

Club Focus Tyneside C.C.

Located only some 291 miles north of CA headquarters and four miles north east of the Scottish & Newcastle Breweries, Tyneside Croquet Club is far from the centre of the known croquet universe, although players from as far afield as Australia and The United States of America and some of the more southerly counties of England have graced our lawns, to say nothing of the invasions of the occasional Scots and Irish hordes.

Bearing this in mind, it should not be all that surprising to hear that our membership has clocked up countless miles in their pursuit of competition and trophies, with a fair degree of success. Even though the club is relatively young at 13 seasons old, the league titles of both Croquet North (formerly the East Pennines League) and the Northern Confederation have rested at one time or another on the club mantelpiece, and the Longman Cup has wound its way to Tyneside twice to date.

Individual exploits or should that be expeditions? are fairly frequent, with more than 70% of club members participating in tournaments from Southport to East Riding, and Carrickmines to Budleigh Salterton - one thing you can't be if you're an outwardly mobile croquet player on Tyneside is travel sick, well not in the summer anyway.

The club has had four grounds it has called home in its history. The first, which was launched by one John Meads, was that pleasant little bowling green in the centre of urban decay known as Smith's Park, nestling amongst the soaring crime figures of North Tyneside. The problems, of which there were many, did not deter the early pioneers of croquet on Tyneside, they just evolved the quicker pace of play to dodge the bricks! One can look back with humour on some of the goings on during those formative years, but eventually life became unbearable and the club moved a few miles to the relatively peaceful haven of Churchill Playing Fields in Monkseaton.

No club house, and two rather, well shall we say, 'interesting' lawns could well have spelled disaster for the future of the club, but Geordies are made of sterner stuff, and in fact the club numbers swelled and the standard of play improved. Alas, try as we might developing the facilities drew a blank, or rather blanks, so we upped hoops and mallets and moved to home and ground number three, Cochrane Park, which is part of the University of Newcastle sports grounds.

The one drawback with this move was that the lawns had to be built from scratch, or rather some disused hard court tennis courts -



Competitors gather for a photo call at this year's handicap tournament.



Chairman Bruce Rannie tries his hand at triple peeling.

to say nothing of lacking the usual pavilion. In due course the two lawns were built, and a six by four club house was purchased and assembled. Some time later another building was erected from two ex-seaside chalets, and still stands today, providing shelter, changing facilities and dining room for club events.

During the summer of 1994 it came to the notice of the club that a bowling green and brick pavilion were available in Exhibition Park in Newcastle, for a very attractive rent (the north / south divide does exist). So mid 1994 we became a four lawn club, albeit at two venues. Since then we have held two open and two handicap tournaments, with plans for more in the future, but the future is a little hazy at present, so perhaps that should not be dwelt upon or promises made that we cannot uphold.

Without attempting to fuel the fire of contention burning presently over Golf Croquet within the Gazette, it would be unfair not to mention our enthusiastic and thriving golf croquet section, which I think became a force to be reckoned with on the move to Cochrane Park (but no doubt they will put me right if I am wrong). Players from this section are also far travelled, Solihull and Parson's Green being household names on Monday afternoons, Thursday evenings and Saturday afternoons when Chuck and Derek are scorching their way round the lawns.

Like any club we have seen good and not so good times. There are the behind the scenes men, like Bill Hill the Secretary and Bruce Rannie the Chairman, then of course there are resident bandits who were Brian Kennedy and Alan Burn but their days of blissful bisquing are now well and truly numbered although we do have some more up and coming bandits in Jim Wardhaugh and Derek and Sheila Watts, the latter of which has now learnt how to peg out, fortunately.

As mentioned, our long term future may be unclear, but if there is an entry in the fixture book next season, please give us a consideration before booking all of your tournaments. We may not have the best lawns in the world or indeed the best facilities, but we do have lots of fun and that famous northern hospitality which we would gladly share with any weary travelling croquet player in search of something just a little different from the norm.

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The CROQUET Gazette

Issue 245

September 1996

Croquet's Staying At Home

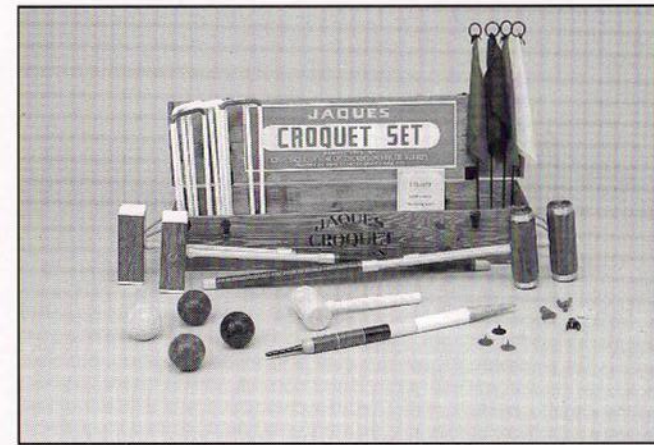


G.B. Retains MacRobertson Shield

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Golf Croquet Championships
Caption Competition
Merit Award Winners



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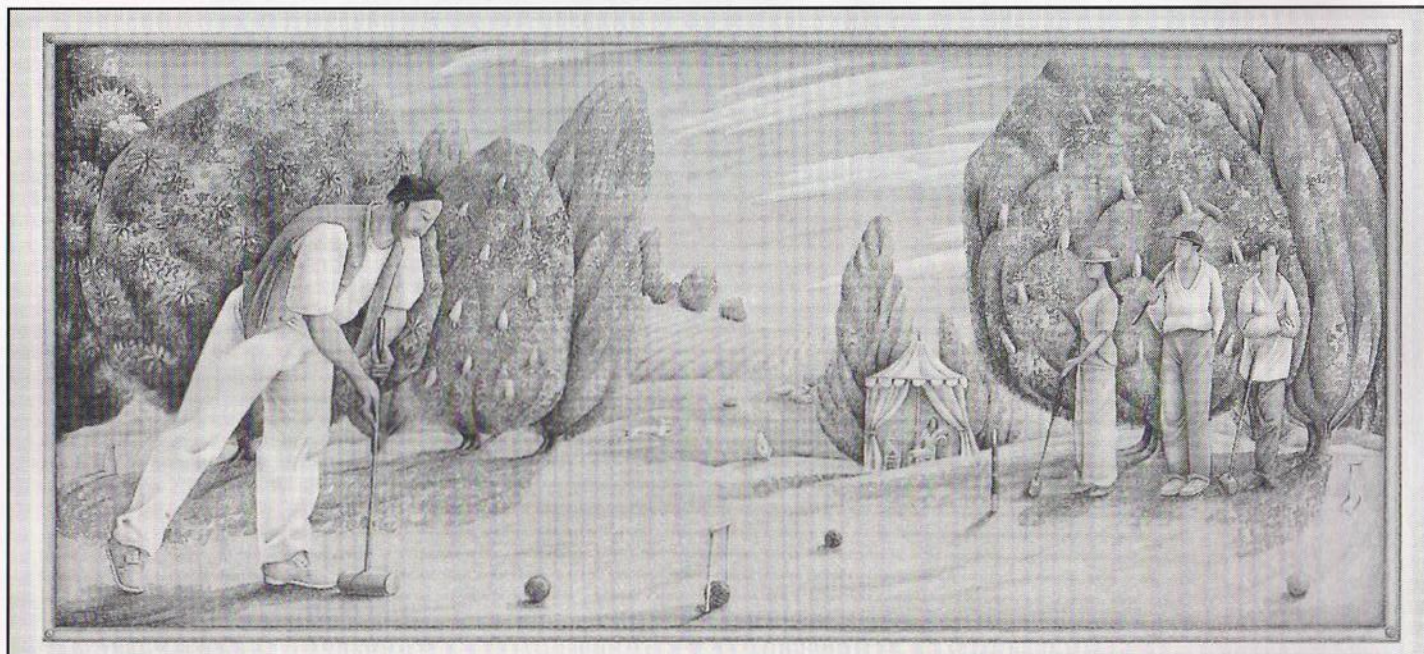
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**The
CROQUET
GAZETTE**

No.245 (September 1996) Price £2.50

Front Cover: Players, officials and guests assemble at Nottingham prior to play in the MacRobertson Shield.

photo by Ian Vincent.

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Produced by Gail Curry for **Publication** in the second week of every other month throughout the year by the Croquet Association **Written contributions** on computer disk (IBM or Macintosh), typed or hand written **Photographs/illustrations** are welcome and should be sent to the Editor **Illustrations/Caroons** are by Jack Shotton unless otherwise stated **Copy date** is shown on the inside back cover **Tournament Reports and Results** should be sent via the CA Secretary **Delivery queries** should be directed to the CA Office **Advertising** details are available from the Editor through whom advertising should be booked **Editor** Gail Curry **Design/Typesetting** Gail Curry **Printing, Binding & Imagesetting** by The Print House.

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The Croquet Association The Hurlingham Club Ranelagh Gardens London SW6 3PR (tel: 0171 736 3148) Secretary L W D Antenen Chairman W E Lamb

Wot No Mac?

First my apologies for the lack of the reportage of the MacRobertson Shield. Alas at the time of going to press it had not been received, although I am hopeful that it may arrive in time for the November issue. However, there is good coverage of many other events and hopefully your enjoyment will not be spoiled by matters beyond the control of the editor.

When Is A System Not A System?

Go to any tournament, or just talk croquet with players at your own club, and the one topic that is almost certainly going to be mentioned is the Automatic Handicapping System (AHS). Some players swear by it, some swear at it, but love it or hate it, it's here to stay.

There is, and probably always will be, comment and criticism of the system at present - but then again how many perfect things are there in croquet, let alone any other field?

During the last year, it has become increasingly apparent that a growing number of players are opting out of the system and not completing cards. On the flip side of the coin it would appear that certain handicappers are blatantly disregarding the system and altering players' handicaps regardless of their results and what their card shows as evidence.

In isolation such happenings may not be heinous crimes, but when those players involved in not playing the system are frequent tournament entrants it is inevitable that their actions will have implications for many other players. After all, who is to know exactly what their opponent's handicap actually is. Do such players give too many bisques or receive too many bisques in handicap events? Do they give or take too many or too few points in advanced events?

There are many relatively simple ways of putting a stop to such disregard for the system. We could advocate, as in golf, that cards are counter-signed by opponents, or alternatively an opponent's index should be recorded as well as their handicap. However, the simplest way to remedy this problem is to talk to the people without cards and persuade them to play fairly by the system, as without everyone's cooperation there is no system - and that really would lead to problems far bigger than those of either postcards or the AHS.

Gail Curry

THE CROQUET ASSOCIATION

NOTICE OF MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of the Croquet Association will be held at the Hurlingham Club on Saturday 19 October 1996 commencing at 11.00 a.m.

AGENDA

1. **Minutes of the previous Meeting held on Saturday 21st October 1995.**
These were published in the "Croquet Gazette" No 242 (March 1996). Copies will be available at the meeting and will be sent to Resident Associates on written request to the Secretary.
2. **Chairman's Report.**
3. **Accounts for Year to 31st December 1995 and Treasurer's Report.**
These Accounts and the Treasurer's Commentary were published in the "Croquet Gazette" No 244 (July 1996). Copies will be available at the meeting and will be sent to Resident Associates on written request to the Secretary.
4. **Election of Hon Treasurer.**
Dr R W Bray offers himself for re-election.
5. **Election of Auditors.**
Messrs Morgan Brown and Spofforth offer themselves for re-election.
6. **Election of Council Members.**
The following eight members retire by rotation under Rule 2:
K. M. H. Aiton, W. H. Arliss, I. J. Burr ridge, T. J. Haste, A. B. Hope, C. J. Irwin, S. O. Jones and C. N. Williams.
S. N. Mulliner who had been chosen to fill a casual vacancy on Council retires under Rule 16.

Three of the nine vacancies on Council are reserved for representatives from the Croquet North, East Anglian and North West Federations.

W. H. Arliss, I. J. Burr ridge, T. J. Haste and S. O. Jones seek re-election under Rule 7A (a)(i). No other nominations for Council have been received.

Consequently there are only four candidates for the other six seats on Council and an election will not be necessary.
7. **Benefactors' Book.**
The names of the Benefactors will be read.
8. **Presentation of Apps Bowl and Steel Bowl (replacement).**
9. **Any Other Business.**
10. **President's Closing Address.**

L. W. D. Antenen
Secretary
16 August 1996

NEWS & INFORMATION

Cancelled due to lack of entries

Following a very disappointing response to the photographic and creative writing competitions both competitions have been cancelled. Any entrants who require their entries returned should contact the editor.

Chris Clarke continues winning ways

At the recent North West of England Championship, held at Southport, Chris Clarke added yet another title and statistic to his croquet achievements. In beating David Openshaw in the final, Chris has now won every event he has entered at the first attempt at the Southport & Birkdale Club - including the long bisquers' title some years ago.

Calling all 'anoraks'

Bob Alman and Mike Orgill have established "Croquet in America" on-line magazine. Internet contact <http://www.ontheweb.com/usca>. E-mail: M.Orgill@sonic.net.

Fishing on the 'Net'

The editor is now connected to the Internet & E-mail cgazette@demon.co.uk so communicating sending in contributions will be even easier that it ever has before (hint, hint). As a consequence of the editor coming on-line a new column will start, which will attempt to bring the debates which occur exclusively on the Internet to the wider croquet audience.

Retirement of Secretary

Our Secretary, Tony Antenen, retires in November this year after six years of loyal service. Would those Associates who wish to make a donation towards a retirement gift please send a cheque payable to the Croquet Association to: Roger Bray, Street Cottage, The Hill, Polstead, Colchester, Essex CO6 5AH. Donations of any amount would be welcome but for those wishing for some guidance something of the order of £5 would be appropriate.

The Chairman's Column

Congratulations to our MacRobertson Shield (or Mac, as it is familiarly called) team for delivering the goods. Enjoyable as it was, there is, of course, some relief that it is all over. It is a very big event to mount and it could not have taken place without the co-operation of many people. The host clubs spared no effort in their arrangements and the input of individuals like Richard Hilditch, who was overall manager and referee, Christine Irwin, who did the duty at Bowdon, Brian Storey, who provided a superb results and publicity service, and all the referees was tremendous.

However, it is becoming increasingly difficult to fund events like this and for players to find the time for this and other world events. The Mac this year was paid for out of the International fund, which has been built up over the years largely from our Sports Council grant, and which has now been severely depleted. Our application to the Sports Council for a supplementary grant was turned down on the grounds that the Mac is not recognised by the World Croquet Federation as a world championship. New Zealand have indicated that their prospects of getting government funding for the next Mac would be greatly helped by recognition.

All the Mac countries have agreed to seek ways in which the event could be opened up to other countries without compromising its essential nature as a team of six event contested by four countries in the final stage. We shall therefore be asking the World Croquet Federation for recognition of the Mac as a world team championship. John Prince has made the sensible suggestion that somehow the Mac could be combined with a world singles and a world doubles championship.

Sadly, the initial reaction of the World Croquet Federation has been predictable. It demands a fee and on a scale that is breathtaking. In the words of their President, "This does nothing to improve world croquet from its present position whilst taking away the WCF's most valuable asset - a World Title - which we insist should not be sold for less than \$20,000 in the case of a Singles event. The only beneficiaries would be the MacRobertson Shield teams, who stand to get more state funding because of the world title, whilst proposing to put nothing back into the development of the game worldwide." That ignores the help that the Croquet Association and other national associations as well as individual associates have given to the development of croquet in European countries such as France and Italy. The most valuable asset that the World Croquet Federation has is the contribution of its member countries, and particularly those where croquet is well developed. Without them it has nothing to sell.

Croquet is fundamentally an amateur sport which relies on voluntary effort. It is none the worse for that. There is not a great deal of money available world-wide in sponsorship. To waste it with an expensive layer of bureaucracy at world level would be ridiculous.

Bill Lamb

Letters...

Hoop Tolerance

Dear Editor,

There seems to be a trend to set hoops over-tightly. Of course, everyone agrees that hoops should be set firmly in the ground, - no wobble thank you, - but do hoop setters for Club play, for matches and for tournaments have a choice about hoop width, and are they at liberty to set these so called "sporting" hoops, where the aural memory of games can be - "clang"? The answer is implicit in the Laws 2(c) and 50(d), and explicit on page 83 of the Fixtures Book, and is quite clearly "NO". The fact that such hoops may be "runnable" is beside the point. Unless the clearance is between 3/32 to 1/8 of an inch greater than the largest ball in use on the lawn they do not satisfy the acceptance standard laid down by the CA, and they are illegal.

Unfortunately, some hoop setters do not take this matter seriously, despite the clear statement in the acceptance standards, and despite its reiteration several times in Bill Lamb's "Principles of Handicapping" (see especially pages 4 and 12). Flippant excuses are frequently the result of a complaint, even of repeated complaints by many players, such as "it is the same for everybody", - which it manifestly is not for high handicappers (as Bill Lamb points out) -, or "players enjoy the challenge", - which many of them do not, or they wouldn't complain. However, such excuses are completely beside the point, since hoops set tighter than the acceptance standards are simply illegal, and should no more be tolerated than pushing or crushing, or double-tapping, or the many other things which the laws forbid.

Setting hoops is a time consuming and usually thankless task, but it is no more difficult to set them right than to set them tight. Please can we put a stop to the practice of setting illegally tight hoops, and enjoy the benefits of quicker and more flowing games, with greater chances of successful break play for all.
Rosemary & Donald Gudan
Bristol C.C.

Tommy Cameron

Dear Editor,

I am sorry to have to inform Associates that Tommy Cameron, who was a member of the York Club, died in July. Tommy was best known to a wider croquet audience for his poems and letters on technical points which were published in the Gazette.

Unfortunately Tommy's health was such

that he made only rare playing appearances at our club but he often came to watch and engage members in entertaining and expert conversation on croquet, cricket and world affairs. He will be greatly missed by York members.

Julian Tonks
York C.C.

Lawn Speeds

Dear Editor,

I am reluctant to disagree with such an expert as Bill Lamb especially when he is supported by Derek Trotman but I do think the conclusions he draws about lawn speeds in his column in the July issue of the Gazette are wrong.

Surely the fastest and therefore the best lawns are those where the ball takes least time to travel 35 yards. If the ball travels this distance in 7 seconds it has averaged 5 yards per second, whereas if it takes 14 seconds its average speed is only 2.5 yards per second.

Bill's own maths supports my argument. If speed is inversely proportional to a function of time the shorter the time the faster the speed.

Practice also supports my argument. Our lawn at York which is a bowling green with grass cut short was measured at 8 seconds. Delicacy of touch which Bill rightly advocates is the prime requirement to be successful on the York lawn where the average player can easily rush long distances. Keeping the front ball in a croquet stroke on the court in dry weather is a much more difficult problem.

I do support Bill's plea for better lawns but I think it is the 14 second lawns which require most attention.

Julian Tonks
York C.C.

Beware Victorian Preachers

Dear Editor,

Having read several recent letters I am now of the opinion that a group of Victorian Preachers are attempting to infiltrate the Croquet Community.

How to spot them:

*As traditionalists (or Luddites?) they hark back to good old days, Victorian costume is de rigueur. Only the whitest of clothing is reluctantly tolerated provided the appropriate ties, studs and stiffeners are in place.

* They lay claim to possession of the rights to the title Guardians of Croquet. Someone really should tell them about Golf, Short, One Ball,

Handicap, Doubles.

* Money is never spoken hence by introducing higher fees they aim to reduce further the number of players / outsiders in the inner circle.

As members of a minority they take pleasure in the exclusivity of their group. Hence you will see them only when any proposals for change are discussed. Their sole purpose is the preservation/restoration of "traditional values".

How to deter them:

* Firstly never underestimate the destructive ability of the group.

* Do not ignore or humour them.

I would advocate some measures that move croquet forward towards the 21st rather than the 19th century.

1) Appointment of a Marketing Manager to manage all publicity including the co-ordination of efforts to commemorate the centenary.

2) Appointment of Commercial Resources Manager to manage revenue generation including fund raising, sponsorship, product pricing, financial controls.

3) While accepting that the Croquet Gazette has improved tremendously I would reposition the content to feature more for the novice/ new club member; a table of "local tournaments / playing opportunities", how to obtain local support, recruitment success stories, the worst court in the country competition etc. At present it would appear that the target readership is an Association player of 10 and better.

4) Introduction of team colours for team events.

5) Introduction of targets for the number of Golf, Short, and One Ball tournaments each year.

6) Establish a working party to identify what is required for croquet to be a national sport by the year 2020. How the CA should be structured. Where the headquarters should be located. What playing facilities / centres of excellence are required throughout the country.

Above all else have fun playing the game in all its forms and do tell your friends and their children/ grandchildren.

Donald Beck.

I shall let the "Croquet Community" or even perhaps the 'congregation' respond as it sees fit to your letter, with the exception of "How to deter them" point 3, which is mine all mine.

Stroking my ego by complimenting me on an improvement does not give you immunity from being put straight on a few points yourself. Alas you are under a misapprehension in your reading of the target readership, which is in fact all Associates regardless of handicap. If, however, readers of handicaps outside your target do not contribute their needs they cannot be included, as sadly I was not furnished with a crystal ball when I took on this seemingly thankless task.

Unfortunately, the editors position is in addition to a full time occupation, so for the foreseeable future at least Associates will have to put up with

back room version. Unless of course you wish to produce a 21st century issue, as I could do with a holiday.

P.S In this issue you will find matters relating to short, golf, handicap, doubles and one ball.)

No More Misnomers

Dear Editor,

Like Roger & Dab Wheeler I strongly object to blatant misnomers. There is a game played widely, indeed internationally, which is commonly referred to as Table "Tennis". This is solely because two bats, a ball, a net and a flat surface are used. I wish to have this practice stopped at once.

Betty Vansittart

Lawns With or Without Imperfections

Dear Editor,

I read Mike Hammelev's letter (issue 244) with interest especially when he referred to perfect lawns. It would be interesting to know how often his opponents have heard him mutter about curved shots due to lawn irregularities - or perhaps his high ranking is helped by them. Most of the top players whom I have met have commented on inadequacies when they have had to play on the less well kept surfaces.

Here at Sidmouth Croquet Club we have, as have many other clubs, a professional groundsman (without need for quotation marks). There does not appear to be a problem. He - and the others I have come across - provide excellent lawns and we play on them without any problems. We do not have a short playing season, we do not consider ourselves a less ordinary club and we do have lawns worthy of the game. He may rely on "the variability of the surface"; we rely on the ability of the players.

Don Waterhouse
NDH. MSc (Hort)

Proposed Amendment to the AHS

Dear Editor,

Although handicap tournaments are very popular and one of the best ways for new croquet players to improve and gain experience, nevertheless many of our better players are unwilling to play them because they can easily lose 40 or 50 points thus affecting their handicap or even, for a few, prejudicing their chances of being selected for certain open tournaments. The reason for this fear is the fact that handicap tournaments attract Rapidly Improving Players (RIP) whose ability improves faster than their index. There is nothing more annoying than to play against such a one and record (-26) with probably a few bisques still standing and having taken 3 shots in the game and having 10 points taken from the ubiquitous index.

It is obvious, therefore, that a modification must be made in the AHS to speed

up the promotion of such players and at the same time not adversely affect the ranking of the better player.

The suggestion is therefore made that the points gained and lost in a handicap event should reflect the number of bisques left at the end of a game.

For the Higher Handicapped Player:-

1 bisque standing gains 1 extra point
2 bisques standing gain 3 extra points (1+2)
3 bisques standing gain 6 extra points (1+2+3)
4 bisques standing gain 10 extra points (1+2+3+4)
etc.

The rationale is obvious; the more bisques standing the better the player is playing. In addition RIP would be encouraged to use their bisques sensibly. Furthermore the extra points would speed their promotion. In a tournament, moreover, the bisques standing should be noted and at the end of a day when 10 or more are saved an automatic lowering of handicap with immediate effect (and adjustment of index) should be made.

For the Lower Handicapped Player

If any bisques are still standing the player's index should be reduced as if he were playing level an opponent of handicap (bisques standing) better than he is.

Rationale: A handicap game is one where, all things being equal, both players should have a 50-50 chance of winning (at present this is represented by a 10 - 10 gain/loss) i.e. the higher handicapped player has been turned into a player of the same ability as the lower by the use of bisques. If the higher handicapped player wins with bisques standing it follows that they have, in fact, been turned into an even better player.

Result:- In many games where all the bisques have been used both players will have had chances and the better on the day will have won. The 10 - 10 split is therefore fair.

If a goodish player (2-4) loses with bisques standing they will have their index affected initially by 8 then 6 then 4.

Once the virtual handicap of the poorer player becomes scratch or minus i.e. playing and winning well against a very good player the number of steps between each handicap level increases. A scratch player losing with 3 bisques standing has, (according to the system) been beaten by a -3 level and the number of steps is such that their index will only fall by 1.

Summary.

This system would encourage good players into weekend handicap tournaments and at the same time speed up promotion of those players who deserve it - everyone would be happy.

John Portwood
Tyneside C.C.

Money Matters at Nailsea

Dear Editor,

The Nailsea & District Croquet Club will shortly be submitting an application for Lottery funds with which to build a permanent pavilion. For years we have relied on garden sheds and a tent for shelter, and a mad 100 yds dash to a local school for the use of their loo!

We are busily raising funds to complete our anticipated 35% portion of the contract price, and during May, June and July, ran our own 'Mini-Lottery'. £10 tickets were sold to those willing and generous to support our cause. All tickets were sold, and three numbers were drawn in each of the three months, the winners being:

| | 1st | 2nd | 3rd |
|------|-----|-----|-----|
| May | 35 | 26 | 22 |
| June | 48 | 37 | 22 |
| July | 24 | 29 | 46 |

We will not embarrass the winners - who will doubtless have planned their visit to the Bahamas on their well deserved winnings - by giving their names, but I would like to thank all those who participated for their support. We hope they will come to our future tournaments to enjoy, with us, the benefits of a permanent pavilion.

We also run an interest-free loan scheme. If anyone out there would like further information it is available from David Murphy, our treasurer, tel 01275 875332, or myself at 01275 852508.

John de M. Jeffrey
Nailsea & District C.C.

Delving into Golf Croquet

Dear Editor,

Up until now I have only played the occasional game of Golf Croquet but after the letter from Roger & Dab Wheeler in issue 244 I am inclined to play more often. On the credit side they did inspire me to delve into the Oxford Classical Dictionary and the Dictionary of Phrase & Fable.

All rude, unlettered "Golf" players, dull blockheads, sneered at by the Athenians of Cheltenham, should take heart from the fact that, amongst others, Plutarch and Pindar were from Boeotia. They can also run brilliant hoops. From the agricultural province of East Anglia.

John Robinette
Bury St Edmunds & District C.C.

Winning, Not Losing

Part two of an article by Colin Irwin on how to cut down on errors in your play and win more games.

If your break falls apart, as it will, then use your bisques to get back into your comfortable break pattern as quickly as possible. This will always be more economic of bisques than trying to use less by playing difficult shots. How many times have you tried a very angled hoop and then needed two bisques to recover, when a tap into good hoop position followed by one bisque was a safe option? "But I usually run them from there!" I hear you cry. I bet that you don't. The trouble is that memory is selective - you remember the times you made it because you were happy about the result, but the failures get swept under the mental carpet.

So the important thing is to know your abilities. (Back to practising again). As I indicated above, it has been my experience over many years that most players, particularly higher bisquers, are incurable optimists. They (a) think they are better than they really are and (b) assume the best result and don't consider the cost of failure. For example, if asked how often you hit 7 yard shots what would you say? 50%, 60%, higher? How does shooting at oppo on the boundary affect this percentage compared with a free mid-court shot? Does it have any effect? Should it have any effect if you know the risks and rewards and have decided it is the right thing to do? What would your basis be for your estimate? As I said above, memory of performance in games is unreliable as we all remember the good bits and forget the bad bits. Unless you have been out on the practice ground shooting 7-yarders and counting, you really have no idea. Listen to top players reasoning why they made a particular choice of shot. Mostly you will first hear an analysis of what the opponent was likely to do if the various options failed and then a judgement on how confident the player was of making the various shots and the benefit to him of success. You have to consider the cost as well as the benefit to decide if the risk is worth it, and that means you have to know the risk. Ask a higher handicap player why they played a particular shot which they have just missed, giving away everything, and they will tell you how good it would have been if they had made it, no thought of other consequences. If you then say "but look what you have given away" they invariably say "well I usually make that shot". In my experience usually they have not considered failure at all.

How good are you at stop shots? That is actually the wrong question. The question should be what is your normal ratio on a stop shot? Let's look at a couple of scenarios. Your normal stop shot is about 6 to 1. You are south of hoop one, taking croquet say two to three yards in from the boundary, and the approach ball for hoop one is three or four feet south of the hoop. The fourth ball is over behind hoop four somewhere. Naturally you want to get a pioneer towards hoop two. Option one is to get close to (ideally just short of) the approach ball, so that you will be taking croquet to approach the hoop from 3 feet or less. So the striker's ball ideally will move 3 yards at most. That means the croqueted ball can be sent 18 yards at most if the striker's ball is to be ideal, so it will be 7 yards short of hoop two. Option two, to get the croqueted

ball a yard from hoop two, means you will have to move it 24 yards, so either the striker's ball will move 4 yards leaving a 3 or 4 footer hitting the approach ball away from the hoop, or you have to make an 8 to 1 stop shot. Which of the first two options you choose depends on your confidence of approaching that hoop on that lawn from 4 or 5 feet. The third, the 8 to 1 stop shot which you usually can't do, is not an option. At any point in the break there is only one thing you have to do right to keep going. There are lots of ancillary nice things you would like to happen as well, but only one thing is critical. Identify that thing, do it right and the break will continue. In this case you have to make hoop one. Where do you have to be taking croquet to be confident of a good approach? This is now the critical factor. Do you need to be closer to the hoop? Maybe the approach is a bit hilly? Then you must choose option one, get the little rush closer, and live with a short pioneer at hoop two. If the lawn is flat and easy paced and you are sure you can approach the hoop from five or six feet and make it ("sure" does not translate to "on a good day with luck and a following wind", it does translate to "if someone will bet £20 against me making this hoop I'll give him 5 to 1.") then option two is viable. The point is that you must make hoop one. If you don't then it doesn't matter how good the pioneer at hoop two is (except that is much better for the opponent now that you have stuck in one trying a 3 foot angled hoop resulting from a poor approach from 6 or 7 feet caused by trying an 8 to 1 stop shot which you can't do, so it didn't work and you didn't even get your normal 6 to 1 so had a 2 yard return to the approach ball.....!). The error was not failing the hoop, it was bad shot selection 4 shots ago.

However on the next lawn in identical circumstances, another player is about to approach hoop one. He is 2 feet short of the approach ball, an opponent ball, and there is a ball down by hoop two somewhere, 7 yards short. The fourth ball is over in fourth corner somewhere. Now where does he want to be taking croquet to have the best chance of getting a pioneer to three and a rush to two? Towards the west boundary about peg high would be good. A simple drive with not much split would do nicely from there. So he needs to be taking croquet about 2 feet more or less straight in front of hoop one, so that a gentle little drive or stop shot will give close position (< 1 foot) and a chance for the rush westwards after the hoop.

But wait, dammit, he overhit the little rush and now he is only a foot short and a bit east of one and the hoop is a bit in the way of the croqueted ball but maybe if he can play a really good stop shot approach and get really tight position he could just trickle through and get the rush..... Is a different plan possible?

If he doesn't get the westward rush he still has a split half roll as an option, followed by at worst a scoop to hoop two. If the approach to two is off the partner he could be quite aggressive as the opponent has a long shot to get the innings, but a better option might be to lay up guarding the boundary instead of approaching the hoop. If the approach is off the opponent and his partner is the ball in corner 4, if he fails to get good hoop position on the approach he can go back to partner. Indeed he could choose not to approach at all, but to take off to partner and make a strong leave. If the fourth ball is near a boundary and he has bisques he could croquet the pioneer nearer to hoop two and carefully shoot off by the fourth ball leaving a rush into the court for an instant four-ball break. So the split is a reasonable fall back position.

Advice To Young Croquet Players As Offered In 'Punch' August 8th 1896

However, if he plays the croqueted ball to the east of hoop one, which is possible from this new position, he might get a rush to corner four and then get a rush out into the court on the ball over there. How viable this is depends on exactly where the ball over there is and whose it is. It should not become a more risky option than the straightforward split described above. If the ball is out around hoop this line of play may be a no-loss option offering the possibility for the fourth ball to be brought into the game if even a moderate rush is achieved. Indeed it might then have been a first line of approach from the very beginning: approach hoop one, rush back to the end of A baulk, drive the croqueted ball to three looking for a rush into the court and settling for a take-off to two if you don't get it. All low risk shots, with alternatives if they are less than perfect. If the ball is right in the corner rushing to it is so much less likely to work than the half roll split as to be not worth considering, so there is no point in even thinking about the rush. (Anybody who is thinking about playing for the rush for the corner cannon should see a doctor).

What he does not do is fail hoop one by trying too hard for either rush, and he does not take the rush to corner four unless it is very easy, because if he fails to get a good rush into the court on the ball over there the split shot needed to recover the break is twice as long and at a more difficult angle than the split he had after hoop one. Be flexible, be ready to change your plans as you go along.

What I have tried to describe here is a way of thinking which minimises careless errors. However the thinking is not negative. I am certainly not advocating an Aunt Emma style of play. The objective is always to get a good break, but to do it in such a way that you don't throw the game away with risky shots. Don't be afraid to settle for a solid leave rather than a risky break. Make your opponent work for his gains and be prepared to work yourself, don't expect to turn a mediocre position into a break with one brilliant shot; see if you can get to the same position or even a better one with three or four or five easy shots. You have the same overall chance of success with five shots each of which you can play four times out of five as with one shot which you can play one time in three. (80% multiplied 5 times is 32.77%) Croquet does not have to be anywhere near as complicated as we try to make it.

And finally, did you work out why he should be approaching hoop one off an opponent as highlighted above? Because he will be croqueting that ball to a position west of three before approaching two off a very loose pioneer. If it is the partner and he fails to approach two, where can he run away to now? I am not saying that you should never approach hoop one off the partner; with a good pioneer at two go for it, but you should be aware of the risks if the pioneer at two is bad and, for example, play for the rush towards corner four after hoop one as the first option, aiming to leave the partner there near the boundary and try to use the opponent balls to set up the break, so that if it fails he is hung out to dry in the middle of the court and you are joined up near a boundary.

I'm afraid this has been a rather longer than I would have hoped, but I hope it has illustrated why some players seem to win a lot more than others of apparently similar or indeed better ball striking skills.

1) Always take your own mallet to a garden party. This will impress everyone with the idea that you are a fine player. Or an alternative plan is to play with one provided by your host, and then throughout the game attribute every bad stroke to the fact that you have not your own implement with you.

2) Use as many technical terms as you can, eking them out with a few borrowed from golf. Thus it will always impress your partner if you say that you are "stimied", especially as she won't know what it means. But a carefully nurtured reputation may be destroyed at once if you confuse "roquet" with "croquet", so be very careful that you get these words right.

3) Aim for at least three minutes before striking the ball, and appear overcome with amazement when you miss. If you have done so many times in succession, it may be well to remark on the unevenness of the ground. If you hit a ball by mistake always pretend that you aimed at it.

4) It is a great point to give your partner advice in a loud and authoritative tone - it doesn't matter in the least whether it is feasible or not. Something like the following, said very quickly, always sounds well: - "Hit one red, take two off him and make your hoop; send two red towards me and get into position." In a game of croquet there is always one on each side who gives advice, and one who receives (and disregards it). All the lookers on naturally regard the former as the fine player, therefore begin giving advice on your partner's first stroke. If she happens to be a good player this may annoy her, but that is of no consequence.

5) Remember that "a mallet's length from the boundary" varies considerably. If you play next it means three yards, if your opponent does so it means three inches. So, too, with the other "rules", which no one really knows. When in an awkward position, the best course is to invent a new rule on the spur of the moment, and to allege (which is perfectly true) that "it has just been introduced".

6) Much may be done by giving your ball a gentle kick when the backs of the other players happen to be turned. Many an apparently hopeless game has been saved by this method. Anon.

Games & The Girl
From Mr Punch's Sports & Pastimes
(published 1933)



Angelina all out at croquet with 'malice a forefoot' for her gentleman opponent.



HELPFUL HINTS No.4

by Don Gaunt

A Series of short tips and ideas for beginners and improvers

Please note that these hints may not always be the best solution, consider your options carefully.

No. 4. Law 32 part 1

In this, and the next two helpful hints, I am going to look at Law 32 (faults) in some detail. If you know this law properly it can save you from making mistakes and it may well improve your game, because Law 32 not only states what you must not do, by implication you can see what you can do.

It will help if you have a copy of the rule book with you so that you can see the precise wording. (If you do not have a copy, they can be obtained from the CA by post.)

32 (a) You commit a fault during the striking period if you.....

Note "during the striking period". This is the only time that Law 32 applies. So what is the Striking Period? The Law book explains it precisely, but in simple words it is the whole time you are making your swing plus just after, while you are leaving your stance. You must leave your stance under control. If you fall or slip, this is not under control as we will see in later helpful hints.

....(1) Touch the head of the mallet with your hand;

It is obvious (or should be) that you cannot actually hold the mallet by the head when striking your ball. Many beginners however do not realise that you cannot touch **any part of the head**. So when you are playing a roll shot, make sure that your fingers are away from the head.

....(2) Try to strike your ball by kicking or hitting the mallet;

This one is pretty obvious, but note that all parts of the mallet are included.

....(3) Rest the mallet shaft, hand or arm on the ground;

So the only parts of your body which must not touch the ground are your arms and hands. The most important aspect of this is that you can kneel. You can also play with your mallet shaft **just** off the ground - but make sure your hands are clear as well.

....(4) Rest the mallet shaft, hand or arm directly connected with the stroke against any part of the legs or feet;

Now, although it is arguably possible to play some shots where one arm or hand is not directly connected with the shot, I recommend that until you are an expert, you never do so. The most common fault here is resting your elbow on your knee when you are playing a difficult little stroke near the hoop. Note that resting the shaft of your mallet against your shoulder is not a fault.

....(5) In a hampered shot, strike your ball with any part of the mallet other than the end face;

I will deal with the hampered bit later. It is probably obvious that you are not allowed to use the side or bottom of your mallet (there would be some interesting possibilities if you were!). Less obvious though, you must not hit with the edge of the face (often called the 'bevelled edge'). Some shots require you to strike your ball very close to the edge. You should always get these watched by a referee. More on this next time.

....(6) Play a stroke without hitting your ball audibly or distinctly;

Don't worry about this one. It is rarely, if ever, used now, with Barlow and Dawson balls which

make very little noise when struck. (Perhaps the laws committee should look at this one.)

....(7) (8) (9) (11) Do not hit your ball cleanly;

What is a clean shot? There are three things that you must do.

A. You must not maintain contact between mallet and ball. This can range from simply playing your stroke too slowly so that your ball rolls along 'pushed' (or 'pulled' if it is towards you) by your mallet, to a blatant 'steering' of your ball in a croquet stroke.

You avoid this fault by taking care with your shot. It is virtually impossible to describe how to do this, so get a coach to show you. Why not go on a CA coaching course?

B. You must not 'crush' your ball, i.e. sandwich it against a hoop or the peg, with your mallet. Note that crushing a croqueted (not your) ball is **not** a fault. Be careful though, you might still make a fault under A or C.

C. You may only hit your ball once. More than this is called a 'double-tap' (irrespective of how many times you hit it). There are two exceptions. The first is if your ball rebounds off the peg in a peg out and hits your mallet again. This is not a fault. The second is if you double-tap when making a roquet. This is also not a fault. **But beware!** A scatter shot double tap is a fault, so is a double tap caused by the roqueted ball rebounding off something.

EXTRACTS FROM A BIBLIOGRAPHER'S CASEBOOK

By David Drazin

IV. OF NEEDLES AND HAYSTACKS

There is ample evidence that the game of croquet came to this country from Ireland about 1850, where it had been played at least as far back as the 1830s. But it is remarkable that, despite the efforts of generations of historians, we still have no contemporary record to prove its Irish ancestry. So, scenting a breakthrough, any active player will prepare to jump through as many hoops as needs be.

To get straight to the point, the needle in this case was a letter written by William Ogilvie from Black Rock, Co Dublin, to Emily Duchess of Leinster in the summer of 1771 in which he mentioned croquet as one of her children's recreations. The haystack was the Leinster Papers, a vast collection of family correspondence held in the manuscripts department of the National Library of Ireland. An Irish historian had drawn my attention to this reference in Stella Tillyard's 'Aristocrats', a fascinating account of the lives of the Lennox sisters published in 1994. Always an optimist, I could barely restrain the cry, 'Eureka!'. All I had to do was to check the reference, locate the source, break the glad news, and prepare the speech I would be called on to make on being received into croquet's hall of fame. But first the haystack. The bad news was that the reference in Tillyard's book was tantalizingly sketchy and my efforts to contact her proved unsuccessful. Nothing daunted, I engaged the services of a local researcher to rake the haystack. She did find a letter which described a typical day in the lives of the Duchess's children in much the same terms as those recounted by Tillyard, but no mention of croquet. Could my co-worker have blinked as the light from the needle flashed across her face?

Quite out of the blue, only a few weeks ago, I heard from Stella Tillyard. She had learnt of my interest in this minuscule matter but had been unable to get in touch earlier. Not having immediate access to the notes she made at the time, she was at a loss to answer my query and gracefully conceded that she was probably wrong. This seemed to be rather a case of a black cat in a dark room which wasn't there.

Sometime someone will doubtless stumble on a contemporary record of croquet having been played in Ireland long ago perhaps a diary entry, letter, invitation card, or newspaper. As they still say in the land of saints and scholars, when Our Lord made time he made plenty of it. Meanwhile my acceptance speech lies on the back burner.

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Proposals For The 1997 Inter-County Championships

The following letter was recently circulated to all county team captains and is reproduced here to ensure that all interested parties are aware of the following proposals.

This letter summarises the discussions re the Inter-Counties at the recent Tournament Committee meeting. We considered the responses to the questionnaire - for which many thanks. Only two counties failed to make any response. There was no consensus on the key questions 1 and 2, save that most of you were prepared to accept more entries provided that these could be accommodated without sacrificing the ambience of the event.

On venues, there was feeling against both Surbiton and Worthing. There was a slight majority in favour of using lawns 10 and 11 at Southwick if necessary. Some mentioned the lawns at Preston Park and Hove, and these will be investigated. For now the proposal below assumes the use of 5 lawns at Compton and 9 at Southwick, with lawns 10 and 11 being used only if we have 22 entries.

So our proposal is to accept up to 22 entries in 1997. The format to be adopted is dependent upon the number of entries.

If 20 entries or fewer, the format will be similar to the last few years (reduced American block), with this exception. On Tuesday there will be no switching of venues, the teams scheduled for Compton will be those adjudged to be the weakest six, and these six will be ineligible for the Championship. If there are 19 or 20 entries each team will play ten matches - if 18 or fewer, the only "byes" will be those necessitated by an odd number of entries.

If 21 or 22 entries, the Counties will be split into two divisions. It was felt that once entries reached this level, divisions were the best solution to provide an adequate number of games and also a fair result and a worthy champion. If 21 entries, the top division of 11 will get 10 matches each, the second division of 10, 9 matches each. If 22, there will be 11 teams in each division, each playing 10 matches.

The only other change to the Rules agreed was re individual eligibility for a County. Two captains expressed concern re the laxity of the Club membership qualification, and this is open to abuse. It was agreed to tighten rule 3 to the effect that club membership is defined to be full playing membership (i.e. NOT Country Membership) of a club registered with the CA.

The opening date for entries will be 1/11/96. The closing date will be 1/3/97. Any of the 19 counties that entered this year which enters before 1/3/97 is guaranteed admission. Please enter early if you can. If you enter on the opening date, your details (Captain's name and phone number, minimum handicap considered) can be included in the Fixtures Book.

All the above proposals are subject to confirmation at the next meeting of the Tournament Committee (26/10/96). Your comments, preferably in writing, are appreciated.

Andrew Gregory, Manager, Inter-Counties.



County Champions 1996 Dorset. (L to R) Stephen Badger, David Harrison-Wood, William Ormerod, Les Butler, John Toye, Strat Liddiard and Peter Trimmer. (photo by Stephen Badger.)

The 106th Open Championships

The Hurlingham Club, 7th ~ 14th July 1996

Report by Chris Williams

Photographs by Ray Hall



Robert Fulford striding towards another major title.

After a reign of three successive title wins, Reg Bamford did not succeed in his attempt for a fourth consecutive Open Championship win, the title going to Robert Fulford for the third time. On a rare visit to the cricket pitch Reg was beaten in the second round in 3 games by Richard Baker of New Zealand. Reg comfortably won the first with a triple and was in control in the second when he unaccountably played the wrong ball. This error allowed Richard in. Reg could never regain control and so an amazing run of success in the Open Championship was at an end. In the previous three finals Reg had beaten the 'big three' of English croquet, namely Robert Fulford, Chris Clarke and David Maugham. However prior to this year's event Reg had not played a competitive game since the previous year's final, due to work commitments in setting up his business.

The Championship was played at Hurlingham straight after the MacRobertson Shield and as a result included a large number of overseas competitors. All of the New Zealand team, as well as their non-playing Captain John Prince, played. Four of the Australian side played, as well as Peter Tavender, Tony Hall and Rosemary Graham who had travelled with the team. Unfortunately all of the Americans and half of the Great Britain team were unable to play. The decision by the selection committee to seed only eight players in the singles and four pairs in the doubles was not met with universal approval. The draw resulted in the inevitable first round pairing of two of the Australians, Harley Watts and Brett Hewitt; and an intriguing battle between the seeded David Openshaw and Tony Stephens, arguably New Zealand's best player in the MacRobertson Shield. Tony Stephens won comfortably with two triples.

The main shock in the first round was the defeat of current World number three Steve Comish by Chris Williams on a very easy lawn 2. In the first game Steve was unable to hit anything after rover having performed a sixth turn triple peel on Chris's forward ball. Chris took the contact and finished from 1. In the second game Steve left his rush open to the far ball after a diagonal spread. Chris elected not to take the lift, took the long shot and hit. Chris finished in three turns giving a diagonal spread each time. Other good wins in the first round were Don Gaunt beating David Goacher, the 1996 Men's Champion, in two; Keith Aiton beating George Noble with two triples, Ian Bond defeating New Zealand's Paul Skinley in three; Lionel Tibble beating John Prince in two and William Ormerod, returning to the Open Championship after a gap of about 15 years, defeating his clubmate Strat Liddiard in two. The first round also saw a sextuple peel by Robert Fulford against Tom Browne.

In the second round Collin Southern should have beaten Tony Stephens in two on the

cricket pitch. However Collin contrived to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory in the first game having dominated it from start to finish. The second did see Collin win. However Tony triumphed in the third. Chris Williams could not reproduce his form of the previous day against New Zealand's Andrew Johnson. Andrew triumphed in three after an all day battle on the cricket pitch. The best win in the second round was Jeff Dawson defeating Australia's number one Colin Pickering. Colin took the first with a triple. However Jeff fought back to win a close second game before winning the third 26tp.

The third round saw quick wins for Robert Fulford against Phil Cordingley, who had had a fright in round one against Frances Ransom; and Stephen Mulliner against Brett Hewitt of Australia. Lionel Tibble took Jeff Dawson very close in game three, pegging Jeff out but still contriving to lose. Robin Brown had a good win over Andrew Johnson, whilst Tony Stephens took three games to defeat Don Gaunt.

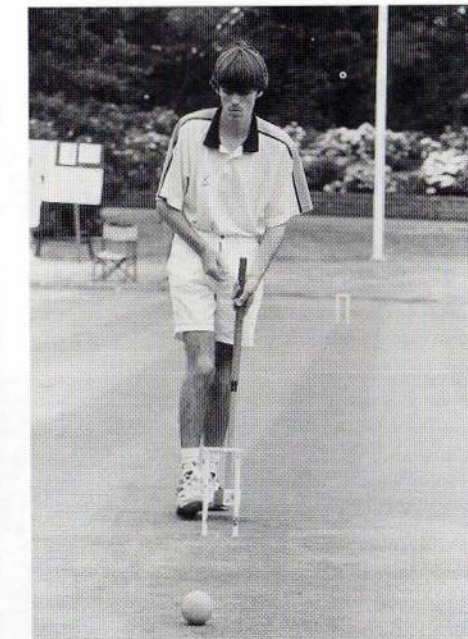
The quarter finals and later rounds were

played as best of five games. Robert Fulford took just two hours to defeat Tony Stephens, giving Tony just 8 shots. Robert was to repeat this performance in the semi final against Stephen Mulliner, who had taken just a little longer to beat Robin Brown. The other two quarter finals went to 5 with Aaron Westerby coming back from 2-1 down to defeat World Champion Chris Clarke, and Richard Baker taking all day to beat Jeff Dawson.

The semi finals featured an all English match (Fulford v Mulliner) and an all New Zealand match (Westerby v Baker). Each game produced a triple peel; Fulford winning in three and Westerby needing all five to triumph. The final was an excellent match. Robert Fulford claimed in his victory speech that it was the best match he had played in a long time. Robert won the first game +24tp having 'popped' Aaron to hoop 3. Aaron took the second +26tp: the first singles game that Robert had so far lost in the event. In the third Robert going first placed his ball in the middle of the lawn. Aaron cornered. Robert hit his ball in the middle and three balled

it to four back leaving a diagonal spread, with his backward ball having a rush on Aaron's ball. Aaron missed and so Robert produced a fifth turn triple peel. The fourth game was similar to game three in that Robert had a third turn ball round. However this time Aaron hit fourth turn and performed a triple peel on Robert. Robert failed to get going from the contact leading to Aaron winning. The fifth game was similar to game three seeing a fifth turn triple peel from Robert. So Robert Fulford became Open Champion for the third time and the first time since 1992.

The first round of the doubles produced what is believed to be the first competitive Octuple Peel in the UK. It was performed by Robert Fulford in the first game against Collin Southern and the absent Jerry Guest. Jerry had not arrived due to his van breaking down near Eastbourne. The leave was: Clarke in hoop 5 with Fulford 6 inches behind. Guest (who had not yet turned up) at 1 and Southern north of 3. Collin shot at and missed the ball in 5. Fulford rush peeled 5. He peeled 6 going to 3, 1 back



Aaron Westerby, losing finalist in the singles championship

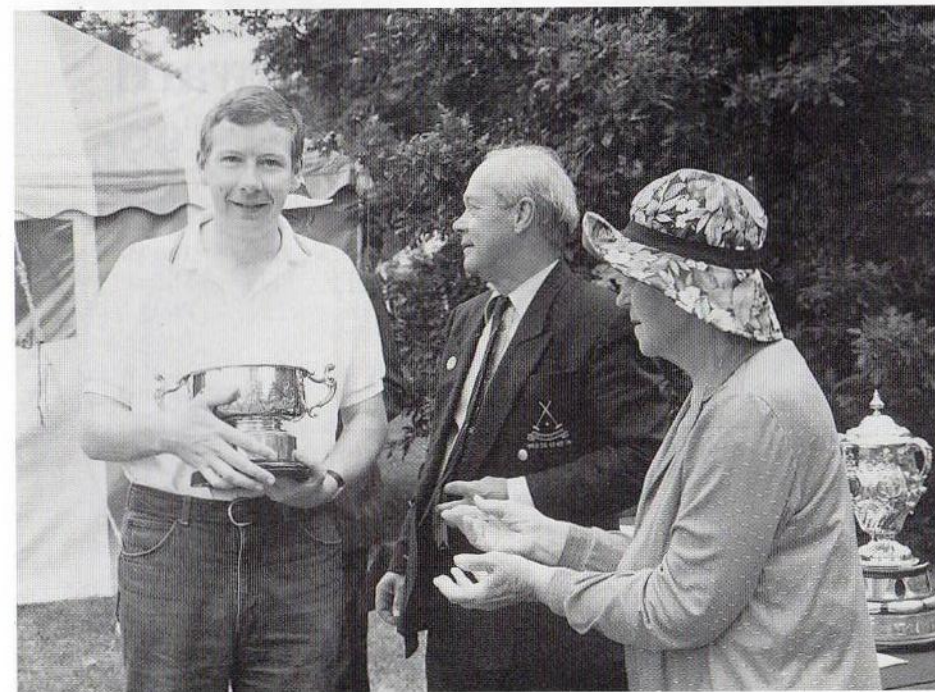
getting a rush to 4 (the pioneer for 4 being near 6). He jawssed 2 back getting a rush to 5 and then put the ball right in front of 3 back taking off to 1 back. He rush peeled 3 back by a yard before 2 back. He then split the peelee to 4 back going to 2 back. Robert hit a deep pioneer after 2 back. He then rolled to 4 back and took off putting the ball right in front of four back getting a rush to 3 back. Robert rush peeled 4 back and then had a standard straight double.

Later rounds in the doubles saw some amazing peeling breaks, mainly from Keith Aiton. In the quarter final against Brett Hewitt and Tony Stephens, Aiton performed a triple peel on opponent (TPO) in both games, winning the second plus one on time (+1TPOT). In the semi final against Fulford and Clarke, Aiton performed a sextuple peel on Fulford's ball. However Aiton's partner Rosemary Graham of Australia could not keep a 3 ball break going and broke down one time too many allowing Clarke to finish and obtain a score of +6OSXP. The other finalists were Aaron Westerby and Tony Le Moignan of Jersey. Earlier in the week Tony had managed to break three of the Hurlingham rules in a few minutes; by parking his car across the lines in the car park and getting a big sticker placed on it and then using his mobile phone whilst lying on the grass. Aaron and Tony had good wins over 1994 champions Bamford and Mulliner in the quarter final and Australian doubles champions Pickering and Watts in the semi final. They ran Fulford and Clarke close in game 2. However Tony missed a 7 foot rush at four back on a finishing turn after Aaron had done a TPO.

Steve Comish won the plate beating Reg Bamford in the final. Steve performed 10 triples in 12 games. Robert Fulford won the John Solomon peeling prize.



Chris Clarke and Robert Fulford, Open Doubles champions once again, with Betty Prichard, John Solomon and Tony Antenen looking on.



Steve Comish, winner of the plate event at the Opens, with John Solomon and Betty Prichard.

The Golf Croquet Championships

Report by Syd Jones
Photos by Don Beck

The finals of this event were held at the Parsons Green Club on Sunday 7th July following regional events at Ripon, Ramsgate, Plymouth and Phyllis Court in early June.

The open singles for the Ascot cup was run in blocks which resulted in the same finalists as last year, Roy Edwards of Bowdon beating Arthur Addis of Plymouth 7-5 to retain the cup. As last years finalists Roy and Arthur will be representing England at the World Golf Croquet competition in Milan in September.

The open doubles for the Ranelagh Challenge Cups was again a block format for the competitors ranging in croquet handicap from nearly scratch to over 18; this provided the closest possible contest. At the end of the day three pairs had equal numbers of wins having beaten each other, so it came to hoop points to decide. The win went to Arthur Addis & Syd Jones as they had the only 7-5 win, all other games going to 7-6! Still maybe Arthur and Syd deserved to win as between them they had travelled over 1000 miles to play in the final, and of over 200 hoops run that day they did get the vital one!

We all had a great day playing and enjoying the hospitality of the Parsons Green Club. Why not join us next year?

This competition has once again shown that open play in golf croquet can produce close and excellent games. Look out for your regional events next season!



Syd Jones (right) presenting Roy Edwards of Bowdon with the Ascot Cup.



Don Beck (left) presenting Arthur Addis & Syd Jones with the Ranelagh Challenge Cups.

Caption Competition No. 3



Answers on a postcard to the editor by October 10th please.
The prize is a copy of The Penguin Book of British Comic Writing.

Merit Award Winners 1996

Bronze

Austin Sherlaw-Johnson
Andrew Elliot
Myer Cohen
Jim Godson
Peter Higgins
Colin Fletcher
Peter Willoughby
Jill Carpenter
John Sanderson
GB Smith
Michael Fraser-Allen
Roger Ivill
D Jenkinson
Robert Alexander
R Sharman
Peter Wilson
George Williams
Naomi Green

Silver

Tim Masterson
Michael Wills
Paul Castell
James Dixon
Mike Evans
Peter Meyer
W Sidebottom
Martin Burger
Gerry Eccles

Gold

Lionel Tibble
Kevin Carter
Nigel Mottram

Tournaments '96

South West Short Croquet Tournament Nailsea 6th - 7th July 1996 report & photos by Judge

Early rain at 6.30 am on Saturday morning greeted the manager when setting up hoops etc. on the eight lawns to be used for the first Short Croquet Tournament at Nailsea. It undoubtedly exhausted the heavens, for the sun exceeded all expectations by shining long and brightly for all to enjoy the intense activity of the tournament to come - much to our relief.

Those supporting this inaugural event came from as far away as clubs in the Midlands, Cheltenham, Bristol and Sidmouth. Fifteen rounds of one hour time-limited games were planned for those who wanted to play on late into Sunday evening, but both the Team and Individual events were decided on the first twelve rounds which were completed by Sunday tea-time. All players played in each round with only fifteen minutes rest, apart from lunch and tea breaks when they were able to enjoy Maureen Murphy's delicious refreshments. Even the manager was able to play and enjoy the weekend due to the efficient use of his purpose-written computerised scoring programme.

After eight rounds on the Saturday, it was apparent that age, experience, ability and bisques, were often the match for youth, agility, inexperience and fewer bisques; to see Ted and Esmi Owen trotting round the lawn after six rounds of hard play was enough to give even the youngsters encouragement. For those who didn't come because the £12.50 entry fee was "...too much for Short Croquet", rest assured that you missed a superb weekend tournament where there was far more actual play per person than in the usual two games a day weekend handicap tournament; just ask the faithful who did come! Letters and cards of congratulations from participants exceeded our expectations, and we look forward to increased support for this event next year.

Team Event

Winners: Nailsea (K. Chambers, P. Dyke, P. Long, D. Murphy) 32/48 wins
Runners-up: Oddlot (B. Claye, J. Dixon, J. Jeffrey, D. Lilley) 25/48 wins

Individual Event

Winner: K. Chambers 10/12 wins Runner-up: J. Dixon 8/12 wins



Participants and coaches at the CA coaching course held at Southwick

CA Silver Coaching Course Southwick 18/19 May 1996

report by Nigel Gardner
photo by Stephen Badger

The CA silver coaching course at Southwick was held in what might be described as very unseasonable weather. The wintry wind and rain did nothing to cool the generous hospitality of the club nor dampen the enthusiasm and good humour of the coaches.

The weekend was organised and run with commendable efficiency by Stephen Badger (Dulwich & Cheltenham). The chief coach, Bryan Teague (Southwick & Worthing), was assisted by Gordon Drake (Tunbridge Wells) and supported by Bill Arliss (Southwick) and Len Hawkins (Ramsgate).

The majority of participants came from the south east, a few from north of the Thames, one from Preston and even one from Scotland (must have over-rolled on a split to Loughborough).

The first day started with a justified revision of basic shots with the emphasis on accuracy, the importance of putting the striker's ball and a croqueted ball precisely in the right spot; this was followed by hoop approaches, again with the emphasis on accuracy. The afternoon was spent on the theory and practice of three ball breaks, tactics on conceding bisques, setting up breaks against 'A' class players and picking up the fourth ball (why did it seem so easy there and yet so difficult in a match?)

A supper in a local hostelry had been organised but with less attending than had been hoped; probably because some had brought spouses and made other arrangements, or were travelling home for the night. A contributory factor may well have been the homework to be done that night on laws and bisque problems, very worthwhile exercises to be worked through without the risk of 'See Me' scribbled over it in red ink the following day.

On Sunday the wind was even stronger but at least the rain confined itself to occasional lumps with good sunshine in between. The day started with a useful, and usually somewhat neglected topic, on the tactics of openings and leaves. Now the rover peel counts towards the twelve hoops required for the Silver Award, so this was also covered as was that rather



Kristian Chambers receives his trophy from Maureen Murphy at Nailsea

elegant evolution, the cannon.

As an interlude, a discussion was generated on outlayer tactics touching on such things as, are there such things? the meaning of life and when does acceptable outgame become unacceptable gamesmanship? the importance of the inner game to match play and how to control it.

The 4-ball break was reached at last, not so much the basic execution (we all know how to execute do we not?) but on such important aspects as break and hoop hygiene. The weekend finished with an unusual but extremely worthwhile session of individual tuition.

Without doubt the weekend was successful due to the good organisation, the friendly enthusiasm and skills of the coaches, and the welcoming atmosphere of the host club. People are prepared to travel and pay if they are guaranteed coaching of this standard but a weekend is not long enough to ensure the right messages get hammered (or malleted) home and some measure of consolidation is achieved. It was felt by many of the participants that a five day course run in-house by the CA would have been justified, not only for the benefit of the rank and file but also for the trainee coaches.

Wrest Park Handicap Tournament

May 17th - 19th 1996

report by John Bevington

It wasn't the sort of weather for taking photographs or making notes by the side of the lawn, so this report has to draw on a few memories and Eric Audsley's results sheets. The wind on Sunday was strong enough to break small branches off one of the Wellingtonias. As it was in the south it was blowing straight down the lawns, and on one occasion had me running frantically for a referee to judge my ball through the hoop before there was a chance of its being blown back.

Braving the elements were a number of visitors new to Wrest Park, among them Leslie and Jillian Carrick from Northampton, Peter Read from Eastbourne and David Harley from Letchworth. Jillian was inadvertently responsible for an interesting episode when she hit the peg when shooting at another ball. There were two clips on the peg at the time; these shattered and fell to the ground in a spray of plastic. I now know that this was due to the fact that our new peg extensions are glued in - the peg extension was vibrating at its natural frequency causing the clips to fracture in the same way that a soprano can manage to shatter a wine glass.

In spite of the lack of rain the lawns were looking a treat and playing smoothly thanks to winter maintenance and reseeded. All six are now back in use. George Collin, our chief groundsman, is still to be seen suddenly dropping to his knees and whipping out a knife to remove an errant weed. He was also seen attempting a rush out of the second corner when his forward swing was suddenly arrested by the lawn, leading to a divot of which a golfer would have been proud.

Eric had drawn the 27 entrants into two American blocks A and B and one Swiss block C. In block A Nick Evans soon gave notice that his handicap of 4.5 wouldn't last long and eventually won with seven straight wins, his nearest challengers being locals Terry Mahoney and Kevin Wells with five and four wins respectively. Block B was another whitewash, this time for David Harley playing in his first tournament, which makes it an even more creditable achievement. I would lay odds that his handicap will be into single figures before this time next year. No one else was even close, the nearest challengers being David Tutt and Mike Percival with four wins each.

And so to the Swiss, which was a more close-run thing altogether. At one point it looked as though Roger Ivill, from March, would walk away with it. With a handicap of 18 he played very smoothly, and quickly got his breaks going although he occasionally tried to run the firm and fairly tight hoops (set in new holes not long before) with too much control. He had not lost a game until the last day when he was pegged back by George Collin and John Bevington to finish with five wins from seven, a total equalled by Brian Kennedy, but as Roger had already beaten Brian he deservedly won the block. George, Eric John and Ron Atkinson (welcome back) followed the leaders with four wins.

This year we tried to find out what our visitors thought of the tournament (and tournaments in general) by devising a questionnaire for visitors in which they were asked to give marks out of 100 for various aspects of the tournament, and also to rank those aspects in order of importance when applied to tournaments in general. There were seven responses out a possible 19. This was supposed to be a light-hearted exercise and is of dubious statistical validity, but for the record the most important aspects of a tournament were (in descending order): lawns, atmosphere (welcome, friendliness etc), management, catering, hoops, environment (what's the place like), balls, refereeing, other players (attitudes to double-banking etc), wet weather shelter, changing rooms and loos, and lastly car parking and access to lawns. We managed a mean score of 85 for the lawns and 62.1 for car parking, with a high of 95.7 for atmosphere and a low of 36.4 for wet weather shelter. This last score may in itself seem generous as the only shelter available is courtesy of the trees, and even this is of little avail when the rain tends towards the horizontal. But then, if we were to look up the records of the weather at May tournaments we might find... no, enough, I can see the editor's pencil hovering.

Winchester One-Ball Championships

15th - 16th June

report by George Winter

By many, one-ball is viewed as a trivial game, akin to golf croquet. However, the strategies of the one-ball game are far from trivial and as a means of sharpening up one's approaches and hoop-running it is unsurpassed. Furthermore it is a very watchable game and clubs with as few as two courts can run tournaments with 24 or more players, since quad-banking is the norm.

This was the third running of Winchester's annual tournament. It is interesting to see that many players, once they develop a taste for the game come back again and again. As a part of a 2000-member tennis and squash club, Winchester's facilities are superb.

The first day is devoted to the big 'Cryptorchid' handicap - said by some to be one of the most difficult trophy in croquet to secure. The conditions were testing, with baked ground and firm, tight hoops. Interestingly this tended to favour high bisquers, since the only way that better players can win is to establish two-ball breaks, which proved very difficult to maintain on such a fast surface. Indeed, the sponsor's prize of bubbly for each all-round break was not won this year. Five or six hoops seemed to be the maximum achievable.

At lunchtime we lost a player, with probably the most convincing reason ever heard for dropping out of a tournament. Tony Marron, a commodities trader, was summoned to the Bank of England following the collapse of the copper market in the wake of the Sumitomo fraud.

By 5.00 we had two pairs of semi-finalists: Bob Stephens took on local player Jo Burnaby, while wife Anne battled it out with Sue Thrussell. Sue quickly won her heat, but the other was a tense battle, with high bisquer Jo staying in touch with Bob while holding onto a bisque or two, ready to pounce, at the end. The tactic almost succeeded, but Jo only managed to jawse rover. Bob had a wiring lift and hit in, then finished.

In the best of three final, the first game went easily to Bob, but the second was a close affair, with Sue holding onto her 5.5 bisques (we have one third the difference in one-ball) like gold dust. Bob ran a long penult, but found himself five yards short of rover. With Sue breathing down his neck he took the brave shot, ran rover and finished for a commendable 2-0 victory.

In Sunday's fierce heat, manager Hugh Smorfitt organised Swiss blocks for the 'Monorchid' advanced level play events. He reset the hoops and when asked to what gap replied: "you couldn't get a gnat's willie in there now". By this, we think he indicated a gap of about 1/64th inch. It was notable that no balls stuck in the hoops through being ovoid - they were Barlow 'GT'.

Don Gaunt, hot favourite to repeat his 1994 open win, fell at the first hurdle to in-form Adrian Wadley. Mike Hammelev looked the part, but had a torrid time, while Bob Stephens, perhaps exhausted by the

previous day's exertions won only two.

By tea-time, Kevin Carter had chalked up 10 wins out of 10 and Tony Mrozinski 8 out of 8 - both commendable performances against such strong opposition. The long-bisquers blocks were won by John Shipton and Anne Stephens. In the best of three final Anne made no mistake this time, slaughtering her oppo 2-0 to collect the engraved glassware.

An appreciative crowd watched the best of three final between Carter and Mrozinski. An early error by the latter in the first game enabled Carter to win more comfortably than the 5 point score-line suggests. However, in the second his sound shooting deserted him and Mrozinski ran out the 8-point victor.

In the third, Tony Mrozinski played like a man possessed. Every approach, played from any distance and any angle, stopped two feet in front of the hoop required. When the position was 3-back vs. 5 the game looked a foregone conclusion. The two protagonists were playing nip and tuck around 3-back, with neither wanting to give the other a shot, when Carter turned to run hoop 5 from five yards, drawing a round of applause. Another followed when he roqueted Tony's ball at east of 3-back into corner 4 and another when he successfully rolled up to hoop 6.

A two-ball break from there saw Carter take the lead and, in due course, Mrozinski, for penult, found himself near corner 4 watching Carter make rover and trickle up to the peg. However, this time Tony drew the applause for a full-square hit-in. He rolled up to penult for what should have been a simple hoop and probable victory. But perhaps the nerves of the big occasion got to him. He blobbed and Carter pegged-out.

Another memorable tournament was over. We shall all be back next year.

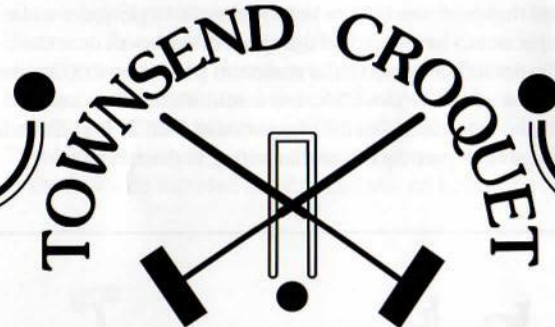
Results Summary

'Cryptorchid' Handicap

Blocks: Bob Stephens (87%), Anne Stephens (80%), Jo Burnaby (77%), Sue Thrussell (77%)

Semi-finals: Bob Stephens bt Jo Burnaby, Sue Thrussell bt Anne Stephens

Final: Bob Stephens bt Sue Thrussell (2-0)



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'Monorchid' Advance Level

Open - blocks: Kevin Carter (100%), Tony Mrozinski (100%)

Final: Kevin Carter bt Tony Mrozinski (2-1)

High bisquers - blocks: Anne Stephens (100%), John Shipton (80%)

Final: Anne Stephens bt John Shipton (2-0)

'A Clash of Interests' -Bristol Handicap Weekend

22nd - 23rd June

report by Laurence Latham

The Latham Cup, evidently named after those who over the years have exited from the first round with greatest frequency, did not fail to disappoint in 1996; he being dismissed by Edward Duckworth and she by Roger Jenkins. Nailsea fired well with Alex Leggate, James Dixon and Peter Dyke overcoming Dyffryn's Barry Marsh and locals Ray Ransom and Peter Willoughby respectively. The remaining encounters all saw home players victorious as Donald Gugan dispatched Pendle's David Gillett, Frances Ransom ended John Sanderson's challenge from Ramsgate and Rosemary Gugan put paid to Kristian Chambers' attempt at winning the event for the third year in succession.

At this stage it became apparent that Saturday afternoon was to play host to not four, but five quarter-finals and the most attention was to be lavished on that taking place in Euro '96. As spectators began to drift away, the appearance of the coach outside the gate caused one to wonder if a reciprocal arrangement had been made with the FA for supporters who wished to beg off from the main match in London. However, this turned out not to be the case, but rather something to do with the sack race or other delight that seemed to be taking place, to accompanying strains of dramatic music, at Stoke Bishop primary school.

Despite the Duckworth Leggate encounter being held over for a 6.00 pm start, the media did not have time to dash across from Wembley for a wider variety of sporting coverage, so all that broke the peace and quiet of the evening game was the protracted and voluble wailing of an infant somewhere in the vicinity, the depth of his discontent suggesting he had lost the entire contents of his piggy bank on the outcome of the sack race or that he was Spanish.

After Saturday's excitement and euphoria, Sunday dawned quiet and traditional to the sound of church bells rather than raucous cheers which had emanated from beyond the hedge the previous afternoon. This tranquillity was enhanced by the sight of a squirrel nosing around on the paving in front of a clubhouse. The all Nailsea semi-final having already been played, Peter Dyke had demonstrated that the experience of the Grand Master (or at least maths master) could still overcome teenage flair, thus extinguishing any hope that James Dixon may have entertained of wresting the trophy directly from Kristian. For a while it appeared that beauty too would get the better of youth, when 1985 finalist Rosemary Gugan went twenty-one up against Edward Duckworth, but it was not to be.

The final saw Peter Dyke use his 8.5 bisques to good advantage, scoring all the points to gain a +25 over Edward, who was thereby consigned to runner-up slot for the second successive year.

A member of staff having secured the main event, the Swiss final was appropriately fought out between his pupils, James winning from Kristian in a predictably quick match. Peter Willoughby, playing in his first CA fixture, qualified for a bronze award in his last game.

(Finally, in case it passed you, the fifth semi-final result was N Gland beat S Pannier +2 on time.)

Over 50 Swiss Handicap Tournament Colchester

July 1st - 3rd 1996

report by Pat Hetherington

Colchester's drought was broken with a vengeance on the first day of the Over 50s Swiss handicap event. The third round was delayed by over half an hour by a violent thunderstorm accompanied by startling flashes of lightning and a ten minute hailstorm, which left all the lawns white over. Nevertheless, three rounds were completed that day, at the end of which

Smoky Eades and David Jenkinson were both unbeaten. A sunny second day saw the two leaders each with a win and a loss and they were joined on four wins by Rene Brazier. The third day was chilly and showery and the sixth round saw John Williams, Ron Harris, Ron Atkinson, and Vi Lester join Rene and Smoky on four wins with David in the lead on five wins. All depended on the final round, at the end of which four players tied on five wins. John had played all except Rene, so the two each had four shots at the peg from the west boundary, Rene scoring twice to John's once to take the Franklin Bowl, John taking the Lexden Goblet.

5 wins: Mrs R Brazier, J Williams, R Eades, D Jenkinson.
 4 wins: R Atkinson, D Cornelius, L Connor, R Harris, Mrs V Lester.
 3 wins: A Adams, Mrs J Collis, Mrs M Clary, M Harbord.
 2 wins: Mrs B Hickman.

Compton Open Weekend, Eastbourne, Aug 3rd - 4th 1996
report by Roy Wallis

In near-perfect weather on very good lawns, 12 competitors, more than half of whom were scratch or better, enjoyed some entertaining croquet. Nevertheless, many of the players were more than a little distracted by the adjacent county cricket match, and, when they were the out-players, ran off to peep at the scoreboards or to watch the dogged batting of the Sussex cricketers as they beat the league leaders, Yorkshire. (Yorkshire got their revenge on the Sunday in the 40-over, one-day, 'pyjama game' match.)

With such a high profile event in the croquet calendar, players were a trifle disappointed that there was no streaker, as some of them had not managed to attend the tennis at Wimbledon or the polo at Windsor and had not witnessed such a sight. Perhaps it is a measure of the public knowledge of croquet that we are not graced with the enhancements that other sports enjoy.

Local players, Dennis Shaw and Roy Wallis, played well enough, but finished some way behind the visitors, the all-day, best-of-5 COWHORN final being contested by George Noble and Jerry Guest - both from Surbiton (George beat Jerry by 3 games to 2), and the consolation Swiss, the COWBELL, being won by Phil Cordingley from Harrow Oak with 5 wins.

Several of the players have been coming to this event almost since

its inception in 1978, and one, David Wiggins, remembers coming to Compton as a child with his father, Bobby, more than 25 years ago. So does Geoffrey, his older brother, who visited on the Sunday to watch progress. However, though he remembers the club and surroundings fairly well, he seems to have been immune from the croquet bug to date, and had to have the play explained to him by David. As lawns became free later in the day, David was seen to be coaching Geoffrey, who showed some (not unexpected) ability at the roquet. Does this signal another Wiggins in the game?

The highest handicapped player, Rodney Parkins (6) from Tunbridge Wells, who tentatively entered for the experience, by no means disgraced himself and, by very careful play, beat two players and made the others fight hard for their victories.

Those who have participated in the event will know that there is an award for the Ace Peeler (a bobby's helmet, naturally), but there were only three separate triples and the trophy was not awarded this year. It was also impossible to decide a runner-up in the Swiss, as the usual criteria did not really have any statistical significance. An interesting suggestion by the winner (the Olympics still being contested) was to follow the weightlifting procedure, which is that, in the event of a tie, the lighter contestant wins. This would have made Graham Fowler a clear runner-up, since his rivals were Kevin Carter and David Wiggins, but the idea was abandoned amid fears that it could lead to an outbreak of Anorexia Nervosa among croquet players. So the stick of Eastbourne rock was donated to the children of Joe King, who had come to see their Dad struggling in his final match. His daughter constantly reminded him that, "After all, it's only a game."

Though Adrian Wadley, followed around the court by his faithful bum-bag, soundly beat the writer, he was a little disconcerted by the running of hoop 5 from three yards and from a highly angled position. (It was a shot born of despair, and the return roquet from somewhere near the north boundary missed anyway.)

Unfortunately, Roger Wood was the non-playing manager as there was an odd number of entrants, except that he stood in for Richard Hilditch in his last match, doing little to help Richard's virgin score as he was the only player not to have sampled the speed of the lawns over the weekend. Roger desperately tried to find a reason to present an OXO cube, which he held in reserve, to the BSE, but could think of no suitable bovine acronym and considered that the suggestion of 'Bull S**tter Extraordinaire' both offensive to participants and insulting to the receiver.

Southport Family Doubles July 6th - 7th 1996
report by Jack Shotton (cartoon also)

Eight couples entered for the Southport family doubles weekend. There were two blocks. Block A consisted of Jack and Betty Shotton, Ernest and Margaret Dalley, Brian & Carol Lewis and John & Barbara Haslam. Block B consisted of Brian and Christine Kerr, Paul and Shirley Stoker, Don & Diana Williamson and Colin and Chris Irwin.

Despite a dismal weather forecast, the tournament commenced at 9.30 sharp on Saturday in sunshine and the sun continued to shine for the rest of the day; the conditions were perfect.

The only distraction came from the adjacent field where a model racing car event was taking place. The distraction was not however from the model cars, but from the chap doing the commentary, his voice bellowing across the lawns, sounding like the indistinguishable utterances of a British Rail information announcement.

One would probably assume that bringing together eight married couples to play croquet would be a recipe for disaster, but it was just the opposite, and I do not imagine any divorces or separations imminent.

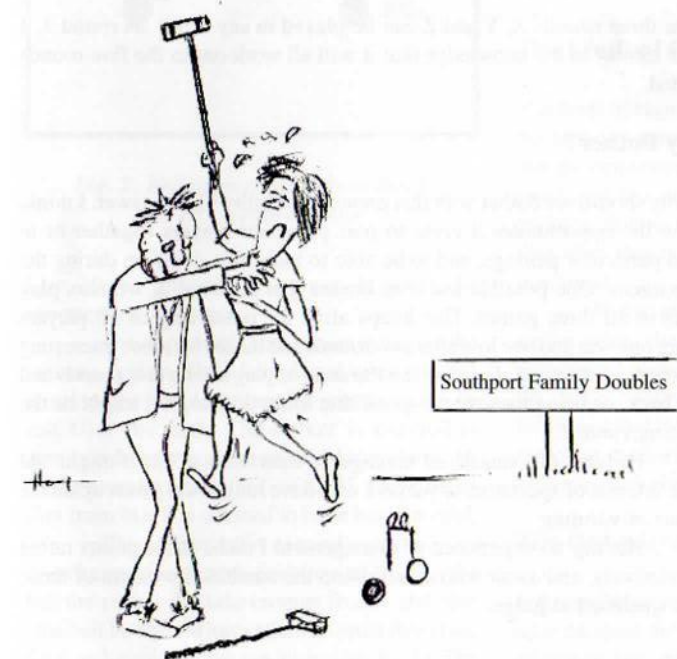
I have a feeling that the reason for the above was the fact that the ladies seemed in most cases to be giving the orders, and also they seemed to be taking charge of the bisques, when available.

The day ended with Jack and Betty winning block A, but block B was not decided until Sunday morning, when Paul and Shirley Stoker finally emerged.

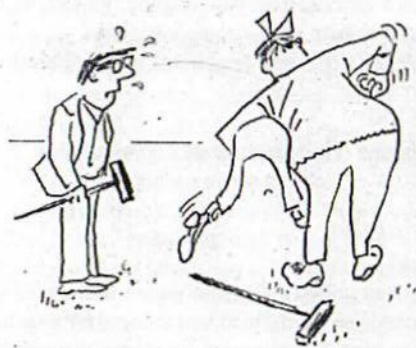
A play-off between the winners of the blocks against the runners-up of the other block eliminated the Shotton and Stoker challenge, leaving the final to be contested between the Irwins and the Dalleys.

The final was an interesting spectator match which right until the end could have gone either way. Well into the game with Margaret on 1-back, Colin peeled Chris through 3-back and 4-back, leaving her a rush to penult. However, Ernest made a lucky hit by curling round a hoop and made good progress with the intention of pegging out Colin but failed at rover. Chris then made penult, stuck in rover. She eventually ran rover laid up a rush to the peg, Ernest missed and Chris pegged out.

Thanks to and credit to the ladies of Southport who again put on some fine meals which included lunches and teas on both days.



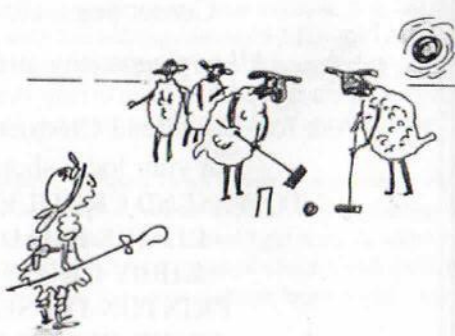
Laugh with Jack



Come on Gail, that's enough, he promises to get the next tournament report in on time.



I think somebody is going to have to rewrite the history of croquet.



I've been looking for you all day!

A Very Good Question

Do you have any questions relating to croquet? If so, this is where to get the answers.

Dave Nicholson of the Crake Valley Club has the following question.

During a 2 ball end game at Southport recently, Yellow ran rover but found that it was wired from the peg and black, which is some three yards away from the peg.

Yellow decided to jump the hoop to try to hit the peg. Standing sideways on to the shot I observed the yellow bounce and rise again to about a foot off the ground before missing the peg.

I therefore have two questions.


- 1) Would a ball hitting the extension constitute a peg out?
- 2) Would a ball hitting a clip on the extension also be a peg out?

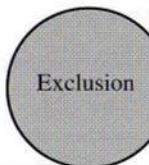
The answer will be elicited from the Laws committee in time to be published in the next issue, hopefully.

Dingbats

by Jane

For those who have led sheltered lives, Dingbats are pictorial conundrums, in which is a well known phrase or saying is hidden; in these cases they are of course connected to croquet. But be warned they can be infuriating and addictive. (Answers at the bottom of the page.)

1. 
2.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | T | |
| O | | H |
| | S | |
3. 

1. All Round Break 2. Scatter Shot 3. Black Ball

Managed American Blocks

Alan Locket takes some, if not all, of the hard work out of how to determine their order of play.

Having read with interest the book on croquet management by Don Gaunt & Roger Wheeler I was prompted to look more closely at the organisation of American Blocks, in particular for six players. American Blocks, for the uninitiated, are just like a league where all play all once. Gaunt & Wheeler indicated that there is a potential problem with blocks of six in that after a couple of rounds care must be taken to select the pairings to avoid creating a blockage which prevents the remaining games from being played within the five rounds that is normal for these blocks. They indicate the problem through an example and demonstrate that the full sequence of play could be written out in advance to avoid embarrassment in the final stages of a tournament. For those who haven't read the book the following example illustrates the situation.

Assume that there are six players A, B, C, D, E, F and they are paired as follows for the first three rounds:

| | | | |
|---------|-------|-------|-------|
| Round 1 | A v B | C v D | E v F |
| Round 2 | A v C | B v E | D v F |
| Round 3 | A v F | B v D | C v E |

Six pairings remain for the final two rounds:

| | | |
|-------|-------|-------|
| A v D | A v E | B v C |
| B v F | C v F | D v E |

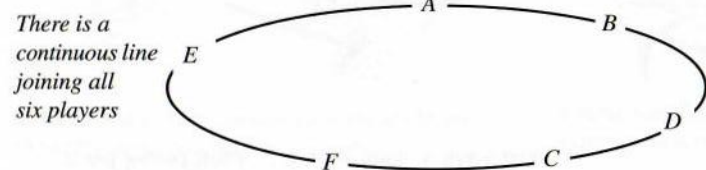
Clearly no player may be paired in the same round twice and a little experiment shows that the block is blocked! (B v C and B v F must take place in different rounds and this prevents C v F in either round - QED!) these six games cannot take place in two rounds.

The advice to plan ahead is therefore well made, but it means that all games are preprogrammed and the manager has little control over the progress of the block. This may be managerial bliss, but in order to keep interest alive it may be better to make adjustments to the playing order during the tournament. Admittedly there is always the option of playing the five rounds in a different order e.g. play round three after round one if wished but this is only a partial solution.

What I was looking for therefore was a way of making up the pairings as the tournament progressed, taking into account the developing form of the players but being sure to avoid the blocked block. The solution is implicit in what Gaunt and Wheeler say, but what follows makes it explicit and provides a procedure to achieve a reasonable degree of manager control. This may be common knowledge to experienced managers but I haven't seen it before and I really enjoyed working it out (onetime mathematicians have this sort of warped sense of enjoyment!).

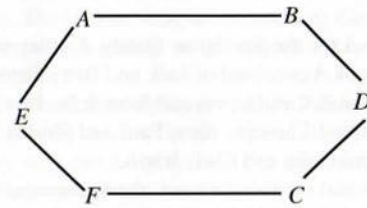
Procedure for Managed American Blocks of Six

| | | |
|---------|---|-----------|
| Round 1 | Any three pairings can be used . e.g. | A ----- B |
| | | C ----- D |
| | | E ----- F |
| Round 2 | Any pairings that produce a single circuit when taken with round 1. | |



You must avoid creating a circuit of four players since this leaves two players to play each other again.

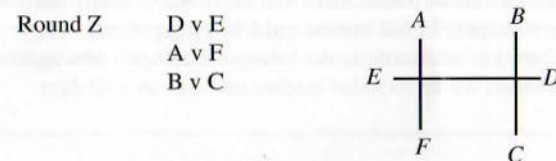
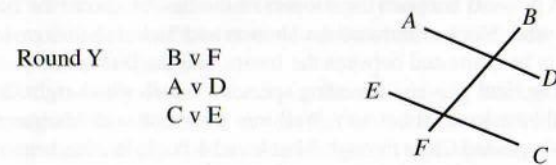
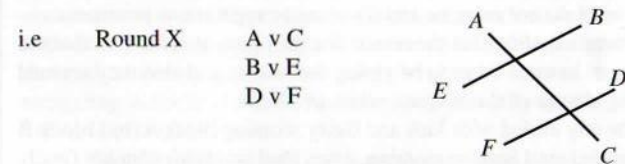
The 'Blocker' Redraw the diagram as a hexagon



Each player sits between the two played in rounds one and two. The 'Blocker' is the three pairings on the diameters of the hexagon.

A v C B v F D v E

This potential round must be avoided, and can only be achieved in one way. Each of the final three rounds is made from one of these diameter pairs and the two chords that cross it.



These three rounds X, Y and Z can be played in any order as round 3, 4 and 5 safe in the knowledge that it will all work out in the five rounds allotted.

Why Bother?

So why should we bother with this greater flexibility? The answer, I think, lies in the opportunities it gives to pair particular players together or to avoid particular pairings, and to be able to make this decision during the tournament. One possible use is to ensure that in round 2, winners play losers in all three games. This keeps alive the possibility of all players having one win and one loss after two rounds and makes for more interesting competition. You can also examine the state of play after a few rounds and hold back, or bring forward the game that looks as though it might be the deciding contest.

Perhaps this smacks of managerial interference, but it might add to the interest of spectators or players who have long since given up on the chance of winning.

Having no experience of management I make these points rather speculatively, and await with anticipation the combined wisdom of those more qualified to judge.

THE LAWS EXPLAINED

An explanation of Law 30(c) - What happens when a player takes croquet from the wrong ball.

(reproduced from the New Zealand CC Croquet Update April 1996.)

Taking croquet from the wrong ball: the basics

The player of red rushes blue close to black. He then takes croquet from black (instead of blue), getting a good rush on blue (see figures 1 and 2 below). At that point the opponent intervenes and points out that the striker has made a mistake.

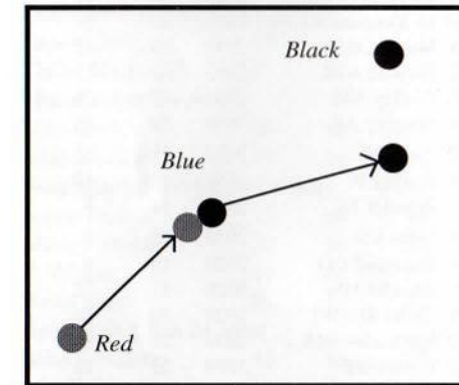


Fig. 1: Red rushes Blue close to Black

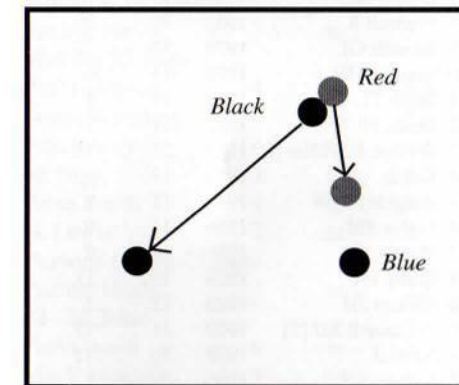


Fig. 2: Red takes croquet from Black and gets a rush on Blue.

Law 30 (a) governs this error. It gives the opponent two options.

The opponent's first option is to give the striker a replay. Black is replaced to its original position and blue is replaced to where it came to rest after the rush. The striker is entitled to continue his turn as he should have done, by taking croquet from blue (see fig 3). The croquet shot from black is deemed to have been invalid.

The opponent's second option is to interchange the current positions of black - the ball the striker did take croquet from - and blue - the ball he should have taken croquet from (see fig 4 and compare the position with fig 2). The croquet shot is deemed to have been valid, but it

is deemed that the striker took croquet from blue and has not yet used black. The striker is therefore entitled to continue his turn by roqueting black.

It is this second option that referees seem most often to overlook when they have to deal with this situation.

Why does the opponent have a choice?

It might seem logical that when a player commits this error, the play should be declared invalid and he should resume his turn by taking croquet from the correct ball. That is the first option open to the opponent. Why then is there an alternative? The reason I believe is as follows.

Suppose the striker got a good position by taking croquet from the wrong ball. He might not have been able to get such a good position by taking croquet from the correct ball. He should be made to replay the shot (the first option) to annul any possible advantage. But if he got into a bad position as a result of taking croquet from the wrong ball, should he have the opportunity to try again on the replay and possibly get a better position? By interchanging the balls (the second option), the striker would probably not get out of the bad position. The opponent is quite entitled to choose whichever option disadvantages the striker and gains an advantage for himself (but see also the comments below on what the opponent should do if he notices the striker about to make this type of error).

The Limit of Claims

The limit of claims is "the next stroke but one of the striker's turn" (Law 30(a)(ii)). That means that the opponent can have the croquet stroke in error and the next stroke to think about the position. But he must claim the error before the shot after that is played, otherwise the error is condoned.

If the error is condoned, the croquet stroke when the error was committed and all subsequent strokes are deemed to be valid and the striker continues the turn without penalty. It is deemed that the roquet preceding the error was made on the ball the striker took croquet from rather than the ball that he actually roqueted.

The Out-player's Duty

If the out-player sees that the striker is about to take croquet from the wrong ball, he should intervene immediately to put the striker right. He should not wait until the striker has taken

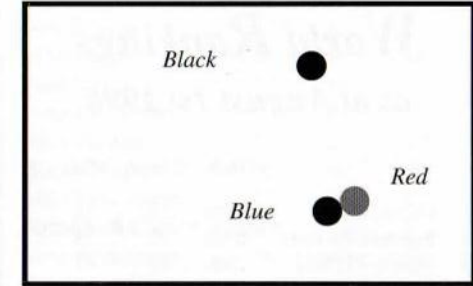


Fig. 3: The first option. Black and Blue are replaced to the positions they occupied at the time of the error and red prepares to take croquet from blue

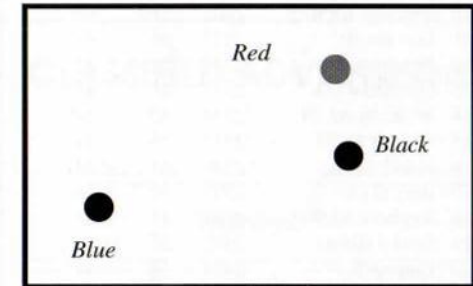


Fig. 4: The second option. The Black and Blue balls are interchanged and the striker is entitled to continue his turn by roqueting Black.

croquet wrongly, and possibly played another shot, to see whether the play will turn out to his advantage before claiming the error. Law 45 (b) requires the out-player to call attention immediately to any error he observes (with two exceptions given in Law 49 (b)). That requirement applies in this case. To wait and see how the play will turn out before drawing attention to the error amounts to taking an unfair advantage.

A question for readers

Suppose the striker of red rushes blue close to black, as in the example above. He then takes croquet from black and gets position at his hoop. He scores the hoop, but has a difficult hampered roquet and while he is thinking about what to do he wakes up to the error he committed. What are the opponent's options and which is he likely to choose?

A question for referees

The striker of red rushes blue close to black, but then takes croquet from black and gets a difficult position at the hoop. Red just goes through the hoop but is judged a fault. The striker then realises what he has done. What are the opponent's options, what are the consequences in each case, and which option is he likely to choose?

Answers to the questions will be provided in the November issue (246).

World Rankings as at August 1st 1996

| | Grade | Games | Wins |
|---------------------|-------|-------|------|
| 1 Fulford RI | 2801 | 102 | 75 |
| 2 Bamford RL (SA) | 2763 | 73 | 53 |
| 3 Skinley PJ (NZ) | 2689 | 85 | 67 |
| 4 Maugham DB | 2672 | 105 | 77 |
| 5 Clarke CD | 2656 | 147 | 109 |
| 6 Jackson RV (NZ) | 2647 | 90 | 78 |
| 7 Mulliner SN | 2646 | 57 | 39 |
| 8 Jones SG (NZ) | 2612 | 70 | 50 |
| 9 Cornelius DA Miss | 2608 | 101 | 59 |
| 10 Burrige IJ (W) | 2607 | 149 | 99 |
| 11 Dawson JP | 2595 | 65 | 43 |
| 12 Pickering C (A) | 2549 | 52 | 35 |
| 13 Openshaw DK | 2538 | 67 | 41 |
| 14 Westerby AJ (NZ) | 2534 | 42 | 28 |
| 15 Cleland A (A) | 2517 | 24 | 17 |
| 16 Kobelt M (A) | 2505 | 61 | 49 |
| 17 Bury G (A) | 2505 | 38 | 26 |
| 18 Stephens AJ (NZ) | 2504 | 45 | 32 |
| 19 Stark J (USA) | 2500 | 27 | 19 |
| 20 Comish S | 2498 | 83 | 49 |
| 21 Goacher DJ | 2483 | 79 | 50 |
| 22 Fleming B (A) | 2474 | 47 | 32 |
| 23 Louw JW (SA) | 2471 | 59 | 40 |
| 24 Beale GW (NZ) | 2463 | 45 | 28 |
| 25 Wislang B (NZ) | 2452 | 29 | 18 |
| 26 Dumergue I (NZ) | 2448 | 47 | 30 |
| 27 Prince JG (NZ) | 2439 | 38 | 21 |
| 28 Watts H (A) | 2435 | 62 | 45 |
| 29 Taves JB (USA) | 2430 | 18 | 11 |
| 30 Irwin CJ | 2421 | 58 | 38 |
| 31 Ketelaars S (A) | 2417 | 32 | 20 |
| 32 Hewitt B (A) | 2413 | 47 | 33 |
| 33 Baker R (NZ) | 2390 | 33 | 18 |
| 34 Taylor M (A) | 2387 | 16 | 6 |
| 35 Carter R (A) | 2374 | 10 | 6 |
| 36 Walters JO | 2373 | 51 | 37 |
| 37 Davis S (NZ) | 2372 | 22 | 14 |
| 38 Day PE | 2368 | 47 | 23 |
| 39 Chambers BM (A) | 2363 | 27 | 19 |
| 40 Heap MEW | 2359 | 33 | 19 |
| 41 Boal K (A) | 2356 | 25 | 17 |
| 42 Avery MN | 2356 | 63 | 32 |
| 43 Gaunt DL | 2352 | 98 | 58 |
| 44 Cordingley P | 2350 | 74 | 38 |
| 45 Liddiard GS (S) | 2349 | 41 | 21 |
| 46 Paterson D (A) | 2345 | 47 | 31 |
| 48 Newcombe J (A) | 2337 | 35 | 27 |
| 49 Mehas M (USA) | 2336 | 35 | 32 |
| 50 Johnson A (NZ) | 2335 | 76 | 45 |

British Rankings as at August 1st 1996

| | Grade | Games | Wins | | Grade | Games | Wins |
|----------------------|-------|-------|------|-------------------------|-------|-------|------|
| 1 Fulford RI | 2917 | 89 | 74 | 47 Foulser DR | 2165 | 10 | 5 |
| 2 Bamford RL [SA]* | 2733 | 11 | 7 | 48 Toye JS | 2161 | 11 | 5 |
| 3 Westerby AJ [NZ]* | 2692 | 66 | 48 | 49 Ormerod WP | 2160 | 15 | 8 |
| 4 Mulliner SN | 2618 | 32 | 22 | 50 Gunasekera DL [W] | 2155 | 10 | 4 |
| 5 Clarke CD | 2582 | 87 | 56 | 51 Carter KJ | 2153 | 53 | 33 |
| 6 Comish S | 2580 | 79 | 57 | 52 Schmieder CS von [I] | 2135 | 43 | 20 |
| 7 Openshaw DK | 2552 | 10 | 4 | 53 Curry GE Ms | 2130 | 11 | 7 |
| 8 Maugham DB | 2533 | 40 | 25 | 54 Mrozinski AJ [W] | 2129 | 23 | 13 |
| 9 Goacher DJ | 2520 | 40 | 26 | 55 Rogerson F [I] | 2126 | 17 | 8 |
| 10 Avery MN | 2515 | 51 | 36 | 56 Patmore CJ | 2122 | 21 | 9 |
| 11 Dawson JP | 2490 | 39 | 23 | 57 Maugham FI | 2113 | 11 | 6 |
| 12 Gaunt DL | 2467 | 59 | 38 | 58 Gale GK | 2113 | 42 | 26 |
| 13 Cornelius DA Miss | 2455 | 54 | 33 | 59 Harrison-Wood D | 2094 | 48 | 18 |
| 14 Burrige IJ [W] | 2448 | 69 | 40 | 60 Le Moignan AS [Jer] | 2087 | 22 | 10 |
| 15 Irwin CJ | 2444 | 15 | 10 | 61 Magee DJ | 2083 | 22 | 12 |
| 16 Walters JO | 2398 | 12 | 8 | 62 Leggate ATR | 2067 | 33 | 12 |
| 17 Williams S [I] | 2377 | 23 | 16 | 63 Wadley AM | 2061 | 49 | 26 |
| 18 Day PE | 2370 | 30 | 17 | 64 Gregory AK | 2056 | 39 | 15 |
| 19 Palmer LJ [W] | 2334 | 40 | 21 | 65 Ames JP | 2053 | 11 | 5 |
| 20 Saurin MA | 2329 | 18 | 10 | 66 Eardley P | 2050 | 18 | 10 |
| 21 McInerney RN [I] | 2328 | 11 | 10 | 67 Wheeler JA | 2041 | 14 | 6 |
| 22 Prichard WdeB [W] | 2310 | 20 | 11 | 68 Jones CS | 2036 | 16 | 4 |
| 23 Goddard JP | 2304 | 12 | 6 | 69 Hopewell CG | 2029 | 18 | 9 |
| 24 Williams CN [W] | 2303 | 56 | 31 | 70 Smorfit HW | 2028 | 37 | 22 |
| 25 Bond ID [S] | 2300 | 23 | 12 | 71 Carter SE [W] | 2028 | 30 | 16 |
| 26 Hallam BG | 2299 | 72 | 41 | 72 Hammelev MA | 2009 | 25 | 13 |
| 27 Tribe R | 2289 | 38 | 26 | 73 Fowler GE | 1999 | 33 | 16 |
| 28 Trimmer PC | 2288 | 27 | 18 | 74 Death JF | 1991 | 10 | 8 |
| 29 Tibble LG | 2287 | 66 | 37 | 75 Solomon JW | 1990 | 13 | 5 |
| 30 Burge TR | 2279 | 52 | 30 | 76 Hawkins JD | 1987 | 28 | 14 |
| 31 Cordingley P | 2278 | 38 | 25 | 77 Kibble DJ | 1984 | 48 | 22 |
| 32 Noble GW | 2265 | 53 | 34 | 78 Fewtrell R | 1983 | 37 | 20 |
| 33 Surgenor J [S] | 2263 | 26 | 16 | 79 Bennett GJ | 1979 | 53 | 22 |
| 34 Cunningham AE [I] | 2262 | 13 | 5 | 80 Sandler MH | 1978 | 15 | 6 |
| 35 Symons AJ | 2261 | 11 | 6 | 81 Smith PL | 1978 | 12 | 4 |
| 36 Evans MJ [W] | 2257 | 17 | 11 | 82 Death PJ | 1972 | 11 | 3 |
| 37 Taylor HP | 2244 | 14 | 8 | 83 Shorten JIA Miss [I] | 1960 | 27 | 12 |
| 38 Brown RJ | 2244 | 45 | 27 | 84 Bell E | 1956 | 17 | 6 |
| 39 Aiton KMH [S] | 2241 | 12 | 7 | 85 Rangeley MW | 1943 | 15 | 8 |
| 40 Duckworth ET | 2238 | 22 | 14 | 86 Taylor PM | 1936 | 14 | 9 |
| 41 Browne TN [I] | 2233 | 16 | 10 | 87 Mantle I | 1936 | 20 | 9 |
| 42 Farthing CN | 2233 | 20 | 13 | 88 Darby PA | 1926 | 19 | 12 |
| 43 Liddiard GS [S] | 2229 | 22 | 7 | 89 Haslam JH | 1923 | 13 | 2 |
| 44 Vincent IG | 2228 | 25 | 16 | 90 O'Connell MJ [S] | 1920 | 31 | 17 |
| 45 Southern C | 2224 | 42 | 28 | 91 Smith J | 1908 | 30 | 12 |
| 46 Guest JE | 2218 | 38 | 20 | 92 Jenkins RS | 1906 | 23 | 8 |

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| | | | |
|---|------|----|-----|
| Colchester Over 50's Weekend | | | |
| Mrs I. Brazier | 16 | to | 14 |
| Wolsland Handicap 4th May | | | |
| Bill Ward | 0.5 | to | 0 |
| Ben Elwell | 11 | to | 10 |
| Roehampton 4 - 9 June | | | |
| Dutton D.C. | 14 | to | 12 |
| Morrow N. | 2 | to | 2.5 |
| Oades Mrs J. | 14 | to | 12 |
| Rees B. G. | 11 | to | 10 |
| Carlisle Mrs H.B. H. | 2.5 | to | 3 |
| Hoskyns R.F. | 5 | to | 4.5 |
| Pennant Jones R. | 3 | to | 4 |
| Newport 15 - 16 June | | | |
| Henderson R. | 8 | to | 7 |
| Southport & Birkdale 16 June | | | |
| Ernest Dalley | 10 | to | 12 |
| David Maddocks | 9 | to | 10 |
| Hunstanton 16 June | | | |
| John Exell | 20 | to | 18 |
| John Leader | 18 | to | 16 |
| Southport & Birkdale 14 July | | | |
| Joyce Taylor | 14 | to | 12 |
| Shirley Stoker | 20 | to | 18 |
| P. Wilson | 14 | to | 12 |
| Brian Kerr | 9 | to | 8 |
| Sidmouth Club 21 June | | | |
| Miss S. Adams | 18 | to | 20 |
| Mrs V. Henderson | 14 | to | 12 |
| Dr E. Owen | 12 | to | 14 |
| Brian Smith | 4.5 | to | 4 |
| Surbiton 22 June | | | |
| Pauline Healy | 3.5 | to | 3 |
| Woking 23 June | | | |
| Paul Champion | 4 | to | 4.5 |
| James Wankling | 6 | to | 5 |
| P. Salisbury | 4 | to | 4.5 |
| M. Bigg | 5 | to | 4.5 |
| Brian Smith | 4 | to | 3.5 |
| G. Lewis | 7 | to | 8 |
| Parsons Green 25 June | | | |
| Pauline Healy | 3 | to | 2.5 |
| 24 - 29 June | | | |
| Paul Castell | 6 | to | 5 |
| Mrs P. Howell | 9 | to | 8 |
| Mrs D. Gaitley | 20 | to | 16 |
| Bristol Club 26 June | | | |
| J.M. Phillips | 18 | to | 16 |
| P.J. Willoughby | 12 | to | 11 |
| R.S. Jenkins | 0 | to | 0.5 |
| Mrs F.E. Ransom | 2 | to | 2.5 |
| Miss M. Hilton | 10 | to | 9 |
| Mrs M. Pena | 12 | to | 14 |
| Budleigh Salterton 30 June | | | |
| Miss M Goodhart | 10 | to | 11 |
| D. Purdon | 4 | to | 3.5 |
| P. Trimmer | -0.5 | to | -1 |
| Lt Cdr A. M. Wickham | 10 | to | 11 |
| Dyffryn Club July | | | |
| G.J. McElwain | 4 | to | 3.5 |
| J.E. Grimshaw | 3.5 | to | 3 |
| Wrest Park July | | | |
| E. Audsley | 1 | to | 0.5 |
| G. Collin | 2.5 | to | 3 |

| | | | |
|---|------|----|-----|
| A. Edwards | 5 | to | 6 |
| T. Mahoney | 5 | to | 4.5 |
| Roehampton 6 - 7 July | | | |
| Graham Bonnet | 4 | to | 3.5 |
| Pauline Healy | 2.5 | to | 3 |
| Mark Roberts | 4.5 | to | 4 |
| Ramsgate 6 - 7 July | | | |
| B. Christmas | 6 | to | 7 |
| L.A.D. Hawkins | 5 | to | 6 |
| P. Highton | 14 | to | 16 |
| P. McCann | 16 | to | 14 |
| Cheltenham 7 - 11 July | | | |
| D. Belson | 12 | to | 14 |
| John Corrie | 14 | to | 11 |
| Cloin Fletcher | 8 | to | 7 |
| Nigel Gray | 3.5 | to | 3 |
| Brian Hewitt | 3.5 | to | 3 |
| Brian Rees | 10 | to | 11 |
| W.J. Sidebottom | 8 | to | 7 |
| Cheltenham July | | | |
| M. Kolbuszewski | 5 | to | 6 |
| Mrs B. Widdows | 7 | to | 6 |
| A. Potter | 3.5 | to | 3 |
| P. Higgins | 16 | to | 14 |
| M. Badham-Thornhill | 14 | to | 12 |
| R. Whitaker | 18 | to | 16 |
| Mrs M. Allanach | 12 | to | 14 |
| A. Blenkin | 14 | to | 18 |
| Mrs G.D. Harris | 3.5 | to | 3 |
| R.T. Jackman | 2.5 | to | 2 |
| D.H. Moorcroft | 1 | to | 1.5 |
| B.G.F. Weitz | 6 | to | 5 |
| D. Clay | 8 | to | 9 |
| Mrs S. Clay | 8 | to | 9 |
| J.D. Bradley | 3 | to | 2.5 |
| P. Higgins | 14 | to | 12 |
| G. Eccles | 12 | to | 10 |
| Sidmouth Club 14 July | | | |
| E. Kitchener | 7 | to | 6 |
| Brian Smith | 3 | to | 2.5 |
| Edgbaston 19 - 21 July | | | |
| W.J. Sidebottom | 7 | to | 6 |
| Budleigh Salterton 24 July | | | |
| J. McBurnie Wood | 7 | to | 8 |
| T.M. Bower | 2 | to | 2.5 |
| J. Turner | 6 | to | 5 |
| Veterans Tournament 22 - 27 July | | | |
| R. Atkinson | 7 | to | 6 |
| Mrs D. Brothers | 8 | to | 9 |
| M. Cohen | 12 | to | 14 |
| Mrs L. Nash | 12 | to | 11 |
| A.J. Nelson | 7 | to | 6 |
| G. Williams | 14 | to | 12 |
| Harrow Oak 28 July | | | |
| J. Smith | 2 | to | 1.5 |
| J.R. Hilditch | 4 | to | 3.5 |
| Cassiobury 2 - 4 Aug | | | |
| D.C. Harley | 8 | to | 7 |
| V.J. Corney | 6 | to | 5 |
| D.H. Drazin | 9 | to | 10 |
| Budleigh Salterton 3 Aug | | | |
| Audrey Whitaker | 4 | to | 4.5 |
| David Wickham | 8 | to | 9 |
| Su Stenhouse | 9 | to | 8 |
| Malcolm O'Connell | 1 | to | 0.5 |
| Gail Curry | -0.5 | to | 0 |
| Roland Henderson | 7 | to | 6 |

| | | | |
|-------------------------------|-----|----|-----|
| Ron Selmes | 4.5 | to | 4 |
| Margaret Selmes | 20 | to | 16 |
| Paul Gregg | 2.5 | to | 3 |
| Roger Jackman | 1.5 | to | 2 |
| Alex Jardine | 3 | to | 2.5 |
| Bob Whitaker | 16 | to | 12 |
| Vera Henderson | 14 | to | 16 |
| Sidmouth Club 4 August | | | |
| Vera Henderson | 16 | to | 14 |

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November Issue
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