

Handicapping Policy

Presented to SWF AGM 2016

Introduction

Handicapping can be one of the most contentious issues players and administrators have to deal with. The following document aims to set out some principles behind successful handicapping and resolutions to follow in order to achieve this. I am very grateful to Ros Key-Pugh for providing the material on which this document is largely based.

General Principles

The point of handicapping is solely to try to give any two players a more-or-less equal chance of winning a handicap game. Although it can inevitably also be used to measure one's progress, it should not be seen as a 'status symbol' as this can be a barrier to correct handicapping. On the other hand, players should always be pleased when their handicap reduces (whether via the automatic system or done by a handicapper) as this indicates their results and play have improved.

Specific points to follow - Association Croquet

1. 24 is the highest handicap allowed in SWF competitions. It is also the highest initial handicap that should be given to a new player.
2. However, 24 is not a 'default' starting handicap that should be given to all beginners. The broad expectation is that after attending a full introductory course and playing within their club for around a month, most people should be able to play to a standard of about handicap 24. However, a few people will be better than this by that stage, sometimes quite significantly. In all cases, the CA-approved test for setting an initial handicap should be used. If a player loses 5 games in a row from their starting point of 24, this indicates more coaching is required rather than they should move to a handicap of 26 and be left to fend for themselves.

Specific points to follow - Golf Croquet

1. New players joining clubs should wait to be given a handicap until they have had a full introductory course of coaching and played regularly in Club play for at least a month. At that point they should do the 3 times round the full size lawn test under supervision and be watched by the Club handicapper for at least two games before being given their handicap. The 3 times round test is only a guide to their basic accuracy of line and distance. It does not test a variety of types of shot or any tactical awareness. This is what should determine their handicap. Any players whose handicap has not been allocated by this full method should be reassessed immediately by the Club Handicapper.

2. There appears to have been a misunderstanding about the use of the new extended handicap range for existing players with handicaps. Club players with the highest handicap (i.e. 12) before the extended range was brought in should only have had their handicaps changed to higher handicaps if their cards showed they had been at Index 0 for 5 or more games. No others should have been altered. Any that have been altered should have their handicap reassessed from play and results since the change was made to bring it back to where it would have reached.

Specific points to follow - both Association Croquet and Golf Croquet

1. All experienced players whose handicap has remained static for a full season should be checked by the Club Handicapper. If they have played insufficient games for their handicap to have had a chance to alter they should be reassessed.
2. A fast improving player should be reassessed by the Club Handicapper regularly through a season and their handicap adjusted if it is out by 2 or more steps. A simple adjustment by 1 step should be allowed to occur naturally if sufficient games are being recorded.
3. The SWF should consider appointing 5 Federation Handicappers for Golf Croquet and 5 Federation Handicappers for Association Croquet. Each would be responsible to cover the clubs within their division of the Federation. They should visit each club at least once a year and assess any individuals the Club Handicapper wants to be reassessed. They should also meet together once a year and ensure that they are in agreement over their standards.