



# *Croquet Matters*

May 2013

## **This month in Croquet Matters**

Croquet Matters welcomes a new regular column from the CNZ Sport Development Officer, welcomes back our kiwi contingent from Egypt, a valuable coaching tip, and provides an overview of several upcoming tournaments

## **From the Exec**

The Executive met on the 24<sup>th</sup> May with the key items on the agenda being the approval of the budget for the 2013/14 financial year and the associated business plan.

The budget was approved by the Executive with the key points being:

- Budgeted revenue of \$278,000 with \$115,000 (41%) of this coming from levies;
- Budgeted expenditure of \$276,000 (which includes the cost of hosting the MacRobertson Shield)

There is a substantial risk that, in the next few years, Croquet NZ will lose (partially or in total) the funding it currently receives from Sport NZ (\$35,000). This is because the pool of funding will become "contestable" with a focus on organisations who can contribute to SportNZ's goals (which will likely be focussed in the youth area). Given that 83% of our

members are 65+ we may struggle to meet their aims.

The business plan (the items the Board wants to see achieved within the next 12 months) has been expanded in the areas of improving the skills of volunteer officials and more people playing better croquet more often.

This is primarily related to assistance we believe the Sport Development Officer can provide players, coaches, clubs and associations.

This includes such things as:

- expansion of school/youth aged activities;
- providing clubkit resources to clubs and associations;
- updating green prescription activities and programmes;
- rolling out the new coaching policy and structure;
- updating the tournament manager's manual;
- providing resources for referees

Phillip Drew (as convenor of the Player Development Committee) put forward an updated coaching for coaches policy, which the Executive approved. This policy was written by Greg Bryant and Jenny Clarke (please see more information later in this issue).

## **Sport Development Officer – A busy winter ahead**

Thank you to all the clubs that have completed and returned the Club Questionnaires. I have collated data representing 73% of our membership which provides very useful information on where we are at, what we are doing and how we are doing it. The information will help CNZ to support associations and clubs and guide where future resources are directed. Clubs and Associations will see benefit in 'Clubkit' resources which will be developed from this information.

The CNZ coaching was a great success last season with an excellent turnout. I hope some of you are still setting a few targets and achieving them. Thank you to those that provided feedback to assist planning for the next program which is proposed for the early part of the 2014/15 summer season.

An emphasis on developing youth participation is underway. Three regions, Taranaki, Manawatu/Wairarapa and South Canterbury have been nominated to host school age croquet workshops from August to October. If your club or association is actively promoting student participation, I'd love to hear about it, especially if you intend sending regional representatives to the National Secondary Schools Event next season. Talk with your Association and school sports coordinators about regional school age competition next season.

Thanks to Plimmerton CC, resources for school age events can be downloaded from CNZ: <http://www.croquet.org.nz/NZ/index.php?CID=nz-croquet---downloads>

Many clubs and Associations will soon be holding AGM meetings and appointing our highly valued volunteer officers. While most positions are filled, croquet does not score well on the appointment of publicity officers. The Publicity Officer's main job is that of communication, internally and externally. 'Clubkit' resources will be developed and distributed to support volunteers in this valuable role. Club newsletters, notices, and well organised notice boards help to keep your members informed and engaged. Invitations to local community groups, homes or local business communities promoting have-a-go, community or business house leagues (keep them simple and short – 4 weeks or so is not too big a commitment) with follow up invitations to club activities are all effective activities. I was attracted to croquet by a simple advertisement in the public notices of a community newspaper! A club website can be a very useful communication tool. Go to <http://www.sportsground.co.nz> to develop a free club website.

Many will agree that by setting club goals, the job of each officer is more effective, in that we know what we are aiming for and can set out a plan to achieve it. The publicity officer's role is no exception to this. Select just one activity that your club is not currently doing and integrate that with the club's goals and ambitions. And to those that are not in a volunteer role presently, remember to acknowledge the efforts of those that are.

I would appreciate hearing of any news or developments taking place, and if any assistance is required, please ask. I can be contacted at the CNZ office by email, [admin@croquet.org.nz](mailto:admin@croquet.org.nz) or by phone (04) 916 0258.

## Tournament Round-Up

With little happening on the CNZ tournament front in the winter months, we welcome hearing from individuals who have played abroad and receiving reports from local tournaments.

### 10<sup>th</sup> Golf Croquet World Championships



The 2013 WCF Golf Croquet World Championships were held in Cairo, Egypt from 21<sup>st</sup>-28<sup>th</sup> April.

New Zealand were represented by represented by Cantabrians Chris Clarke (who entered via a tough Egyptian-packed qualifying event, and was seeded number 1 for the main event) and Duncan Dixon (4<sup>th</sup> seed for the event), Mike Crashley (Gisborne), Sabri Mullaaliu (Auckland) and Steve Piercy (Bay of Plenty).

The pre-event favourites were 2x Golf Croquet World Champion Ahmed Nasr (Egypt) and current WCF Association Croquet World Champion Reg Bamford (South Africa).

The initial stages of the competition featured 8 blocks of 8 players. The format was all-play-all best-of-3 13-point matches with the top 4 from each block progressing through to a 32-player knockout. A range of consolation events, Bowl, Shield and Plate occupied players knocked out at various stages.

Chris, Duncan, Reg and Ahmed all won their blocks, winning 6/7 matches. The other kiwis were not so lucky...

Steve Piercy took matches off former World Champion Mohammed Nasr, and Australian captain Kevin Beard, but this was not enough to qualify from the "Block of Death" (so-named as the 8<sup>th</sup> seed in that block was a 2-time world champion, Salah Hassan). Sabri played solidly, Mike Crashley struggled to find form in the initial blocks, so also found himself in the plate event with Steve and Sabri.

Mike made the final of the Plate, losing to Egyptian newcomer, Tarek Mamdouh. The Bowl event was won by Belgian Pierre Beaudry who beat three very strong Egyptians en route, and the Shield was won by event 3<sup>rd</sup> seed Sherif Nafee who beat the top female player, Soha Moustafa.

In the main event the KnockOut used an experimental WCF seeding method that will be used in the 2013 NZ Golf Croquet Opens. The format ensures that top seeds are separated, no matter what their block results, and sees the winners of each block seeded to play the runners-up from their own block in the second round.

Results for kiwis in the knockout:

Round 1:

Chris beat Simon Williams (IRE) 7-6, 7-4

Duncan beat Ross Marshall (AUS) 7-5 7-3

Round 2:

Chris beat Amr El Ibieri 7-5 7-3

Duncan beat John v.d. Touw (AUS) 6-7 7-6 7-3

Round 3 (Quarter Finals):

Chris lost to Ahmed El Mahdi (EGY) 6-7 4-7

Duncan lost to Ahmed Nasr (EGY) 2-7 5-7

Semi finals:

Reg Bamford beat Ahmed El Mahdi 2-7 7-6 7-3

(Mahdi had the first shot at hoop 13 in game 2)

Ahmed Nasr beat Hami Erian 7-6 7-4

This set the stage for a dream final – Egypt’s best against a player who was denied a shot at the 2011 world title by a questionable refereeing call (see youtube for great footage).

The final was played as a best-of-5 13-point match. Many present felt it was the best Golf Croquet match ever played. There is absolutely no doubt that it demonstrated the power of strong mental preparation and self-belief and the ability to not give up despite apparent odds.

Despite huge home support for Ahmed, Reg made the early start, leading 4-2, Ahmed recovered to lead 5-4, Reg then powered home to win the first game 7-5. The lights were switched on after game 1, adding to the atmosphere.

The next three games alternated, setting up a 5<sup>th</sup> game. Ahmed raced to a 6-2 lead here – and unbelievably Reg chased him down after some fantastic shooting from both players to become the first ever winner of both WCF world titles.

Many congratulations to Reg Bamford of South Africa who is the first ever, and well-deserved, winner of both the Association Croquet and Golf Croquet world titles, and is current holder of both.

Video highlights (in high definition) of all 5 games from the final have been posted on youtube by Nick Cheyne at:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2iqK2rsHQJw>

An overview of the entire event and summary of the final by Chris Clarke, is posted on Croquet World Online at:

[http://www.croquetworld.com/Events\\_byDate.asp?region=Asia/Africa/Pacific&period=3+Months](http://www.croquetworld.com/Events_byDate.asp?region=Asia/Africa/Pacific&period=3+Months)



*Reg Bamford: World AC and GC Champion*

A shot-by-shot commentary of the final is available on the English CA website:

<http://croquet.org.uk/?p=/news/newsdb.asp&NewsID=4457>

## **Odds and Ends**

### *CNZ Gold Merit Award*

Josh Smith (Wellington) is the latest player to earn a CNZ Gold Merit Award for his first Triple Peel in a tournament event.

Congratulations to Josh, a former Arthur Ross winner and member of the CNZ Youth Squad.

The CNZ merit award scheme is described in the April 2013 edition of Croquet Matters, where the criteria for achieving each award are outlined.



## Coaching Corner – NEW!

CNZ has slimmed down, toned up, and completely revamped the CNZ Coaching Qualifications. The qualifications have been realigned with the CNZ Merit Awards, and a pathway created for aspiring coaches to qualify to coach players from new beginners up to triple-peeling national and international representatives.

### Current Coaches:

All current coaches will retain their qualifications. Uncertified coaches also remain very welcome to coach players.

The revamped CNZ coaching is focussed on providing support for existing coaches, and encouraging and enabling more people to be active in coaching roles in New Zealand croquet.

### New, Re-qualified, Upgraded Coaches:

The new Level 1, Level 2, Level 3 and Elite Association Croquet coaching qualifications and training procedures will be outlined in coming editions of Croquet Matters, and new Level 1 and 2 Golf Croquet coaching qualifications will be unveiled.

As before, qualified coaches will be recorded on the national database, and all qualified coaches will be awarded a certificate and a “coach” badge.

All coaching manuals will be updated, and will be available free to all coach trainees. Training seminars will be available across NZ regions from next season.

The Association Croquet coaching levels are as follows:

#### **Level 1: Beginners to handicap 16.**

*Goal:* Target players will aspire to attain their Bronze Merit award (achieving a break of 10 points in a winning game with bisques)

#### **Level 2: Club players of handicap 14-5.**

*Goal:* Target players will aspire to attain their Silver Merit award (achieving a break of 12 hoops without using bisques for setup or play)

#### **Level 3: Club and national level players of handicap 4 to -1.**

*Goal:* Target players will aspire to attain their Gold Merit award (achieving a triple peel in a tournament without using bisques at all).

#### **Elite: International players of handicaps down to -4**

*Goal:* Support players capable of success at the highest level (regularly completing triple peels and more advanced peeling turns and tactics).

The Golf Croquet levels are as follows:

#### **Level 1: Beginners to handicap 4.**

*Goal:* Teach beginning to capable club players the basics, have them using extra turns effectively, hitting balls cleanly, and learning basic tactics.

#### **Level 2: handicap 3 to elite.**

*Goal:* Support players capable of success at national and international level. Regular use of advanced tactics, including next-hoop strategy, and solid technical skills and understanding of GC laws.

## Coach's Tip: Shooting straight

Arguably, hitting your striker's ball along the intended line of aim consistently well is the most difficult part of croquet. The key to a regularly successful outcome is to strike your ball in the middle with the middle of the mallet face. Here's a 3 step approach and brief description of each step that will assist you to do exactly that, more often. Assuming you have developed a grip that feels the most natural to you;

**Stalk:** Stand a few yards back from your ball on the imaginary line that runs from the target back through the centre of your ball and back to the centre of your body. Decide exactly what it is you are intending to do with the shot before approaching your ball. There is no room for doubt here. Ask yourself; How hard will I hit this? Can I see the line that my ball is going to travel on? Am I standing on the line of aim? Imagine what the outcome looks like. When you are confident that everything is perfectly aligned, approach your ball, checking the line between the centre of your ball and the target as you approach. Practice stepping straight into your "stance" when you address your ball. Avoid releasing your mallet, or changing your grip after the start of the stalk.

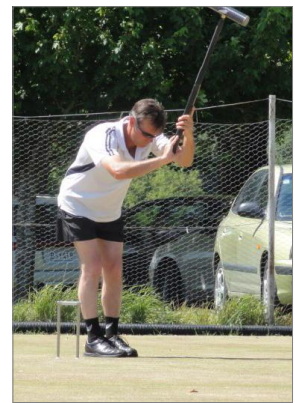
**Stance:** The stance you take is the position your body needs to stay in throughout the entire shot. Check your line and if there is any doubt, interruptions, or you feel the need to adjust your body, feet or the aim of your mallet, STOP and go back to step 1. Your stance should be stable, with some flexing in your knees (so that you remain well balanced as your weight moves slightly with the mallet swinging back and forwards), with your eyes focused on the spot where your mallet will strike the ball. If you are still confident, remain focused on that spot and commence your swing.

**Swing:** The ideal swing is a smooth, unhurried, straight pendulum motion generated from your shoulders with as little movement as possible from any other part of your body. With your eyes on the

spot, swing right through that spot, following through with the swing until the mallet head disappears from sight in the direction of your target. We have all heard "keep your head down!, follow through!, "keep your body still!" but it is a lot to think about all at the same time. Try focusing on one part of your body to keep it exactly where it is throughout the shot. Recognising the position of your shoulders is useful as keeping them exactly where they are will help to avoid twisting, steering, bobbing and head movement. Make sure you see your mallet strike your ball.

To improve your rate of success, try to develop a routine process, concentrating on what you are thinking and what you are feeling throughout the shot. A familiar routine will help you to identify what a good shot feels like, and it will help you to understand what is happening when things don't go as planned.

And of course, practice, practice, practice!!!



## **Coming events...**

This section will profile selected upcoming events for NZ croquet players to participate in, or follow our top players in.

### **National**

#### **New Zealand Gold and Silver Stars, A Golf Croquet event 5-6 October 2013**

This handicap golf croquet event will kick off the new tournament season in Canterbury, at the United Croquet Club. Manager Chris Clarke welcomes players of all abilities and will provide a full tournament's play for all with 5-6 games a day. This year the event will be coupled with the Junior Youth Squad training camp, and will be preceded by the Canterbury Croquet Association Golf Croquet coaching clinics. (Both coaching events are open to applications from all players - contact Croquet New Zealand for details of youth coaching, and the Canterbury Croquet Association for information about CCA events.) Coaching topics include hoop running, which ball to clear, power clearances.

### **Regional**

#### **United CC Weekend Tournaments Association Croquet 28/29 September Handicap and Open events**

These two popular events kick off the South Island tournament circuit, with both being over-subscribed last year. This year the handicap event (for players with handicaps of 2 and above, 5 games over 2 days) moves to Fendalton Croquet Club to accommodate the first 16 entries received, while the Open event (for players with handicaps 2 and below, flexible Swiss format, unlimited games) will be played at United Croquet Club with approximately 29 places.

The event will be preceded by an Elite coaching workshop facilitated by Chris Clarke. The coaching event is open to players on handicaps between -3 and -4. Applications from higher handicap players for the elite coaching will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Topics to be covered include POPing and peeling, advanced openings and leaves, and pegged out play.

#### **MAGAK is coming?**

The annual MAGAK event is in Wellington in 2013 over Labour Weekend (25-28 October). Get in quick as the tournament part of this event is expected to be oversubscribed.

See the next edition of Croquet Matters for details of the MAGAK coaching and tournament.

## **Next Edition of Croquet Matters**

1. New Tier classification for CNZ tournaments
2. Coaches corner - how to play full rolls
3. Introducing Association Croquet - feedback from a new course for golf croquet players
4. One-ball - a winter quickie
5. How the Brits are doing it - Super-Advanced Association Croquet

## **We welcome your news!**

Please send in your match reports, letters to Croquet Matters and other information which may be published in future editions of the Croquet Matters newsletter. We also welcome suggestions for articles and contributions.

*Croquet Matters was prepared by the Executive Director and Sport Development Officer with considerable voluntary contribution from Jenny Clarke.*