdoor furniture must have four main qualities - it must be solid, durable, maintenance free and attractive. Lister products are built from solid lengths of 80 year old teak, which is one of the world's most durable timbers.

Originally the teak was obtained from the decking of steel hulled ships when they were being scrapped, but nowadays Green Brothers import the wood from strictly controlled Indonesian plantations. There new planting is an integral part of the forestry cycle and a gradual increase in the rain forest acreage is a major commitment.

Brought by ship to England Lister teak is crafted, using the finest traditional mortice and tenon joinery, into a wide array of distinctive, design conscious pieces.

The construction of this furniture has in fact changed little since inception. Whilst machinery has replaced the old mallet and chisel the traditional skills of the carpenter are still very much required.

Longevity of life is the main strength of this type of furniture and although there are not known to be any original 1800's seats surviving to this day, furniture dating back over 70 years is known to have defied the march of time and to be in everyday use.

Another attractive feature of teak outdoor furniture is that it is maintenance free. No painting or varnishing is required, indeed customers are advised that the furniture has been designed to ripen and mature under the relentless play of the elements mellowing to a beautiful silver grey hue.

However if a rich golden colour is preferred a coating of teak dressing is needed only once a year. This is purely a matter of individual taste and does not extend the furniture's life span.

Green Bros have a reputation of leading by design and in addition to the original Lister seats they have extended the range to include designs based on the Chinese Lattice Pattern, often associated with Chippendale, and two seats have also been added, based on designs by Sir Edwin Lutyens, the well-known and respected architect and creator of many famous gardens.

Lister teak is the perfect choice to blend with any garden setting, with lighter-weight pieces such as the 'Burford' excellent for the small garden, with the 'Gidleigh' lattice effect ideal for the more formal location to the majesty of 'Lutyens' for the grander setting, or the classic 'Warwick' and sturdy 'Mendip' built for heavier use.

As David Fender, Marketing

Continued on Page 23



The imposing Lutyens seat from Lister's Verey Collection inspired by the designs of Sir Edwin Lutyens creator of many famous English gardens.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Andrew Hope reviews the 1987 season

'Isn't the new Magazine super'; 'I hate the flashy look of the new Gazette - why can't it be like it's always been'.

'Let's have more Tournament reports'; 'There's such a lot of space wasted on reports of Tournaments'.

'Professionalism will ruin croquet'; 'If a musician can earn a living playing music, why shouldn't a croquet player earn a living playing croquet?'

'The CA's subscription should go up every year'; 'Keep subs down!'.

'We don't need more players or clubs - the game is nice as it is'; 'If we got on television we would soon have a club in every town in the country'.

I have heard conflicting views about every aspect of the game and it is impossible, in most cases, to tell which view is in the majority. Should Council members try and reflect the views of the CA membership or should they, as a group of keen croquet players, just go ahead and do what they think is correct?

Do not forget that we are never inundated with candidates for election to Council. The way Council is constituted at the moment means that CA policy is a reflection of Council's opinion and not necessarily that of the CA membership as a whole. Enough of this, no matter what CA policy is in the future, I will still enjoy playing croquet - and sticking in hoops.

We have decided to condone Open Croquet. The main argument being that, because it is inevitable, let's try and control it before it gets out of hand. This was probably the most emotive subject this year but it was closely followed, if not equalled, by CA financing.

Due to an excellent record during '85, '86 and '87 we have been awarded a further three years of grant from the Sports Council. This money plus sponsorship is spent on a development programme. If this source of money came to an end we would still have to run a Tournament Programme and everything that entails (Laws, Calendar, Handicap Co-ordination, Directory, etc). We would still need a Magazine and we would have to employ a Secretary.

The money for all this comes mainly from subscriptions and tournament levies and it is the policy of Council to ensure that we will be able to run these services without any help from the Sports Council or sponsorship by 1990. This can be achieved by a combin-

ation of higher levies and subscriptions and increased CA membership - obviously the emphasis must be on the latter.

Our membership increased by 234 in 1987 and this was largely due to our Publicity and Development Committees chaired by Peter Danks and John McCullough. The Schools' Championship attracted 41 teams from 29 schools and this most important area of development seems to be coming more and more popular each year. We were also successful in continuing our work with the Womens Institutes and the Townswomens Guilds with 'Come and Try it' sessions.

We had a lot of press coverage from the Lassale Croquet Classic which was promoted by the Observer. A short Channel 4 Programme as part of the 'Challenge to Sport' series has been shown three times. Steven Mulliner and John McCullough published a book 'The World of Croquet'. Don Gaunt has also published a book 'Plus One on Time' which deals with all aspects of handicap play, and by the time this edition of the Gazette has been circulated, a book by Anton Gill called 'Croquet' will be available.

Carlsberg and the Croquet Association have prepared a promotional campaign designed to introduce proper croquet to hotels.

The Croquet Association continued to support Clubs both financially and in an advisory capacity during 1987. Significant improvements have been made at Surbiton, Nailsea and Ramsgate but it must be stressed that these were largely due to local enthusiasm.

Many of you will have seen the indoor carpet. It really does look impressive when laid out in a Sports Hall. Opinions differed as to how difficult it was to play on. Absolute beginners who knew no alternative and advanced players, I think, liked the fast surface but handicap players were having problems and therefore the second carpet will be slower.

Coaching is the main aid to retaining new recruits and the Coaching Committee chaired by John McCullough has made tremendous progress during 1987. We now have 99 Grade I coaches, 18 Grade II and 9 Grade III coaches. Several coaching courses were held during last year and the Loughborough Summer School was again oversubscribed even though there were more places than in 1986.

At the time of writing, all but one



of the countries invited to join the World Croquet Federation have accepted and I understand the last country will decide in May. We now have enough countries to make the Federation a creditable organisation. Bernard Neal, Chairman of the International Committee, has organised a regular International Competition playing Association Rules against the USA for the Solomon Trophy. The first match will be held in Cheltenham in July. He is also organising a tour from Japan in 1989.

I am now starting to look forward

so I had better stop but not before I say one more thing. My main wish for the future is that croquet will be a game unaffected by the unsportsmanlike behaviour which is sadly exhibited in so many other sports. No one may appeal against a referee's decision as a matter of fact; accordingly it is bad manners, offensive, unsportsmanlike and pointless to show dissent and I would urge everyone who plays croquet to ensure that this simple rule is upheld.

Andrew Hope

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LOOKING BACKWARDS IN 1896

By Allen Parker (Parkstone)

Knowing my interest in the historical aspects of croquet, Peter Danks kindly lent me his copy of Cassell's 'Book of Sports and Pastimes Illustrated', which was published in 1896. This fascinating work, 'Being a Compendium of Outdoor and Indoor Amusements', consists of 975 finely printed pages and more than 900 illustrations. I counted 300 outdoor games, some 100 parlour games, over 100 toy games, 20-odd mechanical and a similar number of arithmetical puzzles, and a variety of card games, parlour magic and fireside fun. Items varied from Cricket to Catapults, from Marbles (22 different games) to Mount Nag (a playground game), from All-fives to Archery, from Broad-sword to Bowls, from Pall-Mall to Peashooter, from Stool-ball to Spelling-Bee, from Cross-bow to Croquet, and so on, and on....

There is a large section on 'Recreative Science', including experiments with the phonograph, the microscope, light, the spectroscope(!), the microphone, the telescope, the steam engine, electricity, chemistry and more. Instructions for activities in the workshop were given in detail and advice on keeping many home pets (including silkworms) were included. It seems that in the absence of television there was no lack of activities to keep one amused in those days, winter or summer. With a publication date of 1896, it is probable that the articles were written in 1894, and as regards the one on croquet (which runs to 17 pages), this date is interesting as corresponding to the start of the croquet revival after its decline during the previous 20 years. The following excerpt from the introduction to the article gives some idea of the situation at that time.

"Never, probably, has there been a game so universally and thoroughly popular in Great Britain as Croquet, and never was a popularity so rapidly achieved or so soon undermined and thrown into the shade when its zenith had once been reached. Those who remember the first introduction of the game can alone recall to mind the sort of mania which it excited throughout the length and breadth of the land. It was the first successful attempt that had been made to invent an out-door game in which both sexes could join on terms of equality, in which both old and young could take part with equal chances, and in which, as scarcely any muscular power was required, the weak stood almost as fair a chance of winning as the strong. These various advantages, both physical and social, acted with the greater force upon public opinion, in as much as the rage for athletics of all kinds was then reaching its height amongst boys and men, and it was natural that girls and women - to say nothing of children - should feel a desire to excel also in some sort of outdoor competition"

"Croquet, then, in its origin and early history, is entitled to be numbered amongst the numerous athletic games which have been introduced with so much energy and with such immense benefit during the last thirty years. It was productive of what may be almost called a revolution in the social life of the country; for from the time of its recognition as a national game, garden parties, which had hitherto been very dull and monotonous affairs, became the most common and popular of all entertainments in country places; and an amount of outdoor exercise - not violent, or even active, it is true, but still very beneficial - was secured to hundreds of thousands who, but for the attractions of Croquet, would have remained indoors pouring over some occupation which could have done them, physically speaking, no good at all. Another advantage which croquet secured for us was the conversion of numerous lawns and gardens into excellent smooth plots of turf, available not only for Croquet, but afterwards for the more manly and exciting game of Lawn Tennis, which may now be said to have succeeded to Croquet in the popular estimation"

"The merits of Croquet in its social aspect must always remain unquestioned, whatever may be its ultimate fate as a pastime or competition. But the more sober and humble objects of its inventors, whose ambition was, probably, merely that of amusing, were in the course of time to a great extent superseded by the efforts of enthusiastic players to make the game a trial of skill. With this object clubs were started, very much on the system of the old Archery clubs; and prizes were offered to be played for in the most serious and determined style. Instead of practising for the mere pleasure of distinguishing themselves on a lawn or beating a rival in fair field, these zealots began to cultivate the art and science of croquet with a view to more solid advantages. The rewards obtainable by first-rate performers ceased to be merely the admiration of an assembled company and the envy of less skilful players, and began to consist of gold ornaments, silver mounted croquet mallets, opera-glasses and a whole host of congruous or incongruous prizes, paid for by the entrance fee or presented by some enthusiastic patron of the new game. Such an altered state of things

involved, of course, the drawing up of strict rules, and the enforcement of them by umpires, committees and other competent authorities. Meetings had to be held to draw up codes of rules, and a vast amount of debate and discussion - to give it no harder name - ensued before it was found possible to establish laws in which everyone could acquiesce. Then came the establishment of national clubs and the organisation of national prize meetings, with fifty-guinea challenge prizes; and Croquet began to look as if it had taken its place as a permanently favourite sport of the English people, rivalling in its own way such things as boating, cricket, archery and the like."

"We may now, at this distance of time, at once confess that these ideas were extravagant and mistaken. As a social amusement Croquet was, and still is, a great success. But as a game of skill, and a subject of serious competition, it has been proved a failure. No one now hears much of All England Croquet meetings; and if there are such things, no one goes far to look on. As an art and science croquet is capable of almost endless elaboration, and becomes a field for the exercise of much ingenuity, much tact and nerve, and considerable muscular strength. But in proportion as it thus advances to perfection it becomes more and more wearisome and dull. To watch a first-rate player plodding on through a long break is an

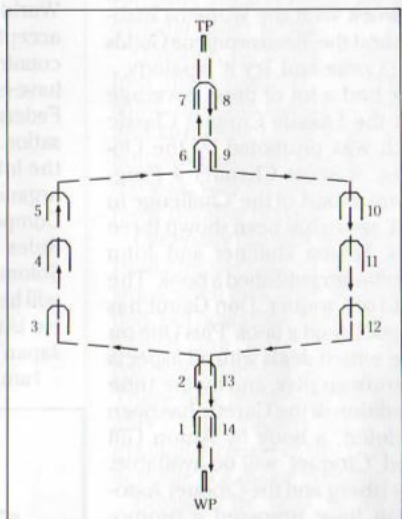


Fig. 1. The original arrangement of hoops. (TP is Turning Peg; WP is Winning Peg).

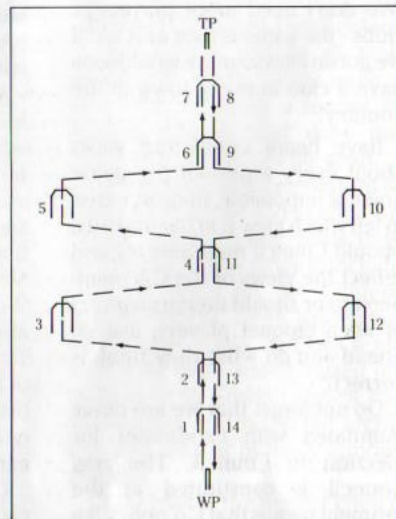


Fig. 2. The later arrangement of hoops. (TP is Turning Peg; WP is Winning Peg).

intolerably tedious task, though it is hardly less so than the task of the performer himself. In a word, patience was found, in the advanced stages of the game, a more important qualification than any amount of skill; and a sport which depends on such a principle could never long retain a leading position as a game for every class. Something more lively and affording more scope for activity was imperatively needed by all able-bodied persons; and this we soon found in the shape of Lawn Tennis. What wonder, therefore, that the latter should have advanced with giant strides since its introduction, and that the former should have fallen farther and farther into the background?"

"It would, however, be a complete mistake to suppose that Croquet will ever be entirely superseded and discarded. The more active game will, perhaps, always be more popular amongst the more agile class of persons, whatever may be their age. But it would be a great error to suppose that everyone is at every time full of this restless energy. There are, unfortunately, many men and many boys who are not physically robust enough to indulge in violent exercise; and there will be times when even the most energetic have need of a more gentle style of amusement. Take the case, for example, of those who are recovering from a fever or long illness, and who are too weak to be excited or over-fatigued, but may, at the same time, be largely benefitted by quiet exercise in the open air. Croquet is the thing of all others at such moments."

There is much in this account that we can still agree with, but with the hindsight of 90 years, there are also some ideas of which we should certainly not now approve. For instance, the conclusion that 'as a game of skill, and a subject of serious competition, it has been proved a failure was certainly over-hasty. We would however agree that watching a 4-ball break is indeed boring, and there is still some doubt whether croquet will ever become a good spectator game. Although it is still a good game for old and young, and both sexes, we would not now emphasise its suitability for those only capable of taking part in a 'more gentle style of amusement'. It is after all a tough game mentally and on a heavy lawn, one could not agree that it requires only 'little muscular power'. Indeed under these conditions it is

hardly true to say that it is a 'game in which both sexes could join on terms of equality'.

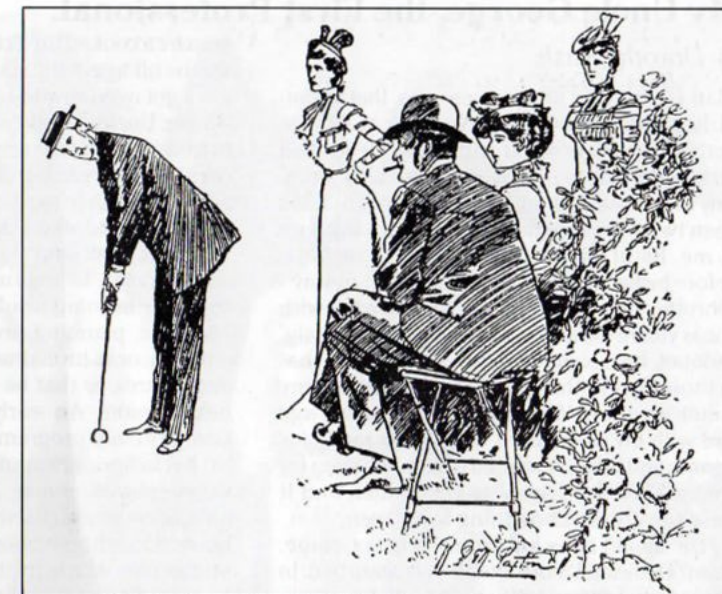
The arrangement of the court in the early years consisted of 10 hoops and two pegs arranged as shown in Figure 1. The player started with his ball at a point mid-way between the winning peg and the first hoop, and ran the first seven hoops in the order shown. He then had to hit the turning peg before returning down the other side of the ground through hoops 8 to 14 and finally hit the winning peg. The hoops were formed of pieces of stout wire, and their width was apt to be altered to suit the fancy of the players; but the space between the two sides of the hoop was originally from about eight inches to a foot. The game could be played with up to EIGHT balls whose colours were painted in rings on the peg, the light colours alternating with the dark. It was a sequence game with the light colours playing against the dark. The balls were of elm- or box-wood "the latter is very preferable, as being less liable to chip, and heavier, so as to travel more steadily across the lawn and over the inequalities of the turf. This latter is really the best feature of the heavy balls, as the light ones, if struck, jump and hop over others, so as to try one's patience sorely."

The article describes how the first player runs through as many hoops as he can manage, and how the second player can aim at a hoop or a ball, and how "If he hits a ball he can get an advantage out of a proceeding called croquetting. By a clever stroke the adversary may, in the first place, be sent flying out of position to a remote and unfriendly corner of the ground. The player's own ball may, at the same time, and by the self-same hit, be sent into position, where, by the other stroke to which he is entitled, he can go through his hoop, and so acquire the right of again aiming at the unfortunate adversary. The third player is still better off, as he has two balls to play on; and so on in proportion to the size of the party, the last player in an eight game having a choice of no less than seven balls at which he may aim directly he is in play and each time he has passed a hoop, or, as the term is, has 'made a point'".

"It was some years before Croquet players thoroughly understood what a vast deal could be done by a skilful person in utilising the services of another ball by this process of croquetting. When they had mastered it at last, they soon showed by their performance in matches that the whole secret of success lay in an application of the process to every stage of the game. When once a ball had been hit, or to speak technically 'roquetted', by a player with his own, his cue was not to send it flying off to a distance, but with a much more refined cruelty to use it, if it were an enemy, as an assistance in getting through his own hoops. By a gentle and apparently most amiable hit the captive ball was sent on a short distance ahead, there to await the coming of the persecutor after he had passed his next hoop. When that had been safely done, the captive was quietly roquetted again, and again sent on into position to await the making of another point. This was the course pursued with an adversary, taking care that, while every convenient use was made of him, he should never be 'put through' one of his own hoops in order, and never left in such a position as he might, when released, turn to advantage."

"As soon as these principles were understood, Croquet made an immense stride forward in the public estimation. Another result was that the original setting was found too simple for the good players. When the task of running through the fourteen hoops in order became one of little difficulty, the victory resolved itself pretty much into a question who should make the first roquet and so make the winning break. In order to provide a remedy for this state of things two devices naturally presented themselves - that of decreasing the size of the hoops so as to make it more difficult to run through them, and that of altering the position of them so that it should be more difficult after passing each one of them to proceed into a position for the next. Accordingly, a great variety of alterations were suggested in the arrangement of the hoops. One of the best and most generally adopted is represented in Fig 2. Secondly, the size, or rather the width of the hoops, has been reduced to an extraordinary extent. At the first great tournament or champion prize meeting held at the Crystal Palace in 1868, the space between the two sides of each hoop was 6 inches, and this was reduced in subsequent years to 5, 4, and even on one or two occasions to 3 3/4 inches, the balls used being at the same time 3 and five-eighths inches in diameter, so that it might almost be said that the deviation of a hair's breadth in accuracy of aim was fatal to all chance in making a point. A more reasonable and convenient width is about 5 inches, which for all practical purposes and for the general average even of good players, makes the game quite difficult enough."

In those days it was permitted to wire an opponent's ball from all others without penalty - there was no such thing as lifts. The act of wiring was thus considered to be of considerable importance as the following comment on the use of hoops shows "Hoops are useful, not only for balls to pass through, but also for punishing adversaries; as there is no more hopeless position for a striker's ball than rammed tight against a wire, or placed so



Frontispiece to Mr A. Lillie's 'Croquet Up To Date' (1900).

that the hoop effectually prevents the mallet from striking the ball. Such a ball is much more safely disposed of than if it were at the bottom of the lawn, as in the latter case a fluky shot may turn the tables. In the former, any shot at all is almost impossible. It rewards any player to practise constantly the wiring of an adversary ball"

The results observed by Dr. Grundy some 30-40 years later (See Gazette No 182, November 1985, p21) are foreshadowed in the following sentences, which also contain some good advice on how to hit a ball, "Roquets may be divided into long and short, the former those effected from a distance of more than twelve yards, the latter those made at distances from one inch to twelve yards. A doubt as to which is the easier will probably excite a smile of derision in our readers, and they will be surprised to hear that more matches are lost through missing the latter than the former. The fact is, that no disgrace is felt at having missed a twenty yards shot, and so there are no nervous qualms while the player is taking aim; but often when the ball is six or ten yards distant, at a critical moment, disquieting thoughts arise, 'What a booby I shall look if I miss this!' 'Oh, dear, I ought to be able to hit it! but' - the striker is doing his best to miss by giving way to such childish fears. Be sure of your medium-distance shots, and you will very soon become one of the most dangerous players. 'How am I to be sure?' is the answer. Well, listen. First, as to the eye, which had better come first, as there is a general consensus as to which is the right method. At the moment of striking your eye ought to be resting on your own ball, and not on the ball aimed at. Fix your eye on that part of your own ball which the mallet must hit in order to drive it straight; be sure, finally, to strike this part with the centre of the mallet's face. You can easily ascertain whether you are accurate in this last point by observing the indentation or discoloration which is made on the face of the mallet by the ball. On the mallet of a bad player the dark marks referred to may be seen all over the mallet's face, ...but a good player's mallet will present one round opaque mark in the centre, showing that the ball has been always struck true."

The following sentences from the article's discussion of tactics still contain good advice for the novice. "How often one hears a disappointed bystander - who has come to see the play of a proficient at croquet - vent his spleen in words like these: 'Why, he never made a stroke that I could not have done myself!' Quite so; but you would never have given yourself the opportunity, as the art of the game consists in contriving to leave yourself nothing but easy shots, and as you do not yet possess that art, you would on most occasions have to execute difficult strokes, which may be easily missed."

The section on croquet ends with a conclusion that is still valid today ".....These and other questions connected with the tactics of the game can only be thoroughly learnt by long practice; but enough has been said to show that a vast amount of headwork as well as nerve and manual neatness is essential to all who wish to excel in what is really, in many respects, a most interesting and difficult game."

One important subject not dealt with in the above account is the question of mallets. The book had much to say about mallets, but this must be postponed for another occasion.

It should be noted that the two court arrangements shown in the book (Figures 1 and 2) were already well out-of-date by 1896, because the Hale setting with six hoops and two pegs was introduced in about 1872. The Willis setting which we now use was not introduced in this country until 1922.

Short Story

My Uncle George, the First Professional.

by Dorothy Rush.

Alan Girling said to me once - yes, that's Alan Girling the croquet player. No, as far as I know, nothing whatever to do with brakes. Four-ball breaks but not four wheel brakes, as it were. Anyway, he said to me once - or it might have been twice because he was always having a go at me. Bit of a tease Alan was, in those days, before he became Sir Alan. Yes, well, anyway - 'Dorothy' he said, 'The only thing wrong with you is you're too keen. You take it too seriously.' Croquet, he meant, of course, and it's true that in those days nothing mattered but getting my handicap down. Which wasn't easy at my age and with my shape but I was always ready for a game and I always wanted to win. Too keen for young Alan. Well, he was young then and it wasn't really the done thing to be keen.

He should have known my Uncle George. Keen? Dedicated more like. Totally absorbed. In a word: professional. It was literally his whole life. He never had a steady job, not in the accepted Protestant - work - ethic sense. Not that he was idle, no indeed. Up at seven every day to lay the fires in Winter and in Summer to saw and stack logs or shovel into the cellar the seasonally cheap coal which had been unloaded in a great pile in the back yard. Then he would

prepare a cooked breakfast for the whole family and be off to get the shopping done before the town got overcrowded. And after this, if it was Winter, Uncle George would read. He would sit in his kitchen in an armchair squeezed into a corner near the fire and read his croquet books and his croquet magazines, until lunchtime, when he would take a light snack lunch followed by a brisk walk over the Lickey Hills, swinging an old mallet, 'to keep me legs and shoulders in trim'. The evening would be spent in analysing his game, planning breaks, thinking without emotion, or so he claimed, about past triumphs and failures, so that he might play even better next session. An early night and that was George's daily programme in Winter-time.

But in Spring, Summer and Autumn, Uncle George played croquet. From 10 in the morning until noon he practised triple peels at his local bowls club, without hoops but with markers laid on the grass where the hoop should have been. I sometimes watched this daily practice and once dared to point out that it was pretty easy without hoops. 'Never mind the hoops, Dolly love', he said. 'Getting the patterns fixed in your mind is what matters. It's got to come automatically. You can practise hoops separately'. And this he did with a hoop, presidentially tight, on the tiny bit of grass which separated his

terraced cottage from the busy Wolverhampton Road.

The afternoons were for playing 'proper games' and this is where the real tale of Uncle George, the first professional, begins. George had a small car, a Morris saloon, in which every afternoon, he drove to a croquet club. A different croquet club every day. In Spring and Autumn, he chose clubs which could be reached quickly, so as not to lose the light, but at the height of Summer he might travel a hundred miles or more for a game. 'Have mallet will travel', I hear you cry. Not a bit of it - Uncle George never took his mallet to the dozens of croquet clubs which he visited in the course of a year. You see, George was a hustler. He knew that the Englishman can never refuse a bet, especially when the outcome appears a certainty, and he traded without shame upon this endearing trait. Endearing to George, that is.

He would park the Morris near the chosen club and, if this was his first time there, would stroll slowly by as if taking a gentle constitutional. At the entrance to the club his eye would be caught by the strange activity within and he would stand shyly (a past master at shyness was George), watching the play from a distance. Inevitably a friendly member would invite him in - clubs have never been short of customers - and would offer to demonstrate to George the rudiments of the game. Reluctantly, George would allow himself to be drawn onto the lawn and would be found to have a certain promise. By this time, George himself would have become rather less shy and mildly unbelieving that great skill was required in knocking coloured balls around a bit of a grass. Well, you can guess the rest: club champion tries to put him right; George says 'Bet I could beat you!' Club champion smiles patronisingly; George mentions money; club champion stops smiling and decides to take the cocky beggar down a peg; offers half-a-dozen bisques; George incredulous, ups the ante; club champion cannot resist the temptation. Not too much later, after a close-fought match in which Uncle George makes precisely the same number of errors as he has bisques, money changes hands and the club champion is muttering something about beginner's luck.

In the Spring or Autumn, when time was short, Uncle George's approach was a touch cruder. He would assume the persona of a lout jeering over the fence at the nobs and their silly game.

See above for the events that followed but multiply the sums involved by at least 3, as the oiks-bashing factor comes into play. In these cases George was rarely able to return to the scene of his coup but the triumphs of the Summer season could be repeated several times over. Another visit later in the season or the following year could be made without raising suspicions. At each place he was 'that chap who came once or twice before and seemed to have a bit of a flair'. He never went often enough to show signs of improvement and he never joined a club. Nor did Uncle George ever play at an Association tournament. He played all the greats from Solomon to Mulliner but he only played them once and only in circumstances of almost complete privacy. George's ability to dash off a triple could not be displayed too publicly if he was not to blow his cover as the most precocious of beginners.

Indeed public exposure was something that

George shunned religiously. He knew which was club night at every place in the country and never went on that evening, carefully choosing times when only a few members would be present. Thus did he maintain his anonymity for more than 3 decades. Probably the best player in the country, if not in the world, he was a complete unknown, whose mantelpiece was bare of trophies and whose photographs never appeared in the croquet magazines.

No, no, I tell a lie: there is one edition of 'Croquet' in which Chris Hudson is shown coaching at a weekend course, in Nottingham I think it was. (This was some years before McCullough was appointed National Coach at a phenomenal salary and coaching became big business). Amongst the smiling beginners surrounding Mr Hudson there is one, a tall, broad shouldered man, apparently blowing his nose with a huge red handkerchief. In those days the photos in 'Croquet' were in black and white but I know that handkerchief is red because Uncle George loved red handkerchiefs and that tall figure is none other.

Beyond the game itself, another love of my Uncle George's life (apart from Aunt Mary, his wife, the three girls they managed to produce in the close season and his two collie dogs, Peg and Rover) was the language of croquet, which George employed colourfully in everyday situations. Eric Partridge can say what he likes, it was George who gave the world a new way to say it was exhausted when he told a Central T.V. interviewer that he was 'pegged out', after saving two young lads from drowning in a Birmingham canal, just before Easter the year that young Debbie Cornelius won the President's Cup and the first year that Uncle George made £10,000 from croquet.

At a party, when George had been dragged along by Mary, he might have been heard to declare that if he could 'just get a rush on Charlie, over there by the door', he could 'take croquet from him and be through Rover before the old girl can call a referee'. Having been constrained by Mary's vigilance to remain too long and to drink too well at one such gathering, my over-handicapped uncle attempted to descend the front steps, fell headlong, pronounced 'I'll take a bisque' climbed back up the steps on all fours, and then hauling himself upright, descended again in more stately fashion.

The discerning reader will have gained the impression that being married to a professional croquet player was rather less than an all-round break and that Aunt Mary came into that category of wives known as 'long-suffering'. The discerning reader would be utterly wrong and had better keep his peering between the lines for the inscrutable prose of John Walters. Aunt Mary was no croquet widow but a New Woman of early vintage. By day she taught Physics at a gigantic comprehensive in Sutton Coldfield and at night she wrote short stories with one hand while feeding, bathing and tucking in her three daughters with the other. You've probably read some of her stuff in a Penguin collection or maybe even studied one of her stories for GCSE, but I won't tell you her full name or I'd be blowing the whistle on old George, as well.

And that's how this lucky man could afford to dedicate himself to the pursuit of croquet excellence, day after day, year after year. For croquet was what George could do. What in fact, he *did*, in the way that other men made cars, taught, flew planes or emptied dustbins. It was his trade and the value of a man's trade is



A rare photograph of Uncle George, seen (background right) partly hidden by Bernard Neal when on a coaching course at Cheltenham.

measured by the extent to which he can make money at it. But in croquet, at the time when George really *was* a beginner, professionalism was a very dirty word indeed and even the minuscule sums won at tournaments would be spent at the club bar. Uncle George's achievement was to break down that convention, anonymously, secretly, aided by the generous and loving support of Aunt Mary and the greed of every man who has vowed never to give a sucker an even break. Or even a four-ball break. He never wanted to be famous and he never wanted to be rich, just to be the best and to prove that he could pay his way by what he did.

My Uncle George has now ceased to be a professional croquet player. He turned 60 last year and decided to retire in the usual way, as was his due. Retire and ... well ... play croquet. He has joined a club on the South Coast where (Mary having retired three years before) they bought a small bungalow, only their second home in 40 years of marriage. George has acquired his first set of whites and plimsoles and has been given a provisional club handicap of 22.

You'll probably meet him on the tournament circuit one of these days, or in a local league match. Or perhaps you've got your eye on the All-England Handicap? Don't waste your time: my Uncle George is going to win that this year.

Handicapping Procedures for the 1988 Season

The procedures for handicapping by CA Handicappers remain unchanged from those in force for the previous two seasons and given in Gazette No. 185, May 1986.

The Handicap Coordination Committee will recommend to Council that the experiment of increasing the highest handicap from 16 to 18 be extended for a further year and that the limit be moved from 18 to 20. If adopted at the April meeting of Council, then the change will take effect immediately.

Club Secretaries and Official Handicappers will be informed by letter of the outcome during the week beginning 24th April. As with the extension from 16 to 18, the new handicap of 20 is intended to extend the range for existing tournament players and not to add two more handicap points for club handicaps.

Handicappers should therefore raise the handicaps of players who play off 18 without success to the new handicap of 20, with similar changes at lower handicaps as deserved.

Barry Keen,
Chairman,
Handicap Coordination Committee.

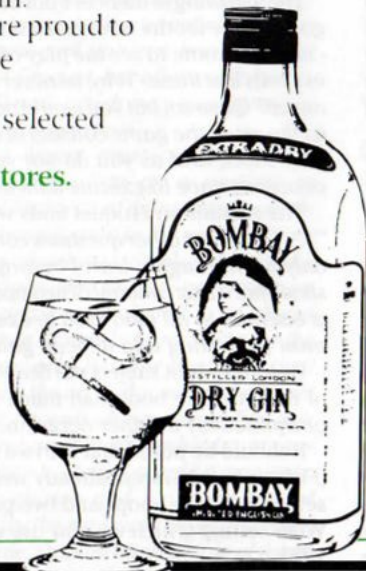
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LOOKING FOR MR RIGHT Considering a Grading System for Croquet

By John Walters

Introduction

Readers will doubtless have noticed the lists of top 100 players which occasionally appear in 'The Gazette'. For some time now Stephen Mulliner has been conducting an experiment to produce an indication of every player's effectiveness at winning games of open croquet. Every game of open croquet is recorded, whether it be the final of the Open or the bottom place play-off at an open weekend swiss. A grade is calculated for each player; a player loses points for any loss and gains points for any win.

This is a probability driven system, which means the comparison of any two grades is supposed to represent the probability of one player beating another (see issue 189). The great advantage of Mr Mulliner's work has traditionally been the list of all open games which is produced as a result of this data collation - very useful for the selectors; while the 'top 100' is great fun, it is not used for selection. Recently though, there has been a tendency to treat the gradings with increasing seriousness, and a reliable system has been requested from various quarters. In response, the CA have appointed Dr Martin Murray to investigate the plausibility of various ranking methods.

'Philosophy' of ranking 'Better' and 'Worse'

'Whether A is 'better' or 'stronger' than B is not a question that the Computer Grading System addresses.' Here I quote Steve Mulliner from his last article on the CGS. Clearly it would require fatuous thinking to suggest that a statistical analysis, processing no data other than results, could tell us anything about non-result criteria. It cannot tell the selectors whether A plays better than B under pressure, whether A's temperament, tactics or team mentality would make him a canny choice, etc.

It is most especially true in the arts that achievements can be judged in two ways, purely on commercial success, or on the talent of a particular artist, writer, or musician; frequently a master is so brilliant that the genius of his work is too subtle to be appreciated by the vulgarity of public opinion. Conversely, in sport judgement is often only by result; I can still remember my philosophy professor acknowledging the implicit reward in playing (badminton) well, but remaining baffled by how this could be expressed in the concept

of winning.

It is to the credit of our sport that the difference between playing well and winning can be so sharply highlighted, and I believe this places croquet on the fringes of an art form. How much more elegant to lose after an immaculately executed delayed sextuple on the opponent, than to win +1 on time! But I needn't even restrict myself to frivolity in making my point; how many 'top class' games have I seen won with tactics and play so obscene that one feels nauseated



Probability ranking systems

Having accepted that in our grading system we can expect no more than a reflection of success at winning games, we may proceed to find the best method. Probability systems work by making inferences far removed from practical results. One may consider the simplistic example of obtaining a probability for A beating C from the results for AvB and BvC; although A and C have never played we have inferred the probability from other results. We may consider this to be an inference removed once from empirical truth; in the extended example, AvB, BvC, CvD, ... YvZ, we may consider the inference concerning AvZ to be 24 times removed. I'm sure readers will agree that by this point, inferences are far from reliable!

In the CGS, there are some 200 people (128 were listed for the 1987 gradings). Of course, there is no order about who plays who; the inference about Hope and Healy (who are currently separated by one point) may be over 100 times removed from reality, or may indeed have no basis whatsoever, as it is possible for 'sub-groups' to occur, where no-one in the group

has played anyone outside it. Clearly, the more games that are played (and between the greatest variety of players) the more basis there is for the system. However, looking at the top 10 alone, one sees that in 1987 Aspinall (2nd) played 23 games, Openshaw (4th) played 25 games, Prichard (5th) played 16 games, Heap (7th) played 24 games, and Lewis (9th) played 31 games, and in each case players played the same opponents several times.

The minimum number of games an individual must play to be listed is 10, and there are a number of players around this level. I suggest that the inferences required for these many examples require faith, to say the least! Scepticism is further encouraged by looking at the actual grade figures; remember that the result of a single game may determine your grade being reduced or increased by 6, and even against a peer in an ordinary event it will change by plus or minus 2½. Using these bands, we can see that in the extreme case, the result of a single game may see, for instance, James Carlisle ranked at 26th in the country or 59th in the country! Even the more conservative band (representing an ordinary game against a peer) sees a single game putting Bryan Sykes at 44th or 61st!

It is because of volatility in the day to day running of his system that when Stephen comes to list the end of year rankings, he averages a player's last 20 grades (sometimes 10 or 5), but even this result is only indicative of a player's performance over the past 30 or so games. Most sport's rankings are designed to represent at least a one-year span; in snooker, it is two years - in croquet, it can be a couple of weeks!

In conclusion, the system doesn't work if people play few games and it doesn't work if people play more than a few games! But like early man, who thought the moon was cheese, one cannot give lie to this folly; in answer to any criticism of its output, defenders of the system can only say 'that's the way the system works'. These probability driven systems are modern gods; impervious to criticism, they are right and all else is wrong, because they make the rules.

A tangible ranking system

I propose a ranking system whose words can be justified by its methods; it is a simple and well tried procedure. To build up grading points a player must reach certain stages of an event. Thus one may gain 100 points for winning, 75 for reaching a final, 50 a semi-final, etc. Such a system gives a far better indication of how players perform under pressure in

important matches. It also must be right that the final stages of the Open carry far greater bonus than minor events and bottom-of-swiss contests, which they do not currently.

Having chosen a system, we must see how it fits our circumstances. The first criticism is that since we are not professional, all players do not play in all the top events. Thus a competent player may be rewarded simply by playing in many tournaments. In answering this, I will say that I think it is desirable to encourage top players to play more often, as it is wholly wrong for an individual to know his 'top ten' place is secure simply by playing in one event. Having said that, I do advocate a system of weighting; in snooker, twice as many points are available in the world championship as in other ranking events, and I would like to see our Open similarly weighted.

A player would have to be extremely successful in other events to match the points netted by the winner of the Open. The other ranking tournaments would probably be the main events of the four regional championships, possibly the Caskets, and a special provision for the invitation events. It is surely not unreasonable to expect the country's top players to take part in these events; what other sport would tolerate the casual attitude that lost us the MacRobertson Shield to the highly-competitive New Zealanders?

The next criticism is: 'What about the rest of us? Those bar the top 20 players may hardly get a sniff of a grading point!' The remaining events are: championship swisses; provincial open weekends; and A-class events at week tournaments. These can also be graded but their weighting must reflect their lesser importance and potential for the previously mentioned 'grade-point bandits'.

Unlike the championships, these class II events cannot be weighted by their intrinsic prestige, as their importance is governed purely by the quality of the players who enter them. Thus I suggest points be awarded on the same basis as class I events, but the weighting (ie the number of points awarded for reaching a particular stage) be dependent upon the total number of grade points possessed by all the competitors taking part.

I further suggest that extra value be given to an event according to certain attributes: seeding; best of three; draw/process; swiss; and american, on the grounds that reaching the final stages of a best of three, seeded event, is more representative and guarantees a

Continued on Page 19.

Budleigh Salterton: 3-4 October GREAT BRITAIN v. THE REST 'Not very likelies' do rather well

Report by George Noble

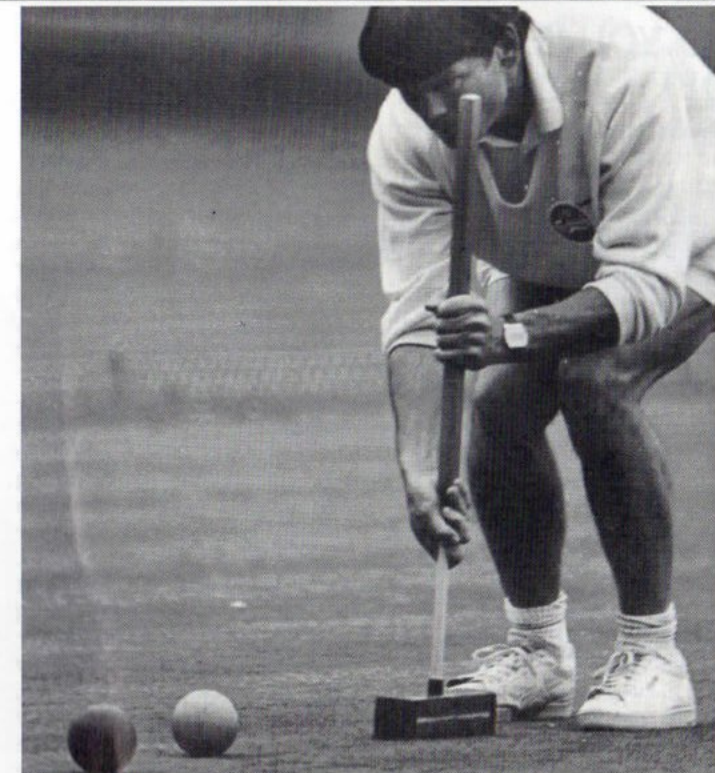
It seems that the potential members of the next Great Britain, test team don't play enough. Thus a team of probables and possibles was assembled and the selectors found a team of 'not very likelies' to put against them. The idea was to provide some tough opposition for our boys and some comfort for the selectors. And of course it nearly went wrong. A mere 6-3 win for Great Britain showed a degree of frailty which will require a winter's study of improving books, and several similar fixtures next year, to correct. The bushy tailed 'rest' are eager for another go.

In fairness, although who wishes to be fair, I should report that two regular Great Britain players, Stephen Mulliner and Nigel Aspinall, were not available but their substitutes, Keith Aiton and Phil Cordingley, showed sufficient flair to be serious contenders for future teams. Indeed Keith Aiton pulled off the first of the eight triple peels in the doubles in order to finish the match before the other players had finished a leisurely lunch - it was alleged that the local

pub was employing David Goacher and Tom Anderson in the kitchens.

They did well to finish early because a meteorological depression spent much of the day transferring the Western approaches onto the Budleigh lawns, - although there was some doubt about whether this was a convincing simulation of New Zealand conditions. In fact conditions were so grim that those notoriously slow players, Avery and Cordingley v Murray and Noble, were unable to complete their doubles on Saturday; play was abandoned for the day due to bad light and misery.

Sunday morning came as something of a shock. The sun shone, the breeze was warm and gentle, birds trilled and spirits rose. After the Saturday dunking, the lawns were easy, the games quick and the triples flowed. Mark Avery had beaten Michael Heap 26TP, 24TP before opening time (a wasted opportunity in his case) although he cruelly allowed Heap to take croquet twice in the second game. Next match off involved your intrepid correspondent in the first



George Noble beat Phil Cordingley +3(TP), +26(TP)

scalp for 'the rest' against Cordingley. But the spectators were wisely watching the first game of the match between Keith Aiton and Martin Murray.

Murray showed some of the old form (pass rolls, long hoops and 3 metre rushes) to progress his first ball to 4-back in two turns. Aiton smoothly tripled off Murray's ball and the gallery settled down for the 3-ball game which Aiton improved to a two baller when he was 2-back versus 4. After that, Aiton's victory was lingering but inevitable. There was more Murray sparkle in the afternoon but Aiton eventually overcame him with a second triple.

If there had been a trophy for the best singles performance, the selectors would have been hard pressed to decide between John McCullough and Steve Lewis. McCullough lost his first game to Irwin by 25 but rumours began to circulate about a spectacular second game, involving a delayed triple with a cannon to adjust the position of the 4-back ball before the rush peel and then - if this is not a tautology - a 3 metre Irish peel at penultimate. And then in the third game he did another one but roqueted his partner after the rover peel and had to make do with pegging out one ball. Irwin missed and the local hero triumphed.

The match between William Prichard and Steve Lewis was similarly absorbing. In his first display of Bowdon tenacity, Lewis came back from both clips on the first hoop against peg and penultimate to win by 4. Lewis dominated play in the second game and reached peg and 4-back before Prichard hit in. He smoothly pro-

gressed to 4-back and, after Lewis had missed, used a series of beautiful croquet strokes to set up a triple peel, only to miss a gentle short roquet. Lewis made a hoop and roquet with his 4-back ball, playing from near the fifth hoop, and Prichard realised that Lewis was unbeatable.

David Foulser, standing in for David Openshaw on the second day, had a tough match with Nick Hyne - a triumph which included doing the peels of a triple and then both missing the peg out and croquetting the ball off the lawn. But he overcame even that set-back, causing 'the rest' to regret that he was not in their team. So, as they say in other games, a tough workout for the squad and an enjoyable late addition to the season's events. Our thanks to the Budleigh Club for their hospitality and for the weather on Sunday.

RESULTS

Doubles
D.K. Openshaw & C.J. Irwin bt M.E.W. Heap and N.G. Hyne +11 +20.
W. de B. Prichard & K.M.H. Aiton bt S.E. Lewis & J.R. McCullough +13 +26(TPO).
M. Avery & P. Cordingley bt M. Murray & G. Noble +5 -5 +16.
Singles
M.N. Avery bt M.E.W. Heap +26(TP) +24(TP).
W. de B. Prichard lost to S.E. Lewis -4 -13.
C.J. Irwin lost to J.R. McCullough +25 -26(TP) 12.
K.M.H. Aiton bt Dr M. Murray +6(TPO) +11(TP).
P. Cordingley lost to G.W. Noble -3(TP) -26(TP).
D.R. Foulser bt N.G. Hyne +8 -2 +13.
Match Result
Great Britain 6, The Rest 3.

Top Players ranked by Selection Committee Only four automatic choices on current form

The following statement was issued by Martin Murray, Chairman, Selection Committee, on 31st March.

Following a Council decision to ask the Selection Committee to take action to help in preparing the British team for the MacRobertson Shield contest in New Zealand in 1990, the Committee decided to issue an annual assessment, at the start of each season, of the current ranking of players who might merit consideration for the team.

Selection depends on several factors, not just current form, since such aspects as players' experience, attitude, and potential are additional factors to be considered. Ranking has been done by placing the players in groups from 1 to 4, Group 3 being subdivided to separate players of differing categories. Within each group, players have been listed in alphabetical order.

Group 1: Players with an established reputation in major Championships and/or Test Matches, who would be an automatic selection on current form. Aspinall, Avery, Mulliner, Openshaw.

Group 2: Players from whom the rest of the Test Team would be

selected, based on current form and established reputation.

Aiton, Cordingley, Irwin, W. Prichard.

Group 3(a): Players who have been in Groups 1 & 2 in the past, but whose current form has fallen below that level. An improvement in their form would bring them into Group 2.

Heap, Hope, McCullough, Murray, E. Solomon.

Group 3(b): Players who have reached President's Cup standard, and have given the indication that they might improve to Group 2. Fulford, Lewis.

Group 4: Improving players who still have some way to go to reach President's Cup standard, but who should reach that standard if they continue to improve.

Aldridge, J. Carlisle, Clarke, Goacher, M. Saurin, Suter, S. Williams.

Obviously the Committee cannot name all the players who have an outside chance of selection through some major and unexpected change in form, but the issuing of this list annually should help to encourage those players whose form is recognised as improving.

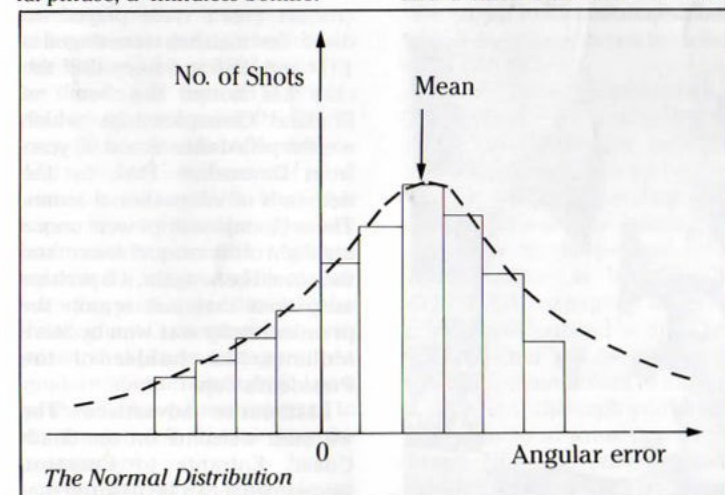
HOW TO BE A GOOD SHOT

By Eric Solomon

This article was prompted by experiences before last year's (1987) Bombay Gin President's Cup. It therefore seems reasonable to explain what these were and I hope that my remarks will not be taken to imply any criticism of the selection committee, nor to suggest that the results of the tournament should have been other than they were.

Prior to selection my season consisted of fifteen competitive games of Croquet of which eight were lost. I had played just one friendly game and practice comprised five minutes exposure on a storm-wracked hilltop at Budleigh Salterton. How was I to justify selection to the premier invitation tournament? One answer which sprung to mind was 'further practice'.

Having been unemployed since the start of the year there was all the time in the world for this activity. However, I could not afford to travel to my club ground in Harrow, and the local court in Clissold Park has been lost through council neglect. So I was determined to see what could be achieved at home - on the remains of my carpet. The trouble was, and is, that my flat is not sufficiently large to practice break building and maintenance. Nor, owing to the proximity of the floorboards to the top of the carpet, are croquet strokes feasible. This left me with only one option - to practise shooting. To become, in Martin Murray's colourful phrase, a 'mindless bonkie'.



I pursued this course scientifically and with mind-numbing diligence for a period of three weeks up to the start of the tournament. The fact that I finished a satisfactory equal third with Phil Cordingley leads me to believe that I have something useful to say about the business of making roquets.

Sources of error

Wherever a targeted action is subject to a large number of independent errors we meet up with the ubiquitous 'normal distribution'. As far as shooting is concerned we can measure the angular error in a large number of shots at some standard target, and draw a diagram such as that shown in figure 1.

The height of each rectangle represents the number of shots whose angular error lines in the range delimited by the two sides of the rectangle. If we continue the experiment by executing more shots we can reduce the width of each rectangle and obtain a smooth curve which, in the infinite limit, and after a simple scaling operation, will represent the normal frequency function.

Two parameters characterise such a distribution of error. These are the 'mean' which is the angular error about which the curve is symmetrical, and the 'standard deviation' which measures the rate at which the curve comes to a peak at the mean. A curve with a small standard deviation peaks suddenly and steeply and a curve with a large standard deviation is wide and shallow. If it were practical to conduct experiments of this type with a number of different players, and if none altered the quality of their shooting, we would find that the good shots produced a curve with a mean near to zero degrees, and a small standard deviation.

The less good shots would produce curves lacking one, or both, of these qualities.

We can interpret the mean as representing a systematic error and the standard deviation as representing the magnitude of the errors which arise randomly. It is interesting to consider what will happen when a player who regularly aims off target improves the

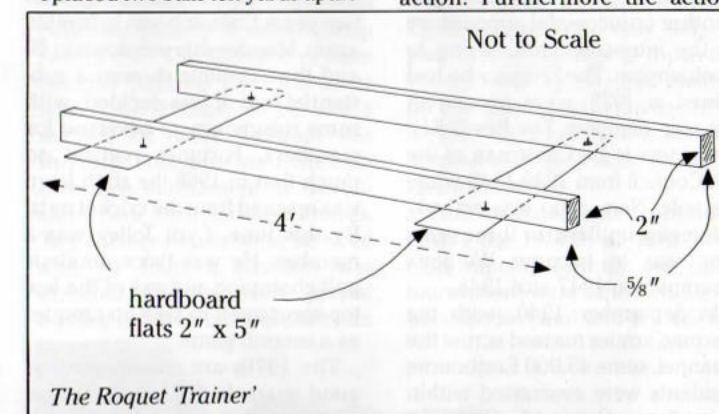
consistency of his swing. Unless he also improves his aim his practice will actually result in his hitting fewer roquets!

Where do the various errors originate? Systematic error might arise from:-

1. Defects of vision which cause the player to see the object ball at some point other than its true position.
2. Asymmetry in the grip or stance.
3. A bad mallet face.
4. Muscular tremor.
5. Inconsistency in the swing.
6. Inconsistency in the position of the striker's body arising, for example, from poor breath control.

Error reduction

My indoor practice was directed towards eliminating these sources of error as far as possible. I was certain that errors of type 1 did not apply in my case. Nevertheless I tested myself in the following way. I placed two balls ten yards apart



then positioned a five foot ruler between the balls and with one end touching one of the balls (notionally the striker's ball). I then stalked the ball touching the ruler and gently prodded the ruler into what I perceived to be alignment with the object ball ten yards away. I was careful to retain an upright stance whilst doing this then, when satisfied that the alignment was correct, lay down to look along the ruler. To my horror I found that I always aimed the ruler about one ball's width to the left of the object ball!

As a check, I placed the ruler in exact alignment with the object ball then stalked the end of the ruler as if to make a roquet. On looking alternately at the ruler and the object ball it appeared that the ruler invariably pointed to the right of the latter.

This established that my shooting was more likely to suffer from errors of type 1. In fact I already knew that I tended to miss more on the left than on the right when attempting long roquets. Here was the reason!

As my knowledge of 'do it yourself' ophthalmology is limited I had to find some way of compensating for this error. To aim off what appears to be the correct line was just not 'on'. Judgement in terms of angles is impractical and the lateral offset would depend on distance. It seemed essential to modify the mallet swing in some way.

Type 2 errors can be corrected by attention to general technique. In particular it seems important to ensure that the hands grip the mallet shaft with equal firmness. Many players adopt a stance with one foot in advance of the other, and some of them are good shots. However, this is a potential source of error especially at the end of a long day when fatigue is likely to produce a change in position.

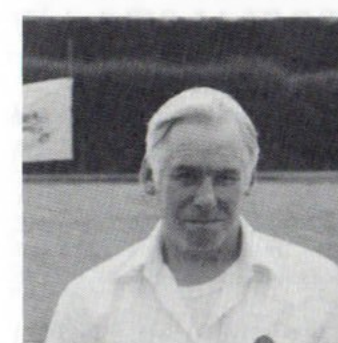
Type 3 errors are easily rectified with a set square and a few sheets of sandpaper.

Errors of types 4 and 5 demand what modern coaches call 'muscle memory' training. This consists of endless repetition of the desired action. Furthermore the action

must be repeated without interruption as far as possible. To make actual roquets necessitates positioning the striker's ball then retrieving it after the stroke. My solution to this problem is described below.

The roquet trainer

I built the device illustrated in figure 2 to 'school' a perfectly straight swing. It consists of two identical boards with the dimensions shown. These are connected by two pieces of thin hardboard. A single round nail is used at each junction so that the boards can be moved parallel to each other. Thus the whole assembly 'lozenges' so that the boards can be made to accommodate a mallet with ease, or to hug it as desired. Note that it is not designed to accommodate a striker's ball - it is used purely for schooling the swing of the mallet. The trainer is placed flat on the floor so that the boards stand upright and an object ball is placed at some chosen distance away and exactly in line with the long axis of the assembly. It is important to



Eric Solomon

have a ball to provide a notional target. The mallet is placed carefully on the floor between the boards and one or more swings executed with the objective of making the mallet head pass cleanly between the boards without touching either of them. Should the mallet touch the boards there is no doubt about the fact that the swing is crooked to some extent.

The trainer can be used for single strokes with a stalk or for repeated swings. I used both in my practice. Each day for three weeks I undertook six sessions including one first thing in the morning and one just before retiring. Each session included 20 single swings of various strengths, all preceded by a stalk of constant length and number of steps, and at least 100 continuous swings. For the latter the mallet was swung back and forth between the boards until the action became ragged and the boards were struck too often for comfort. After a short rest the exercise was continued until 100 swings had been accumulated.

At the start of the three weeks I could rarely achieve ten swings without hitting the boards - the gap between the sides of the mallet and either board being about 1/8 inch. At the conclusion of the period I could set the clearance to around 1/16 inch and execute as many as

Cheltenham: 2-4 October High bisquers shine at Cheltenham

Report by Peter Leach

Up betimes and to croquet at 9.30 - Manager Ian Maugham was allowing for restricted daylight and the fact that he had to fit 90 games onto half of Cheltenham's lawns. (5 are having a well earned rest). He also had to cope with last minute cancellations and several volunteer Cheltenham high bisquers were surprised to find themselves battling with the giants of the club circuits. (Gwen Holliday (15) in her first tournament was to be seen at tea-time, on lawn 8, executing a very passable 4-ball break in front of the assembled tea-drinkers).

Heather Pritchard (no relation), handicapped 12, did well in rele-

30 swings without touching the boards.

Note that in this exercise the follow through is as important as the preliminary part of the swing. Some players question the value of a follow through because the ball has already parted from the mallet. My feeling is that the follow through is important in actual play because it provides feedback information about the stroke and so can influence later strokes.

Conclusion

Friends will know that in fact I built this roquet trainer several years ago. However I had never used it in this intensive fashion which does undoubtedly regularise the swing to a marked degree.

In addition, and to relieve the boredom of the exercise, I played actual roquets at the object ball which was backed up by a number of cushions to reduce damage to the landlord's property. In doing this I concentrated on developing a regular stalk so that I arrived at the striker's ball with the feet close to the required final position. I also regulated my breathing so that the actual stroke was executed whilst holding my breath with the lungs exhaled. This is a principle applied in rifle shooting, archery, and other sports. It produces a steady upper body without any lifting of the shoulders.

It may be that the effects of this exercise are transitory in which case it will be necessary to repeat the training schedule. Nevertheless during the tournament I missed only one of the eight tice shots which I took, and I believe I missed only two roquets under ten yards. The benefits did not carry over into other departments of my game. For example, I completed only one of the many triple peels I essayed. I shall be demanding my 'bonkie badge' from Martin.

gating Ian Maugham to second place in their block by beating him +8(T). This she did diplomatically late on the last day.

Bob Adlard lured four of this opponents to their doom by his relaxed approach to the game, thus winning his block. His second secret weapon was a bottle of 6 year-old damson wine but he was so on form that he decided it was sufficient to apply this treatment after the game.

Paul Watson and Betty Weitz won 4 games each but Paul won on a 'who-beat-who' basis. Maureen Evans (15) nearly unseated Paul by losing only by 1(T).

Southport: 26-27 Sept Collighan reaches Final of Southport's Open Weekend

Report by Mark Saurin

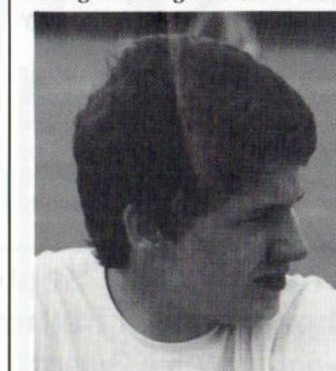
The weather over the two days was excellent and the standard of play was very high, with no fewer than five minus players taking part. It was decided that the tournament should be a single life knockout with progressive swiss.

In the first round Mark Saurin completed his first triple peel in competition against Carol Lewis, which was one of four TPs during the weekend. The other three were done by Steve Lewis, Chris Clarke and Simon Williams. Simon's was a TPO against Mark Suter where he pegged out both balls with the other two balls on hoop one and then went on to win +2.

In the semi-finals Colin Irwin beat Mark Saurin +17 and Russell Collighan beat Chris Clarke +10. Having pegged out one of Chris's balls, Russell struggled to finish off the game until eventually he left himself a semi-wired rush to rover having made 4-back and penult but Chris rather foolishly forgot the lift and missed, thereby putting Russell in the final.

The final was a best of three; Colin won the first +14 and in the second, won more convincingly +23, just failing to get the peg out for his TP.

In the Swiss, many unusual things happened. Jeremy Dyer (handicap 9) almost completed a TP against Angus Peterson. Chris



Irwin came back from the dead against Jeremy when he was for peg and box, and Chris was for one and four to win +1. John Meads threw his mallet at least 10 times. The prize for the most original opening must go to the Bennet versus Suter match. Mark went first, placing his ball in first corner, Andrew put his first ball in third corner. Mark then 'accidentally' played the wrong ball and so was forced to put the right ball on a baulk line, but Andrew failed to do anything from this. Steve Lewis beat Chris Clarke to win the Swiss.

I would like to thank the Manager, Tim Haste, for an excellent job and also the 'catering staff', who provided very good meals and played creditably in her first open event.

I would like to finish though by asking Dan Kelly why he was playing in a waterproof jacket throughout the weekend when there was nothing but bright sunshine?

RESULT (20 entries)

1st Round
Mrs C.E. Irwin bt A. Peterson +25; M. Saurin bt Mrs C. Lewis +11(TP); S. Packer bt S. Williams +25; C. Clarke bt P. Dorke +20

2nd Round
S. Lewis bt M. Kolbuszewski +24(TP); C. Irwin bt C. Southern +21; C. Wild bt M. Wilkins +22; M. Saurin bt Mrs C.E. Irwin +26; C. Clarke bt S. Packer +6; M. Suter bt D. Kelly +17; R. Collighan bt J. Dyer +15; A. Bennet bt J. Meads +16

3rd Round
C. Irwin bt S. Lewis +11; Saurin bt Wild +9; Clarke bt Suter +26; Collighan bt Bennet +3

Semi-Finals
C. Irwin bt M. Saurin +17; R. Collighan bt C.D. Clarke +10

Final
Irwin bt Collighan +14, +23

Russell Collighan

Peter Darby did well to beat runner-up Ray Ransom by +26 but the boot was on the other foot in his game against Sheila Blenkin (8). Peter's normal twinkling affability gave way for a few minutes to bemused twinkling affability as he walked off the lawn from an hour-long game, having made 2 hoops. ('Everything just went right' said Sheila). Runner-up Ray Ransom was struggling against three long-bisquers (with a total of 34 bisquers between them) winning three of his four games on time.

Although veteran John Exell made a creditable 53 points, he lost

to Dab Wheeler, thus conceding the block. Even-more-veteran Edgar Jackson was the only player to win all five games in the weekend. And he achieved maximum points (68); in fact just 68 points ahead of block runner-up Francis Ransom. High-bisquer Millicent James had a good stab at giant-killing taking Edgar to his closest win of +3(T).

All in all an enjoyable last tournament. We soon learned to ignore the gloomy weather forecasts. Rain came overnight and once they had

Continued on Page 18

Tournament Reports

Cheltenham: 18-20 September 'First timers' do well at Cheltenham

Report by Laurence & Deborah Latham

It had been rumoured for some time before this tournament that proposed manager Paul Hands was to unleash one of his experimental schemes on the forty-two participants. However, it was not to be, as circumstances forced him to vanish with his esoteric formulae still undisclosed. His replacement took the form of a managerial triad of awesome power, before which even the boldest competitor hesitated to step out of line.

Instead of the usual six American blocks of seven players, there were three blocks of fourteen, each run as a six-round Swiss. This not only made a pleasant change, but also enabled competitors to play against others experiencing a similar degree of success or failure. The only slight drawback was that with three starting times of 9.30, 9.45 and 11.15 am being assigned between the blocks so that each block started at a different time every day, the disparity in finishing times between car-sharers was sometimes rather greater than is usual. This was, however, only a minuscule spanner in the workings of an otherwise lively and good-humoured tournament.

In Block A, manager Dennis Moorcraft decided the best way to lead his chargin' was from the front. This was fitting, as it did seem that Dennis was in ultimate control of the whole tournament, though it is not generally fitting to question a triad too closely regarding so delicate a matter... In the event, Dennis justified his recent handicap reduction to take five games out of six, stopped at the last only by Colin Snowdon after first place

had already been secured. Second place was clinched by Richard Danby, from the Bear of Rodborough. Playing in only his second tournament, he too won five out of six, losing only to Dennis and finishing with a win over Bath's Maurice Boardman to avoid a five-way tie. Richard achieved a +26 over Colin; indeed, several people showed a propensity for twenty-sixing their opponents - to wit, Marjorie Warren, Maurice Boardman and Paddy Paddon - but as they all seemed to choose Bernard Neal to do this against, Richard no doubt felt it would be fairer to Bernard if he chose someone else to twenty-six!

Block B saw manager Betty Weitz adopt a more 'middle of the road' approach, while Joe Jackson produced the only clean sweep of the tournament to win. Despite twenty-sixing Paul Smith and namesake Edgar, Joe only just managed to keep his unbeaten record with a +1 against Heather Pritchard. Heather also went down -1(T) in the final game, this time to long-standing Curtis Webb partner Paul Smith, who had been heard muttering about things 'not going according to plan' while the vital game still hung in the balance. In the end Paul scraped home to finish second in the block with five wins, again avoiding a multiple tie. Perhaps this was fitting for the only player to produce a triple peel.

Finally, Block C saw manager Liz Neal preferring to ensure that there were no stragglers. In an attempt to emulate Dennis and Joe, Laurence Latham set off in the lead, only to find the pace too hot, as lightly

weighted Ken Bright from Bath swept past (+20) to win with five out of six. It was a pleasure to see a player with a long yet realistic handicap win such an event, his only defeat having been at the hands of Bristol's Barbara Evans, playing in her first tournament. The final day also saw the chances of John McMordie of Aldermaston and local player David Maugham evaporate as Laurence also took five from six to finish second.

Other first-timers included Betty Tribe, Heather Perren and Hamish Hall from Bristol, along with Adam Meares and David Royle of Swindon. Ivor Meredith travelled from Edgbaston, Philip Lewis completed a Swindon trio, while Oxford and Hurlingham were represented by Ian Plummer and Bevis Sanford respectively. The weather was a bit like a toasted tomato sandwich - dry and warm at each end but very wet in the middle - but all three days were a great success. Our thanks go to the managers - every last one of them!

RESULTS
42 entries
(6-round Swiss: Handicap Play)

Block winners
D.H. Moorcraft (1/2) (5 wins); J.J. Jackson (4 1/2) (6 wins); K. Bright (13) (5 wins).



Paul Hands - esoteric formula still undisclosed.

Guildford & Godalming: 11-20 September Dr King excels!

Dr B.A. King took part in his first tournament at this event and was the runner-up. Playing off a handicap of 12, he won two of his six games with straight triple peels, with 2 bisques to spare on the first occasion and 3 bisques on the second.

His handicap has now been adjusted, but what a fine effort!

RESULTS

13 entries
(Swiss: Handicap Play)

Winner
Mrs S. Watson (9)

TOURNAMENT RESULTS

Ryde: 11-13 September

24 entries
(Swiss: Handicap Play)

Winner

T.I. Wood (0) (5 wins). Also with 5 wins, M. Hutchinson (5) and W. Lemmey (11).

Southwick: 11-13 September

28 entries
(American Blocks: Handicap Play)

Block Winners

P.J. Elliott (4) (5 wins); P. Howell (4 1/2) (5 wins); M. Haggerston (4) (6 wins); D. Ruscombe-King (4) (5 wins).

Play-Off

Howell bt Elliott +9; Ruscombe King bt Haggerston +2.

Final

Howell bt Ruscombe King +1.

Nottingham: 18-20 September
(American Blocks: Handicap Play)

Block Winners

K. Cotterell (4 wins); P. Trafford (4 wins); R. Davis (5 wins).

Budleigh Salterton: 18-20 Sept.

36 entries
American Blocks: Handicap Play)

Block Winners

D.J. Croker (-1) (5 wins); C.G. Waterfield (8) (5 wins); R. Brand (4) (5 wins); R.F. Deacon (9) (5 wins); J. McBurnie Wood (5 1/2) (4 wins); Miss K. Holroyde (12) (4 wins).

Cheltenham 2-4 October

Continued from Page 17

dried, the lawns were pleasantly fast. Toni Noel-Smith and helpers kept us fed and Paddy Paddon kept us watered. And Ian squeezed in his 150 games without any torch-light play.

RESULTS

(Handicap Play: American Blocks of 6)

Block-winners

R. Adlard (3) (4 wins); P. Watson (5) (4 wins); Miss H. Pritchard (12) (4 wins); P. Darby (4 1/2) (4 wins); Mrs D.A. Wheeler (3 1/2) (4 wins); G.E.P. Jackson (1 1/2) (5 wins).

Woking: 26-27 September Short Croquet Fixture at Woking

Report by Derek Caporn

Although we claim to be the premier Short Croquet club, having held several unofficial tournaments for many years to try out the rules whilst they were still being drafted, this was our first Calendar Fixture event. It was a great success. We had to limit the entries to 16 as we were only able to provide 4 short lawns, avoiding double banking except for a few games when pressure arose.

Everyone had 6 games of singles in a Swiss. In addition we ran our first ever doubles. In this, handicaps were halved but those who had to do mandatory peels were not allowed a half peel! The bisques are

always personal to the player, so a partner could not use his/her bisques to do the mandatory peel. We allowed 1 hour per game for singles and 1 1/2 hours for doubles. Many games were won, or lost, on time - several games resulted in wins on time with total points scored being less than 14 - half the total possible! Double banking was found to cause few problems, although we didn't try it for doubles. It would have been more satisfactory if the time could have been extended by another 10/15 minutes.

The winner of the singles was Richard Barnes (CA handicap 8)

with 5 wins. The doubles was won by J P Dawson and I McDiarmid, who beat D C Caporn and S M Tuke by 14 in the final! A case for a reduction in the scale of bisques has not yet been made out in our opinion.

The weather was good, all competitors wanted another tournament, there was a lot of fun including in the double 'Z' final a traffic cone instead of the peg! Everyone in the doubles (XYZ and double Z) went hence to tell their families that they had reached a final. What more can anyone want, except to win it and not even the Manager could arrange that!

Wrest Park: 18-20 Sept THE PEELS

Report by Eric Audsley

Pat Hetherington was the only member of the fair sex to challenge 26 men for the Peel Memorial Challenge Cup. The tournament was organised as a Swiss of eight rounds.

Quote of the morning was from John Wheeler who claimed he was only missing by a hair's breadth - at least that was what the watchers thought he said. It looked more like a hair's length but then, like me, he's no expert on that subject. The closest game of the morning was won by Mark Strachan who beat Jack Shotton with all the clips on the peg.

Wally Wortley, whose escapades with bisques provided some of the highlights of the weekend, took one ball round with just 5 bisques against Eric Audsley. He then found himself with his second ball in front of hoop 2 but elected not to use one of his remaining seven and a half bisques and went to bed with them, looking rueful.

George Collin played an unfair trick on Douglas Reeve playing only his second competitive game, when he pegged two balls out leaving a single ball game. Although he was two hoops behind, Douglas with no bisques left was completely lost and George won by 5. Tom Anderson also showed that it can be right to peg your opponent out. With John Bevington on penult and himself on the first hoop, he managed to win by 3.

The regulars maintain it always rains at Wrest Park (which is certainly not true as our July tournament proved) but the form-book came up trumps on Saturday. To be fair it was not continuous and there were periods of non-rain. Lawn 6 which had been a little slippery on Friday, had to be abandoned to the green slime. Bill Lamb however showed that soggy lawns, air and sky do not restrict good croquet and completed the only triple of the weekend on Colin McKenzie.

Grading Systems

(Continued from Page 12)

greater achievement than doing the same in a single life, unseeded knockout. End of year rankings should be compiled from the points accumulated by individuals over the past two seasons, as broadening the base reduces the influence of 'freak' results.

As well as being a system devoid of the failings previously mentioned, this method embodies a clear representation of genuine achievement in croquet. By the same token, it removes the stifling

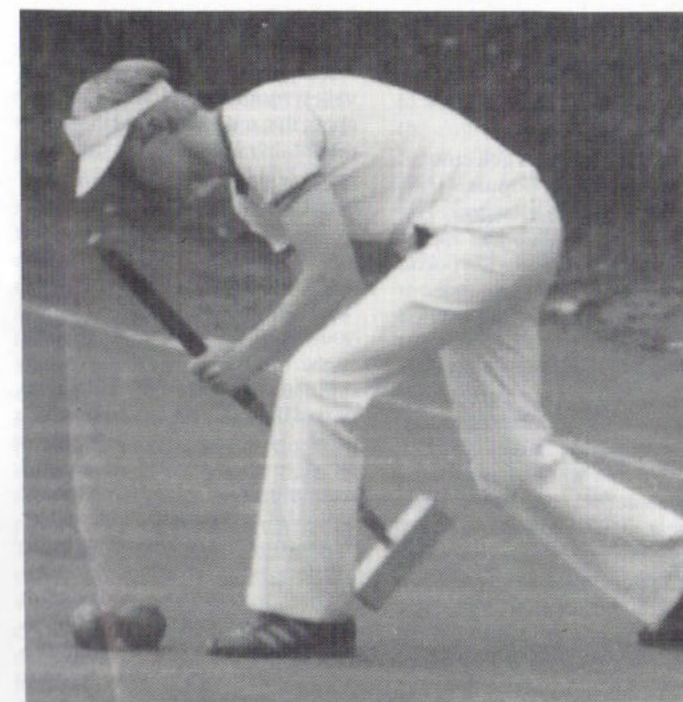
Ron Atkinson should have beaten manager's nightmare Tom Anderson in a tie on time. Tom pegged out one of Ron's balls while on three versus one-back with just half-an-hour to go. Ron kept hitting in and when time was called with the scores level had just split up Tom. He tried a speculative shot at 3-back instead of taking position which allowed Tom to join up (wide just in case) and score the peg point to break the tie.

Throughout all this mayhem, John Coutts had been quietly disposing of one opponent after another, all by double figure margins. In the 'final' of the knockout phase he inflicted the only defeat of the weekend on David Appleton by a mere 18 margin. However, two defeats on Sunday snatched the cup from his grasp. His first loss was to Duncan Reeve in a very close end game. However, any hopes Duncan might have had of the Cup were rapidly dashed by David Appleton with a swift 22 point win.

The destination of the cup thus depended on the result of the game between John Coutts and Robert Jones. In a close game that went to time, Robert inflicted the biggest defeat of the weekend on John - 4 points - to consign him to a mere third place and earn second place for himself. The winner with just one defeat out of eight was thus David Appleton.

Meanwhile among the also-rans, Terry Greenwood came back from 2 and 6 versus peg and peg against Mark Strachan to win by just one point, in spite of several good hits by Mark. Wally still had not finished with his bisques. Having only used 7 bisques to get both balls on rover, he had 5 bisques remaining. Lewis Palmer had given up hope, but in a confusion around rover, Wally scored just three points with his last 5 bisques. It seemed somehow unfair on Lewis when Wally hit the peg from the fourth corner.

influence of the present system which, by punishing loss at any time, has suppressed flair in many of the game's recent improvers, thus doing much harm for the future. I believe this to be a fairer and more accurate way of reflecting the state of croquet in our country, and I commend it to members of Council and the Association. I hope that it will at least receive due consideration, and I look forward to implementing it in trials.



George Collin.

Performance of the tournament must however go to Phil Cordingley who managed to remain undefeated without winning a single game. Forced to withdraw on Friday, he agreed to play as a bye. As everyone knows, 'byes' never win a game, but Phil won all five of his.

RESULTS

Peel Memorial Challenge Cup

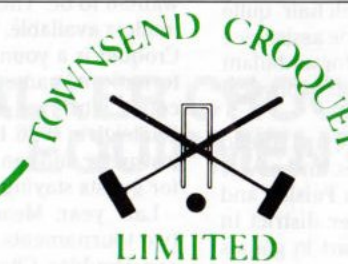
28 entries
(Swiss Handicap Play)

Winner:

D. Appleton

Runner-up

R. Jones



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Tournament Reports

Your Letters

Golf Croquet for Disabled People

Dear Sir,

Over the last two years golf croquet has become very popular with disabled people in Glasgow. The Glasgow Croquet Club was approached by the Strathclyde's Social Work Department for assistance in organising croquet for disabled people, of whom several had suffered strokes and were left partially paralysed resulting in walking problems while others were more severely disabled and could only get about in a wheelchair.

The game proved so popular that last year they were playing every Friday between 11 and 3 o'clock, with some support from the Club members with the setting out of lawns and some guidance during the games. Most of the helping, however, is done by Social Services Staff.

While for obvious reasons the abilities of physically handicapped people vary widely, careful selection of partnerships and other unique scoring systems can render the games relatively even.

It has been very interesting and encouraging to watch golf croquet become ever more popular within this group of people. It can be played from a wheelchair quite independent of outside assistance and it is suitable also for ambulant people with other forms of physical disability.

Interest in the game has spread to various social clubs, and now it is likely that clubs in Paisley and Knightswood (another district in Glasgow) will take part in games this season.

I would like to underline that the wheelchairs do not damage the lawn at all. Occasional traces seen directly after a game had disappeared a few hours later.

If other Croquet clubs would like to get more information about our experiences they can contact me at: 117 Weirwood Avenue, Glasgow, G69 6LB. Tel: 041-771-0031

Corla van Griethuysen,
Glasgow.

Meadowood

Dear Sir,

In January Kay and I spent a few days at this very comfortable hotel in the Napa Valley, which comes about as close to Lotus Land as anywhere we know.

The Napa Valley is about an hour's drive North of San

Francisco, and it is the most important wine making area in North America. The floor of the valley ranges from one or two to about five miles wide, and there are mountain ranges on each side. The entire floor of the valley and a good bit of the slopes are under vines, and there are scores of wineries which welcome visitors. But you can learn all about that by reading 'Decanter' - I am writing to tell you about the croquet at Meadowood.

Meadowood is in the Northern part of the valley, about 2 miles east of St. Helena, a very attractive small town with nice shops and restaurants. It has 58 rooms spread along a narrow wooded valley. There are six tennis courts, a pool, a nine hole golf course, well marked walking trails and two full size croquet courts (they plan to build two more). We stayed in the lodge overlooking the croquet courts. The rooms are very spacious and comfortable, with wood burning fireplaces, and ours was \$160 per night (about \$86 at today's exchange rate), and a real bargain for the quality.

The courts themselves are beautiful, though exceptionally fast compared to those I have played on at Budleigh, and for an hour I was running ten yards past where I wanted to be. The hotel has good mallets available. The Director of Croquet is a young Australian international named Damon Bidecove, who we saw playing at Budleigh in 1986. He is a very good instructor and can organise games for guests staying in the hotel.

Last year, Meadowood staged two tournaments, one an American Doubles Championship and the other an International tournament in partnership with Sonoma Cutrer Winery, about half an hour's drive away in Sonoma County.

The hotel itself has a good restaurant, and the Napa Valley is a great area for eating and drinking.

Paul Henderson,
Chagford.

Professionalism

Dear Sir,

Sheila Black ('Croquet', No. 196) produces no evidence to support her opinion that professionalism will 'kill Croquet as we know it' beyond a reference in her previous letter ('Croquet' No. 193) to the experience of major spectator sports such as lawn tennis. The experience of minor sports such as rackets (not squash rackets) and real tennis, which are comparable in size and outlook to croquet, is far

more relevant. Like croquet, these are games of some complexity which appeal to a small number of people (there are approximately 3,000 rackets players and 2,500 real tennis players in the UK).

Professionals and prize money have been part of rackets and real tennis for decades. Far from doing harm, professionals are essential for the provision of coaching. The prize money they compete for, although larger than the sums likely to be seen in croquet for some time, is insufficient to allow any pro to survive on winnings alone. The existence of an established professional corps has not resulted in a flood of people anxious to exploit the game for financial gain. The typical player of these esoteric racket games and his high standard of behaviour has remained unchanged throughout this century, surviving both professionalism and the advent of sponsorship in the 1970s. In short, the experience of these two minor sports lends strong support to my long-held conviction that the nature of croquet is its strongest defence against harmful change, not unreasoned clinging to the Corinthian principle.

Lawn bowls provides even stronger evidence that Miss Black's fears are misplaced. There are over 500,000 affiliated bowlers in the British Isles, dwarfing croquet, rackets and real tennis. The game went 'open' in 1976 with the result that there are now a number of professionals who make a modest living at the game, principally from coaching. Only a few, such as Stephen Allcock and David Bryant, win significant amounts of prize money in sponsored tournaments. Has professionalism 'killed' bowls as it used to be known? The answer is an emphatic no. At club level, the professional game is nothing more than a popular subject of conversation. The players are as friendly and sportsmanlike as ever and the only tangible evidence of sponsorship is the appearance of smart printed draw sheets for the club competitions decorated with the sponsor's logo. The courteous behaviour of professional bowlers on television is well-known and it is unjustifiable to suggest that professional croquet players, should any emerge, would behave any less well.

Given the available evidence, it is not surprising that the Council rejected the proposition that it must have nothing to do with professionalism. The CA needs professional coaches. It does not need shamateurism or the prospect of losing its best players to a rival organisation. If televised croquet succeeds, the CA must be involved

and able to direct the financial benefit to the game as a whole.

The Council believes that the only justifiable distinction between amateurs and professionals is based on the possibility that a player who earned enough prize money to devote himself to the game full-time might have an advantage over those who could only play and practise in their spare time. The professional might therefore justifiably be excluded from certain events. This is why the prize limit has been set at £2,000, well below a living wage, and not £20,000.

There are a number of foreign tournaments which offer prize money measured in hundreds of pounds and the prizes offered by the sponsor of a televised tournament in the UK would certainly be of that order. The Council sees no justification for describing as a professional a player who is in full-time employment and happens to win a couple of sponsored tournaments as part of his annual leave. This is why the prize limit has been set at £2,000 and not £100.

Miss Black suggests that if substantial prize money is inevitable then players should be compelled to hand over most of it to the CA for the wider benefit of the game. This was the arrangement used to deal with the prize money offered at the televised Nations Cup tournament. It is not a happy solution. Presumably the sanction for non-compliance would be exclusion from tournaments or even expulsion from the CA. Demanding money with menaces is hardly part of the CA's constitution and objects, no matter how worthy the ends. In any case such manoeuvres are unnecessary. A sponsored televised tournament will bring the CA substantial fees as well as prize money for the players. It is these fees which can and should be used for the benefit of clubs.

In summary, the modest changes proposed by Council should strengthen the game at club level by encouraging individuals to become professional coaches and removing unnecessary barriers to sponsored televised events. There are dangers associated with sponsorship but Sheila Black should be reassured that the present Council is well aware of them and determined that no sponsor, no matter how big the carrot, will change the game for the worse.

Stephen Mulliner,
Chairman, F&GP Committee.

Louis XIV Plays Billiards

The drawing shown below is entitled 'Louis XIV Plays Billiards'. As can be seen quite clearly it bears little resemblance to the modern game except for its name. There are no pockets in the tables and the peg, although not a centre one, and hoop appear to be more akin to croquet.

It would be interesting to know the rules of play used by Louis XIV. Maybe one of your readers can throw some light on this subject. The photograph comes from a work entitled 'L'Honnete Homme'.



Unfortunately I do not know the author.

R.C. Sowerby,
St Mary, Jersey.

A Problem of Wording

Dear Sir,

I am writing as Chairman of the Rules Committee of the English Tiddleywinks Association, and would like to consult you on a difficulty that we have.

In Croquet, as in, say, Snooker, a 'push' shot, in which the mallet or cue remains in contact with the ball for an unacceptable length of time, is, I think, illegal. Similar situations arise in Tiddleywinks. We all know what a 'push' shot is, but defining a legal shot can be a tricky problem. In framing a rule, I should like to know how rulemakers in other games have overcome this problem. Please will you tell me what the precise wording of the definition of a shot in Croquet is, or let me have a photocopy of the relevant section of the laws?

I attach a copy of the relevant section of the Rules of Tiddleywinks, and you will see at a glance that this is most complicated,

though it describes the simplest action.

Please, incidentally, do not despise Tiddleywinks. I know that John Solomon, in his book on Croquet, declared that it is not like tiddleywinks, but they have the similarity that they are both strategic games looked down on by the ignorant.

Tiddleywinks has come a long way from the nursery. I myself became aware of Croquet at school, when I was a pupil of Patrick Cotter.

Charles Relle,
London.

Law 5. THE PLAY.

....

(b) A shot consists of any downward pressure of squidger on wink that is an attempt to move a wink or causes a wink to move irreversibly. In any shot a player's squidger must first touch the upper surface (which includes the top 50% of the sides) of an unsquopped wink (see rule 6) of his correct colour in sequence. The squidger may subsequently touch only those winks in the same pile, if any, that are vertically beneath some part of the first wink played in the shot. It is not permitted to touch other winks in the same pile. If while playing the shot on either a single wink or a pile of more than one wink, he disturbs with his squidger or part of his body or clothing a wink or winks that were not in the same pile as the wink or pile of winks he was playing, the disturbed winks are immediately restored to their original position. If any wink is accidentally impeded while in motion, the wink or winks concerned are placed in a position agreed by all the players. If any wink is accidentally interfered with while not in motion, it is immediately replaced where it was before it was interfered with,

squopping or squopped if necessary to comply with this rule. AT ALL TIMES PLAYERS MUST TRY THEIR BEST NOT TO DISTURB WINKS THAT THEY ARE NOT PLAYING.

From the moment that a wink starts to move irreversibly, the movement of the squidger must be quick and continuous. A shot may consist of tapping a wink so that another wink moves from beneath it, but it is a foul shot to squeeze a wink from beneath the top wink and then play the top wink if the two movements are distinct. At the beginning of any shot the squidger must be held not more than 2 inches (51mm) above the highest point of the first wink to be played. The shot ends when contact between the squidger and playable winks ceases, and all winks have come to rest. Any shot that does not comply with these criteria is a foul shot (see rule 12).

Break-Builder No. 7

Dear Sir,

The solution given in the last issue depended on a successful take-off from the first hoop to Yellow in the fourth corner. This will be too difficult for many of those for whom the advice was intended,

and will risk the need to use a second bisque.

A safer way to build the break is to send Blue not to the middle of the court but towards Yellow and about 10 yards short of it. Roquet Red towards the first hoop and take off to Yellow. If you can now hit it, send it to the middle of the court (where Blue would have been in the given solution) and carry on as before with Blue and Yellow interchanged. If however you miss Yellow, you still have an easy break because Blue is now easy to get to from where Yellow is. Send Yellow to the middle of the court going to Blue, send Blue to the second hoop going to Red, and you have a 4-ball break. If you prefer, you could send Yellow all the way to the second hoop, but for some middle- and high-bisquers that would be rather too much.

If you have the foresight to plan all this from the given position, you should be rather more precise than I have been about where to send Blue initially. Choose a place which gives you personally a natural croquet stroke when you later want to send Blue to the second hoop going to Red at the first.

Keith Wylie,
Southampton.

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Your Letters

1987 Accounts

The Treasurer's Commentary
on the 1987 Accounts

The success of the Association's Forward Plan in increasing general development and publicity is reflected in increased income from subscriptions, registration fees, sales of publications, and advertisements in 'Croquet'.

The financial results of the Challenge, Gilbey and Peels tournaments are no longer included in the CA Accounts and this fact together with adjustments made to allow for expenditure of a capital nature (ie. the purchase of new balls and 'President's Cup' hoops) accounts for the change in the item 'Surplus on tournaments'.

I am pleased to be able to report that the expenses of producing and distributing 'Croquet', the Fixtures Book and the Directory, and our general office overheads have not increased significantly.

This year the Income and Expenditure Account has been rearranged: the financial results of the Association's ordinary activities are shown separately from those relating to the initiating publicity and development activities which are financed by Sports Council Grant and by Sponsorship. This has been done in order to demonstrate our progress in achieving the principal aim of the Association's Forward Plans, viz: to balance ordinary income with ordinary expenditure by 1990, not just on the basis of our traditional activities but at a greatly increased level of activity which embraces an ongoing development and publicity programme.

The deficit of the Association's ordinary activities has been greatly reduced from its 1986 level and in the budget for 1988, which has now been approved by Council, it is expected that it will be further reduced. However, to achieve financial self-sufficiency by the end of 1990 a small increase in subscriptions for 1989 and later years will be required.

Turning to the 'extraordinary' items it will be seen that a significant income is already being generated to offset the costs of running the Coaching and Development programmes. Publicity expenditure is also productive since it enhances the Association's ordinary income in various ways.

The Sports Council Grant in 1987 although less than in 1986 is at the level provided for in the first Forward Plan; under the second Forward Plan we shall receive a slightly higher amount in 1988.

Sponsorship totalling \$11,800 gross was received during the year from Anchor Foods (Inter-Counties Championship), Carlsberg Brewery (Open Championships), Bombay Gin (President's Cup), Lassale Watches (Garden Croquet Classic) and the Royal Bank of Scotland (Development of Croquet in Schools). The figures shown in the Accounts are net of the expenses which are directly related to these tournaments and activities.

Grants were made during the year to Dorchester Club, Teesside Club, the South East Federation, the Northern Federation, and the East Midlands Federation.

Bristol Club repaid their loan from the Association and new loans were made to Wrest Park and Teesside Clubs.

No donations to the Benefactors Fund were made during the year but part of the interest

STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS AS AT 31st DECEMBER 1987

	1986	1987
FIXED ASSETS		
Office Furniture and Equipment at Written Down Value	1,193	620
Croquet Equipment at Written Down Value	1,600	-
Trophies, estimated to realise	10,000	10,000
Investment, as per attached schedule	42,162	37,119
	54,955	47,739
CURRENT ASSETS		
Stocks of Literature and Equipment	1,800	1,900
Loans to Member Clubs	3,000	2,750
Sundry Debtors and Prepayments	5,393	1,814
Cash in Hand and at Bank	3,169	3,897
	13,362	10,361
	68,317	58,100
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Subscriptions received in advance	5,432	2,481
Accrued Expenses	9,904	11,954
Taxation	1,463	589
	16,799	15,024
NET ASSETS	551,518	£43,076
Representing:		
Accumulated General Funds as at 1st January 1987	22,990	34,362
Surplus/(Deficit) for the Year	7,007	(11,372)
	29,997	22,990
Life Membership Fund	1,640	1,640
Apps-Hepley Memorial Fund	216	216
Test Tour Fund	3,238	2,879
Benefactors Fund	13,608	12,832
Tournaments and Trophies Fund	2,819	2,519
	£51,518	£43,076

Signed: A.B. HOPE, Chairman of Council
A.J. OLDHAM, Hon. Treasurer

INVESTMENTS HELD AT 31st DECEMBER 1987

Nominal Value		Market Value
£		£
18,817.92	QUOTED INVESTMENTS 10% Treasury Stock 1990	20,000
10.00	UNQUOTED INVESTMENTS Roehampton Country Club Nationwide National Building Society	10 22,152
		£42,162

earnings from the Association's investments was credited to this fund and to the Test Tour Fund. A grant of £6000 to the Surbiton Club has been approved by Council and this will be met out of the Benefactors Fund in 1988.

I referred last year to the fact that the Association had been required to become registered for VAT. The results of the first full year of operating with this tax have not been as dire as I had at first imagined. This has come about partly as a result of the exemptions I have been able to negotiate with H.M. Customs & Excise in respect of a large part of our subscription income, Club registration fees and tournament entry fees, and partly through our ability to pass on the tax harmlessly to sponsors and advertisers. Collecting, recovering and accounting for the tax however remains a heavy and unwelcome administrative burden.

The capital cost of the carpet for Indoor Croquet was substantial but a special grant from the Sports Council coupled with support from

Granada TV and generous sponsorship from the manufacturer of the carpet, Scana Leisure Surfaces, will reduce the net cost to negligible proportions. The expense involved in providing facilities for playing on the carpet at various places during the winter was also considerable but again we benefitted from a 75% grant from the Sports Council; the net cost for the period to 31st December 1987 was about £590 and is included in General Development expenses in the 1987 Accounts.

A.J. Oldham,
31st March 1988.

1987 Accounts

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE
YEAR ENDED 31st DECEMBER 1987

	1986	1987
INCOME		
Subscriptions	13,783	12,290
Registration Fees	2,237	1,485
Levy	2,867	2,564
Tribute	70	20
Sale of Books, Laws etc. (net)	4,657	3,281
Advertisements in Publications	2,797	1,645
Surplus on Tournaments	2,202	1,336
Investment Income on General Funds (net of tax)	1,851	2,040
	30,464	24,661
EXPENSES		
Publications (Magazine, Fixtures Book and Directory)	16,859	15,192
	13,605	9,469
GENERAL OVERHEADS		
Office Rent	1,125	1,125
Rent of Land	400	400
Staff Salaries	9,293	9,268
Council and Committee Travelling Expenses	781	753
Postage and Telephone	1,580	906
Printing and Stationery	1,478	1,478
Insurance	430	405
Sundry Expenses	739	1,185
Audit and Accountancy Charges	950	1,050
Maintenance of Office, Furniture and Equipment	536	998
	17,313	17,568
DEFICIT ON ORDINARY ACTIVITIES	(3,708)	(8,099)
EXTRAORDINARY ITEMS		
Income		27,300
Sports Council Grant	25,956	
Income from Coaching and Development	7,534	7,705
Sponsorship (net)	3,550	3,692
Surplus on Sale of Investments (net of tax)	-	148
	37,040	38,845
Expenses		33,332
Development Officer's Fees	17,388	17,255
Grants to Clubs and Federations	850	7,612
Coaching	2,136	2,759
General Publicity and Development	5,951	14,492
	26,325	42,118
SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) FOR THE YEAR	£7,007	£(11,372)

We have examined the books, vouchers and other records maintained by The Croquet Association for the year ended 31st December 1986 and obtained such further information as considered necessary. To the best of our knowledge and belief the Accounts give a true and fair view of the State of Affairs of the Association at 31st December 1987 and of the Surplus for the year ended on that date.

Alhambra House, 27 Charing Cross Road, London W2H 0AU
3rd March 1988

NICHOLASS, AMES & CO.
Chartered Accountants

Lister . . .

Continued from Page 6.

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We hope everyone will take the opportunity to sit it out on a Lister - anything else just isn't croquet!'

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Contacts

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CA Schools Committee

Ivor Brand, 54 Foxwell Street, Off London Road, Worcester, WR5 2ET. Tel: 0905-358-304.

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Farmhouse B&B with opt. EM overlooking River Dart. Full-size croquet lawn, heated swimming pool, horses, boats and tennis court. Tel: 0804-23278. Claire Grimshaw.

BACK NUMBERS OF 'CROQUET':

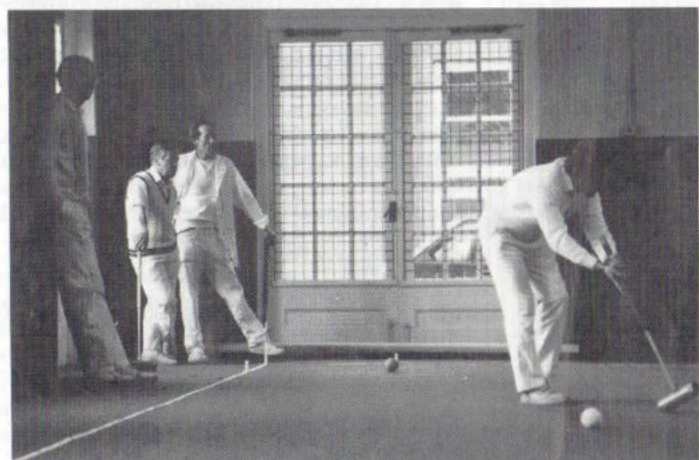
A few copies of issues 180, 182, 183, 184, 185, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193 and 195 are available for collectors. Offers to Chris Hudson (0270-820296).

Indoor Croquet

Manchester Grammar School: 9-10 January A Flying Visit from the Flying Carpet

Report by David Lendrum

It was Manchester Grammar School's wooden floored gym that played host to two days of fast and furious croquet. A grand total of 30 games were played over the weekend. On Saturday, teams from Bowdon, Chester, Ellesmere, QEGS, Pendle and Southport battled away in a friendly and bustling atmosphere. It was for the first time that I'd ever seen croquet players chasing their roqueted ball across a lawn with striker ball in hand in anticipation of it actually stopping before the one hour time limit ended.



Don Williamson (Southport) in play at MGS, watched by (L-R) team-mate John Haslam and Bowdon's David Watkins & Dan Kelly.

No sooner had one game finished than another started and the pace of the carpet easily matched this scheduled timetable. All the games were doubles so that as many people as possible could try the surface and even the occasional hoop. Some tried harder than others to squeeze the balls through these uncompromising hoops. The younger members of the QEGS side insisted on blasting the iron with varying degrees of failure. Most rebounded ferociously toward the hitter giving him little time to react. One ball however stopped dead between the uprights of 1st dumping all its energy onto the hoop. This impulse caused the hoop to lurch forward, so upending the metal base and rolling the ball through to one yard beyond the hoop. A nice touch, I thought, but hardly a repeatable one.

The secret to a break seemed to be a gentle roll through the hoops and controlled rushes across the carpet, no matter how big the degree needed to be. Split shots I

found even more 'hit and miss' than my usual game and early take-offs took off over the barrier drainpipes. All the games went to time except a peg-out by QEGS 1 in the early afternoon.

Resultwise the higher bisquers did better. Despite the unusually endless straight roll, a few bisques on a half-size lawn still converted, if somewhat spasmodically, into a decent enough lead to leave the opposition with a daunting task in the time left.

Thanks must go to Colin and Chris Irwin for running such a

splendid out-of-season friendly, and congratulations to the winners Ellesmere.

Sunday saw the West Midland Federation side under Peter Dorke go under 2-4 to the 'home side', the North West captained by the energetic Bill Aldridge. So eager was Lindsay Norgrove of the Midlands to compete that when she arrived at the locked front gates in the morning, she keenly clambered over the top. Unfortunately for her, the anti-vandal sludge smeared over the spikes on the iron railing could not distinguish her as a good honest croquet player and so did its job to full effect. Despite that, she won a close singles game, beating Martin Bradshaw +2 on time.

Thanks must go to Angus Peterson for organising the whole weekend, to Liz Taylor and others for providing an excellent tea, and most of all to Chris Hudson for bringing the flying carpet.

REGIONAL MATCH RESULT
West Midlands 2; North West 4.

Bristol's David Gocher and Barbara Evans who won the SW Federation Indoor Club event. On the right, losing finalists John Brudenell and Dave Nicholls of the Bear of Rodborough.



Brierley Hill: 6-7 February INDOOR CROQUET IN THE WEST MIDLANDS

Report by Terry Greenwood

THE PLACE

Brierley Hill, a small town in the Black Country, was the venue; a place that was once a hive of industry where Anuk and Ali turned out quality steel, high class forgings, the best bricks and tiles and the cut (canal) was a local beauty spot; relaxation included whippet and pigeon racing, the breeding of Staffordshire Bull Terriers and discussing Aston Villa at Ma Pardoes, a famous home-brewed pub that became and still is a legend and a landmark. It was here that the red neckerchief with the white spots would carry the grub alongside the bottle of cold tea to work and croquet would be thought of as a snobs potato pie.

Much of this has disappeared and been replaced by warehouse type buildings with gaudy signs and it is known as a shopping centre. Card-board cutouts are rapidly replacing the Anuks and Alies and it was this scene that greeted the Hudson Roadshow on a crisp and sunny morning on the 6th of February at the Brierley Hill Leisure Centre. Somewhat different was the Sunday evening when wind and pouring rain saw the Roadshow leave and weave its way in and out of the gypsy encampment that had taken over the Centre's car park.

THE AIM

It was decided that the carpet should be dedicated to a weekend of croquet for the West Midland players with the aim of giving as many players as possible the opportunity to try out their skill on a near perfect surface. Some 38 players played 23 hours of non-stop croquet, except for a small break at Sunday lunchtime for the purpose of allowing the York and Humber team to test the carpet.

SATURDAY

Eight teams from West Midland clubs, including three school teams, played an Inter Club Handicap competition, 4 in the morning and 4 in the afternoon, with the top

two teams playing for glory in the evening. Each game consisted of a doubles and a single, playing two games each in a time limit of 55 minutes.

Unfortunately a slight problem in unloading the carpet delayed the morning's start by 15 minutes and play began at 9.30 with the time reduced to 45 minutes but by 13.00 the games were back on time. With the players inexperienced on the quick surface mistakes were made, notably with the take off shot, the favourite shot of high handicap players. However it did not spoil the enjoyment and though very few managed to peg out every player thoroughly enjoyed the experience. Even with the low scores there were some exciting moments as the time raced on.

Himley and Stourbridge qualified in the morning, Ludlow and Wolverhampton GS in the afternoon.

SUNDAY

At 9.00 sharp the Advanced Singles, consisting of 8 players began a Swiss Style Competition. It soon showed that the low handicap players had enough skill to master the surface, if not the hoop running, with most players reaching the peg in an 18 point game, often inside the 1 hour time limit. Greenwood and Potter qualified to meet in the final which was to take place in the evening after the Federation event.

WEST MIDLANDS V NORTH

Due to a Northern Federation meeting the likes of Bill Lamb and Sid Jones did not appear, but led by John Davies were they really missed? John settled into the pace with style and grace and never gave his opponent much of a chance, his gentle touch play was admired and was very effective. However the star of the afternoon was the cunning Stourbridge veteran, Des Willetts whose lax style and gentle touch found the surface to his liking; in the doubles

SETTING UP FOR THE TRIPLE PEEL

For those keen to win the CA's new Gold Performance Award....

By Keith Aiton

In this article, I shall attempt to show how the player of the Red ball can reach the delectable position in figure 1, Yellow being for 4-back and Red for hoop 3.

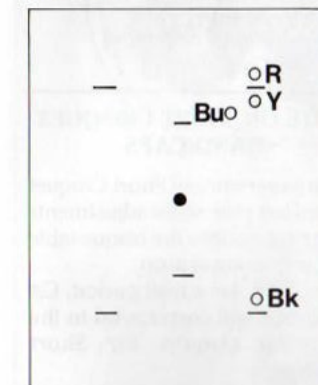


Figure 1.

Astute readers will recognise this position as the start of what is known as a standard triple, ie a triple in which the first peel is made immediately after making hoop 3 with the striker's ball.

A few minutes earlier, at the start of Red's turn, the position may have been the one shown in figure 2.

This position came about because Blue missed a short lift shot at Red. Eighteen shots are required to reach the position in figure 1:

1. Red gently roquets Blue.
2. Red stop-shots Blue into court and obtains a rush on Yellow towards Black.
3. Red rushes Yellow a few yards East of Black.
4. Red stop-shots Yellow to hoop 2 as a pioneer and obtains a rush on Black to hoop 1. This

contest he even froze John out.

Spare a thought for Derek Trotman who achieved the lowest score of the weekend - 1 hoop point. However, to be fair, Derek carried his doubles partner to victory and that was no mean task, if you know what I mean! Gail Curry 10, Derek's doubles partner, was very impressive and one would expect that the figure of 10 will soon disappear, as she is a very stylish, powerful and accurate hitter, perhaps another Mary Collins? In an exciting match with Richard Southgate (13) of Bishop Vesey GS, she overcame the bisques and sneaked in a victory just before time.

THE WINNERS

Everyone won, none more so than indoor croquet. It was a tremendous weekend and everyone came to say thanks; that in itself showed

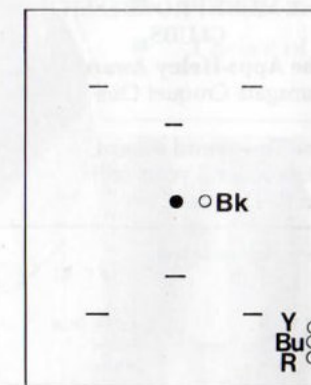


Figure 2.

initiates the first crucial stage of the turn and deserves some attention in practice.

5. Red rushes Black to hoop 1.
6. Red approaches hoop 1 sending Black to the North-East of the hoop.
7. Red runs hoop 1 obtaining a rush on Black towards Blue. Now we see just how crucial shot 4 is, as it has to be good enough to enable shots 5,6,

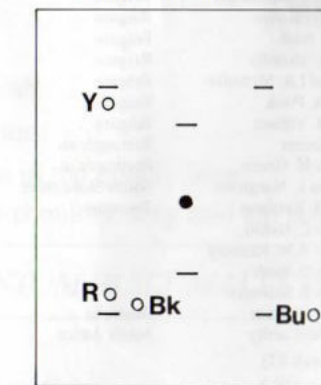


Figure 3.

how appreciative the participants were. It was also very pleasing to see the schools represented and lining up alongside the Wolverhampton veteran duo of Ken and Fay Townsend, that Chris Hudson was practising what he preaches, and Peter Dorke was even whistling when he was losing.

I would like to express my thanks to all those who took part and accepted the flow process line croquet. The timing and rapid changeovers would not disgrace a motor car production line at peak periods. Also a special thanks to Jim Potter for his knowledge and valuable assistance.

By the way, Stourbridge won the Club Team Event and yours truly done Jim Potter in the Advanced Singles.

REGIONAL MATCH RESULT:
West Midlands 3; North 3.

8. Red rushes Black to the East boundary near Blue.
9. Red stop-shots Black to hoop 4 as a pioneer obtaining a rush on Blue towards the South side of Yellow.
10. Red rushes Blue to the West of Yellow to a position which enables shot 11 to be played.
11. Red stop-shots Blue as a pioneer to hoop 3, and obtains a rush on Yellow to hoop 2. Be careful with the position of Blue. It should be as close to hoop 3 as possible to make shot 16 easy, and preferably on the South side of the hoop.
12. Red rushes Yellow to hoop 2.
13. Red approaches hoop 2, sending Yellow to the North-East of the hoop.
14. Red runs hoop 2, obtaining a rush on Yellow towards Blue - figure 4.

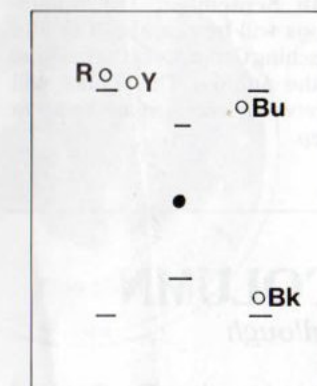


Figure 4.

15. Red rushes Yellow near to Blue, such that shot 16 can be played. This is the second crucial stage of the turn, and now we see why the position of Blue in shot 11 is important.
16. Red croquets Yellow in front of hoop 4-back and obtains a rush on Blue to hoop 3.
17. Red rushes Blue to hoop 3.
18. Red approaches hoop 3 sending Blue to the South-West of the hoop - figure 1.

Of course the eighteen shots of this turn have all worked perfectly, which doesn't happen often on grass (or carpet). Despite this

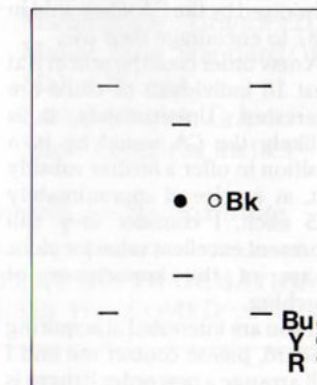


Figure 5.

and 7 to be played with good enough accuracy to reach this position - figure 3.

Coaches Corner

limitation it is still possible to reach figure 1 from figure 2 because not all of the shots have to be perfect - as long as a good shot is played when required. For example, it is helpful if No 4 is good, but if not, then a good No 5 may rescue the turn, or a good No 6, and so on. Similarly, a good No 16 will make up for a poor No 11, or a poor No 15.

Going back to figure 2, suppose Blue had shot at Yellow and missed - figure 5. Of course Red now begins the turn by roquetting Yellow, but this makes no difference to the sequence of shots up to No 16 (reading Yellow for Blue and vice versa). Now Red approaches hoop 3 off Yellow, putting it into peeling position in the approach shot, having already positioned Blue. In this sequence Red has more flexibility because Yellow is not the pioneer at hoop 2 as it is in the first sequence. The advantage for Red is that he could go straight to hoop 2 after hoop 1 if he does not obtain the rush in No 7, secure in the knowledge that he can still rush Blue to hoop 4 after hoop 2 in order to collect Yellow and rush it to hoop 3 (where Black is now the pioneer). This is not possible in the first sequence because Yellow must be rushed to hoop 3 after Red makes hoop 2.

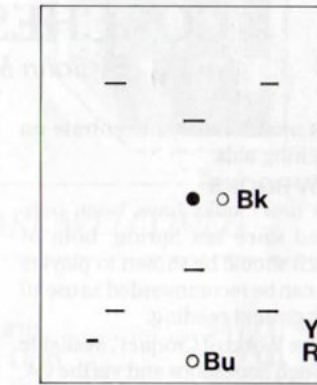


Figure 6.

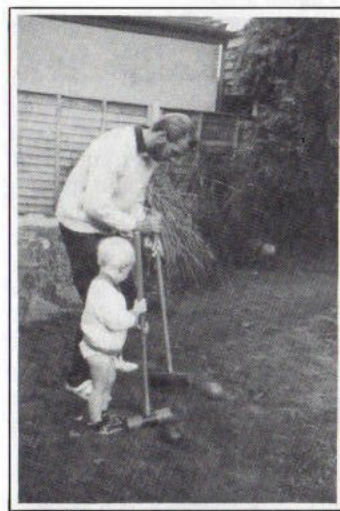
Figure 6 shows the position after Blue has missed a lift shot at Black from B-baulk. See if you can work out the sequence of 18 shots needed to reach figure 1. As a clue, you should reach figure 4 with Blue and Black interchanged, and do not attempt to reach figure 3.

I have not attempted to give an exhaustive (and exhausting) list of all the possible sequences of shots from all the possible starting positions. I must, therefore, leave you with a guiding principle, namely to think out carefully before playing the first stroke of the turn exactly how you are going to set up figure 1. Bear in mind, also, that it is more important to set up and maintain the break with Red, so do not be tempted to dispense with a pioneer at hoop 2 or hoop 4. It is better to make sure Red advances to the peg.

Coaches Corner

NOMINATIONS FOR 1988 'COACH OF THE YEAR' AWARD

This award is made annually to the person who has made the most outstanding contribution to coaching during the previous season. The 1988 Award will be



Ivor Brand, Chairman of the Schools Committee, gives his son a little coaching.

presented at the 1989 AGM of the Croquet Association.

Any member of the Croquet Association can nominate a person for this award. Please include the following information:

1. Name and club of person nominated (must be CA member).
2. Your name and club.
3. Reasons why you think that person should be given the award.

Members of the Coaching Committee, i.e. Chairman and all Regional Coaching officers are not eligible for the award. Nominations should be sent to the CA office, 'for attn. Chairman, Coaching Committee', to reach it **no later than 30th September**. The nominations will be considered by the Coaching Committee at its meeting in the Autumn. The winner will receive an inscribed memento to keep.

COACHES COLUMN

By John McCullough

This month I will concentrate on coaching aids.

NEW BOOKS

Two new books have been published since last Spring, both of which should be shown to players and can be recommended as useful background reading.

'The World of Croquet', available through bookshops and via the CA, is particularly useful for Grade I (beginners) and Grade III (advanced play) coaching. Written by John McCullough and Stephen Mulliner, it is published by Crowood Press.

'Plus One on Time', available direct from the author and via the CA, is particularly useful for Grade II (intermediate) coaching. It is written and published by Don Gaunt.

POSTER

John Jaques, the equipment manufacturers, have sponsored the production of a coaching wallchart which is worthy of display at all clubs and at interested hotels and schools. Contact Brian Macmillan at the CA office for a copy if your Club hasn't already got one.

AIDE-MEMOIRE CARDS

Three separate pocket-size laminated aide-memoire cards have been produced for use by

Grade I coaches. The Grey and Yellow cards summarise the standard 6-week beginner's course and the pink cards summarise the 3-week improvers course. One of each will soon be sent out to all Grade I coaches. It is hoped that a Grade I Coaches handbook, containing all the necessary information a Grade I coach should need, will be produced in due course, although budgetary considerations could delay its production until 1989.

DEMONSTRATION BOARDS

Hopefully most of you will have seen the excellent magnetic demonstration boards produced by Walker Croquet Equipment and subsidised by the CA when sold in 1987 to encourage their use.

A new order could be sent in if at least 10 individuals or clubs are interested. Unfortunately it is unlikely the CA would be in a position to offer a further subsidy but, at a price of approximately £25 each, I consider they still represent excellent value for clubs aware of the importance of coaching.

If you are interested in acquiring a board, please contact me and I will arrange a new order if there is sufficient interest.

Official Business

C.A. AWARDS FOR 1987

Congratulations to the following winners of CA awards, and to all those clubs and players who achieved nomination but were just pipped at the post.

THE MOST PROGRESSIVE CLUBS

The Apps-Heley Award
Ramsgate Croquet Club

The Townsend Award
(Club under 3 years old)
Pendle Croquet Club

New Associates

K.P. Wells	Ansell Trust
Mrs E.J. Bradbury	Bristol
Dr A. Bray	Bristol
Ms R. Kerswell	Bury St Edmunds
N.A. Clarke	Canterbury
J. Haigh	Canterbury
A.H. Simmons	Canterbury
Miss C. Collis	Colchester
D.A. Scott	East Riding
A.M. Ramsay	Edinburgh
P.A. Johnson	Letchworth
A.J. McDowell	Nailsea
T.L. Marr	Oxford
Mrs B. Hibbert	Parsons Green
Dr E.N. Morgan	Phyllis Court
K.N. Plater	Phyllis Court
Miss M.A. Backway	Plymouth
D. Clare	Ramsgate
Miss B.J. Buckland	Reigate
F.S. Byren	Reigate
Mrs E. McGough	Reigate
K.M. Moore	Reigate
P.J. Nash	Reigate
G.J. Nicholls	Reigate
Miss I.A. Nicholls	Reigate
H.A. Pook	Reigate
V.H. Villiers	Reigate
J. Green	Rottingdean
Mrs M. Green	Rottingdean
Miss L. Norgrove	South Shropshire
R.M. Bettison	Teesside
Mrs C. Heald	
Rev A.M. Ramsay	
Mrs D. Rush	
Mrs B. Solomon	
D.Y. Graham	Australia
R. McCarthy	South Africa
(Total: 37)	

THE MOST IMPROVED PLAYERS

The Apps Trophy
(The most improved man)
Russell Collighan

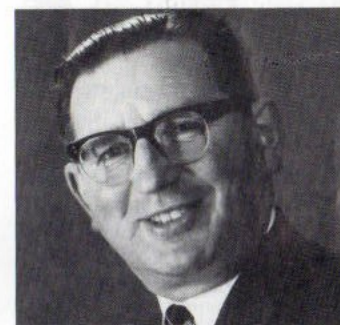
The Steele Bowl
(The most improved lady)
Fiona McCoig

NOTE ON SHORT CROQUET HANDICAPS

From experience of Short Croquet gained last year, some adjustments are being made to the bisque table for the coming season.

For 1988, for a trial period, CA handicaps will correspond to the following bisques for Short Croquet:

Normal CA Handicap	Short Croquet Handicap Bisques	Mandatory Peels
-5 to -1,		3
-½ to ½		2
1 to 2		1
2½ to 3½	0	
4 to 4½	½	
5 to 6	1	
6½ to 8	2	
9 to 11	3	
12 to 14	4	
15 to 16	5	
17 to 18	6	
Over 18	7	



Brian Macmillan, Administration Secretary.

New Affiliated Organisations

Nivingston House
Cleish, Kinross-shire, KY13 7LS.
Contact: Allan Deeson (Tel: 05775-216).

Ugbrooke Park
Chudleigh, S. Devon, TQ13 0AD.
Contact: Capt The Hon T.H. Clifford (Tel: 0626-852179).

Copthorne Hotel
Copthorne, W. Sussex, RH10 3PG.
Contact: Paal Borresen (Tel: 0342-714971).

Fosse Manor Hotel
Fosseway, Stow-on-the-Wold, Glos, GL54 1JX. Contact: R. Johnston (Tel: 0451-30354).

REGIONAL CONTACTS

At its November meeting, the Development Committee decided that only non-federated regions should have Regional Development Officers (RDO's). It was felt that all members of Federation Committees share responsibilities for development and that no region should have more than one 'postbox'. In the case of Federated regions this should be the Federation Secretary. A list of Federation Secretaries and RDO's for non-federated regions is given on page 16 of issue 196.

Our thanks to the RDO's made 'redundant' as a result of this decision (Judy Anderson, Terry Greenwood, Martin Murray, Dennis Shaw, Paul Stoker, Ian Vincent, and Ron Welch) for all their past efforts, particularly in the run-up to the formation of their Federations. We know they will remain stalwart supporters of the Federations they helped to create.

John McCullough,
Chairman, Development Committee.

Introducing "Matchplay" Mallets

Hand Built by Craftsmen – Heads Made From the Finest of Indian & African Hardwoods Shafts from Quality English Ash

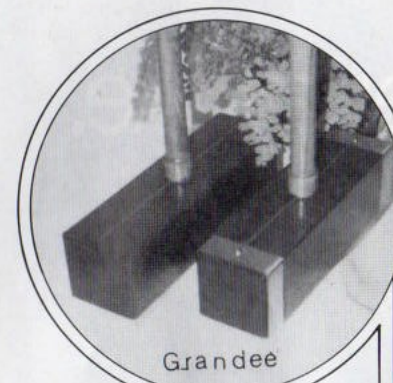
- Traditional type and choice of three designs
- Choice of Mallets from each design i.e. –

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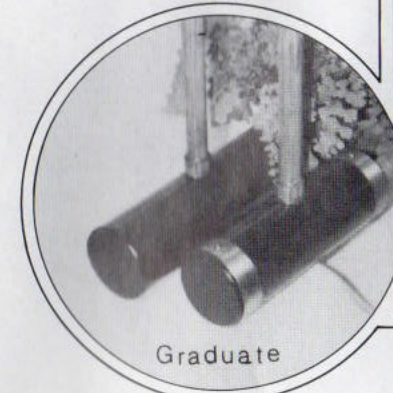
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Standard Plain Head Leather Grip.....	£38.00	S/Steel Ringed Head Leather Grip	£52.00
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Weighted Plain Head Leather Grip.....	£43.00		

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Widcombe in the Moor,
Devon, TQ13 7TB

INFORMATION REQUIRED

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Mallet Type, Standard/Weighted/S.S. Bound
Mallet Weight
Leather/Nylon Grip
Shaft Length in inches

All Weights and Measurements are approximate

IF REQUIRED, PLEASE TELEPHONE FOR FURTHER INFORMATION TO 036 42 218
YOUR ENQUIRIES WILL BE COURTEOUSLY WELCOMED – Geoffrey H. Day

* The Gremlin is only Half-Ringed, and is not available in weights of 3lbs.