

SWF AGM 2024: Proposals

Proposal 1

That AC, SC and GC League Rules be re-formatted to improve consistency, grammar and clarity. The substantive content and meaning of the Rules is not affected.

Proposed by: SWF Committee

Rationale

The attached documents are the result of a series of iterations between David Harrison-Wood and Stephen Custance-Baker over several weeks.

During the last 5 years the Rules have suffered in terms of errors in formatting and fonts, incorrect references and incorrect use of English. David has identified cases of ambiguity, paragraphs in inappropriate sections and out-of-date terminology.

The iterations have been in several steps:

- Identifying errors, serious structural faults and ambiguities.
- Identifying inconsistencies between the AC, SC and GC rules.
- Re-phrasing some sections and moving others to more appropriate places.
- Generating final documents with consistent formatting and fonts throughout.

In summary, the most obvious editing changes we ask the AGM to approve are:

- Moving existing paragraphs to more appropriate locations in the rules.
- Re-wording for the purpose of clarification.
- Almost all references to 'Lawn' have been changed to 'Court' in keeping with the Croquet England and WCF adoption of 'Court' as the standard expression in AC Laws, GC Rules and Tournament Regulations.
- Change 'Croquet England handicapper' to 'National handicapper'.
- More consistent use of 'Fixture' to mean the date of a match, as opposed to 'Match' meaning the actual play.

We will go on to propose separately more substantive changes – identified in red in the document. These should be ignored for the purposes of this proposal.

Proposal 2

That in AC, SC and GC Rules, the wording re 'Warm-up time' be changed from 'up to 10 minutes', to 'at least 10 minutes'.

Proposed by: SWF Committee

Rules affected:

- AC Rules: Appendix 4
- SC Rules: Appendix 3
- GC Rules: Appendix 2

Rationale

This guarantees the visiting team in particular the time to acclimatize to the lawns.

Proposal 2A

That in AC, SC and GC Rules, comments about referees at matches be inserted.

Proposed by: SWF Committee

Rules affected:

- AC Rules: Rule 13e(2) and Appendix 4
- SC Rules: Rule 13e(2) and Appendix 3
- GC Rules: Rule 13e(2) and Appendix 2

Rationale

The proposed wording appears in red, both in Rule 13 and at the end of the Appendix.

Proposal 3

That Rule 14b in the AC Rules, concerning new entrants, be amended.

Proposed by: SWF Committee

Rules affected: 14 – Outcome and Entries (Advanced League Only)

Current rule:

b. **Entries.** A new entrant to the League shall be assigned to Division 3.

Proposed rule:

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).

Rationale

This covers what actually happened in 2024 and gives the Tournament Secretary the discretionary power to ensure that a new team is playing at the right anticipated level.

Proposal 4

That Rule 9a in the GC Rules (Pairing of Opponents) be amended.

Proposed by: SWF Committee

Rules affected: 9 – Pairing of Opponents.

- a. The two team captains shall exchange the names of their players in each round of the match **immediately** prior to the commencement of that round. During this exchange, one captain shall present the names of his players first, to which the other captain shall respond with his players' names, as follows.
- (1) Before the first round, the home team captain shall present first.
 - (2) Before the second round, the visiting team captain shall present first.
 - (3) For subsequent rounds, this "right of presentation" shall alternate.

Insert: It is recommended that, to avoid unnecessary delay, the captains agree on the players for the current round and the next.

Rationale

To expedite play and avoid long waits for players.

Proposal 5

That in the GC Rules Appendix 2, the wording re 'Wrong Ball forestalling' be amended.

Proposed by: SWF Committee

Text affected

Delete:

~~It is recommended that the match referee invites all players to be Sequence Umpires, whether playing or not. Their responsibility is to forestall in any game if a wrong ball is about to be played or has been played. The home team captain should ensure that spectators who are neither referees nor players do not forestall, but they can draw the attention of a Sequence Umpire to a wrong ball if they notice one.~~

Replace with:

The WCF GC Rules specify that all players and referees have the responsibility of forestalling play in any game where a wrong ball is about to be played or has been played.

(In the SWF GC Leagues, a non-playing captain shall be treated as a playing member of the team.)

The home team captain should ensure that spectators who are neither referees nor players do not forestall, but they may alert an appropriate person to watch for a wrong ball if they believe that the play is out of sequence.

Rationale

A non-playing captain may be the most experienced player and is anyway clearly part of the team.

It does not seem reasonable to prevent them acting in this way.

Proposal 6

To update the SWF League Rules to permit an alternative venue when Play-off clubs are far separated.

Proposed by: Bude CC

Rules affected: 13 – Play-offs and Finals

Rule 13.c deals with arrangements for the play-offs between block winners, in the run up to the league final. It is currently as follows:

13.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 is the responsibility of both clubs in each match to inform the League Secretary of the agreed date.

This should be replaced as follows:

c. Play-Off Matches.

- (1) Play-offs shall normally 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.
- (2) 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 is the responsibility of both clubs in each match to inform the League Secretary of the agreed date.
- (3) If the two play-off teams are based more than 2 hours apart by road (according to Google Maps on a normal traffic day), the "Away" team may ask for the match to be played instead at an alternative venue somewhere between them. The "Away" team becomes responsible for identifying a suitable venue and making all arrangements with that venue. The venue chosen should be as near as possible equidistant between the Home and Away clubs, but preferably closer to the Home club.
- (4) The date for the match must be one of the 3 dates first offered by the "Home" team. If no suitable venue can be found on any of those 3 dates or within the league deadlines, then the match must be played at the "Home" venue within the league deadlines. Where a charge is made by the alternative venue for court and ball hire, the standard "Base Rate" defined by Croquet England shall apply and shall be paid by the "Away" team. The "Home" team remains responsible for the provision of simple refreshments (hot and cold drinks, biscuits and/or cake, but not lunches) for both teams.

Rationale

Sometimes, the distance between clubs in the Play-offs is so great as to require an overnight stay before and/or after the match. For instance, this year Bude CC faced a 3½-hour journey to the "Home" club.

All team members had to find overnight accommodation to make the match possible, and still faced a very long day for the match plus a long journey home.

This adds to the difficulty of assembling a full-strength team, and to the costs of participating. The above proposal aims to offer a more balanced contest between the two sides in future play-offs.

Proposal 7 – withdrawn

Proposal 8

That SWF League Rules should align with Croquet England Regulations.

Proposed by: Bristol CC

The Problem

Croquet England publishes updated Tournament Regulations each year just before the playing season starts, however, SWF League Rules can be changed only at an AGM almost a year later.

This delay can lead to inconsistencies and outdated rules within the SWF, as seen in past issues such as the use of net hoops as a tie-break in handicap matches: Although recognised as unfair by Croquet England, this practice took years to be updated in the SWF League Rules and may still persist in some leagues. This motion seeks to establish a process that avoids such misalignments and ensures clearer, more consistent rules for players.

Motion

The SWF Committee should find a way for the League Rules to be aligned with the latest Croquet England Regulations. Suggestions to achieve this include, but need not be limited to, the following:

1. Remove from the SWF League Rules any areas covered by the Croquet England Regulations (e.g., tie-break procedures) and instead refer directly to these Regulations, or
2. Establish a mechanism for reaching a consensus within the SWF to update the League Rules in response to updated Croquet England Regulations, allowing for changes to be made before the start of each playing season.

<https://www.croquet.org.uk/?p=tournament/regulations>

Proposal 9

Advantage Play should be used in all Handicap Golf Croquet play.

Proposed by: Bristol CC

Rationale

1. Competitive Balance:

- a. Advantage Play allows players of varying skill levels to compete by adjusting starting scores based on handicaps. The stronger player usually must score more hoops than the weaker player.
- b. Timed games using Extra Strokes give an advantage to the higher handicap player as their Extra Strokes can all be used within the time limit leaving no time for the lower handicap player to catch up and overtake. Advantage suffers no equivalent problem.

2. Consistency with Level Play:

- a. Unlike Extra Strokes (ES), Advantage uses the same tactics as level play, removing the need for players to learn and then unlearn ES tactics as they progress.
- b. It encourages players to develop the skills necessary to compete in (level play) Golf Croquet.
- c. No handicapping system is perfect and Advantage better prepares players for transitioning from casual to competitive play.
- d. No national tournaments use ES, the overwhelming majority use level play with handicap entry restrictions.

3. Player Preference:

- a. Players who have experienced both systems usually prefer Advantage to ES.
- b. Adopting Advantage might encourage lower handicap players to play in the league, enriching everyone's experience.

4. Concerns:

- a. Many think that matches between players of significantly different handicaps are unfair, but the analysis of game results shows that Advantage facilitates fairer outcomes than ES and the starting score chart has been extended.
- b. Timed games, and the ability to see who is ahead during a game, are now better catered for. A WCF/Croquet England summary is available for download at <https://www.croquet.org.uk/?d=3347>

Recommendation

Should the motion not pass we urge the SWF Committee to:

1. Engage fully with our governing body, reporting perceived problems and assessing responses.
2. Encourage our clubs to trial Advantage so they may form opinions based on direct experience.

Proposal 10

The SWF should review its relationship with the croquet-playing community and consider its strategic vision.

Proposed by: Bristol CC

Rationale

Note: This is not a motion to directly change rules, though it might lead to a future change to the Constitution, it is a request for action.

Rationale

1. **Community:** The current structure recognises only clubs as members of the SWF, limiting its broader community engagement. While meetings are open to interested parties, voting rights are restricted.
2. **Inclusivity of Meetings:** Online monthly meetings in the off-season are made open to all by asking clubs to circulate details to members, but seldom does anyone attend who is not representing a club. The agenda of those meetings is somewhat confused by mixing club business (usually only of interest to club committees) with personal coaching advice that most players would benefit from and enjoy. Many of the discussions would be enhanced by greater participation, though there is a limit.
3. **Evolution of the SWF:** The SWF has evolved from its origins some 30 years ago but has not developed its formal relationship with the croquet-playing community in the region. Croquet England has gradually withdrawn from many development aspects and depends upon the Federations to step up (though has not made that formal) – for example, referee training and coaching provision and planning. This has created a gap and an opportunity for the SWF to enhance its engagement.
4. **Creating a Richer Environment:** A comprehensive review could foster a more connected and supportive croquet community in the SW, aligning the SWF's objectives with the needs and desires of individual players.