

## **Workshop on Running a Tournament, 4 November 2020**

Firstly, thanks to you all for registering to attend this discussion, and particular thanks to Kate for being the moderator. It is encouraging to see that so many croquet players want to get involved in running tournaments – hopefully many of you will be able to take on the role of Tournament Manager or TM for a Croquet NSW Tournament over the next year or so.

Thanks also to those of you who have sent questions in to Kate – Larry Bryant (Newcastle), Helen Cooper (Forster), Peter Freer (Canberra), David Gibson (Manly), Rik Mills (Orange) and Wal Mills (Maitland). Most of the questions raised concerned how to do the draw for a tournament, so I'll devote most of what I say to that aspect.

I'll touch more briefly on other areas such as the preliminary tasks of deciding whether the event should be handicap or level play, whether there should be handicap limits (upper, lower or both), generating entries to the tournament, the important tasks of organising your "workforce" of volunteers for hoop-setting, refereeing, recording results and appointing a handicapper to check that players seem to be playing to an appropriate handicap.

I don't plan to spend any time on catering arrangements, raffles or other social events which might be associated with a tournament.

### **1. Preliminary Tasks**

- 1.1 A decision on whether the tournament (either AC or GC) should be level or handicap play, along with the length of each game, the proposed dates of play and the likely number of games per day should all be decided before the event is publicised.
- 1.2 A decision also needs to be made about what hoop width will be mandated for the event. This should reflect the level of player likely to enter, and should never be wider than  $3\frac{3}{4}$  inches, or less than 3 and  $\frac{21}{32}$ nds of an inch.
- 1.3 In making these decisions, account should be taken of the make-up of the expected entrants, particularly their level of experience. Some events will appeal to players whose approach to croquet is at a more social level than at a competitive level, and some will be the reverse of that. Consideration of how many games will be played each day need to keep this in mind.
- 1.4 If the event is to be for a specific handicap range (such as Division 2 in GC or Silver in AC), thought needs to be given to what happens if a player with a higher handicap (a Division 3 or Bronze player) wants to enter. My inclination is always to accept the entry, usually on the proviso that if there are too many entries for the event to be held in the available time with the available courts, these players will be likely to miss out.
- 1.5 Once decisions have been made on these matters, a notice should go to clubs and/or players seeking entries. This notice must explain how players can enter, with an email address and a phone number for the tournament manager. At this stage, the event should be created on croquetscores.com, with manager access given to the tournament manager.

### **2. Getting Volunteers**

- 2.1 You will need to appoint volunteers to undertake hoop setting each day of the tournament, and to ensure that the lawns and all equipment are in good condition for

the event. This might involve liaison with your local council if they are involved in helping you with lawn maintenance.

- 2.2 You should appoint a Tournament Referee, and the TR should then take on the task of appointing referees for games. For a Croquet NSW event, the appropriate State Director of Refereeing should be asked to appoint the TR.
- 2.3 Recorders/scorers should also be appointed, and they should be added to the [croquetscores](#) event as either scorers or managers.
- 2.4 Ideally a Tournament Handicapper (or Handicap Committee) should be appointed to keep an eye on handicaps, particularly if players are coming from many clubs. Some clubs are more attentive than others to ensuring that their members play on appropriate handicaps, and an events with players from many clubs is a good opportunity for some level of uniformity of approach to be achieved.
- 2.5 In practice, of course, as TM you might find yourself filling many of these volunteer roles, either with or without help from others. Always try to get assistance from other club members – they will generally find the experience of being involved to be quite pleasant.

### **3. Doing the Draw**

- 3.1 The crux of having a good tournament is in setting up a draw which achieves a balance between giving all participants a good number of games, and ensuring that the player who plays the best croquet throughout the event emerges as the winner.
- 3.2 A decision on the format of the draw can't really be made until after all entries have been received. However, if you have specified a maximum number of entries which you are confident will be met, the format can be decided earlier.
- 3.3 Most tournaments will consist of one or more blocks of players each playing a round robin, followed by knockout finals for the top one or two players from each block, and perhaps by a Plate event for players missing out on the finals.
- 3.4 Occasionally it will be desirable to go straight to a knockout, and occasionally the tournament will consist of just a single block playing a round robin. The decision on which format to adopt will depend to a very large extent on the number of players taking part, the number of days and courts available for the event and the number of games which can be played on each court each day.

#### Block Play

- 3.5 If there is to be block play, each block should be of the same size, or very nearly so. Blocks should have at least 4 players, and ideally no more than 8, although there are exceptions to both these limits. Blocks should have approximately equal average player "strength", as measured by handicap, index or world ranking. Usually the top two players in each block will be "seeded" as positions 1 and 2, with the remaining players randomly allocated to the remaining positions.
- 3.6 Once blocks have been formed, a standard round-robin draw for the size of the block should be used. Standard draws for blocks of up to 12 players are given at the end of this paper. Standard draws usually have the top two players playing one another in the last round. If the event is being played as a single block, or if one player from each block is progressing to the final series, this is a good format.
- 3.7 However, if the top 2 players are to qualify for the next stage, it is good to have the players seeded 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting in the final round, with similar considerations for other numbers of players progressing. If 4 players are going through from each

block, a mini round robin between players seeded 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> in the last three rounds is desirable.

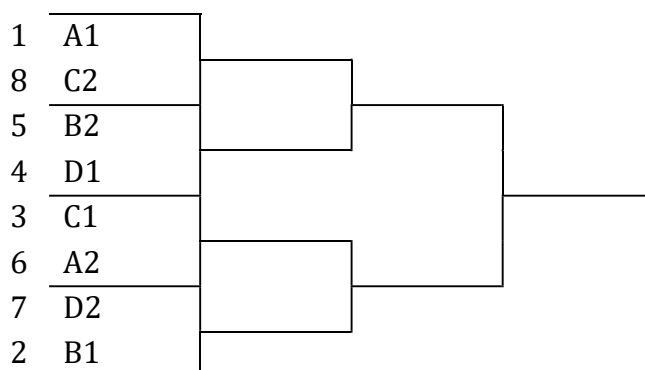
- 3.8 If the tournament has only four entries, a double or even triple round robin is desirable, mainly to give players sufficient games to justify the time and cost of participating.

Progression from Blocks to Knockouts

- 3.9 If you have an odd number of blocks and you need to populate a knockout with an even (power of 2) number of players you need to come up with a method of selecting different numbers of players from the various blocks. If blocks are even in size, this is not too difficult. For example, with three blocks and four players to qualify, the 3 block winners plus the “best” runner-up would go through. With 8 to qualify, the winners and runners-up and the “best” two 3<sup>rd</sup> place-getters would qualify.
- 3.10 “Best” will usually be the runner up with the most wins, or the best net hoops if wins are equal, or best hoops “for” if net hoops are equal. If this doesn’t produce a winner, either a coin toss or a play-off will be necessary. With blocks of different sizes, rather than number of wins the measure would be percentage of wins, followed by ratio of points for to points against rather than net points.
- 3.11 In some tournaments it will be regarded as unfair to exclude a player from the finals on the basis of net hoops, and in this case play-off “games” should be allowed for. Each “game” might be another game in the same format as the block games, if time permits, or it might be a shortened version. For example, following a block of 13-point GC games, play-off games might be for a much lower (odd) number of hoops. In AC rather than a shortened game a play-off might involve a “nearest the peg” shoot-out, or a hoop-running contest.

Seeding the Knockout

- 3.12 Seeding the knockout should be done in such a way that the best two block winners will meet in the final if they win all their games. Best can be based on performance in the blocks, or on handicap, index or world ranking. There are arguments for and against both methods, which are too complex to go into here.
- 3.13 A simple approach often works well, for example for 4 blocks with 2 players from each block progressing to the final, make sure that the block winners are in positions 1 to 4 in the normal seeded knockout, with the runners-up each playing a winner from another block, and a different half of the draw from the winner of their block.
- 3.14 If blocks are A, B, C and D, where A1 is the block A winner and D2 is the block D runner-up, etc, a satisfactory draw would be:



3.15 It is common for the first knockout to be called the “X” knockout, for reasons which escape me. This is particularly the case where there is no block play before the knockout starts. Depending on the size of the first knockout round (8, 16 or 32 players, for example) first round losers either enter the Plate or the “Y” knockout. If first round losers have entered the Plate, second round losers go to the “Y”. In either case, losers in the next round go to the “Z” knockout. First round losers in the “Y” knockout then enter the “W” knockout, so winners keep playing winners and losers play losers.

#### Populating the Plate

3.16 Setting up a meaningful Plate event for players who miss out on the finals is an important part of making the event an enjoyable and worthwhile experience for all participants, not only the top players. The exact format will depend very much on the number of players, and will ideally cater for the fact that some players will not want to stay to play in the Plate if they miss out on the finals. A single block round robin amongst all remaining players is often the best solution, and one option here is to not have players play against any player they played in the initial blocks.

3.17 As an example, the recent CNSW Women’s AC Open Singles had 8 players playing in two blocks of 4. Block winners played the final, and the remaining 6 played for the Win Dickinson Trophy. They effectively completed a round robin of 6 players, carrying the appropriate games from the first two blocks into the final block.

3.18 Another technique I have used for the Plate when only 4 players progress to the finals is to take the players who missed out on the finals into the Plate, along with first round losers in the finals. The Plate can then be either another block or a new knockout, depending on numbers.

#### Variations

3.19 Many more options are available, including Swiss events and Double Elimination knockouts. The Swiss is particularly appropriate where the number of players likely to take part in the Plate is unknown. Swiss events are described in the [ACA Tournament Regulations](#). Double Elimination tournaments require a player to lose twice in the knockout before being eliminated. Various formats are available by searching the internet.

#### Matches rather than Games

3.20 In top level tournaments (particularly NSW Open Championships) it is always the aim to finish with knockouts made up of best-of-3 or best-of-5 game matches rather than single games. Particularly in GC, this minimises the likelihood of a fluke upset win determining the winner of the event.

#### Time Limits

3.21 A continuing problem for tournament managers is getting all games completed in the time available. While it is common in AC events to impose a time limit, usually 2½ hours, the concept of time limits is resisted in top level GC events. This is largely because it is very possible for a single hoop to take a very long time to be scored, and a time limit penalises players if net hoops or gross hoops are to be used as a measure for determining progress to the finals.

3.22 The problem the Tournament Manager faces is that all scheduled games need to be completed in the time available, so some reasonable time limit is required. Various methods have been used for GC events recently, ranging from an absolute time limit

to the imposition of a time limit if after a certain time the TM feels that the game is bogged down, in which a time limit is set for completion of the game. Neither method is perfect, but the first is easier to implement, because it is not subjective.

- 3.23 Whatever method is used to “ring the bell” to signal the end of the game, the question is what happens next. The aim is to make it difficult for one player to “game” the situation when he/she is marginally ahead with time about to run out. To this end, we have recently introduced the condition that after the bell goes, each ball is played once more. If the scores are then equal, one more hoop is played, otherwise the game ends. This seems to have worked quite well, and will probably be introduced in a new set of Tournament Regulations soon.

#### Slow Play

- 3.24 Slow play is another bugbear for the TM. Players relatively new to the game can be expected to be slower than more experienced players, but all players should be made aware of the need to play “with reasonable despatch”. The main problem is if a player slows right down when leading getting close to time, in an effort to prevent the opponent getting a chance to play. It seems to me that this is more of a problem in AC than GC, but I might be wrong. Referees need to be aware of the powers they have to deal with slow play, and have the courage to take action if necessary, without becoming over zealous and ruining the game for all concerned.

### **4. Questions**

- 4.1 Larry Bryant asked a question about substitution of players, and I imagine from his question that he means after the tournament has started. My view would be that substitution should not be allowed, except perhaps where a player who has missed the finals and withdraws from the Plate is replaced in the Plate by another player of similar ability.
- 4.2 Peter Freer has asked a number of interesting questions, and I suspect that, given his experience, he has a fair understanding of what the answers should be.
- 4.2.1 He asks how much conditions should be standardised and how much we should experiment a bit. I’m not sure quite what he is getting at in the way of experimenting – perhaps he can elucidate.
- 4.2.2 He has also asked how many officials are really required to run a croquet tournament. This is not easy to answer other than to say that with a very experienced field of players the TM is almost superfluous, but it is desirable to have a TM for events with less experienced players involved. It is often the case with experienced players that one of the players is able to take on the role of TM without it having a detrimental effect on their game. This is probably more the case with AC than GC.
- 4.2.3 One way to reduce burn-out in TMs and TRs is to have sessions such as this to equip more people to take on the role of TM, and for the State Directors of Refereeing to continue to train more referees so that the task of being TR can be shared around. Neil Hardie did a great job as SDR- AC, but less seems to have been achieved in regard to GC referees. I understand that the SDR-GC position is currently vacant, so perhaps there is an opportunity for somebody to get stuck in to GC referee development.
- 4.2.4 I think more training and refreshing of knowledge of the Laws and Rules, and attention to lawncraft, can improve the quality of refereeing, and referees who are

better at their job are more likely to get enjoyment from refereeing games. Hopefully sessions like this will help towards improving the quality (and quantity) of Tournament Managers.

4.3 Hopefully the questions from Helen, David, Rik and Wal have been covered above.

## 5. Conclusion

I hope you feel that you have gained something from this session, and I am very happy to try to answer any question you might have.

David Stanton

CNSW Tournament Committee

## Seeded Draws for 4 to 12 players

Round	4 players		5 Players		6 Players		
1	1 v 4	2 v 3	3 v 4	2 v 5	1 v 6	2 v 5	3 v 4
2	1 v 3	2 v 4	1 v 5	2 v 4	1 v 5	2 v 4	3 v 6
3	1 v 2	3 v 4	1 v 4	2 v 3	1 v 4	2 v 3	5 v 6
4			1 v 3	4 v 5	1 v 3	2 v 6	4 v 5
5			1 v 2	3 v 5	1 v 2	3 v 5	4 v 6

Round	7 Players			8 Players			
1	4 v 5	3 v 6	2 v 7	1 v 8	4 v 5	3 v 6	2 v 7
2	4 v 6	1 v 7	3 v 5	4 v 6	1 v 7	2 v 8	3 v 5
3	2 v 5	3 v 7	1 v 6	2 v 5	4 v 8	3 v 7	1 v 6
4	2 v 6	1 v 5	4 v 7	3 v 8	2 v 6	1 v 5	4 v 7
5	1 v 4	6 v 7	2 v 3	1 v 4	5 v 8	6 v 7	2 v 3
6	5 v 7	1 v 3	2 v 4	5 v 7	1 v 3	2 v 4	6 v 8
7	1 v 2	5 v 6	3 v 4	1 v 2	5 v 6	7 v 8	3 v 4

Round	9 Players				10 Players					
1	2 v 9	5 v 6	4 v 7	3 v 8	1 v 10	5 v 6	4 v 7	3 v 8	2 v 9	
2	2 v 8	1 v 9	3 v 7	4 v 6	2 v 8	1 v 9	5 v 10	4 v 6	3 v 7	
3	3 v 6	2 v 7	1 v 8	4 v 5	3 v 6	2 v 7	1 v 8	9 v 10	4 v 5	
4	8 v 9	3 v 5	2 v 6	1 v 7	4 v 10	3 v 5	2 v 6	1 v 7	8 v 9	
5	7 v 8	4 v 9	1 v 6	2 v 5	7 v 8	4 v 9	3 v 10	2 v 5	1 v 6	
6	1 v 5	6 v 7	4 v 8	3 v 9	1 v 5	6 v 7	4 v 8	3 v 9	2 v 10	
7	2 v 3	1 v 4	5 v 9	6 v 8	2 v 3	1 v 4	5 v 9	7 v 10	6 v 8	
8	7 v 9	2 v 4	1 v 3	5 v 8	6 v 10	2 v 4	1 v 3	5 v 8	7 v 9	
9	6 v 9	3 v 4	5 v 7	1 v 2	6 v 9	8 v 10	5 v 7	1 v 2	3 v 4	

Round	11 Players					12 Players					
1	3 v 10	5 v 8	2 v 11	4 v 9	6 v 7	1 v 12	3 v 10	5 v 8	2 v 11	4 v 9	6 v 7
2	5 v 7	3 v 9	1 v 11	4 v 10	6 v 8	5 v 7	3 v 9	1 v 11	4 v 10	6 v 8	2 v 12
3	2 v 9	6 v 11	3 v 8	4 v 7	1 v 10	2 v 9	6 v 11	3 v 8	4 v 7	1 v 10	5 v 12
4	2 v 10	4 v 8	1 v 9	3 v 7	5 v 11	2 v 10	4 v 8	1 v 9	6 v 12	3 v 7	5 v 11
5	1 v 8	3 v 5	2 v 7	4 v 6	9 v 11	1 v 8	3 v 5	10 v 12	2 v 7	4 v 6	9 v 11
6	6 v 10	3 v 11	5 v 9	1 v 7	2 v 8	4 v 12	6 v 10	3 v 11	5 v 9	1 v 7	2 v 8
7	8 v 9	1 v 6	4 v 5	2 v 3	10 v 11	7 v 12	8 v 9	1 v 6	4 v 5	2 v 3	10 v 11
8	4 v 11	2 v 6	7 v 9	1 v 5	8 v 10	4 v 11	2 v 6	3 v 12	7 v 9	1 v 5	8 v 10
9	7 v 10	8 v 11	1 v 4	2 v 5	3 v 6	7 v 10	8 v 11	1 v 4	2 v 5	3 v 6	9 v 12
10	1 v 3	7 v 11	6 v 9	2 v 4	5 v 10	1 v 3	7 v 11	6 v 9	8 v 12	2 v 4	5 v 10
11	5 v 6	7 v 8	1 v 2	9 v 10	3 v 4	5 v 6	7 v 8	1 v 2	9 v 10	3 v 4	11 v 12