



Cygnnet

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Offspring of SWAN The e-Newsletter for the South West Federation of Croquet Clubs

Hello again

Most of us will have played our first properly competitive games of the season by now and will hopefully be overcoming those early-season nerves - here's to a very enjoyable summer for us all.

Please remember that we send Cygnnet to our club contacts and ask them to pass them on to individual club members - ideally putting a hard copy on the club noticeboard. But Cygnnet is also available shortly after publication on-line on our website:

www.swfcroquet.org.uk

Changes of contact details

As ever, do let us know of any changes in contact details: League Team Contacts, Treasurers or the person we should send Cygnnet to. Please send to: lindawithani@hotmail.com - along with any comments or suggestions about Cygnnet or the SWF.

Congratulations St Agnes



In case you haven't already heard, St Agnes CC has received the Apps Heley Award for the tremendous effort they have dedicated to developing their club over the past two years.

Many congratulations - we look forward to playing down there sometime soon.

If you or anyone in your club has undertaken any outstanding work, then do check out the CA website for details of various awards - let's celebrate all our local achievements.

Short Croquet Tournament

It was a brilliantly sunny but bone-chillingly cold weekend for this weekend which hosted a record 27 teams split into 5 divisions over 3 days - the hot water urn never stopped over the three days trying to keep everyone warm. Thanks to Nailsea for providing your usual excellent facilities and welcome and here's John Grimshaw's report:

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Division 5 played on Friday and had seven teams. This presented a conundrum, because we could not have an all-play-all in the time available, so I kept the last round open so that I could ensure that the winning team had played the second best.

Ultimately, it came down to a shoot-out at the peg between Weston super Mare and Taunton Deane B, which Taunton won. There was also a shoot-out for fifth/sixth place between Budleigh Salterton and Camerton & Peasedown, which Budleigh won.

Division 5	
Team	Wins
Taunton Deane B	10
Weston Super Mare	10
Exeter B	9
The Bears	8
Budleigh Salterton Rushes	7
Camerton & Peasedown B	7
Llandaff	5



This shoot-out was necessary in case we get enough entries next year for a sixth division, in which case the sixth and seventh teams in Division 5 this year would be relegated.

Divisions 3 and 4 were played on Saturday, and both required shoot-outs to determine the winner, Division 4 had 3 teams involved.

Smiles all round as John Grimshaw presents the trophy to Kington Langley Braves: from left: Richard Jones, Richard Smith, Tim Lacy-Hulbert (John) and Ian Morrison

Division 4		Division 3	
Team	Wins	Team	Wins
Bristol Boys	9	Nailsea Avening	10
Bristol	9	Exeter A	10
Nailsea Glassblowers	9	Taunton Deane A	9
Parkstone 8		Budleigh Salterton Roquets	7
Sidmouth Connaught	5	Dyffryn	4

Divisions 1 and 2 were played on Sunday, and, for once, no shoot-outs were required. In fact, Kington Langley Braves had won Division 1 with a round to spare.

Division 2		Division 1	
Team	Wins	Team	Wins
Camerton & Peasedown A	11	Kington Langley Braves	12
Bath A	9	Cornwall 1	10
Sidmouth Fortfield	8	Nailsea Trendlewood	9
Bath B	7	Nailsea	5
Swindon	5	Kington Langley Apaches	4

And don't forget - the autumn Short Croquet Competition will be hosted by Budleigh from 11th - 14th October - are your entries in? Make sure John Grimshaw has your entry.

What every club needs . . .

Would your club like access to a laser levelling kit? The CA Development Committee has unanimously agreed to make a grant available to member clubs to rent one. Contact Paul Francis for further info on this.
paulwfrancis@icloud.com



CA Council Elections



At the CA Special General Meeting in March, the proposal to change the Constitution and structure of the Council was agreed.

This means elections will be held for new Council members and the Federations will have a role in this. Consequently we will be holding an additional committee meeting on 17th July to pull our side of this together and issue the next Cygnet shortly after this.

In the meantime, do watch out for CA notifications about this - on their website and in the Croquet Gazette.

Come and join us

And while we're on the subject of committees, we'd really like some new blood on the SWF committee. You don't have to be good at croquet but you certainly need to be interested in the game and its development here in the South West. There are various aspects to being a committee member and we're looking for a range of skills and experience:



- ✓ good committee and communication skills
- ✓ ability to enthuse others
- ✓ an interest in the issues that affect clubs and players e.g.
 - improving facilities
 - improving standards of play

We will have two meetings before the AGM on 17th November: 17th July and 4th October (both dates have been re-scheduled from the original dates) - if you are interested in joining us on the committee this would be a good opportunity to come along and observe.

You might like to bring your skills to a wider audience without joining the committee - if you'd like to support our work without the meetings, then again, we'd love to hear from you.

Contact Brian brian@europaassociates.co.uk or Linda lindawithani@hotmail.com for more info.

Spotlight on ... Coaching

This is a really important part of our croquet careers. It presents a great opportunity to learn from other club members or people from further afield - read on . . .

Outside Help if Needed!



Some clubs can meet their coaching needs from their own resources. Others may be able to cover one code only or rely on informal coaching.

If this applies to your club, please contact the SWF Coaching Liaison Officer richard.jackson@yahoo.co.uk who may be able to arrange help from one of our coaches who are willing to travel to neighbouring clubs to help.

He will also be able to advise and encourage potential coaches to become qualified croquet coaches.

South West Coaching Academy

And don't forget another of our local resources: The SWCA runs a range of coaching sessions - see details of their excellent programme on www.southwestcroquetacademy.co.uk

Development Pods

Dave Kibble explains: These provide a focus for improving players to get together and work on their game in a relaxed, friendly, local environment. They facilitate the sharing of knowledge, help establish informal mentoring arrangements, and raise the standard of play.

Pods in both codes take place across the country and are aimed at B-Class and A-Class players, as well as those aspiring to get there soon.

Each pod session is led by an experienced coach or player, is generally two to three hours long, on a weekday evening, and uses first-class coaching materials developed in conjunction with top players.

Each session covers a particular topic (for example: AC lift leaves, GC extra strokes, AC openings, GC partner play, and other AC and GC tactics topics). It's not a course - each pod session stands on its own, so you can attend just one and still gain a lot from it.



Dave Kibble demonstrates a jump shot

To register your interest (there's no commitment), go to the CA Website Members' Area, click on Development Pods, and choose your pods - the organisers then will ensure that you are informed about session dates, details and topics.

. . . while others take a more relaxed approach!



Women's Croquet Coaching Day: Wednesday 15th May at Cheltenham

At the time of writing there were just 2 places left on this eagerly anticipated day. First come first served.

You may enter through the CA Website event listing:

<https://www.croquet.org.uk/?p=tournament/caCalendar&TwOpen=y&CalendarEntryID=3252&pup=y>

Alternatively, please send Sarah Hayes an email:

cacommchair@googlemail.com

However you enter please do also send her a message detailing anything you would like to be included in the timetable for the day.

Sarah writes:



I am delighted to announce the CA Coaching Committee, have been able to arrange the promised coaching day as follows:

Date: Wednesday 15th May, 2019
Venue: Cheltenham CC
Time: 10am start through late afternoon
Lunch: Bring your own
Attire: Whites not required
Cost: Free of charge

The target audience?

Well, female players who are considering entering their first CA Calendar Event or perhaps considering moving up to their first advanced or level event, and female players who are looking to step up to more challenging events and need a change in mental approach to make it happen.

Beginners are not being targeted in this instance.

What will be happening?

It is hoped to cover a wide range of topics including confidence building together with coaching elements for both AC and GC - the final details of these will be agreed upon when a list of attendees is known.

If there is anything you would specifically like to be discussed please make sure to let me know when applying for a place.

Finally - if you are not able to attend for any reason please send me an email giving me your contact details and a preferred venue. I will collate this information and am hoping the Federations will be able to fill the gap at some time this season - no promises but I will do my best.

Thanks and look forward to seeing you.

Sarah Hayes: Chair - CA Coaching Committee

We can all benefit from coaching, however good we think we are!

Spotlight on ... Handicapping

Robert Moss has organised a really successful series of handicapping workshops over the last 18 months. Everyone who has attended - and hopefully at least one person from each club in the south west was amongst them - will have learnt loads and should be disseminating the knowledge through their club and ensuring good practice is followed.

Here Robert guides us through some of the key issues.

No-one wants to play against an opponent who is wrongly handicapped but this can happen for several reasons. I should explain why it is not always the players fault and from my experience it is rarely intentional. **Mistakes happen.**

We sometimes hear accusations of cheating and although this happens it is far rarer than many people suspect. **However, when anyone plays off the wrong handicap it is unfair.**

If everyone's handicap is correct then we should have roughly a 50% chance of winning a handicap game. This, of course, means that we also have roughly a 50% chance of losing, so if you are winning (or losing) substantially more than half of your handicap games, your handicap is probably wrong regardless of what it says on your card.



Let me explain. The automatic handicap system is excellent for players who play regularly outside their own club but it cannot cope with players who only play within their own club; it cannot cope with players who only or mainly play doubles games; and it cannot cope with new members or rapid improvers. Players in any of these categories will almost certainly have the wrong handicap unless their club has an active club handicapper who monitors play and checks their cards regularly.

Even top players make mistakes and there are several areas of possible confusion - particularly with handicap trigger points.

Two essential things need to happen by us all if we are to ensure fairness:

- ✓ EVERY competitive game must be recorded on our handicap card and
- ✓ EVERY player's handicap card must be checked regularly

This is not because anyone is being critical or suspicious but because there are so many genuine mistakes which, if left uncorrected, will result in unfairness. (I certainly prefer my mistakes to be spotted by a fellow club member than by an opposing team captain.)

Having your handicap adjusted by a club handicapper is neither a reward nor an insult.

It is a normal part of playing games and solely aimed at ensuring fairness to you and to everyone else.

The SW Federation supports clubs and players to ensure that we can all enjoy our games confident that everyone is playing with a correct handicap. The three recent workshops held at Cheltenham, Nailsea and Budleigh were attended by 97 people representing nearly every club in our federation, so the number of people with the knowledge and skills to ensure fair play is increasing.

Clubs are being encouraging to form partnerships with neighbouring clubs so that new club handicappers can be part of a team with more experienced handicappers and also have the support of CA Handicappers.

Each year, the Federation conducts a detailed analysis of league results which highlights any clubs who have results that deviate from the norm and we contact these clubs to find out why they appear to be under or over performing.

At its last meeting, the SWF Committee appointed Richard Jackson as the Federation Handicapper to coordinate these discussions and to be a single point contact for clubs with handicap concerns. See next article for further information.



There are plenty of examples of good practice in our clubs and some ideas which others may like to consider. The following are just some of the suggestions made by those attending the handicapping workshops:

Competitive play

It is easier to assess true handicaps when there is more competitive play either by internal competitions or by competitions between neighbouring clubs.

Lots of people are nervous about the prospect of competitive play but invariably find it is really enjoyable when they take the plunge and find it is not such a threatening atmosphere that they may have anticipated.

Some clubs introduce competitive play in a small, non-intimidating way such as tutored High Bisquers Matches or "Fun" Day Tournaments.

Club initiatives

- ✓ Introduce more internal competitions and internal match play
- ✓ Short Croquet, One-Ball and shortened games are increasingly popular
- ✓ Consider how your new members learn about the correct use of handicap cards - by being taught or by osmosis?
- ✓ Advertise clear guidance on what results should go on cards - i.e. list every competitive game
- ✓ Encourage members to group results under the title of the league match or tournament so the club can check the precise point at which the handicap should change i.e. end of match? end of day? end of tournament?
- ✓ Get every handicap change signed off by the club handicapper
- ✓ Assist players who only play on club days and have no match experience
- ✓ Consider producing a club policy on handicapping. This does not need to be complicated or even written as long as every member knows about it
- ✓ Discourage Aunt Emma tactics because they distort the automatic handicapping system
- ✓ Invite opponents to counter-initial cards to ensure you both get it right

A final thought: “We should not assume that every game we lose is because our opponent is wrongly handicapped - or that every game we win is because we played brilliantly today!”

Thank you to everyone who attended the workshops and for taking the time to complete an evaluation sheet. Your views, comments and suggestions have been combined into a report which has been sent to each CA Handicapper in the SWF, each member of the SWF committee, and to the Chair of the CA Handicapping Committee. Our work continues. Robert Moss

If you're interested in some of the complexities of handicapping and how it may affect results, please see Appendix 1

Using the knowledge we have: Handicappers in action

Following the round of successful handicapping conferences, **we are making progress towards having at least one club handicapper for each of AC and GC in all clubs** in the federation to manage the automatic handicapping system within their club and make any necessary manual changes.

The Croquet Association encourages Federations to appoint a **Federation Handicapper** "to coordinate handicap matters across their region". **At their last meeting, the SWF Committee appointed Richard Jackson to this role.** He will continue to address possible

anomalies in handicaps between clubs arising from the season's match results, and possibly unusual events during the season such as more than one 7-0 win (or defeat) by a particular club within a short period of time. He will be prepared to help (or find a CA handicapper close to the club to do so) clubs who are establishing or re-establishing their handicap system.

If questions arise about individual handicaps, for example to manage the handicaps of rapidly improving players or to consider requests from experienced players who have had their playing ability significantly reduced through injury or illness to have their handicaps increased, he will put the club in contact with a CA Handicapper of the appropriate code. We have 11 AC and 5 GC CA Handicappers in the Federation!

We stress that the automatic handicap system is by far the normal way that changes in handicap take place for individual players. The more games that players play outside their club in matches or tournaments, the better will be the alignment of handicaps between clubs.

Corporate Croquet

Klim is our rep to CA Council and is a member of the CA Marketing Committee and writes:

We have been considering ways in which we might be able to support those clubs which are already involved in this type of corporate fund raising/recruiting and also clubs which wish to become engaged in corporate activity in order to generate an income stream.

From my travels around the tournament circuit I know that there is much knowledge and information already out there. I informed the committee that we didn't actually know which clubs were currently involved, which clubs would like to become involved and which clubs have no desire to become involved (for whatever reason).

We do have knowledge of the existing CA system, which tends to be London based at Hurlingham. But the CA will sometimes also contact croquet clubs away from London to see if they would be willing to respond to requests.

The Marketing Committee feel that it makes sense for the CA Office to hold a register of clubs which are willing to take part and could then pass requests for such events onto the nearest clubs.

- ✓ Would your club be willing to have its name placed on a central CA list?
- ✓ If you have a "to do" check list would you would be willing to pass it on to other clubs, with the CA acting as a distribution point (probably via the CA Website)?
- ✓ Do you have any thoughts on "Dos and Don'ts"?
- ✓ What kind of support (probably via the Federations) could the CA offer to those clubs already involved and/or clubs wishing to become involved?

If you have said "yes" to any of the above then I will contact you in order to put a profile together for your club.

klimseabright@gmail.com

Appendix 1

For the past two years, the SWF committee has analysed the results of all the handicap league matches played within the SWF. The total number of games won and lost by each club gives an indication of possible discrepancies of handicaps between clubs (rather than of particular players).

Where it appears that a particular club has results significantly better or worse than the expected range, the committee has entered into dialogue with the club concerned to attempt to resolve the issue, which may for example be due to the influence of rapidly improving players on the results.

The issue of handicapping will it seems give us hours of involved discussion - here are some of the points raised by the committee:

Stephen Custance-Baker comments:

I am not sure about the basic premise that the correct handicap leads to a 50% likelihood of winning. This would only be true if both players were on an equal level of improvement or worsening. If one player is improving then their probability of winning could be much more than 50% without their being on the wrong handicap.

For example, a GC high handicapper who wins 60% of their games will only increase their index by 20 for every 10 games played. To move their handicap by 1 step would take 25 games played but non-one would say that their handicap was wrong. For GC handicaps 6 and below, where the trigger points are at every 100 instead of 50, this changes to 1 step every 50 games. Even a player with 70% probability of winning will only gain an average of 4 index points per game and will take more than 12 games to change their index by 50 on the AHS.

I am planning to produce a model of the system to see if there is any way to differentiate an improver (whose handicap should be governed by the AHS) from a rapid improver (whose handicap needs intervention). It may be necessary to look at net hoops scored, rather than just wins.

Our favourite Aunt: I would agree that Aunt Emma tactics should be discouraged but only because they make the game less interesting and will delay a player's improvement.



That's all for now - see you next time!