

Executive Report to Croquet Australia AGM 2008

This past year has been challenging. However, with the support and hard work of my fellow Executives and many other generous people, we have moved forward and embraced the many changes that have emerged in that time.

This report will also incorporate the Events Report.

ACA Executive

John Fransen took over the Presidency almost 12 months ago. John brought business and mediation skills to the Executive and we have appreciated his contribution in these areas in particular. John is also a Member Protection Information Officer for Croquet Australia. Unfortunately, he is unable to continue as President due to his own work commitments. We wish John well for the future and thank him for giving the ACA 12 months of his busy life.

Stephen Meatheringham has taken on the task of co-ordinating the update of our Referees Accreditation Scheme and is working with Peter Tavender, Owen Edwards and the Australian Sports Commission to provide a much requested improvement in that area. Stephen is also undertaking a review of our Tournament Regulations and Conditions and is assisting Owen Edwards with the final edit and formatting of the GC Referees Manual. He is Senior Vice President, manages the Croquet Australia web site, a member of the Selection Committee and a member of the Handicapping Committee.

Max Murray as Vice President, agreed to take on the Management and Editorship of Croquet Australia Magazine at the last AGM. Max is also on the WCF Management Committee. In the time since taking it on, he has worked more than 40 hours a week in the weeks leading up to publication. To Max's credit, the magazine content has improved and subscriptions have increased. The magazine is a full-time job and would be almost impossible for someone who is not retired to manage. Carolyn Ribone has recently taken over as Editor and is looking forward to the challenge. Max has volunteered to assist me with the Events. He is now Events Manager and I will continue to carry out the administrative tasks associated with the events.

Tony Hall is a very busy and accomplished Treasurer. Over the past twelve months most of the Banking has taken place by electronic funds transfer. This has certainly streamlined such processes as payment of entry fees and payment of Invoices. Tony in cooperation with others wrote the new Golf Croquet Rules and assists the Executive in the writing of policy documents and various submissions. His wealth of experience is invaluable to us.

Cathy Leske commenced part-time work for Croquet Australia in January 2007 as an administrative assistant with a six month contract through the South Australian Croquet Association. It was a pleasure to work with Cathy and she assisted me in the setting-up of databases and several other projects.

On 1 July 2007, Cathy ceased work for Croquet Australia and I became the part-time paid Executive Director with a workload estimated at 24 hours per week. My duties included those of Secretary, Insurance Officer and Events Manager (in fact I had been carrying out all of those duties since the AGM in April 2007). In addition to that I am also one of the Member Protection Information Officers for Croquet Australia. During the periods where preparations for events were taking place, I was working well in excess of 40 hours a week. For that reason, the Executive agreed at the last executive meeting, that the Events work would have to be divided to enable me to concentrate on the administrative duties of the sport.

The Constitution and Governance

It has become apparent that our Constitution needs major revision. In tandem with that process, we will be looking at our management structure. It is the intention of the ACA to establish a working party (following the AGM this year) to review the Constitution and work together with the Australian Sports Commission to develop a contemporary model of governance.

Revised Member Protection Policy

The revised Member Protection Policy is at present with the Honorary Solicitor for review prior to submitting it to the Australian Sports Commission.

It would be remiss of me not to emphasise that the Policy is for all people who play, administrate, officiate and volunteer in any capacity for the sport. The policy should be drawn to the attention of all clubs, players and volunteers.

There is no place for behaviour that contravenes the Member Protection Policy in this sport.

Revised Anti-Doping Policy

This policy has been amended according to ASADA's guidelines and is available on the website. There is ongoing communication with ASADA regarding the education of athletes in relation to the policy. Croquet New Zealand would like to collaborate on this issue to ensure that our countries have equitable policies.

Appointments

The ACA has made several new appointments. Christine Pont as National Director of Golf Croquet, Gilon Smith as National Director of Gateball, Carolyn Ribone as Magazine Editor, Steve Jones as National Coaching Consultant and John Riches as National Coaching Director.

Ray Howell resigned as National Handicapper due to ill-health. We are most appreciative of the contribution Ray has made to the sport. Creina Dawson agreed to take over the position until the AGM.

Communication with the ACA

Whilst there are times when it is most appropriate for an individual to contact the ACA direct, I would like to point out that the correct protocol for any relevant queries is firstly through the member's Club or State Association. Many queries can be answered by someone at State Level or submitted more appropriately to the ACA through the State Association.

The ACA Executive has a specific mandate to service its own and State by State requirements. It is not appropriate or possible that the Executive be asked to manage and service what should be Club and or State matters. Nor does the Executive have the time or resources to manage individual enquiries.

Golf Croquet

The Handicapping Committee developed new Golf Croquet Regulations and Guidelines for games to be included in the Golf Croquet International Grading System have been posted on the Croquet Australia website.

New Logo

John Thompson of 'Design Plus' created a new Logo for Croquet Australia. We will be utilising the logo on all stationery and gradually on medallions, badges and polo shirts.

Review of Coaching Accreditation

The Australian Sports Commission requested that we review and re-register our coaching courses. As a result, all coaching accreditation has been suspended until the courses are approved and registered with the ASC. National Director of Coaching, John Riches and I have

met with a Senior Project officer from the Department of Recreation and Sport in SA to discuss the update and John is at present working on the courses.

ACA Tournament Committee

The Executive agreed that I should form an ad hoc Tournament Committee to assist me with the draws and associated matters for events. Tim Murphy, Trevor Bassett and Kevin Beard were invited to be on the committee and agreed to assist me. I am most grateful for their experience and help in these matters. I could not have managed without them.

In addition to that, Tim Murphy has written scoring programs for the National Events. Thank you Tim, your expertise is much appreciated.

Panel of Enquiry

An independent Panel of Enquiry was established to examine the events that led to the withdrawal of Chris Clarke and Jenny Williams from the Australian Open Doubles Championship in Melbourne in November 2007. Robert Fenwick Elliot Chaired the Enquiry, Michael Sweeney and Peter Landrebe were panel members. We are most appreciative of their assistance in this matter.

The recommendation of the Panel was that Croquet Australia review the Tournament Conditions and Regulations. Stephen Meatheringham is currently working on that review.

Players' Meeting

A Players' meeting was held in November 2007 during the Australian Open Championships. Some good recommendations came out of that meeting and we have implemented some of the suggestions. The other suggestions will be considered together with the current review of the Tournament Conditions and Regulations.

Insurance

The National Insurance policies have been renewed for another 12 months. We made a substantial saving on the Public Liability Policy this year. I would like to thank Steven Hill from OAMPS Insurance Brokers for all the assistance he has given to Croquet Australia with regard to insurance matters. Steven has recently left OAMPS to take up a position with another company and we wish him the very best in his new position. Matthew Wilson will be looking after our account.

New Club Grant

Croquet Australia awarded a grant of \$1,000 to Lakes Entrance Croquet Club in Victoria.

New Zealand Scholarships

Croquet Australia will award up to three Scholarships for the New Zealand Open Championships in 2009. States will be asked to nominate young talented players for the scholarships.

Most Improved Player Award

Each State has been asked to nominate a new croquet player who has shown great improvement for an encouragement award.

Eire Cup and Championships in Perth

The Interstate Cup, Men's and Women's Singles and Gold Medal events were held in Perth last year from 21 March to 1 April 2007. The NSW team won the Eire Cup for the first time in twenty-six years.

Peter Landrebe from NSW won the Men's Singles Championship and Helene Thurston from WA, the Women's Singles Championship. The Men's Plate Event was won by Greg Whymark

and Nerida Taylor from NSW won the Women's Plate. Stephen Forster from Victoria won the Gold Medal Event and Ian Dumergue from WA won the Silver Medal.

Tournament Manager Brain Hadley and Tournament Referee Trevor Ashby and the venue managers, referees, helpers and caterers at each club are to be congratulated for their contributions towards a very successful event. Croquet WA was highly efficient in the planning and execution of the event.

2nd WCF Women's World GC Championship

Christine Pont and Creina Dawson were selected as Australia's representatives to play in the Championship which was held in Ireland 3 – 9 September 2007. Glennis Kitt and Vivienne Murphy were awarded wild card places. All commented that they had gained valuable experience playing in a Word Championship and were enthused about Australia putting a bid to hold the next Championship.

The WCF has indicated that they would be pleased for Australia to bid for the Event and dates are being settled at the present time (either late 2009 or early 2010). Croquet Australia in conjunction with the Victorian Croquet Association has decided that the Championship will be held at the Victorian Croquet Centre.

Australian Golf Croquet Championships Hunter Valley

The inaugural GC Interstate Teams Event and Open GC Singles Championships were held in the Hunter Valley from 8 – 16 September 2007. Kevin Beard won the Open Singles and Victoria won the Interstate Shield. John Compton won the Plate Event. Thank you Tournament Manager John Eddes and Tournament Referee Owen Edwards and to all the organisers and workers who put in an enormous effort to make the event so successful and the Clubs who made their facilities available for the Events.

A special thank you to Geof and Jacky McDonald who gave me so much assistance as this was my first event as Events Manager.

We decided after consultation with the States, to preserve the format for the Teams Event this year. There were some refereeing and time-related issues arising out of the event. John Eddes submitted a very detailed report with some very helpful suggested changes. These matters will be taken into account when organising the next event to be held on the Sunshine Coast 6 – 14 September 2008.

President's Eights

This event was held at the Victorian Croquet Centre from 28 September to 1 October. Thank you to Tournament Manager Brian Reither, and his assistant Judy Evans and Stephen Meatheringham and all who helped with the organisation and the running of the Event.

Peter Landrebe won the Eddie Hunt Trophy, Ken Bald won the Tom Howat Cup and Liz Fleming won the Jean Armstrong Bowl.

The courts were not in the best condition and the weather was very cold and windy. Play went on until quite late at night on one occasion. The reasons for the problems have been determined and changes will be made to ensure that these problems do not re-occur.

The lawns at Cairnlea have been receiving attention and are now in much better condition.

Australian National Handicap Championships Rich River

This Tournament was cancelled due to the low number of entries. Croquet Australia sought the views of croquet players to determine what led to the lack of entries. We received excellent feedback and will try to offer a tournament that is more in keeping with what croquet players would like this year at Rich River on 12 – 18 October 2008.

Australian National GC Handicap Championships Deniliquin

This event was held in Deniliquin from October 22 – 26 2007. We had a record number of entries. Tony Hall and Beryl McDonald won the Doubles Championship and Jim Saunders won the Singles Championship. Thank you Tournament Manager Bernie Bailey, Tournament Referee Owen Edwards and his band of referees and to all the volunteers at the Deniliquin Club who worked so hard to make the event such a success.

Play was interrupted by a severe storm on the third day. The doubles semi-final was drawn out for too long as we made the format best of three. This will be changed for the 2008 event.

The Deniliquin Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club has agreed to host the event again on 20 -24 October 2008. The Deniliquin Council has made an offer to the Club to assist in the setting-up of the courts.

Australian Open Championships Melbourne

The Australian Open Singles and Doubles Championships were held at the Victorian Croquet centre at Cairnlea from 2 – 11 November 2007. Paddy Chapman and Greg Bryant were awarded the Winner's Trophy in the doubles and Bruce Fleming won the singles. MacGregor Fletcher won the Plate Event.

Thank you to Tournament Manager Brian Reither, Tournament Referee Bill Keddie and all the volunteers who worked so hard in the planning and implementation of the event.

The issues of play under lights and the number of hours players are expected to play in any one day became critical issues.

Brian Reither supplied a detailed report suggesting some changes and they will be taken into account together with the recommendation of the Panel of Enquiry that we review our Tournament Regulations and Conditions.

4th Australian Gateball Championships Melbourne

The Australian Gateball Championships were held at the Victorian Croquet Centre 23 – 25 November 2007. Fifteen teams from Australia, Japan and China competed in the Championships. Petro China Sports Association was the winning team with a perfect score of 25 points.

Thank you to all who contributed to the success of the event. The 5th Australian Gateball Championships will be held in Queensland in 2009.

11th WCF World Association Croquet Championships

The Championships were held in Christchurch New Zealand on 2 – 10 February 2008. Eighteen Australians played in the Championships. Peter Landrebe, Ian Dumergue and Bruce Fleming made it to the knock-out. Ian Dumergue progressed to the next round and was defeated by Keith Aiton (ENG). Trevor Bassett and Simon Watkins made it to the knock out round of the Plate Event.

8th WCF World Golf Croquet Championships

The Championships were held in Cape Town South Africa 8 – 16 March 2008. Five Australians played in the Event. Tony Hall, Owen Edwards and Kevin Beard made it to the knock-out. Kevin Beard made it to the second round and was defeated by Chris Clarke (ENG). John Levick and Tony Hall made it to the Plate Quarter- Final; John went through to the Semi-Final and was defeated by Ian Lines (ENG).

Australian Gold Medal, Men's and Women's and Interstate Cup Events

These events will be held in Brisbane from 26 March – 6 April 2008. Final preparations are underway and I wish to thank Tournament Manager Carmel Donley and her volunteers for the enormous amount of preparation that has gone into organising the events.

Trans Tasman Test 2009

Croquet New Zealand has announced that the Trans Tasman Test will be held on 7 – 14 February 2009; venue to be decided. Coaching Consultant Steve Jones has announced that there will be a Training Session held at the Victorian Croquet Centre on the weekend of 3 -4 May 2009 and an Australian Selector will be present. Invitations have been sent to players selected to be in the Training Squad by the Australian Selectors to attend the weekend. Selection for the Trans Tasman will take place following the Training Squad Weekend.

In conclusion and on behalf of the Executive, I would like to thank all those players and officials who have willingly assisted us in the administration of the sport. It is not an easy task to try to cater to the needs of such a diverse group of sportsmen and women. We may not always agree on the most appropriate way to proceed, but as long as we continue to communicate and discuss matters in a productive manner and if we always bear in mind that we are all here to assist in the development of Croquet in Australia, we will make progress.

Maree Skinner
Executive Director
Croquet Australia
March 2008