

The

Issue 343 April 2013

CROQUET

Gazette

Bamford aims for World Double



Sport for ALL in 2013





10 THINGS....

you might not know about The Croquet Association

- 1 In the last 10 years the CA has awarded grants totalling nearly £200,000 to 80 member clubs and interest-free loans of more than £28,000 to 15 clubs. This support is often crucial for clubs to obtain funding from other sources.
- 2 In the last eight years, 48 new clubs have benefited from the CA's financial and practical help.
- 3 In the last 10 years the income from well over £1million of CA Shop sales to the public and £40,000 from sponsors has been used by the CA to expand its development programme.
- 4 198 clubs are members of the CA and most benefit from its free Public Liability Insurance scheme as well as help from 10 Federation Development Officers.
- 5 The CA organises national coaching, handicapping and awards to encourage enterprising play and to raise overall skills.
- 6 The CA co-ordinates championships, tournaments and inter-club events nationally.
- 7 The CA represents the interests of players internationally and selects and supports teams and individuals who play for their country.
- 8 The CA promotes research into, and development of, playing equipment and court surfaces.
- 9 The CA publishes *The Croquet Gazette* and a website, which are full of news, coaching tips and information so that players can keep in touch.
- 10 More than 60 volunteer members help run the CA which only employs three part-time staff in the CA Office and pays modest retainers to three others.



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Editorial

Editor of The Croquet Gazette' – Well there is a surprise!

I have to admit if you had told me that 30 years ago when I was at the bottom of a rugby ruck, I would have laughed my head off!

I've always enjoyed my sport, through playing, photographing and writing, so now having got over the disappointment of not having discovered the joys of croquet much earlier in life, I am delighted to have been appointed to this editorship. I hope that my enthusiasm for our lovely game will shine from the pages of this first and subsequent issues.

The 2013 season gets off to a cracking start with The WCF Egyptian Pharaohs Golf Croquet World Championship taking place in Cairo soon after this Gazette hits your doormats. It runs from 21 to 28 April and I am indebted to Stephen Mulliner, whose tournament preview forms the lead article in this issue.

Elsewhere there is much to report on,



after a winter of good work by the CA's manager, council and committees on our behalf and I hope that news of that activity and the variety of other articles included in this issue will interest you.

Thank you to my proof readers, especially Amanda Haste and John Filsak who took the lion's share and to Frances Colman for her research, order and calming influence.

To the contributors this month, thank you all for your copy and also to those whose work didn't make it into print this time. Some tough decisions had to be made due to the space available, and the wider readership interest took sway over the more locally based articles.

Finally, a plea for the next Gazette – please keep contributions short, so that I won't have to wield my editor's axe quite so freely in the future in order to maintain the high number of articles that will again hopefully provide for all interests.

Chris Roberts

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Front Cover: 'A Sport for All' montage by The Editor, **clockwise from top left:** Reg Bamford, Euan Burrige, Ann Attfield, David Maughan, Harry Dodge, a friend's son and Rachel Rowe. (Photos by: 'unknown', Ian Burrige, Chris Roberts, Julie Kaye, Roger Hayes, the boy's father and Bob Thompson)

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Disclaimer - The opinions expressed in the Croquet Gazette are those of the Editor and contributors. The Croquet Association is not responsible for statements other than those clearly defined as being made on behalf of the Croquet Association.

Contents

- 4 CA News and Announcements**
- 6 GC World Championships preview**
- 8/9 Obituaries and letters**
- 10 Charity One Ball & Lawns Advice**
- 11 Croquet Challenge**
- 12 Development**
- 14 Schools and Youth**
- 16/17 Laws, Coaching and Crossword**
- 18 Taking Croquet to India & the WCF**
- 20 A Mind(set) for Croquet (part 2)**
- 22 Croquet Association contacts**

Chairman's Column

This is Chris Roberts's first edition as editor of The Gazette, and I'm sure you will all join me in wishing him well in the position. Chris is a professional photographer and has considerable experience in sports writing, having contributed a rugby column for his local newspaper for many years. He also edited the Wasps Rugby Club newsletter. He is chairman of both the Southern Croquet Federation and Phyllis Court Croquet Club, and is a member of Surbiton CC. Chris has played croquet for more than five years and is the Director of the Golf Croquet All England Handicap competition. I'm sure all that constitutes more than enough experience to do a great job!

Strat Liddiard took over as chairman of



publishing last October, and I know he has been keen to push ahead with several changes, some of which were initiated by Charles Waterfield, his predecessor. Among these has been the establishment of an editorial team, who will be helping Chris by gathering material. I know one issue which is also being reviewed is establishing a closer link between The Gazette and the website. Longer articles which we might not be able to fit into this magazine might have an abridged version here and a link to the full article on the website. With more and more of us comfortable with new technology, I can see this link being a valuable way forward.

We have, of course, also debated having an entirely web-based magazine, which would save the CA considerable expense. However, for the time being we think it is important to continue with a paper-based version. There are still enough of us who like to see something physical landing on our doormats! We may need to explore this further in the future, especially if we try to widen distribution of the Gazette to include ALL club players, which many of us think might be a valuable thing to try to do.

Finally, I would like to end by thanking Gail Curry for all her hard work as previous editor of The Gazette. Looking back over the records, I see she started as Gazette editor in May 1995. She had a break from July 2001 to July 2005 when she handed over to James Hawkins, but has been editing ever since. That makes a total of about 14 years, which is a considerable stint for anyone. Gail's earlier experience also included producing a more humorous publication, namely 'Taking the Bisque'. Early in her first tenure the name of our magazine changed back from Croquet to The Croquet Gazette and colour was introduced. Geordie grit, determination and humour undoubtedly helped her in getting the job done for so long.

It's not true that the CA has banished Gail to Siberia - she's presently, with a couple of Russian friends, travelling the entire Trans-Siberian railway and is currently over 6,000 miles away in Irkutsk. Hopefully we can persuade her to publish her most entertaining blog, packed with pictures!

Jeff Dawson

CA Club Awards

By Peter Death, Chairman of Development Committee

The CA has announced the winners of its Club Awards for 2013, which recognise a club's progress over a two-year period.

Townsend Award

(for clubs with fewer than three lawns)

The winner is **ROTHER VALLEY** from West Sussex, who fought off a strong challenge from Kingston Maurward in Dorset.

In the two years 2011-12 the club has:

- Improved its lawns and off-court facilities
- Increased the proportion of members who are CA Associates
- Competed in Federation Leagues for both codes of the game
- Provided support to smaller clubs in the area
- Developed its commitment to coaching

Apps Heley Award

(for clubs with three or four lawns)

This award has been given jointly to **FYLDE** and **WEST WORTHING**, two clubs which are at very different stages of development. The **Fylde** club was formed in 1986. Its remote location makes it difficult to attract quantities of new members, but the ones they have make up for this by their drive and enthusiasm.

In the two years 2011-12 the club has:

- Developed a third lawn from two disused grass tennis courts, using members' labour
- Taken on the maintenance of its lawns, again using volunteer labour, and funded the purchase of machinery
- Built a new clubhouse and played a full part in the North West Federation

- Hosted its first CA Handicap trophy, and the international match between the CA and the CA of Ireland

West Worthing is a much more recent club, having been set up in 2010. In its first two years of life it has:

- Attained a playing membership of 56
- Developed and equipped four courts
- Acquired suitable storage and clubhouse facilities
- Become involved in Federation Leagues

Millennium Award

(for clubs with five or more lawns)

The winner this year is **NOTTINGHAM**. In the two years 2011-12 the club has:

- Taken on three bowling greens from the City Council, giving a total of eight lawns
- Offered year-round play for the first time
- Sunk a borehole to provide a source of water for the lawns
- Obtained funding to install an automatic watering system on its five original lawns
- Increased its membership and number of CA Associates
- Developed GC play at both club and tournament level, to add to its strong showing at AC
- Continued to run a full programme of CA Calendar events
- Improved its website and contributed to the running of the CA and the East Midlands Federation.

Each winner receives an inscribed plaque, a cheque for £250 and holds the associated trophy for 2 years (or one year each in the case of Fylde and West Worthing). Trophies will be presented at the CA AGM in October.

The next round of awards will be made in February 2015 and applications will be invited in the autumn of 2014

Nominations for Election or Notices of Motions for the 2013 AGM

The 2013 AGM will be held at The Hurlingham Club on the morning of Saturday 19 October

Nominations for the posts of Hon. Treasurer, Hon. Secretary, membership of Council, or motions to be put to the AGM, should be sent to the Hon. Secretary, Dr. I. G. Vincent, 21 Cedar Avenue, Beeston, Nottingham NG9 2HA, or e-mailed to ian.vincent@cantab.net, by 1st June.

Nominations should give the name of the candidate together with those of the proposer and seconder, and state that the consent of the candidate has been obtained.

There are expected to be six vacancies on Council. The four retiring members (Peter Death, Martin French, Ian Lines and Alan Pidcock) and one co-opted member (Strat Liddiard) have stated that they are willing to serve again and so do not need to be nominated, but at least one additional nomination is required.

Opposite page: James Tuttiett dressed well for winter AC at Hamtsworth (photo by Chris Roberts)




Tournament Regulations Announcement

The AC Tournaments Committee, in conjunction with the GC Tournaments Committee, announce the Croquet Association Tournament Regulations for 2013. The major changes are as follows:

1. For handicap-restricted events, players' handicaps on the allocation date (rather than the closing date) are now relevant for determining eligibility. This change will provide reduced uncertainty for those players near a cut-off point.
2. Best-of-N matches now have a minimum time limit of 1.5 hours for each game. This avoids the potential for games extending beyond the bell making a nonsense of subsequent games. International players may wish to note that this is not the same as the new WCF regulation which covers this subject.
3. Dynamic Grade is now explicitly referenced throughout the regulations, so adopting the new ranking system that has been adopted world-wide for AC. The CGS Grade is still to be used for GC.
4. Any member of a CA member club is now eligible to participate in Inter-Club events.
5. The Approved Super-Advanced Variations to laws have been merged. In terminology that will be familiar to those who have played or watched events using this variation, TV3 is now the only permitted variation. TV1 and TV2 have been withdrawn.

A number of other changes have been made to correct typos, increase consistency with WCF regulations and where clarification or simplification was felt necessary. A full list of changes and the full regulations can be found on the CA website:

<http://www.croquet.org.uk/?p=tournament/regulations.html>



It's been a busy winter for the CA and there is much to announce

The Golf Croquet 'B' Level Series & National Final

Chris Roberts

The CA GC Tournaments Committee is pleased to announce the launch The Golf Croquet 'B' Level Series and National Final. This brings together all 11 of the tournaments listed in the CA Calendar, and in this first year each of those events will send one qualifier to the national final at the end of the season, with a 12th going to the 'lucky' loser.

This all came about thanks to a simultaneous 'good idea' voiced by Jennet Blake of Nottingham and Richard Jenkins at Hamptworth. The concept is to create what one might call a junior version of the Ascot Cup qualification series, with the hope that it will provide, for some at least, a stepping stone to tournament play at that higher level.

Handicap restrictions differ between the 'B' Level series tournaments, so it has been

decided that only a player who starts a tournament day with a handicap of three or more will be eligible for the national final.

Series Director Chris Roberts encourages all keen 'mid-range' GC players to enter one or more of the following tournaments and hopes that more events will join the series in the coming years.

- 4/5 May - Sussex County
- 11 May - Hamptworth #1
- 12 May - Hamptworth #2
- 13 May - Watford
- 22 June - Wrest Park
- 17 July - Nottingham
- 27 July - Hamptworth #3
- 28 July - Hamptworth #4
- 16/17 Aug - Phyllis Court
- 17 Aug - Guildford
- 10 Sept - Edgbaston
- 12 Oct - Hamptworth (National Final)**

CRB becomes DBS

Ian Vincent

The new emphasis on youth activities has led to a renewed focus on child protection, which of course has been much in the news of late. The system and requirements for checking that people do not have anything in their records to indicate that they should not be working with children has changed since the enactment of the Freedom of Information Act 2012 last September, the replacement of the Independent Safeguarding Agency by the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) in December, and will change again from a date yet to be announced this spring.

Ian Vincent, the CA Secretary, attended a briefing and workshop arranged by the Sport and Recreation Alliance in early March about these changes, and has reported back to the CA's Child Protection Officer, Jean Hargreaves, who is planning to update the guidance to clubs in the light of them. Council has authorised its Management Committee to set up arrangements for obtaining and administering portable disclosures once the details of the new system are known. Watch this space...

News from the CA Office

Liz Larsson

We have completed the main administrative round of the year, sending out the annual mailing to individual members and clubs alike. Entries for both club and individual competitions and tournaments are starting to arrive.

Club Competitions and Tournaments - By the time you read this, the draws will have taken place for the following:

AC Inter-Club, The Longman Cup, The Mary Rose, The Secretary's Shield.

GC Inter-Club Championship, GC Murphy Inter-Club Shield.

There is still time to finalise entries for both the AC and GC All England Handicaps, and many thanks to clubs who have provisionally indicated that they are going to be entering. Grass Roots and Centre Stage entries need to be received by 31 May and should be sent directly to the Director, Terrey Sparkes and not the CA office please – there are full details in the Fixtures Book.

Selection - Players may now make themselves available for the Ascot Cup if they wish. Although this is an event for which players must qualify, it does not follow that they will be available to play. So if you have already qualified or are entering a qualification tournament and wish to play in the Ascot Cup, please make yourself available.

Insurance - All full member clubs receive Public Liability Insurance as part of their membership. Insurance runs from the end of April, so new certificates will be sent to clubs during April and May. Clubs are reminded that Club Membership falls due on 1 May, and the certificates are not posted out until membership is actually renewed.

The CA Shop - With Paul Hands offering advice and assistance, the shop has made a good start to the trading year. Paul and Liz Larsson are always happy to help with queries and advice. It's not just CA members that benefit: The general public are also keen to take our advice when buying croquet equipment and last year we sold more than 200 sets.

Archives - The CA's archives go back to the 1890s with minute-books, year books, Gazettes and a library of croquet books. Whilst these cannot be lent out, members are welcome to come and use them for research in the office in Cheltenham. Please make an appointment to use this valuable resource.

It's Bamford, Dixon or the Nasrs

The WCF Egyptian Pharaohs Golf Croquet World Championship takes place in Cairo from 21 to 28 April

Chris Roberts asked Stephen Mulliner who he has his money on.

Can Reg Bamford beat Ahmed Nasr and the other Egyptians in their own back yard?

That's the big question that the veteran of many GC World Championships, Stephen Mulliner, is asking himself in the run up to the Cairo event, the first time the Egyptians have acted as hosts since 2000.

"It would be great to see Reg getting his revenge for 2008 by beating Ahmed Nasr in the final and thereby becoming the first player ever to hold the GC and AC World Championships simultaneously. That would be quite an achievement", said Mulliner.

"However, the Egyptians have great strength in depth and will have the distinct advantage of playing at home, in mid-season and without any interference from the weather. The Nasr brothers will almost certainly be to the fore but there are plenty of others who could do well, especially the younger players".

Ahmed Nasr was world champion in 2004 and 2008, Mohammed Nasr kept it in the family in the 2006 and all but one of the nine previous championships have been won by Egyptians.

"It is a shame that reigning world

champion Mark McInerney of Ireland won't be there to defend his title but I understand that he is not playing much croquet at the moment" continued Mulliner, who also singled out Sherif Nafee, Amr Bahar and 2011 runner-up Hisham Abu Osbaa as other experienced home stars to watch.

"I played many of the Egyptians last October at their International Open Tournament and saw the best juniors in action.

I was really impressed by Hami Erian, Amr El Ibieri and Yasser Esmat and would not be surprised if one of them reached the semi-final. I came third in that event and am disappointed not to be travelling to Cairo again this time".

It is a familiar tale for our amateur sport, that so often other things in life get in the way and Mulliner's absence is a case in point. He is a county council candidate and has to be at home campaigning in preparation for the elections on 2 May.

"Time is not infinite and many of our best GC players have other commitments, not least towards AC" said Mulliner, who explained that for a good few, their priority is selection for the MacRobertson Shield next January. "With many of our top GC players also playing the other code, it is always going to be a problem finding time to fit everything in. There is no Robert Fulford or Rutger Beijderwellen in the field and I am especially sorry not to see Will Gee being able to make the event, because he played so well early on in the

World Teams event in November to beat Reg Bamford.

The other nations face similar commitment problems from their best players and I can't see anyone from either Australia or the USA getting to the later stages. However, Duncan Dixon, the top New Zealander, was in superb form in Johannesburg where he beat Ahmed Nasr twice. He also won the U-21 World Championship in Cairo in 2009 and so knows the conditions. He is my other non-Egyptian pick."

What did Mulliner think of our English players' chances?

"We aren't able to send a particularly strong representation this time for the reasons given earlier. However, I think that Tim King could surprise people. When he is on form he is a match for anyone and then we have Jacob Carr, who also played really well in Johannesburg, and Howard Cheyne who is another strong player. Both played in the 2011 World Championship and know what to expect."

The English contingent is completed by Nick Cheyne, John Spiers, Martin French, Tobi Savage and David Crawford, while Scotland's lone representative is Jamieson Walker. For some of these players this will be a baptism of fire on the world stage but a thrilling experience awaits them for sure.

So the word from Mulliner is that it will be Bamford, Dixon or the Nasrs. We will see...

You can follow the progress of the GC World Championships on the new Croquet Scores website www.croquetscores.com and see a full list of players on the WCF site www.wcfcroquet.org.

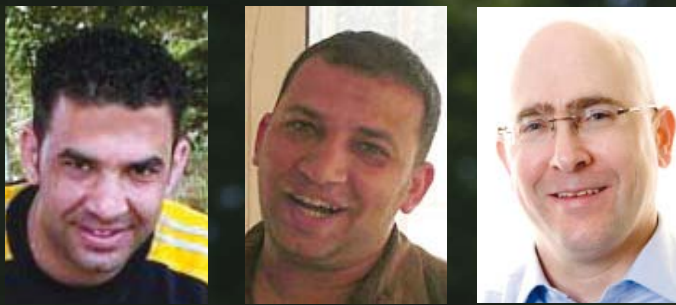


Only 5.6 milion listen to Tobi

The prize for getting croquet to the biggest audience goes to Ramsgate's Tobi Savage who won our game some more excellent exposure in mid-February

Tobi earned himself a three-minute interview on prime time National Radio 2 on Simon Mayo's 'Drive Time' evening show in the 'Friday Fixture' slot. This is a regular feature where a different minority sport is featured each week.

Tobi managed to enthuse enough to researchers about Golf Croquet that he got on air and was coolness personified when talking to 5.6 million listeners! He managed to pack in lots of positive information to champion our sport in the run-up to The GC World Championships. It helped, of course, that he is the current holder and two-time winner of the All England GC Handicap and will be stepping up to the world event later this month.



Cairo date for Cheyne Gang

The Cheyne brothers, Howard and Nick, won't have to look far for support in Cairo – Mum, Dad and both the boys' partners are all going on the trip too, *writes Chris Roberts.*

And this isn't a case of pitching up to just to see the lads now that they are on the world stage, because it would have been more of a surprise if they weren't all going! Parents Sue and Rod have been supporting their sons right from the start of their croquet careers and are now regarded as much as 'regulars' on the Ascot Cup circuit as many of the players.

Rod spoke fondly of the warm welcome they are always extended at the tournaments they attend and of the many players they now see as friends.

"Everyone thinks that we know more about croquet than we actually do, which is a compliment I suppose," said Rod. "We are really looking forward to Cairo". Fast becoming just as familiar at the side of the court are the girls, Howard's fiancé Sarah Penrose and Nick's girlfriend Steph Bray, who are pictured above with their men.

Photographs - *Opposite Page, top:* Reg Bamford *bottom:* Duncan Dixon

This page: The Championship Trophy (image by Tim King)

Above, left to right: The Cheyne Gang - Rod, Sue, Steph, Nick, Sarah and Howard

Head shots: clockwise from top left: Mohamed Nasr, Ahmed Nasr, Tim King, Jacob Carr, Martin French and Jamieson Walker

Action images: clockwise from top left: Sherif Nafee, Tobi Savage, David Crawford and John Spiers (photos by Chris Roberts, Will Drake, David Crawford and Tim King)



Obituaries

Tony Blok 1938 - 2012



Tony Blok passed away, owing to a severe lung infection, on 26th December. His two daughters and son were with him.

Tony will be remembered in the croquet world as the enthusiast who retired to Corfu and built a club there, against all the odds. He negotiated a lease on suitable land on the edge of the marina; he did a favourable deal to obtain unlimited water for irrigation and initially built two courts, later expanded to three. His attention to detail was meticulous and only the best equipment and materials would do - he even had top dressing trucked from the UK.

For a while it was a struggle to recruit members and for a long time the core of the club comprised a group of expat Dutch working in the travel industry. However, he later managed to interest a few Greeks.

The club held its first tournament in 2007 (grandly called the Greek Championship, on the basis there was no other club or tournament in Greece!). It was followed by four other Championships and a handful of other international events. Most were sell-outs, not least because of Tony's ebullience, generosity and desire to ensure that everybody enjoyed their croquet-based holidays in the sun.

It is great news that the Croquet Club of Corfu will continue, and the Sixth Greek Championship will be held in October.

Before he retired, Tony was a solicitor in South London. He represented many hardened criminals. In a memorable moment when he visited Southwick for a tournament, he was greeted enthusiastically by a younger member, who then told everybody: "Tony's a diamond geezer; he got my mum off"!

Tony Blok was a member at Hurlingham and played most of his croquet there, as well as backgammon and bridge.

Kevin Carter

Peter Howell 1926 - 2012



The croquet fraternity lost a well respected member last December. Peter Howell was born in Liverpool, the son of a world-famous champion golfer. He attended the Bluecoat School in Birmingham and his education was interrupted during the 2nd World War. He joined the Royal Navy and went to Canada to train as a Fleet Air Arm fighter pilot. Peter was fortunate however, for while on a ship bound for Burma to fight the Japanese, the war ended and he was saved from having to shoot down a plane in combat.

His working life was spent in the world of commerce, mainly in the food industry, and he started his own company in the pioneering days of frozen food, frequently travelling far afield to Europe, North and South America, the Caribbean and the Far East.

After retiring to Spain where he spent many hours on the golf course, he returned to England, bought a house with a small croquet lawn and became hooked on the game. Typically of Peter, he rang the CA and asked how he could learn to play Association Croquet in a week, which of course was met with laughter! Uppermost in his mind was to set up a croquet club in Mijas, Spain. This was difficult to achieve

but, having made contact with the private Santa Rosa club in Jerez, he met Fernando de Ansorena and persuaded him to come to England to enter tournaments; a great friendship ensued.

Peter's first club was in Reigate, but in the mid-eighties he took over the Tunbridge Wells club which had only six members and was about to close. For the next 15 years, as Chairman, Treasurer and 'chief bottle-washer', Peter badgered the local Council for an alternative site in the town. His efforts were finally rewarded when the club moved to its present venue and, with improved facilities, the membership increased.

On moving to Budleigh Salterton, he and Audrey were made Honorary Life Members and when the Tunbridge Wells club heard of his passing they held a minute's silence as a mark of respect.

Peter won many tournaments all over the UK. He won a National Golf Croquet title, was twice National Veterans Champion and played in the Australian Open Championships. He was a Referee both in Association and Golf, a CA Coach and Club Handicapper.

Latterly he couldn't play croquet to the standard he wished but took great pleasure from coaching on a one-to-one basis and seeing his protégés win some silverware.

Peter had a great philosophy on life. That Liverpoolian dry wit and repartee were complemented by a kind, warm-hearted spirit. He would never bad-mouth anyone and he would support you if you needed help. He loved living in Budleigh, loved his croquet, bridge, musical theatre and pints of Guinness.

*Budleigh Salterton
Croquet Club*

Croquet on the Box (1)

South African viewers were treated to the croquet on TV with a half-hour show covering the GC World Teams Championship in Johannesburg.

Reg Bamford and Stephen Mulliner both did nice pieces to camera and Chris Wakeham, President of South African Croquet, did a good job as the expert summariser, keeping it simple for the uninitiated TV audience.

There was some nice camera work in covering selected shots, including some from a very high angle.

The programme was only spoilt by the over-use of background music.

You can view this show in great quality on You Tube and there is a direct link to it from the CA web site home page, listed under 'Latest Croquet News' and dated the day the link was published, 29 January (just scroll down to find it).

Letters to the Editor

A simple rule for both AC & GC says non QC

Following the article on the laws of the game in the last issue, I feel this Gordian knot should at last be cut for the benefit of everyone who does not have a law degree. Might I respectfully suggest that the rules concerning faults should be unified for both AC and GC in having the following simple rule: If a player commits a fault with regard to any of the balls, the opponent has the right to have the ball(s) replaced or left as they are and the next player takes his/her turn.

This might not always produce a fair result, rules can never cover every circumstance, and if they try to, the last state is often worse than the first, but it would be a great relief for all who are not QC's if we adopt this simple rule. Any objections?

Frank Lee - West Worthing CC

We are all getting older - What to do?

The future of croquet has been subjected to much thought and discussion in recent months (Growth and Recruitment - Gazette 332). Have we considered the impact of National Economic Policy on our game? Croquet is predominantly played by retired people (two-thirds are retired and less than 8% are aged under 40). This group is often also the backbone of many clubs taking on committee and ground maintenance tasks. As retirement age is pushed ever later, it is likely that the average age of players, and the age at which people take up the game, will get even older. I am fortunate to be in a job that has early retirement as a considerable benefit. People who follow me do not have this perk.

How can we make Croquet, and for me AC in particular, more accessible and available to people who work full-time?

Adam Moliver - Cheltenham CC

Errant managers are affecting the rankings

Here's a topic that would have interested me if it had been in the Croquet Gazette because I knew little about it before an email exchange with WCF Rankings Officer, Chris Williams and Elizabeth Larsson, Manager, Croquet Association.

A manager of a Croquet Association (AC) tournament is supposed to record players' results which subsequently appear on the World Croquet Federation website (<http://rank.wcfcroquet.org/rank.php>).

Last week I discovered that three tournaments from the past two seasons are missing from my record. That's because the manager didn't send in the results.

If you discover a gap in your tournament record, the person to contact is WCF Rankings Officer, Chris Williams (results@croquet.org.uk) who administers the ranking system, and chases up errant managers who fail to supply the raw data.

He relies on players to inform him which tournament results are missing, and which manager to pursue.

Results affect your official rank. Some tournaments are subject to an entry condition: "If oversubscribed on the allocation date, places will be allocated according to the latest Official Rankings list".

The official ranking list is also valuable as an on-line diary of games played over many seasons, and allows you to follow the progress of your croquet cronies regardless of where in the world they play.

NB. For missing golf croquet tournaments the contact person is the WCF Rankings Officer, Stephen Mulliner (<http://www.wcfcroquet.org/joomla/index.php/rankings>).

Greg Wicksteed - East Dorset CC

WCF Rankings Officer, Chris Williams adds: Managers may wish to consider using the new Croquet Scores results entry website at (<http://www.croquetscores.com/>).

This website has been set up by Tim Murphy of Australia, and allows managers of AC and GC tournaments to enter results easily.

These are then updated and viewed in real time.

The site also produces results for the World Ranking Officers exactly in the preferred format for easy inclusion into the rankings.

100 years ago - 1913



Dear Sir,

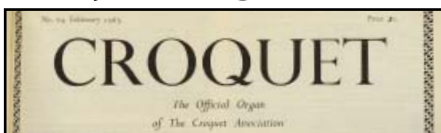
Certainly your last two issues have been most interesting.

To read the letters of those players (managers I can quite understand look askance at innovations) who rave about "the alternatives", anyone might think that

"the powers that be" are all drivelling maniacs, instead of being good men anxious to improve our game. I should like to have a little bet with the first ten "Anti-alternatives" that I hear from, of 5 shillings each, that when season 1914 appears, Alternative "A" will still be in vogue. I quite agree the "top hole" men will still win, but if two of that ilk are playing together, it will not be such a case of "The man who wins the toss, wins the match" as it is under the old style.

Yours truly, W.Christopherson

50 years ago - 1963



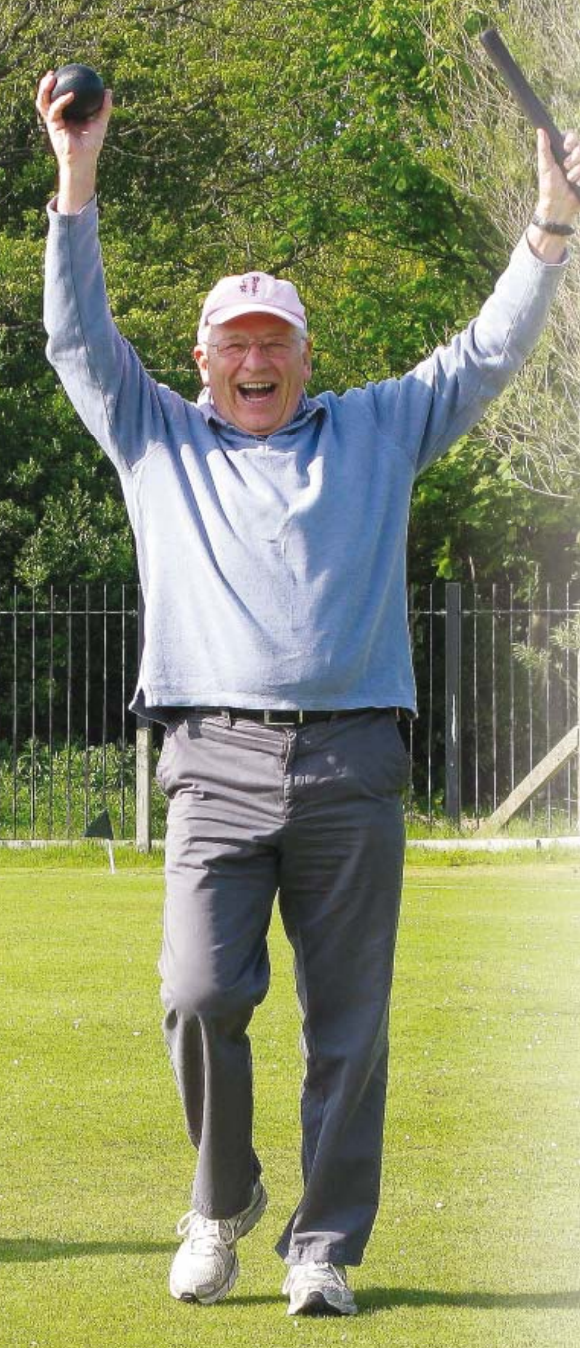
Southwick - A Demonstration of Indoor Croquet was held in December and we were favoured by a visit from Mr.Cotter, who officially declared the venue open, having been welcomed as the Chairman. A straightforward game was played by Messrs.Roper and Cotter, followed by alternative variations of Indoor Croquet by those who were experienced players. Mrs.Chittenden kindly provided one of her attractive afternoon teas . . . I.H.T.

10 years ago - 2003



Dear Sir,

The Croquet Players at Hurlingham Club send their best wishes to the CA staff at their new home. We hope that they are enjoying the purpose built facilities, which they so deserve. It could be that they do not miss us - or that Portakabin - but we miss them! We miss their friendly and helpful presence at our Club. Bronach Reid, Chairman, Croquet Sub-Committee, Hurlingham Club



'BLUE IS THE COLOUR' for Charity One Ball Competition

The annual Charity One Ball competition signals the start of the season proper for many. Organiser Kevin Carter is hoping that this national event can break last year's terrific tally of £3,085 for this season's chosen charity, Prostate Cancer UK.

And after two years supporting Breast Cancer UK when everyone enjoyed dressing in pink for the day, this year for Prostate Cancer UK – Blue is the Colour!

Clubs around the country are holding their heats to raise funds and qualify players for two regional finals which will both be held on 12 May at Winchester and Bowdon. Kevin Carter is the contact for the southern final and for the northern it's Ken Cooper.

At Bowdon there will be space for further direct entries into the northern final, for the premium entry fee of £20 (£10 of which will go to charity).

But first it's all the club heats. Although most smaller clubs hold their heats just for their members, where there is more room some clubs often accept guests - notably Surbiton, Nottingham, Southwick and Hamptworth. Anybody wishing to play in one of these events, or indeed to ask if they can play in another heat, should contact the club secretary, and there is no bar to playing in more than one heat.

Organisers are still waiting to hear from a

few clubs who usually support the event, but the known calendar of club heats currently reads:

17.3.13 Reigate	23.4 Woking
23.3 Bowdon	26.4 Southwick
23.3 Northampton	27.4 Hamptworth (with Winchester)
24.3 Nailsea	28.4 Hurlingham
24.3 Tunbridge W.	28.4 Southport
07.4 Surbiton	05.5 Bear of Rodborough
11.4 Sidmouth	19.5 Chelmsford (after the final, but still contributing to charity) TBA: Bristol, Caterham, Lymm, Durham & Aukland
13.4 Middlesbro'	
14.4 Dulwich	
17.4 Phyllis Court	
20.4 Blewbury	
20.4 Nottingham	
21.4 Guildford & Godalming	

Please do join in with this light-hearted competition in aid of such a worthy cause.

Prostate Cancer UK is a registered charity in England and Wales (1005541) and in Scotland (SC039332). Registered company number 2653887.



Southport's Peter Bundred celebrates victory at a previous Charity One Ball event. Photograph by Tony Thomas



Is your croquet lawn getting enough fertiliser? Red Thread is a great indicator of an under-

Red Thread Threat

nourished lawn. Look for splotches of pink grass two or three inches across; it is easy to recognise but the pink can be quite subtle to the untrained eye. You will find photographs of Red Thread at Google Images.

How much Nitrogen? This varies from 5kg to 11kg per lawn each year depending on grass type and environment. For example, rye grass is hungrier than bents and fescues, and nutrients will wash through a light sandy soil, so more needs to be applied.

Fertiliser always carries three numbers, for example 8.0.10. These tell you the percentage of Nitrogen, Potassium and Phosphorus in the bag. So in this case 8% of the bag is Nitrogen. A 25kg bag would therefore contain 2kg of nitrogen.

How much to apply? If you make three applications during the season (April, June and August) you can calculate the application rate required. Using the above example, if you spread one bag over the lawn three times a year you would have applied 3 x 2 kg = 6kg

of nitrogen during the year. One and a half bags would increase this to 9kg per annum and two bags

would be 12kg per annum, which is probably too much. It is best to buy a "slow release" fertiliser which will release nutrients over an eight- to ten-week period.

How to apply? You will need a good quality lawn spreader which will distribute the fertiliser across a three-metre width on each pass (don't get a drop spreader, they take too long).

What else should you do? A healthy croquet lawn needs an active root zone full of micro-organisms which are the stuff of life for roots. They need oxygen which can be provided by regular aeration. A Sarrel Spiker is ideal if you have the means to tow it. This type has very thin tines which won't disrupt the playing surface.

Paul Woodham of the Sports Turf Research Institute tells me that the biggest problem they find on sports turf is under feeding which leads to all sorts of problems. It is easy to apply the right amount of fertiliser and if you are undercooking it you will see Red Thread.

By Duncan Hector



A challenge for Euan & Ian 21 clubs in 5 days!

Eleven-year-old Euan Burridge and his father Ian will be attempting to play a game of golf croquet at 21 Clubs in just five days. This is a Charity fund-raising tour in aid of Leukaemia and Lymphoma Research and the motivation is their mother/wife Catriona's successful treatment for Leukaemia in early 2012.

Inspired by football's 92 Club (membership of which requires attending a match at each of the 92 Football League grounds), the idea is to try to play croquet at all the 19 croquet clubs still in existence which have hosted a CA Selection Eight. For good measure they will be including both Hamptworth and Pendle & Craven, which will host The Eights for the first time in 2013 and 2014 respectively and all this takes place in between 29 May and 2 June!

Chris Williams (Croquet's very own 'Statto') said: "I don't think that anyone has played at all the previous venues before."

At only eleven, Euan is not surprisingly one of the CA's youngest members, yet he competed in his first calendar fixture (*as pictured*) at the tender age of just seven!

Father Ian, who is a regular tournament player and has represented Great Britain at Association Croquet, said: "We hope that

at each club, singles games will be played against local members, either at handicap or level play as appropriate, and at Nailsea they have come up with the novel idea of holding a raffle amongst their members for the chance to play Euan, so raising funds for the charity that way".

Euan who has the role of Charity Co-ordinator at his school said: "I'm really hoping that we will be able to raise lots of money. I have been to quite a few croquet clubs to see Dad play and I have already played at Nottingham, Colchester and Ramsgate myself. Hopefully it will be good fun and I will win some of my games".

The charity tour will begin in Hunstanton and travel in an approximately clockwise direction around the country, ending at the Burridges' home club of Nottingham. Ian says that the most challenging day will probably be day three, when the schedule takes in three different islands! Father and son start that day with a flight back from Jersey and later on have to make a ferry crossing from the mainland to the Isle of Wight. Ian regards the flights to and from Jersey as the biggest potential problem but is also concerned about the traffic on the M5 northbound on a Saturday. As he

says: "Does it really take 2 hours 17 minutes to drive the 83 miles from Ramsgate to Eastbourne, as Google Maps suggests?"

I am sure that everyone will wish young Euan and father Ian 'bonne chance' on this ambitious and exciting adventure.

The Schedule

Wednesday 29 May
Hunstanton, Colchester, Hurlingham, Roehampton, Surbiton

Thursday 30 May
Ramsgate, Compton, Southwick, Jersey

Friday 31 May
Hamptworth, Ryde, Parkstone

Saturday 1 June
Budleigh, Sidmouth, Nailsea, Cheltenham, Bowdon

Sunday 2 June Heaton Pk, Southport, Pendle and Craven, Nottingham

Donations can be made at www.justgiving.com/croquettour or a text donation of £5 can be made by texting 'TOUR76 £5' to 70070 (text donations of £1, £2 or £10 can also be made). Further details and progress will be available at: www.facebook.com/croquettour and www.twitter.com/burridgeian.

Croquet on the Box (2)

Michael 'Choo Choo' Portillo followed his Bradshaw's Guide and found croquet on his exploration of 'Great British Railway Journeys' for the BBC. It took him to the All England Club at Wimbledon, where he was given a brief history of croquet at the club by Mike Hann, before our intrepid politician-cum-traveller was told to "choose your weapon". And what do you know; he sunk the only hoop shot that we saw him play! How many 'takes' were necessary before our hero scored his three yarder, I wonder? "Beginner's luck" he quipped. I don't believe it for a moment!

Chris Roberts

David Barrett
The maker of Powerflex croquet mallets

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SP6 'Aerotech'

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The exclusive Powerflex shaft can assist players achieve increased shot distance. Powerflex can also help avoid problems with aching wrists and fingers

10 things you might not know about the Croquet Association

by Quiller Barrett, CA President

More than 1,000 players responded to the CA's Survey last year and about half of them gave us their comments on a variety of croquet topics. Often respondents were passionate as well as articulate in expressing their views and a common theme was that players were ignorant about what the Croquet Association does.

The CA Poster

The CA's Marketing Committee has taken the initiative to produce a poster that includes some facts which may come as a surprise to many.

It is reproduced on the inside front cover of this Gazette.

Clubs have been sent laminated versions of the poster and we have asked Club Secretaries to display them on noticeboards. If you don't see the poster at your club please tell Liz Larsson in the office (caoffice@croquet.org.uk or 01242 242318) and we will send you another one. It's now up to everyone – CA committee members, Federation and Club officials, and you – to spread the word about your Association. If your croquet friends say to you "I've no idea what the CA does for me and my club" just ask them to read the poster, and then suggest their friends do the same. **Thank you very much.**

Grant secures Steelfort mower for Wingrave

by Richard Keighley

Wingrave CC has been the fortunate recipient of a Development Grant of £950 from the Croquet Association towards the cost of a new professional cylinder mower.

Wingrave is a hilltop village overlooking Aylesbury Vale in the north eastern corner of Buckinghamshire with an attractive

Recreation Ground surrounded by half-timbered cottages built in 1876 by Hannah de Rothschild for farm workers. The Earl of Rosebery, donated the 'Rec' to the village in 1924 and it has been used for sport and recreation ever since. The Croquet Club was formed in 2006 and allocated a corner of the 'Rec' in 2008. Members were kindly loaned an ancient, but still serviceable, vintage cylinder mower by Wrest Park CC. Five years on, this became

Split Rear Roller type with a cut width of 26", Honda 4hp engine and ten blade cylinder with turf rake.

The cost was to be £1900. With help from Southern Federation Development Officer Chris Roberts, the Club applied to the CA for a Development Grant and the successful outcome enabled us to clinch further funds

from the Community Chest established by Aylesbury Vale District Council.

Having succeeded in sustaining a membership of around 25 since its formation, Wingrave's newly purchased mower will allow a steady improvement of the playing surface and a flatter more closely-cropped lawn to appeal to existing and new members alike.

What has the CA

CA Development Grants

The CA Development Committee met twice in the winter months and was pleased to approve grants to member clubs for various projects. All successful applications for assistance have been subject to scrutiny by the committee.

In line with CA policy, no grant exceeds half of the total cost of any particular project, and in some cases the award is subject to conditions.

The maximum grant available is £5,000 for clubs with two or more lawns or £1,000 for smaller clubs.

Recent Beneficiaries

- Bishop Monkton** - £3,000 – land drainage and lawn levelling
- Craig y Don** - £900 – secure store
- Kenilworth** - £3,000 –replacement hut
- Lodsworth** - £1,000 –establishment of a lawn for this new club
- Nailsea & District** - £3,900 - towards lawn improvement
(in instalments over four years)
- Sussex County** - £3,500 - relaying of Lawn 8
- Swindon** - £4,668 – major works; lawn maintenance equipment
- Tattenhall** - £500 – a new lawn
- Wingrave** - £950 – new mower



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ever done for us?

Security for Craig y Don

Jack Pattenden, Club Chairman

Landudno Club Craig y Don has just been the grateful recipient of a CA development grant.

The club was formed only last year and the first games played on its lawns in June. In the spring we found that there was a bowling green in our midst with better facilities adjacent to the community centre and that it was only used by the bowlers during the winter, when their own lawn was closed. The bowlers said they would be delighted to see it used and maintained for croquet between April and September.

The next step was to find out if others in the locality wanted to play croquet. We got an enthusiastic "go ahead!" from the 40 people who attended a public meeting, and

a steering committee was formed, subscriptions collected, and a number of voluntary donations gratefully received. We joined the CA and the North West Federation, which gave us the opportunity to go begging for any spare equipment! In particular we thank Pendle and Craven and Fylde for gifts of mallets, hoops and balls.

The CA provided us with a start-up kit

so we were ready to start using our two short lawns.

However, we needed a store for our equipment, because our metal garden shed was quickly vandalised. We realised we had to raise funds for a secure store of concrete and steel, and the best price we could find was £2,141.

We approached the CA who very quickly agreed to provide a grant of £900, for which we are extremely grateful. Our members contributed to a building fund which raised a magnificent £650 and we also received £450 from Conwy Voluntary Services Council.

So now our 41 members are the proud owners of a brand new store as pictured and look forward to a more secure second season.



CA backing aids Nottingham's Olympic legacy funding to the tune of a cool £24,951

Ian Vincent, Club Secretary



Shortly before the Gazette went to press, work began on Nottingham Croquet Club's latest phase of their automatic irrigation system project with the 'turning of the first sod' landmark.

The Croquet Association awarded Nottingham a development grant to part fund the works (as reported in the Gazette issue 340) and having the backing of the National Governing Body is usually vital to securing additional funds.

So it turned out to be in this case, when the Club successfully applied for National Lottery funding and were rewarded to the tune of a cool £24,951. This came through the 'Inspired Facilities' scheme which is part of the £150 million 'Places People Play' London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games legacy programme.

Nottingham had already sunk a £10,000 borehole down to water lying some 30 metres below its lawns. Club secretary Ian Vincent said "Drawing water from below ground is environmentally sound and will be cheaper for the club in the long run. And by watering during the night when evaporation is at its least, we'll be able to use the water resource sparingly. Keeping our lawns in top condition will mean we can continue to host international tournaments and we are proud to be staging a World Championship Qualifier in August. We can also welcome schools, community groups, and local businesses for team bonding days".

Nottingham CC were awarded the CA's Millennium Award in February, in recognition of their significant progress in taking on three ex-bowling greens which now gives them an impressive eight-lawn facility and all year round croquet.

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CROQUET GOES TO SCHOOL

by Chris Roberts

Breakthrough for our sport at Magdalen College School

Croquet is to be taught as a proper games lesson at Magdalen College School in Oxford this summer term. Frances Colman and Chris Roberts will be teaching croquet twice a week to sixth-form girls at this prestigious school (founded in 1480) and believe that this is a real breakthrough for our sport.

Is this the first time that croquet will have been taught as a full sports lesson in a school?

It will certainly be the first time for many years and if the project finds favour at MCS, it will be an excellent recommendation for other schools to follow.

MCS is in the heart of Oxford and this year will send 50 pupils to the City's university colleges or those of great

rivals Cambridge and, with croquet already being played at several of those establishments, some of the girls will be able to continue the sport easily upon leaving the school.

Frances and Chris will be in good company as specialist sports coaches as, alongside MCS's acclaimed academic successes, the school also takes sport seriously and already has former England international cricketers John Crawley and Phil deFreitas on their staff.

Sports teacher Sadie Lapper told her recently recruited coaches that there was a real excitement amongst the girls when croquet was offered, and that those who have chosen to sign up for the croquet option are already in double figures. MCS admitted girls for the first time only two years ago and see croquet as an ideal accompanying sport to the more physical demands of athletics.

There is already talk of a possible match with Eton and the girls haven't struck a ball yet! Their first lesson will be on 15 April.

Facebook i reaches ou

by Rachel Rowe

According to the latest CA survey only 2% of members are under 30 years old.

This isn't just that young players are not joining the CA; there just aren't many young players within our clubs.

We are trying to do something about it!

Youth Croquet Network Facebook Group



There is now a group on Facebook called 'Youth Croquet Network' which has started to disseminate, discuss and organise national and local issues, coaching and events relating to 'youth' croquet. The group evolved from a Facebook thread started by Rachel Rowe as a discussion to see what sort of demand there might be for an U21 Tournament. Eugene Chang took up the idea and set up this Facebook group which has had a very positive response so far and at the time of writing we had 118 members from all over the world!

It is free to join Facebook and create an account in order to see some of the group's discussions.

The group is located here:

facebook.com/groups/youthcroquetnetwork

Two main ideas that have arisen so far:

- The possibility of running fun days for local schools to have a go at the sport. Advertise in local papers, introduce the game gently and have coaching for the kids at the weekends.

- Clubs should use their younger players to help run coaching sessions when trying to encourage younger players. They will make the game more relatable and help with the 'cool' rating.



Nottingham's Street Cred

Nottingham CC's David Brydon reports that many schools use National School Sports Week (this year 24-28 June) to give their students a chance to try new sports beyond the standard mainstream offerings. His club is keen to promote croquet among younger people, both at their local university next door to the club, but also while they are still at school. The Heads of Sport at Nottingham High School and Nottingham Girls' High School have both welcomed this approach. The club will be supplying equipment and personnel for the week, which is likely to be on grass at the schools. Nottingham is fortunate in having two relative youngsters in Rachel Rowe and Will Gee who will be in attendance to supply a bit of 'street cred'. Meanwhile the club committee is debating whether to offer temporary membership at a nominal fee to students who enjoy the taster sessions and wish to explore croquet further during the remainder of the season.

Calling All Young Players

Eugene Chang is looking at arranging a weekend of croquet for younger players at Parsons Green, possibly in early July.

This initiative might even extend to a couple of other locations around the country as well.

If you know any young players in your club or federation with potential, who might be interested in attending a young players' weekend or playing in the U21s, please contact Eugene Chang, Marcus Evans or Rachel Rowe.

~

Ashby CC are trying hard with their own youth initiative and are running four Sunday mornings of tuition starting on 19 May.

The Club's Martin Wroughton has contacted local schools, guides, scouts and Duke of Edinburgh's award groups but the response has been slow. A possible youth tournament is in the offing if there is sufficient demand.

initiative t to young

CA Competitions for Young Players

The CA has a few AC competitions designed specifically for younger players – The Junior Championships, The Schools Championship and The Student Championships. But the latter is the only one of these that has attracted sufficient entries to be viable in the past couple of years. The Student Championships is held at Oxford University Croquet Club and in the recent years has drawn players from Oxford, Cambridge, Warwick, Bath and Nottingham Universities.

A number of other CA competitions offer reduced entry fees for juniors, and so younger players should remember that it's always worth checking before you enter. It would be nice if more clubs would offer discounts in this way.

There have previously been three England v Ireland U21 team events and the last two of these have seen a mixture of codes, with one day each for GC and AC. There is the possibility of another match this year. Such an event should be eligible for a CA bursary contribution, which basically includes up to 50% off the cost of travel, entry and accommodation (up to the value of £500 for one

year) for appropriate competitions. More information about this can be found in CA website.

CA Mentoring Scheme

For up and coming young players, the guidance of a senior player can be very helpful. The CA offers a Mentoring Scheme that can put you in contact with some of the top players for guidance on anything croquet related. There are more details about this on the website, but please contact Stephen Mulliner if you are interested.



Above: A rather young looking Will Gee (left) accepts the winner's spoils at the Junior Championships from a similarly youthful Eugene Chang, on the occasion the event was last held in 2007. The shield is actually for the handicap competition which was the main event that year. Will still has possession of the shield and will be delighted if another Junior Championship comes to fruition so that he can pass it to the next young pretender.

Photo by Rachel Rowe

Main Picture: 17 year old Harry Dodge of Bath CC, playing here in the SWF Intermediate Final hosted at Nailsea. Harry played in the U21 GC World Championships when he was only 15.

Photo by Roger Hayes

Center of page: Ascot Cup circuit regular Ryan Cabble with hoodie and 'nice' socks.

- What's he like! :o)

Photo by Howard Cheyne



You are the Ref

by Bill Arliss and Ian Vincent

In this issue we again deal with a situation that can arise in either Golf or Association Croquet, but where the way the laws treat it is different:

Situation: A player tries to run an angled hoop with a jump shot. The ball goes through, but only after hitting a clip that was on the hoop. What would be your decision if asked to rule on this?

Note that in both games, the laws say that clips should be removed before any stroke in which a ball is likely to come into contact with them. Additionally, clips (and especially if clothes pegs are used) can spring off a hoop quite violently and there has been at least one case of a player sustaining a serious eye injury after being hit by a flying clip. Referees will often remove clips if asked to watch a shot, so as to eliminate a source of noise that might confuse their judgment.



GC Decision:

In Golf Croquet, clips are defined in Law 4(d) as an accessory and accessories are given as examples of outside agencies in Law 9(d). The general law for dealing with interference with a moving ball by an outside agency is Law 9(f), but for clips that has been overridden by International Ruling 9.3. This states that clips should be removed if a ball is likely to hit one and that if a ball does hit a clip that was not removed the ball stays where it stopped; there is no replay and no point is scored in that turn. So the ball is left where it ended up (whether or not hitting the clip actually affected whether the ball went through the hoop).

AC Decision:

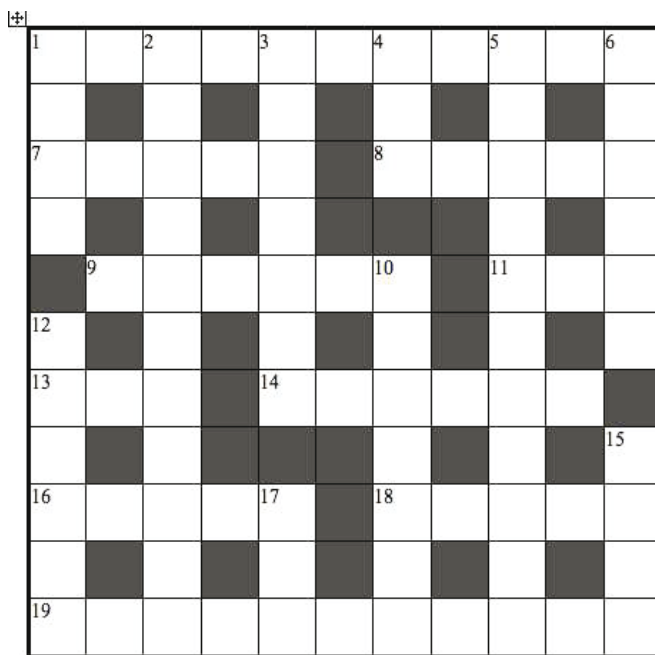
In Association Croquet clips are defined in Law 3(d), which again says that they should be removed if likely to influence the path of a ball in the next stroke, but refers to Law 35(c) if a ball does hit one. 35(c) states that, providing the clip belonged to the striker's game and was attached to the hoop, there is no interference and hence no remedy. So the ball is left where it ended up and the point is scored. Incidentally it goes on to say that a clip not attached to a hoop, or which belongs to another game, is to be treated as an outside agency under Law 33(a).

CROSSWORD

'18-point game' by Dis

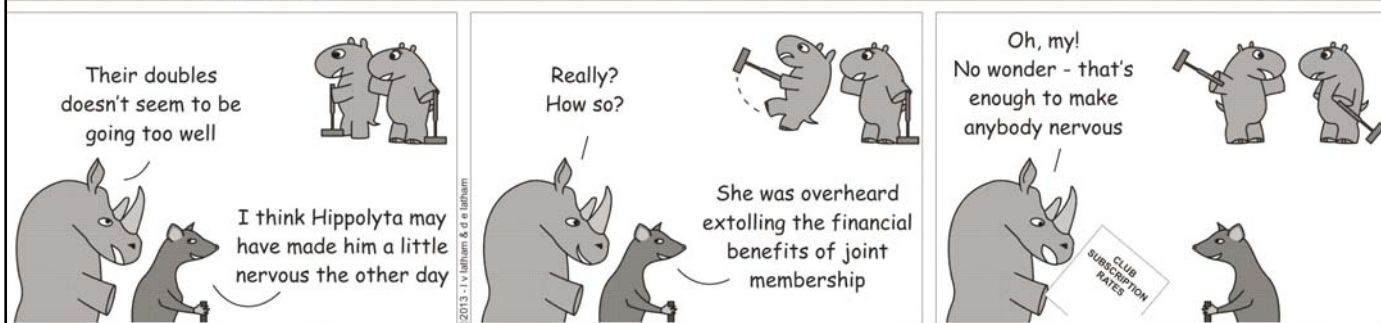
- Across 1, 3 dn.** Game run by 3 dn, 1 ac. (11,7)
7. I'm here, Henry, measure about a yard, love. (5)
8. Cheat? Why, of course, regularly. (5)
9. Watch learner accept what is essential to roquet. It follows. (6)
11, 13. Mirror? Rover has one. (3-3)
14. You can hit this time, many swings with power. (8)
16. Tests late morning shooting (without giving a hollow cry). (5)
18. Green ball available to roquet? (5)
19. TV programme about high bisquers? (3,8)
Down 1. With red around it's got there. In fact it's long. (4)
2. What you might get from performing real live TPs? (6,5)
3,1 ac. See 1 ac, 3 dn. (7,11).
4. see 17.
5. Rain! Nice and stormy. Make red. (11)
6. End of game with negative team. (2-4)
10. Aberdonian lad grips a mallet poorly at first. Aggressive take off? (7)
12. Witness a tense international. (6)
15. They're in the middle of the lawn, little Margaret and son. (4)
17, 4. Display prominently where two Edinburgh clubs play of a Wednesday? (6)

Every grid entry is in *The Chambers Dictionary (2008)* though not all of the answers are. The solution to this puzzle is on page 22.



HOOPOPOTAMUS

by Victor



KEN COOPER

Lifetime Coaching Award

Chairman of the Coaching Committee Roger Staples

devotes his column this issue to congratulating Ken Cooper of Bowdon who has been awarded the accolade of a Lifetime Coaching Award.

In addition to his long service at Bowden, Ken became the NW Federation's Coaching Officer three years ago; in that time he has totally revolutionised the 'thinking and active involvement' of all our clubs and exposed individual players to the benefits of good progressive croquet coaching.

Prior to his appointment in 2010 the federation only ever received a nominal number of requests for coaching. Ken was therefore charged with the job of changing players' attitudes towards competitive play and thereby helping to develop the quality of our league games throughout the NWFCC Region.

Ken set about this in earnest by gathering together several of the Federation's other coaches to assist him in running courses at the various levels required. He introduced

the concept of 'Flying Coaches', a small group of peripatetic coaches who could deliver high quality coaching to new or distant clubs with little homespun coaching capability. He soon began attending CA coaching meetings and also succeeded in being awarded his Grade 2 Coaching Badge in 2010.

The impact and progressive success that his coaching initiatives have had on north-west clubs has seen skill levels and demand for coaching rise enormously, and team entries to each of the Federation's leagues have also increased for both AC & GC.

Whilst doing all this work for the NWFCC it should also be noted that he has continued his long-standing commitment to Bowdon Croquet Club where he has been the coaching officer for the last 6 years, following two earlier periods in the post which makes approximately 12 years at a club that is renowned for producing some of the best AC players in the county.

His quiet but assured way of addressing

people soon gains respect and confidence, and he has a clever knack of allowing people to express their concerns before delivering clear concise replies with a cheeky pleasant smile.

Sadly Ken suffered some serious health problems during 2012 that resulted in him having to 'slow down' and for medical reasons he had to resign as NWFCC Coaching Officer at the end of the season. The Federation AGM minutes record that "The meeting thanked Ken for his report and all his past efforts with a heartfelt round of applause".

And congratulations as well to John Reynolds of Ealing who recently qualified as Grade 1 AC Coach.



Photos courtesy of NWFCC & Bowden CC websites



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Taking Croquet to

INDIA

By Klim Seabright

Photographs by Vicky Underhill

The World Croquet Federation (WCF) are keen to encourage India into the Association/Golf Croquet "club" and so I responded positively to their request for qualified coaches who were prepared to go on a coaching trip to the sub-continent. The "Coaching Camp and Championship of India" would be run under the auspices of the Croquet Federation of India (CFI).

Most Indians play Gateball, a mallet game played mainly in Asia, and the CFI are keen to introduce Association and Golf Croquet, so that they can become part of the world croquet scene.

An email from Martin French, Secretary General of the WCF, informing me that I would be going on the trip with Dave Underhill from Switzerland (canton of Bristol). I particularly enjoy working with beginners and have experience coaching Chinese and Canadian players and looked forward to working with Dave, whom I knew from our many fixtures representing our respective CAs.

Going with the flow

An early morning arrival in Delhi was followed by a meeting with Dave where we decided that our mission statement would be "Go with the Flow". During the next five days lots of "go" and lots of "flow" would be required.

After a two-hour internal flight to Bhubaneswar, we received an outstanding welcome from the President of the CFI Manarojan Mishri. I would guess that not

many arriving croquet players have ever been greeted with a month's supply of cut flowers, and the spot lights of two television stations blazing into their eyes. The CFI committee then drove us off to the hotel in a light-flashing, horn-blaring, near-missing, cavalcade of cars.

It had been agreed that the first morning would be spent looking at the lawns at a sports stadium, and then coaching eight 'Assistants', which the CFI had agreed to identify in advance. These Assistants would then help us on four lawns that had been promised. However 60 players showed up for coaching, which was supposed to start the next day! It was pleasing to discover that an invitation had gone out to schools in every state in India and 50% had confirmed attendance. Other boys and girls joined us the next morning to make a party of 120 (including their teachers/instructors) who were all delightful and a pleasure to work with.

I'm not sure what happened to the eight Assistants though!

The young players were very inquisitive, wanted to know everything from lawn size, to hoop (wicket) and mallet (stick) dimensions, and were very keen to learn throughout our three days of coaching.

The CFI had bought some croquet kits that were quite good garden sets, but there is a major opportunity here for a western supplier to become involved with India; or for the WCF to work with the CFI to establish equipment which is suitable for tournament play here.



Dave Underhill and Klim Seabright with prize winner Mrs Asad.

Below: At the Coaching Camp .

There were some snags

There were only four wire type hoops per set, the peg (pole) showed the wrong colour sequence (for the GC we were coaching) and the balls almost completely lost their colour in 5 days!

We corrected the peg colours with some electrical insulation tape sourced from a small trader's stall nearby and we improvised by writing the secondary colours in Hindi on the advertising hoardings next to the courts.





We were grateful for the generous equipment donations from Bristol, Cheltenham, the Swiss Croquet Federation and also Martin French at the WCF.

Dave Underhill's late night planning of a tournament programme based on the assurance of 16 promised hoops, proved to be a waste of time when it was finally acknowledged on the first morning of the tournament that only 12 would be provided. So we hastily decided that we would run with four hoops on three lawns and Dave's partner Vicky (canton of Norway) would prove to be our much needed timekeeper.



On Tournament day, we arrived at the stadium to find that nearly all 120 participants wanted to shake hands, before Dave and I were asked to officially open the tournament by cutting a ribbon, and we watched as some young dancers performed a very intricate local folk dance of welcome.

"Needs his eyes testing"

The spectators like to follow the play around the edge of the lawn and shout advice as is the Gateball style. They also like to join the referee on the lawn! They never openly disagreed with the referee, but I am sure I caught the Hindi equivalent of "he needs his eyes testing" and "qualified ref?".

I was soon impressed with the way in which most participants not only picked up the basics of the Golf Croquet but also played tactically. I like to think that it was down to good coaching but I also think that some of this was due to their Gateball knowledge. The men's semi-final was an exceptionally good game and included a spectacular jump shot from the West boundary, which I had coached during one lunch break!

Due to the superior organisational skills of my Swiss colleague, we somehow managed to finish the competition exactly on time and the CFI handed out many prizes, which included the "Doubles National Championship of India".

India - it's BIG!

The future of croquet in India looks promising indeed. Where else would one get to coach croquet with 120 teenagers and their teachers? This country presents a tremendous opportunity for the CFI to build an interest in the game at an early age, because the enthusiasm to learn is tremendous.

I am sure that the WCF will do all within its power to assist the CFI, who do face some very serious challenges. Not least, of these is to decide the best organisational structure for a country the size of India - It's very big! The CFI also has to find a satisfactory way to communicate with the Gateball Association and take forward messages about lawn quality. Equipment is an issue too because it is too expensive to buy from the West.

Have I coached a future World Champion? Let's hope so.

Welcome India, to the World of Croquet.

Klim Seabright is a Grade 1 Coach, Secretary of Cheltenham Croquet Club and has represented the CA in matches against other National Associations



Window on the WCF by Martin French, Secretary-General

The World Croquet Federation has 30 members, each a national association. Some represent 9,000 players, some just 20. The largest 10 are Full Members, the smaller established associations are Associates, and the newer and smallest associations are Observers. The Council (all the members) has just approved a change so that now Associates, as well as Full Members, have a vote. This, together with the email-based discussion and decision process we introduced a year ago, allows the members more effectively to control the direction of the WCF. The day-to-day business of the WCF is run for the Council by a Management Committee (MC) of nine people, including Amir Ramsis from Egypt as President and me as Secretary-General.

What's been happening since the New Year?

Detailed preparation has been underway for the next two events: an Under 21s GC World Championship (15th to 19th April), followed by a GC World Championship (21st to 28th April) – both in Cairo. We are at the stage of chasing players for entry fees, and short biographies and photos for the programme. There are eight England players in the field of 64: Jacob Carr, Tim King, Howard Cheyne, Nick Cheyne, John Spiers, Tobi Savage, David Crawford, and myself, playing in my first World Championship since 1989! Jamieson Walker is representing Scotland, but there are no Welsh players this time.

The MC has been having some pretty extended arguments about a couple of topics recently, which has led me to question how the MC is structured and organised. Maybe a committee of nine is too large to be effective for day-to-day management, so I've suggested a more focused Management Board of three people each with clearly-defined roles. So far, few of the MC seem to share my enthusiasm for this reform!



A MIND(SET) FOR CROQUET

Part 2 ~ by James Hopgood

Development Mindset and the Talent Myth

There is some controversy regarding the concept that the best in the world in almost any field, where there is objective measures of skill level, achieved their excellence through focused sustained work rather than an inborn natural talent. Consequently, subject to the absence of any debilitating circumstances, such excellence is achievable by anyone including you (Ankersen, 2012; Shenk, 2011; Syed, 2011; Colvin, 2008). This increasingly accepted body of work promotes the so-called development mindset, which essentially indicates that through deliberate and purposeful practice, sustained hard work, and an improvement (or development) mindset, there is no reason most Croquet players couldn't easily achieve a scratch handicap or better. All that is required is for a player to find sufficient motivation to pursue their goals, to have a belief that they can attain such levels, and to put in the hours of practice necessary. It will require hard work, probably in the order of 500 games, a familiarity with tactics, and the fundamental belief that if others can do it, so can you.

It's perhaps easier to attain such a belief when a player's skill level is improving rapidly and winning numerous games, although it's harder if a player appears to be doing less well than their fellow competitors. While different players will

*This page: The author in preparation and play
Center opposite: Reg Bamford, who hosted
'The Mental Game' seminar in September -
watch it on You Tube (search for Reg Bamford
seminar) All three photographs by Samir Patel*

have a different rate of improvement, this can often be due to environment circumstances outside a player's control. The "Gold Mind Effect" and "Bouce" (Ankersen, 2012; Syed, 2011) give a clear explanation why groups of athletes from a particular geographical region at a particular point in time can excel and push a sport forward, perhaps as happened with some of the current top players back in the early 1990s. Nevertheless, simply because it takes one player longer to improve than others, doesn't mean that attaining a particular skill set is beyond that player. A full appreciation of sport psychology and the process of how we learning is crucial to rising above the negative belief that you could never be as good as the top players in the world.

The "mindset for improvement" has gained sufficient recognition that Sport Scotland, for example, is promoting this approach (Sport, 2013), and even some Sports Governing Bodies, such as Curling,



are recognising in their selection policies that it is crucial for players to have a development mindset (Royal Caledonian Curling Club, 2013). One particularly important tool crucial for improvement is abandoning the concept that natural talent is necessary for good stroke play, and that it cannot be learnt; rather, good stroke play comes from a) an awareness of what your body feels during stroke production utilising as much feedback as possible, b) continual practice to grove your swing, c) concentration and focus.

In the Bamford seminar, Reg strongly

promotes perfecting your swing by practice, and notes that feedback is "the breakfast of champions". Perfecting the swing comes from deliberate purposeful practice utilising feedback of the outcome of the strokes, as well as sensory information from your body. If a stroke outcome results in an end-of-turn, rather than focusing on the negative aspects of the consequences, focus on the signals that your body is feeding back to you, for example about your stance, your grip, your thoughts and feelings at that moment, and so forth. Sport psychology techniques can help focus on what feedback is important.

Positive Thinking

Positive thinking is perhaps one of the most easily grasped concepts in the mental game of Croquet. Clearing being indecisive when taking on a shot is going to distract the subconscious mind from letting the body execute a stroke as well as possible; this is reminiscent of the infamous "performance equals potential minus interference" phrase discussed in the Inner Game theory by Tim Gallwey (Gallwey, 1986). Yet it's very easy to think you are being positive when in fact you aren't. If an athlete is training and feeling tired, the well-meaning statement "don't think about how tired you are" is incredibly negative

because it's impossible to avoid thinking about tiredness without processing that statement and thereby thinking about it (Lazarus, 2006). Similarly, thinking "don't blob the hoop" or "don't miss on the left" is not positive thinking, as the brain has an uncanny habit of executing the last thing the conscious brain thought about (Rotella & Cullen, 2004), and therefore will likely blob the hoop or miss on the left. Therefore, it is important to train yourself to think positively by, for example, thinking about running the hoop to a specific spot on the lawn, or hitting a very precise spot on a ball

when making a roquet. Concentrate what you want to do rather than what you don't want to do.

Positive thinking doesn't mean eliminating words from your vocabulary that might have negative connotations. On a hoop stroke, aiming to miss the near leg is a more positive objective, albeit using a negative word (miss), than the objective "don't hit the near leg" which uses a positive word (hit) but requires the brain to think about what it doesn't want to do (hit the near leg). Similarly, on a roquet, thinking "don't miss this four yarder" is negative whereas "I want to hit/rush the four yarder to position X" is positive. It's interesting that roquets on boundaries balls are usually missed because there isn't a positive enough thought about the objective of the shot; if the roquet were in-lawn, it is likely the thought process will involve considering how far the ball will be rushed to rather than just wanting to make the roquet at all.

Chris Clarke made an excellent comment on the Nottingham Board (12/1/13) in response to the discussion at the end of the Bamford seminar. This revolved around a discussion about how to approach a six-yard roquet mid-break as a result of a previous shot that wasn't as good as the player intended it to be. The positive outlook promoted in the seminar was to consider the six-yarder as another opportunity, or equally to imagine it as the start of the turn; clearly this is better than negative thoughts about what a disaster the previous shot had been, which at least is the first fundamental step in a good mental approach to the game. However, an alternative perspective is to focus on the fact that mid-break your muscles are warmed up, you are concentrating and focused, and therefore the subconscious brain is much more likely to execute a good stroke compared with the first shot of a turn. Thus, for some, thinking of the mid-break shot as a first-turn shot is not positive enough.

I used the latter mentality in a TPO-turn in the 2012 President's Cup when a roll shot from 1-back after penalt to rover, attempting to peel partner to 2b with all peels on the opponent completed, ended up short of the peg (partly because the lawn around 1b was a bit of a swamp). I confess to momentary thinking "oh dear, my opponent gets a lift to position if I miss this, game over". However, I quickly dismissed that thought, allowed myself to smirk to some fellow players as I knew



Visualisation through experience: Blewbury's Ken Gotch

Julie Kaye Photography

what they must be thinking, but also knew I had the happy realisation that since I had just played 85 consecutive shots I was extremely likely to hit the six-yarder.

Positive thinking requires work and practice, and what works for one person doesn't work for everyone; this is why the



mental approach to a game needs work and cannot simply be learnt overnight by listening to a couple of good insights.

Concluding Remarks

The mental approach to sports through the use of sport psychology requires continuous work and study. Reading one article or reading one seminar isn't sufficient to perfecting the mental approach. However, there are a number of excellent suggestions in books on other precision sports, such as Golf and Snooker, including "Golf is Not a Game of Perfect" by Bob Rotella (Rotella & Cullen, 2004) and "A Mind for Pool" (Capelle, 1999). There are also

some worthy ideas in John Riches booklet (Riches, 2004), although I've personally found it better to refer to more general sport psychology books and adapt the ideas to Croquet. Nevertheless, to conclude, here are some ideas that stuck the author as particularly noteworthy for players who wish to improve:

Purple Patches Indicate Your True Potential: When you perform well, for example, completing your first 10-hoop break with bisques, your first triple peel, your first win against a top player in three breaks, and so forth, regard this as a sign of your true potential rather than a lucky streak; then practice becoming more consistent in the goal you have just achieved, and consider working to the next goal. As soon as you complete your first triple peel, for example, you should instantly know this is the first of many.

Trust What You Practice: A pre-shot routine is absolutely crucial to developing consistency in Croquet, and therefore work on this. In practice sessions, vary your feet position, vary swing; but once you have tuned this to something that works consistently, when you have taken your stance, you should trust what you have practiced and not second guess any swing mechanics. However, that does not mean that you ignore any feedback you get from the swing; if it doesn't feel right, trust that instinct and re-stalk.

More Important to be Decisive Than Correct: This is a psychological phenomenon which is perhaps more easily observed in doubles than singles; if your partner is taking a shot and has decided on line of play and is convinced it is the right choice, it might be better to let them take the shot even if it is tactically the incorrect one, on the basis that a positive mindset is likely to result in better shot execution.

continues overleaf. . .

... Visualisation through Experience:

As I've played more, I've found it easier to visualise shots based on the experience of previous shots I've played. When preparing to hit a lift shot, I find it easier to recall memories, feelings, and sensory feedback from previous games in which I hit the stroke perfectly, than it is to visualise the object ball following a straight line and hitting the target. Sport psychology books often cover the four types of visualisation such as visual-internal, visual-external, visual-internal/external kinaesthetic methods (Karageorghis & Terry, 2010). These are interesting ideas worth reading about.

Opponents make Mistakes: Your opponent will have to deal with all the psychological aspects which you have to and, therefore, rather than worrying that your opponent will never break down (something you don't want to happen), concentrate on being prepared for when they do break down (something you do want to happen).

Finally, I would like to say that I've found studying sport psychology a remarkably interesting topic, and perhaps now that I have played more compared to six years ago, it is much easier to relate to the concepts. Nevertheless, the material in the books listed below clearly indicate that beginners would benefit from coaching in the mental game and that, arguably, improving Croquet players should open a book on sport psychology before they reach for Wylie.

Bibliography available from the Editor.



Crossword Solution

Across. 1 association croquet; 7 h,ell,o; 8 hocus (alternate letters); 9 se(qu)e,l ; 11, 13 red-top; 14 tympan (anag inc t,p); 16 ex,am,s(hooting); 18 o,live; The Clangers. **Down.** 1 (re)ache(d); 2 silver plate (anag); 3, 1 ac Croquet Association; 5 incarnadine (anag, remember Macbeth?); 6 no-side; 10 l(a,m,p)oon; 12 a,t,test; 15 pegs; SPL,Ash. nag); 17 ye,s.

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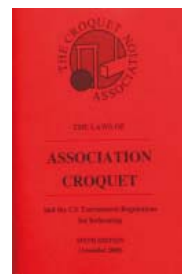
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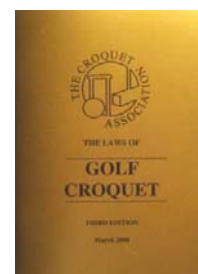
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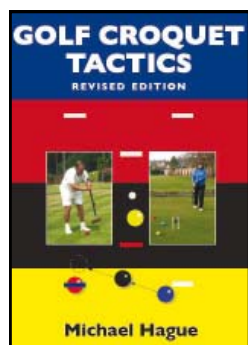
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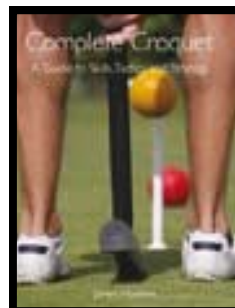
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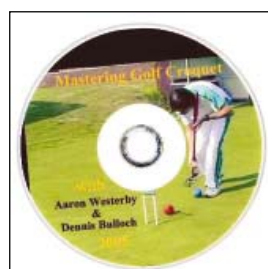
GC Laws £4



NEW EDITION of Michael Hague's highly-regarded book 'Golf Croquet Tactics'. The original has been updated and this edition includes a new section on giving away extra turns. Published in October 2012 A4 size, 42 pages. Price : £14 inc p&p



'Complete Croquet: A Guide to Skills, Tactics & Strategy' by James Hawkins, published May 2010. James trains coaches around the country and has a deep knowledge of the AC game. Learn how to improve your handicap play right up to employing top-class croquet tactics. £16 inc p&p



Popular DVDs:
Mastering Golf Croquet: £25;
Using Bisques £19;
The Skill of Peeling £27;
Learn Croquet (AC) £35

All DVD prices include p&p



Timer - ideal for timing a croquet match £11.50 plus £2.60 p&p



Clothing—Ventilite Wet Weather Jacket £42 + £3 p&p and Trousers £23 + £2 p&p or £60 + £5 p&p for both (see left); Unisex Fleece Reversible Gilet £29 + £4 p&p; Fleece Jackets £28 + £4 p&p, White Trousers from £32 + £3 p&p and white leather belt £10 + £2.30



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