

PLAYER HANDBOOK

player pathway handbook




Chairman's Introduction

Welcome!

This handbook supports the Croquet England Player Pathway. Croquet is a sport for everyone, regardless of your age, background, or ability. The pathway is designed to support you achieve your croquet ambitions and have fun while playing the sport. As a beginner, and as you become more experienced, there's always something new to learn and enjoy.

The booklet is particularly focused on the early stages of your competitive croquet career, Levels 1 and 2 of the pathway. Taking you from your first tournament through to becoming a regular tournament player. Playing in your first competitive tournament may seem like a daunting step, but remember, every great player started where you are now. With plenty of support available, you'll find that taking this first step can be incredibly rewarding. One word of caution – you may get hooked for life!



I hope that you are inspired to participate and that you will find answers to many of your questions here. If not, please get in touch with your club pathway facilitator or the Croquet England office, who will be more than happy to assist you further. Remember, you're not alone on this journey – we're all here to help you succeed.

I look forward to meeting you on the lawns in the near future.

Best regards,
Samir Patel
Chairman, Croquet England Board of Trustees



About Croquet England

When you join a Croquet Club affiliated to Croquet England (CqE) you become entitled to be a Croquet England Standard Associate. Amongst other benefits this entitles you to enter Croquet England Tournaments and Courses.

Your club secretary should have registered you as a Standard Associate of Croquet England when you joined your club and you will have received a welcome email from Croquet England (try searching your inbox for “new Standard Membership”). Occasionally at smaller clubs, or if you join part way through the season this does not happen, in which case you should ask your club secretary to register you.

Croquet England has two websites. A public facing site croquetengland.org.uk and a site for its Associates and Members croquet.org.uk It is on the latter that you will find information relevant to those wishing to participate in Croquet England events, including the Croquet England Fixtures Calendar. The Fixtures Calendar is where details of all Croquet England events can be found and entered on-line croquet.org.uk/?p=tournament/caCalendar

In order to be able to access some of the information on croquet.org.uk and to enter tournaments on-line you will need to log in to croquet.org.uk (there is a button in the top right hand corner of the page). You will only be able to do this if you have been registered as a Standard Associate by your club and you will need to use your email address that they provided at that time.

To find out more about events having logged in to croquet.org.uk navigate to the Fixtures Calendar (link above) and click the  symbol next to the event that you are interested in. If you wish to enter click the  symbol and follow the process through. If the symbol is not present for your event it is not currently accepting entries eg the closing date has passed.

If you are experiencing problems accessing croquet.org.uk or entering an event you should contact the CqE Office during office hours Monday to Friday on 01242 242318



FINDING AN EVENT

The Croquet England Fixtures Calendar, croquet.org.uk/?p=tournament/caCalendar provides full details of all the tournaments and coaching courses offered each year.

Tournaments

There are three basic types of competition:

Handicap: More common in AC than GC but in both cases play is in accordance with handicap rules, intended to give each player an equal chance of winning the game.

Restricted: Events which typically have a lower handicap limit (and occasionally an upper one too) to ensure that all the players are of approximately equal standard. Sometimes referred to as Series or Class events. Games are level play.

Open: Events with no restriction on entry, most usually contested by the best players

Tournaments vary in duration:

One Day: More common in GC than AC, these events tend to be aimed at higher handicap players

Weekend/Two Day: Typically a single competition played over more than one day. Consolation events will be offered to players eliminated from the main competition.

Longer, “week” tournaments are also held: These are often comprised of more than one event eg doubles and singles, handicap, restricted and open.



Finding an Event

Croquet England Events

Most of the events listed in the Fixtures Calendar are organised by the host club. However, Croquet England runs a variety of events itself. These include both Championship events and events aimed at higher handicap players, including the GC Series events and AC Handicap events. A full list of CqE events can be found here croquet.org.uk/?p=tournament/caEvents

Newcomers

Typically newcomers should be looking to participate in handicap events or series/class events aimed at C&D class players. It should usually be possible to find such an event in your locality, these will often be advertised at your club. The CqE Fixtures calendar can be filtered to show events suitable for your handicap, enter your handicap into the "Use your Handicap" function (this only displays if you are logged in).

Nearly all events provide play for all the players throughout the full duration of the event, if you lose your first game you will not have to go home! Usually you can expect to have about 3 games of AC in a day or half a dozen or more of GC.

Your club will most likely arrange a qualifying stage for the National All-England Handicap competitions. There are separate events for AC and GC, the initial stage is played at your club, with qualifiers progressing to a regional final, which further determines who progresses to the national final. Entry is made via your club, who will internally advertise their qualifying stages.

Coaching Courses

Most coaching courses are run early in the year, in order that those attending are able to put into practice what they have learnt throughout the following season.



Your First Tournament

Introduction

Your first tournament can seem like a daunting experience, this document is intended to answer various questions that you might have and help you to prepare.

If you have the opportunity to do so by far the best thing you can do is have a conversation with your club's Level 1 Pathway Facilitator (your club may display a poster with their name on it). Chatting things through, face to face, will provide far more reassurance than simply reading this document. Your Facilitator might even be able to put you in touch with another player playing in the event that is prepared to act as your "buddy".

Gaining a Place

You should enter via the Croquet England Fixtures Calendar Tournament Entry System (see page 3).

You should get an email from the Tournament Secretary shortly after the Allocation Date confirming whether or not you have received a place in the event.

If you have been successful the Tournament Manager will usually contact you shortly before the event with useful information about arrangements for the event. If you have any questions in the the meantime contact the Tournament Secretary.

Your First Tournament

Before you set off

Have you got your mallet! If you do not have your own mallet ask your club if you can borrow one for the event.

Make sure you know what the start time is. Check this for the event on the Fixtures Calendar, if no start time is listed the default is 9.30am.

You should also take your handicap card with you. You might be asked to show this to the Manager on arrival and you will need to complete it to record the games that you play. There is a separate guidance sheet on how to do this.

Playing in whites is expected for nearly all CqE events and most players will turn up wearing them rather than getting changed on arrival, although many clubs do have changing rooms. There is no formal relaxation of this rule for new players but provided you appear to have made a degree of effort and turn up in smart light-coloured clothing nobody is going to mind. Shoes do not need to be white but must be flat soled to avoid damaging the court. (There are a few generally exclusive private clubs that may enforce the whites rule more strictly – if in doubt ask).

Play will continue in the rain, unless the courts actually get waterlogged, so waterproofs are advisable (these do not need to be white).

If you have a timer or plastic ball markers remember to pack these, if you do not they will be provided by the host club.

Remember any food or snacks that you need for the day. Many players take their own water bottle or flask, so that they have an easily accessible drink whilst they are playing.

Equipment

The Croquet England Shop croquetengland.org.uk/shop stocks a wide range of equipment suitable for tournament players including mallets, mallet bags, white clothing and timers.



Your First Tournament

Upon Arrival

Make yourself known to the Tournament Manager, let them know that it is your first tournament in order that they know to provide you with greater assistance. They will let you know basic information about the facilities of the club and the arrangements for the day, these are likely to begin with a briefing for all the players where the tournament and the plans for the day will be explained. In particular any time limits to be applied will be advised.

Playing your games

See pages 10-12.

After a Game

Tidy up the court putting all the equipment that you have used (ie balls and clips) tidily back near the start area for the next game.

Report the result to the Manager, who will advise you approximately when your next game will be.



Record the result on your handicap card.

Meals

In most events you are likely to be playing for most of the day. There will usually always be a break for lunch and maybe a shorter tea break too. The Fixtures Calendar should indicate whether meals will be available to purchase from the club during the event. If you wish to partake in these you should indicate as such when entering the tournament. If the club is not providing meals, or players who prefer to do so, usually bring their own pack-ups.

End of the day

Confirm with the Manager that you have completed all your games and are free to leave. If it is a multi-day tournament confirm what time you will start play the next day.






Inter-Club Events

Croquet England organises a variety of National Inter-Club events, many of which are suitable for Level 2 players. All are contested by teams of 4 players. Your club will likely designate a captain for each event that they enter, who is responsible for organising your club team. Your club Pathway Facilitator should be able to put you in touch with them if you wish to be considered.

GC

The GC Inter-Club Championship Tier 3 (Bowl) : Players with handicaps 5 or above (one player may be a 4) with a team aggregate of at least 20. Level play.

The GC Inter-Club Championship Tier 2 (Murphy Shield) : Players with handicaps 2 or above (one player may be a 2) with a team aggregate of at least 8. Level play.



The GC Inter-Club Championship Tier 1: No restrictions. Level play.

AC


The Short Croquet Inter-Club Championship: Players with handicaps of 20 and below. Handicap Short Croquet.

The AC Inter-Club Handicap Championship (Longman Cup): Players with handicaps 3.5 and above, with a team aggregate of at least 24. Handicap play.

The AC Inter-Club Championship Tier 2 (Mary Rose): Players with handicaps 0 and above, with a team aggregate of at least 4. Advanced play.

The AC Inter-Club Championship Tier 1: No restrictions. Advanced play.

(Separately there are AC and GC events contested by the clubs that won their respective Federation competitions the previous year).





TOURNAMENT PLAY THE BASICS

Double Banking

Most tournament games will be double banked (i.e. playing two games on one court), one with primary coloured balls and the other with secondary. Be aware of the other game and do not play a shot if it is likely to interfere with the other game. Also try to avoid distracting or walking across the line of aim of players in the other game.

If a ball in the other game is in the way of your shot ask the other game if you may mark it to allow you to play the shot. Permission should normally be given if it is not in a critical position, or about to be moved shortly. If you do mark a ball do so carefully with a plastic marker and replace it as soon as you have played your stroke.

In GC if after you score a hoop you find that the other game is contesting the next hoop (in either direction) wait for them to score the hoop before playing any shots towards it.

In AC if two players are needing to play in the same vicinity priority is given to a player who has an established break.

Scoring Clips

These will be used in all games:

In GC coloured clips will be provided which are attached to each hoop after it is scored to signify which side won the hoop. Sometimes if there is a shortage of clips one side will have clips and the other will not.

In AC coloured clips are provided which indicate which hoop each ball is due to score next.



Tournament Play the Basics

Critical Positions/Hampered Shots/Referees

If you find yourself with a tricky/hampered shot to play (basically anything other than a normal shot) you should ask your opponent if they wish to have it refereed. If they want a referee raise your mallet vertically in the air, with the head uppermost to signal that you require a referee. When the referee arrives they will confirm the situation in the game and mark the balls they think may be affected by the stroke. After the stroke they will declare whether it was a clean stroke or a fault and assist in restarting the game if a fault has been played. If before you play your stroke you wish to check any details of the rules with the referee you may ask them (NB They will only advise you on the rules, not on how to play your stroke!) Other than in this situation you should not offer or accept advice from anyone whilst playing a game (apart from your partner in doubles). If in AC you are trying to hit a ball in or near a hoop and there may be some doubt as to whether you are successful you should call an independent person (it need not be a referee) to witness and adjudicate the stroke.

Time Limits

If the game has a time limit a timer should be started at the start of the game. The sides should arrange for an independent person, or failing that, one of themselves to be responsible for calling time when the time limit expires (in practice players may rely on an audible alert from the timer). When time expires: GC – unless stated otherwise, each ball will have two more strokes, after which the score will be the result of the game unless the score is level in which case play will continue until the next hoop point is scored.

AC – the striker completes the turn in progress (starting it if they have not yet played a stroke) before the opponent has one more turn. The result of the game is the score after these turns, if the scores are level play continues until another hoop is scored.




Tournament Play the Basics

Customs

At the start of the game the coin is usually tossed by the player with the lowest handicap.

If your ball leaves the court and needs replacing do this with your back to the court in order to avoid any doubt that you are seeking to gain an advantage by looking at where you replace it. If the ball that has left the court needs to be retrieved from some distance, it is usual to leave your mallet where it left the court in order to ensure that it is replaced in the correct place.

Particularly in GC when, unlike AC, the non-striker generally remains on the court whilst the opponent plays their stroke: avoid standing on their line of aim, in the corner of their field of vision or moving whilst they play their stroke.



Be aware of and sensitive to the wishes of your opponent and other players, whilst some may welcome it not everyone wishes to chat during a game.

Whilst nobody, particularly juniors should feel obliged, in AC tournaments the winner of a game usually offers to buy the loser a drink. It is polite to accept but it does not have to be alcoholic – a cup of tea is just as acceptable!

Merit Awards

Separate Croquet England merit award schemes exist for both AC and GC, they follow a similar structure each comprising Bronze, Silver, Gold and Platinum awards. Players are entitled to receive the awards in both codes. The awards can only be gained during participation in Croquet England calendar Fixtures.

	AC*	GC
Bronze	10 hoop break with bisques	Winning a C-Level series event or specified equivalent
Silver	12 hoop break without bisques	Winning a B- Level Series Event or specified equivalent
Gold	A triple peel	Winning an A- Level Series Event, specified equivalent or the 3rd Eight
Platinum	A sextuple peel	Winning the 1st or 2nd Eight

*To qualify for an AC award the player must also win the game. To claim an award that you qualify for inform the Tournament Manager, complete the appropriate form and return it to the Croquet England office.



MAINTAINING YOUR HANDICAP CARD

Differences

There are separate handicap systems for AC and GC. If you play both you should have a card for each. The systems are “automatic”, players maintain their card in accordance with the regulations and when handicap “trigger points” are reached the player’s handicap changes.

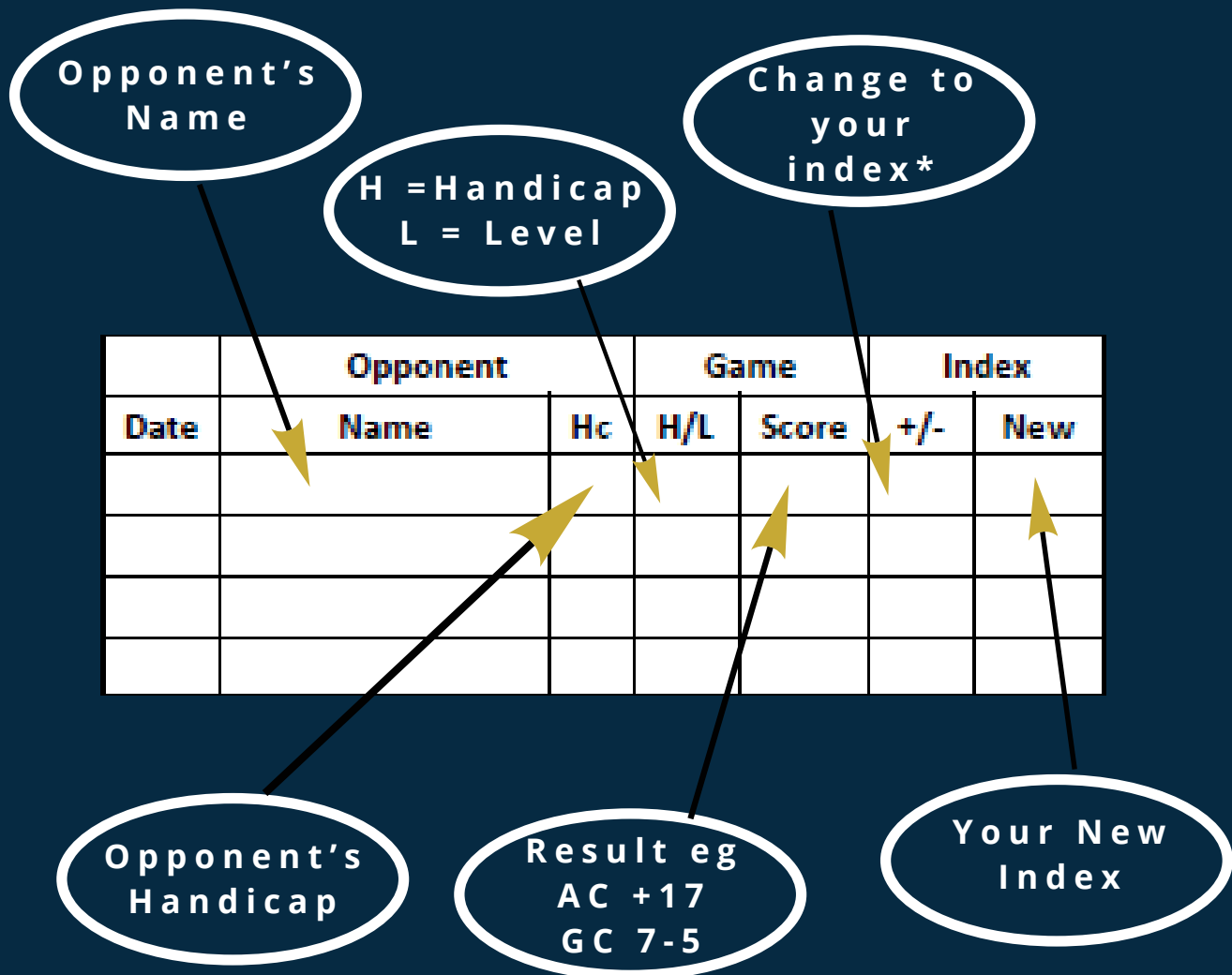
You should already have a handicap and card if you have played competitive games within your club. If you do not contact your club handicapper who should be able to assign you with a handicap and provide you with a card.

Changes

Games played in Croquet England fixtures are entered onto your card in just the same way as your club games (see example opposite). Your handicap only changes at the end of the tournament if you have passed and remained beyond the relevant trigger point. If your handicap does change during a tournament you should get your handicap card initialled by the Tournament Handicapper and update your handicap on the Croquet England website at the earliest opportunity.



MAINTAINING YOUR HANDICAP CARD



*In handicap games this is always +10 for the winner and -10 for the loser.

In Level games look up the change using the table on the back page of your handicap card (these are different for AC and GC).

Avoid a common error: when your handicap improves and you go through a trigger point your handicap reduces. If you then lose your next couple of games and go back below the same trigger your handicap does not increase again. This is because the trigger point you've gone through is for the handicap you are now on - so your handicap does not change again.

Level 2 Facilitators

Having played in your first tournaments and becoming a regular competitor you will now be regarded as a Level 2 player, someone competing in handicap or restricted events (ie those with a lower handicap limit).

It is the aim of Croquet England that every Level 2 player will have access to a Level 2 Facilitator. This Facilitator should be fairly local to you but where possible not actually a member of your own club. The purpose of this is to try to broaden all competitive player's view of the sport to beyond their own club.

What will a Facilitator do?

The Facilitator role is to help you develop as a croquet player and make the most of the opportunities that Croquet England has to offer. In particular they will:

- Make themselves known to you with an introductory email each year
- Provide you with guidance about CqE Tournaments, Coaching Programmes and be able to put you in touch with appropriate level coaches in your area
- Help you understand the various selection events that exist, when they might be appropriate and how to apply
- Be able to advise you about the CqE Merit Award Scheme
- Be able to advise you about becoming a Premium Subscriber
- Be able to help you progress to Level 3 when appropriate
- Help you with other queries that you might have

If you need help finding a Level 2 Facilitator contact the CqE Office during office hours Monday to Friday on 01242 242318




Premium Subscription

Affiliate member

As a member of an Affiliated club you have the right to enter CqE events. If you begin to play a few events per season you may wish to consider taking out a Premium subscription to Croquet England. A Premium subscription provides a discount on every event entered and should “pay for itself”, particularly in the first Year, for players regularly playing in Croquet England events. Additionally, you will receive an additional discount in the Croquet England shop (10% compared to 2% for Standard Subscribers) and a copy of the Croquet Gazette, which is only sent to standard subscribers for a limited period when first subscribing.

Premium Subscriber

Becoming a Premium subscriber is straightforward and can be done here croquet.org.uk/?p=ca/JoinUs If you have never previously been a Premium Subscriber click the “Join Year 1” button in the Premium Associate section.




Advanced TES

Additional Features

As you enter more tournaments and become more familiar with using the Tournament Entry System (TES) there are various additional features that you should be aware of:

Viewing which players have already entered an event

This can be useful if you wish to see if an event is appropriate for you, or if you are likely to get a place in the event when allocation takes place. It is simply done by clicking the  icon alongside the event in the Fixtures Calendar.

Entering Multiple Events at the Same Time

When you are logged into the Croquet England subscribers website and view the Fixtures Calendar instead of entering tournaments individually you can select multiple tournament that you wish to enter, by putting a tick in the appropriate boxes in the first column and then clicking the “Enter” button at the bottom of the page after the listing of all the fixtures. This is particularly useful at the start of the season if you plan to enter multiple events during the year.

Customising how you see the Fixtures Calendar

More detailed advice on how you can customise the Fixtures Calendar and make it work for you can be found here

croquet.org.uk/?p=tournament/caCalendarHelp#customisation

Availability for Selection Events

What are selection events?

CqE operates various Selection Events through the year. At the top end there are a various International and National Individual and Team Selection Events in both AC and GC, which are selected on merit and likely to be beyond the reach of players playing at Level 2. However, there are other events that may be suitable:

Representative matches: Croquet England organises representative matches against other national associations. These usually incorporate a wide range of handicaps with captains trying to match team strengths

Inter-County events: Annual Inter-County AC and GC events are held and advertised in the Fixtures Calendar.

Selection for both the above is managed via the CqE subscribers website. For representative matches find the event in the Fixtures Calendar and click the 🏏 icon which will take you to the page where you can make yourself available.

Availability for the Inter Counties is managed here

croquet.org.uk/?p=tournament/caEvents/InterCounties You can indicate all the counties that you are eligible and wish to be considered for. County captains will look at this list when selecting their teams for each year's event. The strength of each County varies considerably and Level 2 players may be able to gain selection for some teams, particularly those playing in Division 2.

How to find selection events

A full list of all other Selection Events each year can be found here

croquet.org.uk/?p=members/availability

Your Level 2 Facilitator will be able to help you with any queries that you have with regard Selection Events.

The Rankings Explained

What is different?

Ranking rather than handicap is used to allocate places to many events. It is believed that rankings are less susceptible to regional variations than handicaps and additionally they are formally managed with eligible results being entered by a central administrator rather than being the responsibility of each individual player.

Where to find the rankings

The AC and GC ranking systems are independent and administered separately, they can be found here:

AC: <http://butedock.com/cgs/rank.php>

GC: <https://rank.worldcroquet.org/gcrankdg/rank.php>

How to use

Both have a similar menu structure, the top section being relevant to basic operation. You might wish to change the "World" box to "UK" in order to get a more restricted list. If you have not played the minimum number of games you might need to change this in order to appear, likewise if you do not have the minimum grade that is selected by default. When you have the attributes set as you wish press "submit" and the ranking list will appear. Whilst there are other columns the "DGrade" column is your official Grade. If you click on the name of a player you can see their results that have been included that calendar year and see how their Grade has fluctuated.

If you look at your own record and believe that a result is missing or wrong you should send an email to results@croquetengland.org.uk It can take up to two weeks for an event to be added.

Further explanations of the Ranking Systems can be found here:

croquet.org.uk/?p=games/golf/gcRankings

worldcroquet.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/The-Ranking-Systems-Explained-Final.pdf

Croquetscores

About Croquet Scores

Events that you play in may well be reported on croquetscores.com. This site is also useful if you wish to follow other events, top events particularly will often be updated regularly through the day as they happen. You can also follow the progress of friends and club members.

Use of the site is fairly self-explanatory. Events are listed chronologically, if you wish to look at results from previous years you can select as appropriate.

If you believe that one of your games is wrongly reported on croquetscores.com you should contact the manager of that event.



Coaching

Coaching at all levels is available via Academies and Croquet England. There are three academies based at High Wycombe, Sussex County and York Croquet Clubs. Their courses are listed in the Fixtures Calendar. Players are encouraged to take advantage of these opportunities.

Courses are available for both AC and GC. In either code Newcomers to competition will eventually inevitably experience a slowdown in their rate of improvement, often known as “the plateau”.

What is it?

All players, even those destined to be future World Champions, experience the “plateau”. After an initial period of improvement, a player’s progress suddenly stops and they become stuck at a particular handicap level. For some players this will be whilst still quite a high handicap player, other may progress to quite low handicaps before their progress suddenly stops.

Essentially a player’s natural aptitude for the sport will take them so far without the need for significant input from others. However, there comes a point where the limit of that aptitude is reached and without outside input simply repeating the same thing over and over again ends in the same result and progress come to a halt.

What to do?

It happens to everyone and it is important to recognise when it is happening for you. Having identified the issue you can speak to your Level 2 Facilitator for advice, they will:

Be able to suggest appropriate CqE coaching courses

Be able to put you individually in touch with CqE qualified coaches of the appropriate level in your local area

Be able to offer guidance on which tournaments you should consider entering. Sometimes it is necessary to enter events slightly out of your current comfort zone to gain exposure to the skills and techniques that you need to be progress to that next level.




Higher Levels

This booklet is primarily intended to newcomers to the sport, providing detailed information relevant to Levels 1 and 2 of the pathway. The full pathway comprises 5 levels, for information these are briefly outlined below. Full information relating to the various levels is available on the Croquet England website.

Level 3

This is a relatively niche level consisting of separate Development Squads for both AC and GC. Level 2 players having progressed to the standard of a Level 4 player are invited to take part in these two year development programmes. The programmes will help them make the transition to Open competition and beyond,



Level 4

This is the level supporting those playing primarily in Open events. On-going support will be provided for those players at this level that want it.

Level 5

This is the level of International players and potential International players, including women and juniors. Players will be invited to take part in individually focussed mentoring/coaching. Various group activities to develop, support and encourage players to become stronger players and team members will be organised. Such activities might include World/European Championship preparation, International Team preparation, Invitation Events (singles and doubles) and other specific coaching events.



CROQUET ENGLAND



MORE PEOPLE, PLAYING MORE CROQUET, IN MORE PLACES

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