

Australian Croquet Association
(Croquet Australia)

Plenary Session held in Perth on Monday April 2nd 2007

The notes taken at this session held prior to the AGM are issued for general information.

Attendees: Gary Fox (President), Tony Hall (Treasurer), Maree Skinner (Secretary), Judy Fowler and Cynthia Tacey (QLD), Doug Hall and Kay Chynoweth (WA), Greg Rowberry and Creina Dawson (SA), Jacky and Geof McDonald (NSW), George Latham and Anna Miller (Vic), Kate Fox (Tas).

Observers: John Fransen, Max Murray, Jean Murray, Eric Miller, Owen Edwards, John Levick, Brian Hadley.

Apologies: Stephen Meatheringham (Snr Vice President), Rosemary News (Vice President).

Opening: President Gary Fox declared the meeting open at 10.10am and welcomed all who were present and explained the purpose of the session. He gave a brief summary of the items on the Agenda and invited each Delegate, member of the Executive and observer to introduce themselves.

1. Notices of Motion

1.1 Selection Committee

- 1.1.1 The History of the Selection Committee was outlined by Gary. He explained the need for selectors to have exposure to international play. The Bald appeal lodged against the selection in the recent MacRobertson Shield Test Series, highlights the need for specific skills to be mandatory for appointment to the Selection panel. He described the technical expertise of Stephen Meatheringham and Peter Landrebe as outstanding, particularly in relation to the recent MacRobertson Shield Team Selection.
- 1.1.2 Tony Hall commented that The British Croquet Selection Committee always has top players on the Committee.
- 1.1.3 Geof McDonald expressed concerns relating to conflicts of interest that may arise if a selector was related to a potential team member. It was generally agreed that if that was the case, then that person with the conflict would stand aside.

- 1.1.4 Doug Hall commented that he thought it would not be necessary for the selector with a conflict of interest to stand aside as the Committee has the President as an independent person – isn't one independent person enough?
- 1.1.5 Discussion followed regarding the merits of having 2 or 3 elected members on the committee. Kate Fox could see no problem in having 2 elected selectors as they have technical skills to fall back on.
- 1.1.6 The pool of people in reserve to sit on Appeals Panels was discussed.
- 1.1.7 The proposal was that there should be 3 selectors elected to the Selection Committee in addition to the two ex-officio members – (the Australian Team Coach and the President) plus the appointed Team Captain.
- 1.1.8 Cynthia Tacey said that would put a lot of pressure on the Team captain to also be a selector.
- 1.1.9 Eric Miller commented that there has been reluctance for the Team Captain to be a selector for the Victorian Team.
- 1.1.10 George Latham replied that in passing judgement on players, the Team Captain needs to become separate from the players. Consequently, there may be a resulting feeling of separation or awkwardness.
- 1.1.11 Gary agreed that the Team Captain has significant responsibility and the ability to divorce from the team may be a good management skill.
- 1.1.12 Kay Chynoweth added that WA has three top players on the Selection Committee and it works well. When there is a conflict of interest, the person in conflict leaves the room before the final vote is taken.
- 1.1.13 Brian Hadley suggested that to avoid the implication of an 'Old Boys Club', state selectors should be advised of what is happening if top players are being approached by ACA selectors. Gary commented that selectors can work with whomever they wish to select a team. Doug Hall clarified Brian's position by saying that it was a courtesy for national selectors to advise state selectors as to what is happening to avoid misinterpretation.

- 1.1.14 Gary agreed with that point of view and suggested that selectors make a generic statement that they are talking to players. However, he said that selectors talk to players about players all the time.
- 1.1.15 Geof McDonald suggested that when selectors are getting down to specific selections, then they should advise.
- 1.1.16 Creina commented that there is no point in advising until the team is selected. Cynthia Tacey agreed with Creina.
- 1.1.17 Gary saw no problem in publishing that selectors do talk to players about players and said that selectors already make an announcement when they are in the process of selecting teams. This could be included in the announcement.
- 1.1.18 George Latham commented that Croquet is becoming more professional. He agreed with the idea of having a smaller selection committee. The best expertise will provide a professional selection of a team.
- 1.1.19 Greg Rowberry asked: what if the Team Captain is not intending to carry on? Gary replied that the Captain is appointed by the ACA Executive on recommendation of the Selection Committee. Greg also suggested that nominations should be thrown open again for the selection committee as it appears that changes would be made to the original motion. Agreed.
- 1.1.20 The meeting reached consensus: there will be three elected members of the Selection Committee plus the Team Captain – the chairman will have the casting vote.
- 1.1.21 George saw a potential problem with conflict if there are four selectors instead of three.
- 1.1.22 Anna Miller expressed concern that selectors may be relying entirely on data and results and don't observe players at events. Gary replied that ACA pays for selectors to be present at events (can only fund one or two selectors at each event).

1.1a Golf Croquet Selection Committee

George Latham said that as Golf Croquet has just emerged from a 'social setting' it would be good to have some Golf Croquet

expertise on the Selection Committee. Jacky McDonald requested that the Executive come back with suggestions in relation to a Golf Croquet Selection Committee. Gary replied that Golf Croquet selection needs to be brought into the Constitutional framework to move it forward.

1.2 A B Morrison Encouragement Award

Gary outlined the rationale (refer Notices of Motion in the Council Pack). Jacky McDonald commented that the award was usually won by someone who has played in the plate. There was general agreement with the Motion.

1.3 Regulation 5 - Supervising Referee

1.3.1 Creina commented that the abolition of this 'rule' could lengthen games.

1.3.2 Owen Edwards was asked for his views. Owen said that this rule should be taken into consideration when the new regulations come out. Owen felt that the '45 second Regulation' was valid for Divisions 2, 3 & 4.

1.3.3 Greg Rowberry supports the Regulation and suggested that it needs to be reviewed and strengthened.

1.3.4 Gary replied that Law 49 is quite clear and therefore there is no need for the '45 second Regulation'.

1.3.5 John Levick gave an example of a player using the Regulation to advantage.

1.3.6 The majority of attendees supported the abolition of the Regulation.

1.3.7 WA abstained from the decision – saw the issue as being that referees are not courageous enough to use the Regulation.

1.3.8 Owen made an additional comment that Law 55 and Law 49 provide sufficient power to control a slow player.

1.4 Motion 1- New South Wales (Division of Australian Championships)

1.4.1 Jacky McDonald outlined the rationale for the motion (refer Notices of Motion in the Council Pack).

1.4.2 This issue was brought to the last plenary session. Unlimited entries had to be addressed following complaints from states. Large numbers of entries in events are unsustainable. It is not practical to try to run 16 day tournaments. Players will have to make choices in relation to which events they wish to play.

1.4.3 Tony Hall is of the view that playing events (in particular the open singles and doubles) at the Victorian Croquet Centre may allow for an increase the numbers of entries. This venue will also allow the doubles event to be expanded to international standard.

1.4.4 Doug Hall suggested that states should fund all players whether they are in the team or not (eliminates choices made on cost of transport alone).

1.4.5 The majority of the attendees did not support the motion.

1.5 Motion 2 – New South Wales (Preliminary Events for National Championships)

1.5.1 Jacky Mc Donald outlined the rationale for the motion (refer Notices of Motion in the Council Pack).

1.5.2 Gary commented that a qualifying event is usually played when the need arises. He gave a commitment that ACA will run a preliminary event when it is feasible to do so.

1.6 Motion 1 – QLD (Gateball)

1.6.1 Judy Fowler outlined the rationale (refer Notices of Motion in the Council Pack).

1.6.2 Gary made a statement that Gateball has a separate World Body not connected to the WCF; that people need to be aware of the issues; Gateball may take over some croquet clubs; Gateball teams are not presently selected by the Croquet Australia Selection Committee; there was an issue over the use of the Coat of Arms on Gateball uniforms.

1.6.3 Judy replied that she was not aware of the latter issue and commented that it is a fact that a lot of Gateball players also play Association and Golf Croquet and ricochet.

- 1.6.4 Tony said that he could see Gateball as a significant threat and that there may a conflict of interest in the future.
- 1.6.5 Doug Hall said that there was a need to focus on the key business – Association and Golf croquet.
- 1.6.6 George Latham said we have four key businesses: Association and Golf croquet, Ricochet and Gateball. It is a strength and means we have four different versions of croquet. George was of the opinion that we should educate clubs not to worry about Gateball 'taking over'. His idea is that we should regard each of the elements as being a part of a suite of games to offer new players rather than opposing disciplines. Clubs need to be educated to accept all disciplines of the sport.
- 1.6.7 Geof McDonald said that he regarded Golf Croquet and Ricochet, as derivatives of Association Croquet, but Gateball is a different game altogether.
- 1.6.8 Gary commented that the Executive were critically reviewing the situation. Croquet Australia will continue to monitor Gateball and there would have to be changes made to the constitution to alter the present arrangements for Gateball.
- 1.6.9 The majority of attendees were against making any changes at the present time.

2. Development of Association Croquet

- 2.1 Gary and David Openshaw (President of the WCF) have had discussions and it is generally accepted that Association Croquet is lagging behind Golf croquet. Golf croquet provides sociability and quality lawn play. Association Croquet is harder to play and does not use lawns to maximum capacity. Gary asked the question: Should the ACA be looking to develop Association Croquet?
- 2.2 George Latham commented that Aussie Croquet had been developed for schools and felt that it should be used as a coaching tool for all new players. For example, start with two sessions of Aussie Croquet and then the usual progression to Association Croquet, then introduce Golf Croquet much later.

- 2.3 Victoria has a series of promotional material that advocates good practices for increasing membership.
- 2.4 Jacky McDonald said that NSW had looked at using half courts with new players as is done in Victoria, but it was not implemented. Have introduced 14 point games for new players. NSW is thinking of encouraging wider play of 14 point games for beginners as it is a quicker game and it is easier to peg out.
- 2.5 Doug Hall said that we need to look at innovations, more options are good. We need people to trial various options and report back.
- 2.6 Kay Chynoweth said that she has had feedback from new players to say that the games are too long and that Croquet should be seasonal to allow people to play other sports as well.
- 2.7 Geof McDonald said that a greater number of people can play Golf Croquet at the same time and he is going to try 14 point games with some of the younger players.
- 2.8 ACA needs to develop material to develop Association Croquet and develop resources through coaching.
- 2.9 Decision: refer to the Executive and the New Coaching Director.

3. Referee Accreditation Scheme and use of Referees on Request

- 3.1 At present the Executive has retyped and is reviewing papers prepared some years ago by Peter Tavender. The draft papers will be circulated to the States for comment.
- 3.2 Until this process is completed we will continue with the present system of examinations. Referees need to maintain their skills. Referees will be invited to referee international games.
- 3.3 Referee's badges will not be taken away if they do not maintain their skills. However, they may not be asked to referee.
- 3.4 Kate Fox was in favour of progressing accreditation.

- 3.5 Gorge Latham said the concept should be marketed – reaccreditation then becomes a popular concept and that brings its own rewards.
- 3.6 Decision: progress accreditation.
- 3.7 **Referees on Request.** At National and International events there are only 'Referees on Request' and the system works well at this level.
- 3.8 Referees on Request must bring no prior knowledge of that game to the court.
- 3.9 Supervising Referees are in fact Referees in Charge who supervise multiple games; most suitable for Divisions 3 & 4.
- 3.10 Recommend: continue with Referees on Request but clarify the role (Referee on Request, Referee on Appeal or Spectator Referee). Would like to see Referees on Request for all Australia Events, but there are not enough referees.
- 3.11 There are some inconsistencies regarding Referees on Request – ACA will be instructing the Laws Committee accordingly.
- 3.12 States should consider taking a similar approach to this issue.
- 3.13 Tony pondered whether we should follow the traditions and customs of the game regarding the 'prior knowledge' issue. He gave an example of a personal dilemma he faced over this issue.
- 3.14 Continue with the present system of Referees on Request while issue is referred to the ILC for possible clarification and inclusion in the laws.
- 3.15 Owen Edwards said that we need Referees in Charge and Supervising Referees, then Referees on Appeal. Eliminate Spectator Referees to stop the confusion.
- 3.16 Owen does not agree that a referee should bring prior knowledge to the court. Referees need to be careful with their decisions.

- 3.17 George Latham made the point that other sports have games observed and dealt with. Owen commented that the Regulations for croquet were unclear on that issue.
- 3.18 Decision: Referees on Request to be continued. There is a need to clarify the issue and bring it into the Laws rather than Regulations. Needs to be standardised world-wide.

4. Handicaps for National Events

- 4.1 Judy Fowler read a statement to the meeting in relation to the QLD Handicap System Trial Modification. The letter was posted to all State Presidents and a copy provided to the Handicapping Committee and the Executive.
- 4.2 Gary replied to Judy by making the point that the ACA did not consider the QLD system to be a modification – it is a new system based on the New Zealand system applying to players with a handicap of 12+.
- 4.3 Players cannot play in National Events using their QLD card.
- 4.4 The AHS card is the only valid card for National Events.
- 4.5 Results of games played under the QLD system may not be recorded on an AHS card.
- 4.6 The outcome was that QLD and ACA would 'agree to disagree' - QLD will continue with their trial and QLD players will keep two cards – AHS and QLD.
- 4.7 Creina addressed the meeting and said she was disappointed that QLD had not submitted any material or rationale in relation to the matter to the handicapping Committee prior to undertaking the trial.
- 4.8 She also commented that the long-term effect of the system would be to create 'bulges' at Division 1-2 level and another at around a handicap of 15.
- 4.9 She reminded the forum that under the revised handicapping regulations, state and club handicappers now have the power to promote players where applicable.
- 4.10 The Handicapping System simply reflects the level of play.

- 4.11 Points earned under the QLD system will not be a part of the AHS.
- 4.12 Doug Hall posed the question: Why are the players losing games? Is it because they are aiming too high? They should play at the appropriate level rather than inventing a system to artificially handicap players.
- 4.13 The view of the meeting was that the ACA decision was justified.

5. Golf Croquet Events

- 5.1 The Inaugural Australian Interstate Teams Event for Golf Croquet and Open Events will be held in the Hunter Valley from September 8th to the 16th 2007. National Park Croquet Club will be 'Headquarters' for the Events. Maitland, Toronto and Macquarie City Croquet Clubs will also co-host the events. Tournament Manager will be John Eddes and the Tournament Referee will be Jan Sage.

Secretarial note: subsequent to this session, Owen Edwards (National Director Refereeing) chose to exercise his prerogative to be the Tournament Referee under ACA By-Law 28.5.1.7; Jan Sage will be the Deputy Tournament Referee.

- 5.2 Jacky McDonald supplied pamphlets in relation to the Hunter Valley and accommodation.
- 5.3 The Open Singles will be played first, from 8 – 11 September 2007 (format for the Open will be the same as for world championships) followed by the Interstate Cup from 12 – 16th September 2007.
- 5.4 QLD, VIC, WA and TAS indicated that they would probably field a team. (Confirmation requested within 6 weeks).
- 5.5 Jacky mentioned that the APEC meeting was to be held in Sydney at the same time and the resulting security measures could disrupt traffic – players flying into Sydney should take note.
- 5.6 NSW will have shirts and caps and will take orders for the items. There will not be a specific badge made for the Event.

The meeting closed at 12.45pm