

## **Most Improved GC Player 2019**

### **Steve Leonard**

The Spiers Trophy for Most Improved GC Player of 2019 is awarded to Steve Leonard of Winterborne Valley Croquet Club (formerly Kingston Maurward CC).

Steve started the 2019 season as a handicap 0 and finished as a handicap -3. During the year, his ranking dynamic grade improved by 286 points from 1905 to 2191, representing a rise from 133rd in the UK to 35th. At the time of his nomination, he was the player with the third highest ranking grade change in the world.

Steve was nominated for the Spiers Trophy in 2017 and narrowly missed out to Richard Bilton and, following his impressive 2017 and 2018 seasons, he had another extraordinary GC term in 2019. His improvement and playing record this year are impressive and his performances in the GC Opens and the GC World Championships particularly stand out.

In the Open, in qualifying for the knock-out stage, he took games off international players J-P Moberly and Stephen Mulliner, and was only beaten by the latter 6-7 in the deciding game of their match.

Steve won the Ryde A-Level Series tournament and soon after was the top finisher with 13 wins in 16 matches in the World Championship qualifying event. This was the springboard for a great run of results in the World Championship itself where he won 5/6 matches in his block, including beating two-time World Champion Ahmed Nasr 2-1, but he narrowly missed out on a place in the knockout-stage when he lost a block play-off game.

Steve completed his 2nd year in the International Performance Development Squad and domestically he achieved a string of semi-final placings in other CA Fixture calendar tournaments and helped his club Kingston Maurward complete their league season undefeated.