



Southern Croquet Federation

Guide for Tournament Players

1. Introduction

This is a brief guide to tournament play in Golf Croquet. For each event, a Tournament Manager will have been appointed and will take charge of proceedings. The Manager will provide a briefing before the start of play and will subsequently direct the players to their next game, record the results and maintain the results sheets to track the progress of the tournament.

The next sections provide some reminders about what will happen before and during the event.

2. Before the Event

Entries

The SCF GC10+ competition uses the following system of entries:

- Entries open for all the events at the start of the season, and players may enter as many as they wish
- Each event has an "Allocation Deadline". All entries received before that date are dealt with together soon after the deadline, according to the rules of the competition. Players with confirmed places are then notified. It's important to note that your entry is not confirmed until after allocation and so you should avoid incurring any costs associated with the event until that time. If places remain, entries may still be made after the initial allocation of places has taken place.

In the days before the event, you'll be sent an email confirming the details of the venue including such information as:

- The time of the Tournament Manager's briefing and the start of play
- Details of catering arrangements for the day. These vary from club to club. In some case, you'll be expected to bring your own lunch and in some other cases, it's not permitted to do so
- Contact details for the Tournament Manager to allow you to inform them of any problems
- Advice on getting to the club, parking arrangements etc.

Rules

Naturally, play will proceed in accordance with the current rules of Golf Croquet. You can brush up on the basic rules [here](#) and the full rules are online [here](#). They can also be purchased as a rule book from the Croquet England shop ([CqE Shop](#))

You may be interested in reviewing some official rulings from the GC Rules Committee, published in October 2024, that clarify some details without changing the intentions of the current rules. ([GC Official Rulings](#))

2. On The Day

Aim to arrive at least 30mins before the advertised start time, and allow adequate contingency for travel hold ups etc. That will give you a chance to familiarise yourself with the club's facilities and be in good time for the Tournament Manager's briefing which will lay out the details for the day.

Remember, **flat-soled shoes are required** and other clothing should be predominantly white. You should also bring:

- Waterproof clothing to play in the rain if necessary. This need not be white.
- Your GC handicap card, filled in and up to date. If you don't have one, contact your club GC handicapper
- Plastic ball markers, if you have them. If not, the club hosting the event should be able to provide some.
- Your mallet !

Tournament Manager

The Tournament Manager will arrange the order of play and allocate courts for at least the first game. It is important to be available to start promptly and then follow the Manager's direction throughout the event as to the arrangements for your next game. Don't leave the tournament area except in exceptional circumstances and never without checking with the Tournament Manager when your next game will take place.

In the event of inclement weather or poor ground conditions, the Tournament Manager will determine whether play can continue or if it should be suspended. In the event of rain, play will usually continue unless the court becomes unplayable. In the event of a thunderstorm, play will be suspended.

Practice and Warm-Up

The Tournament Manager will allow a period for warm-up before the start of the day's play, most typically of 10 minutes duration. After that, play starts and no further practice between games is permitted.

3. Play

Starting the Game

Once you have your opponent, lawn and set of balls assigned by the Tournament Manager, you're ready to proceed.

It is usual for the player with the lower handicap to toss the coin to decide who has the choice of whether to play first. Remember that coins must never be used to mark the position of a ball on the court. See "Marking" later on in these notes for the correct approach.

Each player should then collect scoring clips to track the progress of the game. For level-play, each player should take 6 clips of an appropriate colour for the balls they'll be using. The Tournament Manager may give special instruction about the use of scoring clips or other scoring mechanisms, however the usual practice is for the players from the game using the primary colours to put their clips on the top of the hoop when the hoop is scored, and the clips from the secondary game to go on the side of the hoop.

It's important to use clips so that:

- The score is kept accurately. In a long day's play, it's easy to lose track.
- The Tournament Manager can see how the game is progressing to decide if and when time limits may need to be applied to ensure the progress of the event.

Double Banking

In many tournaments, games will be "double-banked" meaning two games are played on one court at the same time. One game will use the primary colour balls (Blue, Red, Black, Yellow) and the other game will use the secondary colours (Green, Pink, Brown, White).

The game using primaries will start first, and it's usual to allow the players to progress past Hoop 2 before the secondary game starts.

Throughout play, it's important to have regard to the other game sharing the court. As well as taking care to avoid disturbing your opponent, you should also try not to disturb the other game, by avoiding walking across their striker's line of aim, for example.

Marking

Players may be required to mark balls to aid the progress of a doubled banked game and all players should equip themselves with plastic ball markers at the start of play. In no circumstances should coins be placed on the court.

To mark a ball, place a plastic ball marker on either side of it, so that it can be replaced accurately. Put the markers in place before moving the ball away.

Time

It is important, and indeed required by the rules, that players should "play with dispatch". That means you can take some time to decide upon the stroke you wish to play and to execute it carefully, but that unnecessary time-wasting during a game or

between games should be avoided. That way, the tournament will progress smoothly to its conclusion.

If a game is taking a particularly long time, or the tournament has been delayed perhaps by bad weather, the Tournament Manager may determine it's necessary to apply a time limit. If that takes place during a game:

- the players will be informed that a time limit has been applied
- the limit will not be applied after less than 45 minutes play and will allow at least 15 further minutes
- at the end of that time, the players may make 8 further strokes (i.e. 2 with each ball)
- the score after the 8 strokes will be the final score, unless the scores are then equal, when play will continue to the next hoop in order as the final hoop.

In the case of timed games, there is no right to demand a "time extension" because you have been held up by a double banked game. Time limits will have been set with double banking in mind and the timely running of the tournament is important in creating an enjoyable day's play for all.

Etiquette & Behaviour

The etiquette for play in croquet has developed over the years so that all players can have a fair chance in the game and an enjoyable experience. Of course, it's mainly common sense to behave in such a way as to not distract your opponents or players in other games that are taking place, but some of the basics are:

Avoid Distractions: don't distract your opponent by standing too close, walking about or catching their eye. Don't stand in their line of aim, or directly behind them. Be aware of where your shadow falls. When walking past a court, pause and stand still while in the eyeline of a player preparing to take a shot.

Double-Banking: Always keep an eye out to ensure that you do not impede the other game. Do not walk across the line of aim of the other game and always be aware of the state of the other game before you strike your ball. If your stroke is likely to effect the balls in the other game, either wait until the way is clear, or ask the players in the other game to mark and move the relevant balls.

Marking: It is normal for players to mark their own ball, should the need arise. Therefore, it's generally a question of asking the other player to mark rather than just marking balls from the other game. However, it is certainly allowed to offer to mark a ball on the owner's behalf, allowing them the choice of whether to do it themselves or not.

No Advice: You must not give your opponent any tactical advice. The one exception when you are obliged to intervene is when you believe they are about to strike the wrong ball. In that case, you should forestall them and agree which is the correct ball to play.

No Smoking or Vaping on Court: Croquet England Tournament Regulations specifically forbid players from smoking or vaping on court.

4. Referee

As with any other croquet game, in a tournament it's the responsibility of the players jointly to referee their game. However, there are some extra responsibilities and opportunities to help the games progress.

At most tournaments, there will be one or more qualified referees present, either there specifically to referee or amongst the other players. It may also be the case that the Tournament Manager is a referee. Who the referees are will be identified in the Manager's briefing before play.

When to Call a Referee

You may call a referee to assist with your game if you reach a situation where you and opponent may not be able to sensibly judge a situation or agree between you.

The non-playing referees present are always happy to help so as to ensure the smooth progress of your game, so don't be reluctant to call them if:

- **RULES** - You have a question about the rules. For example, a wrong ball has been played and you're not sure how to resolve the situation.
- **FACT** - You want a judgement of fact. For example, if it's not clear whether a ball has run a hoop or whether two balls very close together are actually touching. If the players are not certain enough to agree the situation, a referee can be called to make a determination.
- **LAWN DAMAGE** - You want a judgement of lawn damage. Everyone will cause lawn damage accidentally from time to time. There are two important points when this occurs:
 - It will often be a fault, a referee can judge if that is the case
 - It's important that the lawn surface is properly repaired

It is therefore VERY IMPORTANT that you don't attempt to repair the lawn before the referee has seen and assessed the damage.

- **WATCH A STROKE** - You want a stroke watched to see if a fault occurs. If the stroke to be played seems to carry a significant risk of a fault, for example if the striker's ball is very close to another ball, CALL A REFEREE ! This can either be for your own stroke or your opponent's. It is very important to call the referee before the stroke is played so that they may watch it carefully and make a judgement. If you wait until after a stroke is played, there's nothing the referee can do.

How to Call a Referee

When required, call a referee by raising your mallet vertically - head uppermost.

What Happens Next

When a referee comes on they will:

- Ask what the situation is
- Possibly mark relevant balls

- If there's a shot to be watched, ask the player to take up their stance. It is important **NOT TO PLAY THE BALL UNTIL THE REFEREE SAYS THEY'RE READY**
- The referee will take up a position where they can see the stroke without interfering with the player
- When the referee says they're ready for the stroke to be played, the ball may be played
- The referee will announce "Clean" or "Fault"
- In the event of a fault, the referee will then guide the players in applying the appropriate remedy, for example replacing the balls that moved as a result of the stroke.

Wrong Ball

Every player in the tournament (but not other spectators) should forestall any game where there believe a wrong ball has just been played or is about to be played, just as you would normally forestall your opponent in your own game.

5. Reporting the Result

After the game, the winner should report the result promptly to the Tournament Manager. The Manager will then be aware the game has finished and the players are ready to prepare for their next game.

6. Conclusion

Hopefully this note has provided some useful information and will help you be ready to enjoy your tournament of friendly and competitive golf croquet. If you have any questions during the event, the Tournament Manager will always be happy to help. If you have questions about an SCF GC10+ Competition event then please contact gc10plus@southern-croquet.org.uk