

South West Federation of Croquet Clubs

League Rules (Association Croquet)

(Incorporating changes made at the 2024 AGM)

1. Leagues and Entries

- a. The Federation shall organise a number of leagues, in which teams from Full Member Clubs may play matches against one another. The leagues currently supported are:
 - (1) the **League for Advanced Play** (herein referred to as the '**Advanced League**');
 - (2) the **Federation League** (herein categorised as 'a Handicap League');
 - (3) the **Intermediate League** (herein categorised as 'a Handicap League');
 - (4) the '**B**' **League** (herein categorised as 'a Handicap League').Further, the Federation League, Intermediate League and 'B' League shall collectively be herein referred to as the '**Handicap Leagues**'.
- b. **Structure of the Advanced League.**
 - (1) The **League for Advanced Play** shall comprise three divisions: Division 1 shall contain five teams, but the number of teams in each of Divisions 2 and 3 shall be at the discretion of the League Secretary.
 - (2) Each division shall consist of one or two all-play-all blocks. The number of blocks in each division and the allocation of entrants to those blocks shall be at the discretion of the League Secretary. Should any block contain fewer than five teams, each team shall play all of the others twice: once at home and once away.
 - (3) A team shall remain in the same division from season to season, subject to:
 - i. any promotion or relegation under Rule 14a(2) at the end of a season; and
 - ii. application for a place in the League under Rule 1d for the following season.
- c. **Structure of the Handicap Leagues.**

The **Federation League**, **Intermediate League** and '**B**' **League** shall each consist of two or more all-play-all blocks. The number of blocks in each league and the allocation of entrants to those blocks shall be at the discretion of the League Secretary, except that in a league containing 22 or more entrants that league shall be structured in a minimum of four blocks.
- d. **League Entry.** The Federation Secretary shall invite applications from clubs in the Federation for places in the leagues for the following year when notifying them of the agenda for the Annual General Meeting (AGM).
- e. **Refusal of Entry.**
 - (1) A team that has conceded two or more matches in the most recent season shall, in the following season, be refused entry to the league in which it has defaulted, unless the League Secretary can be convinced that there were extenuating circumstances that prevented the matches in question from being played.
 - (2) Where the defaulting team has played fewer than half of its scheduled matches, the results of those matches that have been played shall be expunged from the block records; otherwise, any unplayed matches shall be treated as walkover wins by the opponents (as defined in Rule 11a(2)).
- f. The deadline for entries shall be ten days after the AGM.
- g. The entry fee for all leagues shall be the same.

2. Fixtures and Venues

The fixtures and their venues for each season shall be laid down by the League Secretary, who shall send out notification to each club of its league fixture commitment for the following season no later than one month after the AGM.

3. Fixture Dates

- a. It shall be the duty of all clubs concerned to arrange the dates for their fixtures and submit them to the League Secretary by 24th January. Appendix 1 is to act as a checklist for club tournament secretaries / team captains.
- b. No fixture shall be arranged for a date later than that specified for the relevant league by the League Secretary in the notification to clubs (*q.v.* Rule 2).
- c. It shall be the duty of the League Secretary to publish a full league fixture list, with details of dates and venues, and distribute this list to clubs.
- d. When the list has been distributed, a fixture date may be changed only in exceptional circumstances, with the agreement of both clubs and subject to immediate notification to the League Secretary.
- e. Where two teams from the same club are in the same block in a League, those teams must play the fixture(s) between them before any other fixture for either of the teams.

4. Eligibility

- a. Only current playing members of a club shall be eligible to represent that club. It is the responsibility of the team captain to know the current Rules that apply to the team, and to have a copy of them for reference.
- b. In any given league, no player shall play for more than one team, or for more than one club, during a season, except as specified below.
 - (1) A club entering more than one team in the **League for Advanced Play** should declare each team squad to the League Secretary before the club's first match of the season. Players not so nominated shall be assumed to be members of the squad of that team for which they first play.
 - (2) For each club in (1) above:
 - i. No member of a Division 1 or 2 squad may play in a lower division.
 - ii. A member of a lower-division squad may play in one match in a higher division whilst retaining membership of the lower-division squad; however, should that member play in more than one match in a higher division, membership shall transfer to the higher-division squad and that member may no longer play in the lower division.

This rule does not preclude a player from participating in more than one league during a season, or from playing for another club in a different league.

- c. **Handicaps.** On the day any match is played, each player shall comply with the appropriate handicap restriction from the following.
 - (1) **League for Advanced Play.** There is no handicap restriction.
 - (2) **Federation League.** Players with handicaps of 14 or below, subject to (d) below. In addition, a team may field one player whose handicap is 16 or 18.
 - (3) **Intermediate League.** Players with handicaps within a range of 9 to 18, subject to (d) below. In addition, a team may field one player whose handicap is 20 or 22.
 - (4) **'B' League.** Players with handicaps within a range of 16 to 24, subject to (d) below.
- d. **Federation, Intermediate and 'B' Leagues.** Where a player has played for a Handicap League team in at least half of the team's matches during the season and the team qualifies for the play-offs, that player shall be allowed to participate if the player's handicap is not more than one step outside the range for that league.
- e. Every player must have a properly assessed Association Croquet handicap, and all players should have a completed handicap card. Each player is responsible for ensuring that the AC handicap on the Croquet England website is correct.

- f. Each player is required to play every game at the correct handicap. If the use of a wrong handicap should come to light, one of the following remedies shall apply.
 - (1) **Advanced League.** If any handicap errors are discovered during or after a match, the opposing team captain should be informed immediately so that corrections can be made to any affected handicap cards.
 - (2) **Handicap Leagues.** If it is discovered at any stage, during or after a match, that a player's declared handicap in any game was above the correct value, each such game shall be deemed to have been lost by the maximum margin.
- g. Where a player is a member of a team for which the player is not eligible under (a) to (d) above, all of the games involving that player shall be deemed to have been lost by the maximum margin.
- h. A National handicapper, being a member of a team, may not alter the handicap of a member of the opposition without that player's consent.

5. Size of Teams

- a. **Number of Players.**
 - (1) The size of teams for any given fixture is a matter for agreement between the opposing clubs, subject to (2) and (3) below.
 - (2) The minimum team size shall be three players.
 - (3) Where teams cannot agree on the team size, the lower of the two suggested figures shall be used.
- b. **Substitutes.** Nothing in a(1) to (3) above shall restrict a club from substituting new players in a later session of the match.

6. Match Format

- a. Whatever the team size, the match shall be arranged so that one side must win (except as provided in Rule 11b).
- b. Subject to Rules 5a(1) and 6a, and the number of courts it has available, the home club shall choose the match format. Appendix 2 lists examples of possible match formats.
- c. A match shall consist of a minimum of five games. One-court clubs may either play two afternoon sessions (see Rules 8a(4) and 8b(2)), or triple-bank (except in the 'B' League).
- d. **Choice of Courts.** Where a club has two or more courts available, the visiting team captain shall choose the courts for each session of the match, avoiding double-banking where possible.

7. Game Format

- a. **Advanced League.** All games shall be played according to the Croquet England Laws for Advanced Play, on full- or near to full-size courts.
- b. **Federation League.** All games shall be played according to the Croquet England Laws for Handicap Play, on full- or near to full-size courts.
- c. **Intermediate League.** All games shall be played according to the Croquet England Laws for Full Bisque Handicap Play, using a Base Handicap of 6, on full- or near to full-size courts. Appendix 3A specifies the allocation of bisques.
- d. **'B' League.**
 - (1) All games shall be either:
 - i. 26-point games played on half-size courts (except as provided in Rule 8b(2)); or
 - ii. 14-point games played on full- or near to full-size courts.
 - (2) The choice in (1) above shall rest with the home club, which may decide to play some games in the match on full-size courts and other games on half-size courts.

- (3) All games shall be played according to the Croquet England Laws for Full Bisque Handicap Play, using a Base Handicap of 11½.
 - i. 26-point games shall use the calculated bisque allocation modified, in accordance with published Schedules, for half-size courts.
 - ii. 14-point games shall use the calculated bisque allocation modified, in accordance with published Schedules, for 14-point games.

Appendix 3B specifies the allocation of bisques, and court dimensions.

8. Time Limits

a. **Advanced, Federation and Intermediate Leagues.**

- (1) The time limit for any session shall be 3, 3¼ or 3½ hours, to be determined by the away club. Other time limits may be imposed by agreement between the two captains.
- (2) Time taken for stoppages (for tea, coffee, etc.) shall be added to extend the time limit.
- (3) Notwithstanding (1) and (2) above, where the home club has only one court and wishes to play three games in one session, the away club may decide that all or some of the singles games in that match shall be limited to 2½ hours.
- (4) In the Federation and Intermediate Leagues, where the home club wishes to play two rounds of singles in one session, any singles game in that session may be given a 2-hour time limit and, in that case, shall be played as an 18-point game, starting at Hoop 5, with the number of bisques reduced accordingly.

b. **'B' League.**

- (1) Any doubles game and any singles game not covered by (2) below may be given a time limit of 2½, 2¾, 3, 3¼ or 3½ hours, to be determined by the away club. Other time limits may be imposed by agreement between the two captains.
- (2) Where the home club wishes to play two rounds of singles in one session on half-size courts, any singles game in that session may be given a 2-hour time limit and, in that case, shall be played as an 18-point game, starting at Hoop 5, with the number of bisques reduced accordingly. (To clarify the bisque reduction process: the reduction for the 18-point game takes place first, followed by that for the half-size court.)

9. Pairing of Opponents

- a. In all leagues, it shall be the duty of the team captains to arrange the pairing of opponents for all games of the match prior to the start of the first session.

b. **Federation, Intermediate and 'B' Leagues.**

- (1) The captains should first arrange the pairings for the session with the most games (normally the afternoon session) by choosing their doubles partnerships, if any, and then pairing opponents for the singles games by random draw.
- (2) Games in the other (usually morning) session should then be arranged so that no game is repeated.

- c. **Advanced League.** As play may be all singles, all doubles or a mixture of both, the following shall apply.

- (1) Where one or more doubles games are to be played in a session, the captains shall nominate the partnerships; opponents shall be paired in order of aggregate handicaps. For any remaining singles games in that session, opponents shall be paired in handicap order, subject to (4) below.
- (2) Where only singles games are to be played in a session, opponents shall be paired in handicap order, subject to (4) below.
- (3) Where two or more players in a team have the same handicap, the captain shall choose their order, which shall apply for the whole match.
- (4) Singles players must play different opponents in each session, so the pairings must be adjusted, if necessary, to comply with this requirement.

10. Reporting of Results

It shall be the duty of the home club to complete the appropriate Association Croquet League Report form and submit it to the League Secretary within seven days of the match. (The forms are available on the South West Federation website.)

11. Walkovers / Abandoned Matches

a. Walkovers.

- (1) Where a club fails to provide the minimum size of team for any fixture, the League Secretary shall be empowered to award a walkover win to its opponents.
- (2) A walkover win shall be scored 3–0, each game being scored as 26–13, for block position calculations.

b. Abandoned Matches.

- (1) **Definition.** A court is unplayable if:
 - i. both captains agree it is unplayable; or
 - ii. there is sufficient surface water on any part of the court to prevent a ball hit through it from reaching any one of the four boundaries.
- (2) **Options.** Where one or more courts are unplayable, the two captains may:
 - i. choose to continue the match; or
 - ii. agree to abandon the match; or
 - iii. disagree, in which case the match shall be abandoned.
- (3) Where a match is abandoned because one or more courts are unplayable, every attempt should be made to complete the match at a later date unless one team has already won more than half of the scheduled number of games. Failing this, the match shall be awarded to the team with the most wins in completed games; should the number of wins be shared equally, the match shall be declared a draw.
- (4) Where all the courts are playable but the two captains mutually agree to abandon the match for some other reason, the match score at the time it is abandoned shall be the recorded score.
- (5) Where all the courts are playable and one captain wishes to abandon the match but the other wishes to continue, any uncompleted games shall be awarded to the team that is prepared to continue.

12. Final Block Positions

- a. In determining the positions in an all-play-all block after all fixtures have been decided, teams shall be ranked according to the following hierarchy.
 - (1) Match points awarded. (Two match points are awarded to a winning team, or one match point to each team in the event of a draw.)
 - (2) "Who beat whom", using the nett games where teams have met twice.
 - (3) Where two or more teams are still equal, then for a mini-block of the equal teams:
 - i. match points awarded; then
 - ii. "who beat whom", using the nett games where teams have met twice; then
 - iii. nett games between the teams in the mini-block; then
 - iv. average nett hoop and peg points per game between the teams in the mini-block.
 - (4) Where two or more teams are still equal, they shall be ranked by their nett games in the entire block.
 - (5) Where two or more teams are still equal, they shall be ranked by their average nett hoop and peg points per game in the entire block.
- b. Should the above measures fail to resolve the equality in ranking, lots shall be drawn by the Committee.

13. Play-offs and Finals

- a. After the final block positions for each of the constituent blocks have been determined, in each block the team with the highest position shall be declared the Block Winner. For each league and division containing more than two blocks, the League Secretary shall arrange such play-offs between the block winners as may be necessary to produce two finalists.
- b. Should any block winner be unable to compete in the relevant play-off match or final, the League Secretary may deem the next highest-placed available team in that block to be the block winner. Similarly, should a team win a play-off match and then become unable to compete in the next play-off match or final, the League Secretary may reinstate the last team beaten by the unavailable team.
- c. Play-offs shall be staged at the venues of block winners. The block that is to provide the host and "Home" club shall be determined each year on a rotational basis and notified to clubs. Matches may be played on any date after the block winners have been decided, by arrangement between the clubs involved, but no fewer than seven days before the scheduled date for the next round. The host club must offer the visiting team three dates on which the play-off match could be played. It shall be the responsibility of both clubs in each match to inform the League Secretary of the agreed date.
- d. League and division finals shall be staged at venues (host clubs) and on dates decided by the League Secretary and notified to clubs. For each of the finals, the "Home" club shall be determined by the League Secretary.
- e. For each play-off and final, the host club shall:
 - (1) determine the number and size of the courts; and
 - (2) appoint a referee, **suitably qualified wherever possible**.
- f. The winner of the Federation League final shall be invited to represent the South West Federation in the Secretary's Shield in the following season.
- g. In the League for Advanced Play, the winner of a division final shall be declared the team with the highest position in that division.

14. Outcome and Entries (Advanced League Only)

- a. **Outcome.** After the final block positions for each of the divisions have been determined and any division finals played, the outcome of the league shall be decided as follows.
 - (1) The team with the highest position in Division 1 shall be declared the winner of The Parkstone Trophy for that season.
 - (2) For the following season, under normal circumstances, the team with the lowest position in each of Divisions 1 and 2 shall be relegated to play in the next-lower division, and the team with the highest position in each of Divisions 2 and 3 shall be promoted to play in the next-higher division. However, the Committee may vary the number of teams promoted or relegated.
- b. **New Entrants.** A new entrant to the League shall **normally** be assigned to Division 3. **Where the predicted standard of the new team is considered to be too high for Division 3, the League Secretary shall have the power to introduce the new team into a higher division. Such a decision shall not affect any promotions arising from Rule 14a(2).**

15. Matters in Dispute

The Committee shall have the power to resolve:

- any matter not covered by these rules;
- disputes over the interpretation of anything contained within these rules.

16. Amendments

These rules are subject to amendment at any General Meeting of the Federation by simple majority of those delegates present and eligible to vote.

Appendix 1

Step-by-step guide for arranging a League Match

STEPS		RELEVANT RULES
	Before 24th January	
1	Once you have been notified of your fixture commitments, you should contact your opponents and agree dates for the fixtures.	2, 3a, 3b & 3e
2	Notify the League Secretary of the dates agreed for your fixtures.	3a
	At least 7 days before the fixture	
3	Contact your opponents to agree team size.	5a
4	The home club should then decide the match format and notify the away club. Where relevant, it should also inform the away club of the size of courts to be used.	6 & 7 Appendix 2
5	The home club should notify the away club of any time limits it needs to apply to make a certain match format viable.	8
6	Inform the opposing captain if your team includes any player for whom Safeguarding might be an issue, e.g. players under 18.	Appendix 4
	On Match Day	
7	Each captain should provide the opposing captain with a list of players' names and handicaps.	Appendix 4
8	The team captains shall arrange the pairings of opponents for all games prior to the start of the match.	9
	Not later than 7 days after the match	
9	The home club shall inform the League Secretary of the match result and the full details of the games, printed on the appropriate Association Croquet League Report form, obtainable from the South West Federation website.	10 & 11

Appendix 2

Examples of Possible Match Formats

The following table indicates combinations of Doubles (D) and Singles (S) games which will enable a result to be obtained for different numbers of available courts.

Number of available courts	ONE		TWO			THREE			FOUR OR MORE		
No. of players	am	pm	am	pm		am	pm		am	pm	
3	1D, 1S	3S*	1D, 1S	3S		1D, 1S	3S		1D, 1S	3S	
			3S	3S	3S	3S	3S	3S	3S	3S	
4	2D	1D, 2S*	2D	1D, 2S		2D	1D, 2S		2D	1D, 2S	
			1D, 2S	4S		1D, 2S	4S		1D, 2S	4S	
5			2D, 1S	1D, 3S		2D, 1S	1D, 3S		2D, 1S	1D, 3S	
						1D, 3S	5S		1D, 3S	5S	
6			3D	2D, 2S		3D	2D, 2S		3D	2D, 2S	
						3D	6S		3D	6S	
						2D, 2S	1D, 4S		2D, 2S	1D, 4S	
						1D, 4S	6S		1D, 4S	6S	
7						3D, 1S	2D, 3S		3D, 1S	2D, 3S	
						2D, 3S	1D, 5S		2D, 3S	1D, 5S	
									3D, 1S	7S	
									1D, 5S	7S	
8						4D	3D, 2S		4D	3D, 2S	
						3D, 2S	2D, 4S		3D, 2S	2D, 4S	
									3D, 2S	8S	
									4D	1D, 6S	
									2D, 4S	1D, 6S	
									1D, 6S	8S	

NOTES:

1. There is no reason why you should not have even bigger teams if you have lawn space, balls and players available.
2. Many of the above formats, of necessity, involve double-banking. In 'B' League matches on half-size courts double-banking is not feasible, but 2 x 2-hour games can be played in a 4-hour session.
3. * These formats require 2 consecutive singles games to be played on the same court in the same session, unless triple-banking is used.

Appendix 3

Full Bisque Games – Allocation of Bisques

All games in the **Intermediate League** and **'B' League** are to be played under the conditions of Full Bisque Handicap Play.

A. Intermediate League

Singles

As all games will be played as Full Bisque using a Base Handicap of 6, each player must first deduct 6 from their handicap to find the number of bisques. Both players will receive bisques in accordance with this calculation.

Doubles

The same procedure as for Singles is used, except that the initial bisque allocation for each side is half the difference between the side's aggregate handicap and twice the Base Handicap (i.e. 12).

The following table is a quick reference indicating the number of bisques to be allocated in any **Intermediate League Doubles game**.

Side's aggregate handicap	Allocation of bisques to this side
16 (play-off only)	2
17 (play-off only)	2½
18	3
19	3½
20	4
21	4½
22	5
23	5½
24	6
25	6½
26	7
27	7½
28	8
29	8½
30	9
31	9½
32	10
33	10½
34	11
36	12
38	13
40	14

N.B. **Both** sides are given bisques in accordance with the above table.

B. 'B' League

Singles

As all games will be played as Full Bisque using a Base Handicap of 11½, each player must first deduct 11½ from their handicap to find the number of bisques for a full (26-point) game. This is then reduced according to one of the Croquet England Schedules of Bisque Allocation:

- 26-point games, on half-size courts (i.e. as near to 28 x 17½ yards as possible), use the Schedule for games played on half-size courts;
- 14-point games, on full-size courts (i.e. as near to 35 x 28 yards as possible), use the Schedule for 14-point games.

The following table is a quick reference indicating the number of bisques to be allocated in any **'B' League Singles game**.

Player's CqE or Club handicap	Allocation of bisques to this player in a 26-point game on a half-size court	Allocation of bisques to this player in a 14-point game on a full-size court
14 (play-off only)	1½	1½
16	3	2½
18	4	3½
20	5½	4½
22	6½	5½
24	8	6½

N.B. **Both** players are given bisques in accordance with the above table.

Doubles

The same procedure as for Singles is used, except that the initial bisque allocation for each side is half the difference between the side's aggregate handicap and twice the Base Handicap (i.e. 23).

The following table is a quick reference indicating the number of bisques to be allocated in any **'B' League Doubles game**.

Side's aggregate handicap	Allocation of bisques to this side in a 26-point game on a half-size court	Allocation of bisques to this side in a 14-point game on a full-size court
28 (play-off only)	1½	1½
30 (play-off only)	2	2
32	3	2½
34	3½	3
36	4	3½
38	4½	4
40	5½	4½
42	6	5
44	6½	5½
46	7	6
48	8	6½

N.B. **Both** sides are given bisques in accordance with the above table.

Appendix 4

Regulations

These regulations are intended to provide guidance for team captains on some aspects of match conduct, in order to reduce misunderstandings.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding of vulnerable players, including minors, is the responsibility of their team captain. The procedures described in the Croquet England Child Safeguarding Policy must be followed, and the Local Safeguarding Officer of the host club should be made aware when a vulnerable player is included in either team.

Handicaps and Bisques

At the start of the match, each captain should provide the opposing captain with a list of players and their handicaps.

The captains should be particularly aware of Rule 4, Eligibility.

The number of bisques claimed for each player should be clearly stated before each game.

Each bisque should be removed before the stroke is played, to ensure that there is no misunderstanding about the number remaining.

Warm-up time

A visiting team should always be allowed time for warm-up and to become familiar with all of the courts that will be used for the match. The time taken for warming up is not fixed, but **at least** ~~up to~~ 10 minutes should be allowed in the schedule.

This also implies that the visitors should arrive in good time to allow for this warm-up before the agreed start time.

Any hoop-running during the warm-up should be relatively gentle. This is not a practice period, and the purpose of hoop-running is to learn the ball clearance and feasible approach angles.

No further practice should occur, but a player who joins the match later should be allowed some time to get the 'feel' of the court before starting to play.

Refereeing

A match referee should be identified prior to the start of play. Where no qualified referee is present, an experienced player should be selected.