

WCF Management Committee Report 2020

This report covers the year ended 31 December 2020

OVERVIEW

Members and Recognised Croquet Organisations

Sweden upgraded its membership to Full Membership during the year while Belgium stepped down from Associate Membership to RCO status. Austria gave notice that it wished to make the same change with effect from 1 January 2021. At the year-end, the WCF had eleven Full Members and eight Associate Members and recognised ten other croquet organisations.

What the WCF does

The work of the WCF falls into four main categories, namely:

- (1) **Competition** – from the perspective of the great majority of competitive croquet players around the world, the organisation and holding of regular world championships for individuals and teams is by a large margin the WCF's most important function. In addition, the WCF is responsible for maintaining both the AC and GC Rankings.
- (2) **Development** – the expansion and support of organised croquet throughout the world remains a key WCF objective and a range of working groups are currently in operation.
- (3) **Communication** – keeping Members up to date with WCF and WCF MC activities through newsletters and the WCF website, much of which revolves around the organisation of world championships, and seeking Council's approval of MC recommendations through the e-mail decision process.
- (4) **Administration** – ensuring that the day-to-day running, periodic tasks and financing of the WCF are managed efficiently. Specific subjects requiring ongoing management include the 10 year Championship Schedule, the WCF web-site, the Hall of Fame, WCF membership, the Laws of Association Croquet, the Rules of Golf Croquet and the WCF Statutes and Regulations.

1. COMPETITION

1.1 Brief review of 2020

The first two months of 2020 featured Tier 1 of the Golf Croquet World Team Championship in New Zealand followed by the AC World Championship in Australia. The pandemic crisis became severe in March and led to the postponement of the other three WCF events planned for the year. On a more positive note, the sustainability of the GC Grading System was increased by software development and the recruitment of four Assistant Ranking Officers.

1.2 Golf Croquet World Team Championship, Tier 1

Tier 1 of the GC World Team Championship was held at the Nelson-Hinemoa Croquet Club in the South Island of New Zealand from 6 to 12 January. Eight countries (Australia, Egypt, England, Ireland, New Zealand, South Africa, Sweden and USA) competed for the Openshaw Shield with Egypt and New Zealand, the finalists in both the 2012 and 2016 events, as the pre-event favourites. It was

notable that Egypt fielded a squad with an average age of well under 30 and New Zealand's team averaged under 25.

The semi-finals suggested that Egypt were on track to avenge their 2016 defeat by New Zealand. They pummelled England by 12-1 in one semi-final while New Zealand only scraped past USA by 7-6. However, GC can be hard to predict and England took third place by a comfortable 7-2 margin and New Zealand ran out 7-4 winners against Egypt.

The standard of clearing and hoop running in the final was extraordinarily high. The 19-year old U21 GC champion, Edmund Fordyce, being an outstanding example of brief stroke preparation coupled with laser-like accuracy. The final stages were filmed by Sky Sports Next [and the footage is available on the WCF YouTube channel].

1.3 Association Croquet World Championship

The Victorian Croquet Centre in Melbourne hosted the seventeenth holding of the ACWC from 15 to 23 February. The 80 players represented a total of eleven countries and the pre-event favourites were undoubtedly Reg Bamford (ZAF) and Robert Fletcher (AUS). The event was notable for the success of the younger players with five of the eight quarter-finalists being under 30.

In the semi-finals, Bamford defeated Edward Wilson (AUS) in five games after Wilson fought back strongly from 2-0 down. The match scores were +26tp, +25tp, -17, -26, +26tp. In the other, 19-year old Matthew Essick (USA) caused a sensation by defeating Fletcher in four games after losing the first, winning by -17tp, +26tp, +17, +26. In the final, Bamford prevailed by +26tp, -12, +17tp, +26tp to win the title for the fifth time in his career and thereby draw level with Robert Fulford (ENG).

The event was filmed in high definition by MySportLive in collaboration with the ACA and the footage has been added to the WCF YouTube channel (see Section 3 below for the link).

1.4 Pandemic postponement

The arrival of the coronavirus pandemic in March led to a general postponement of almost all events in the 10 year Championship Schedule by an initial period of 12 months. This immediately affected the events planned for 2020, namely Tiers 2 and 3 of the Golf Croquet World Team Championship and the Women's ACWC.

1.5 Forthcoming Events

Two events are now scheduled for 2021 and five for 2022. Dates given below are subject to progress in dealing with the pandemic and are subject to regular review.

- the GC World Team Championship Tier 3 will be held at the Guildford & Godalming Croquet Club, England from 20 to 24 July 2021.
- the GC World Team Championship Tier 2 will be held at the real Club de Golf Vista Hermosa, Puerto de Santa Maria, Spain from 11 to 16 October 2021.
- the Women's AC World Championship will be held in Canterbury, South Island, New Zealand from 5 to 12 January 2022.
- the Under 21 GC World Championship will be held at Claudelands Croquet Club, North Island, New Zealand from 6 to 10 February 2022.

- the GC World Championship will be held at Mount Maunganui, North Island, New Zealand from 12 to 20 February 2022.
- the AC World Team Championship Tiers 2 and 3, will be held at Budleigh Salterton Croquet Club, England from 9 to 14 August 2022.
- the AC World Team Championship Tier 1 for the MacRobertson Shield will be held in Australia in November to December 2022

1.6 Event Hosts and the venues

1.6.1 The MC and its Event Sub-Committees are responsible for arranging and scheduling these events and handling entries and this involves significant time and effort. However, the Event Hosts and the host clubs have the heaviest burden by providing venues and maintaining lawns, appointing officials, seeking sponsorship, arranging catering and taking care of all the other practical arrangements that are an essential part of holding a world championship event.

1.6.2 On behalf of all the participants and the other WCF Members, the MC would like to express its gratitude to the 2020 Event Hosts, namely Croquet New Zealand (GC World Team Championship Tier 1) and the Australian Croquet Association (ACWC), and to all the clubs which provided the venues, namely the Ballarat, Belmont, Essendon, Nelson-Hinemoa and Williamstown Croquet Clubs and the Victorian Croquet Centre.

1.7 Golf Croquet Grading System

1.7.1 The WCF accepted responsibility for the GCGS in 2018 but, until early 2020, it was based on a macro-driven Excel spreadsheet operated by Stephen Mulliner who was also responsible for all data input. Competitive GC has grown steadily for several years and, in 2019, 833 events and almost 34,000 games were processed. This arrangement created a high level of “key person” risk and needed to be addressed by spreading the load.

1.7.2 The Excel system was not capable of being used by more than one person so the calculation and output routines were rewritten in Python and now reside on the WCF server that supports the WCF website. The input module was also rewritten so that the data checking and input functions can be carried out in a distributed form by several individuals who can then send the data to the WCF server and initiate the calculation and database update routines.

1.7.1 The MC is very grateful to Richard Bilton (ENG), John Christie (NZL), Peter Freer (AUS) and Felipe Mestanza (ESP) for agreeing to become the first GC AROs. They have responsibility for entering data from events in their own countries and their local knowledge helps to avoid new player errors. Stephen Mulliner remains as the GC RO for the present with responsibility for the overall maintenance and administration of the system. He also acts as an ARO for the other countries.

2. DEVELOPMENT

2.1 Formation and adoption of four-year Business Plan

A Member Survey was conducted at the start of 2020 and based on the responses, a new Business Plan was drawn up and circulated. In consequence, the MC has formed a WCF Development Working Group and a WCF Media Working Group. Both include volunteers drawn from the global playing community with the appropriate skills and interest.

WCF Development Working Group

This working group is chaired by Ian Burrige (WAL). The other members are Begoña Elizaburu (ESP), Sally Harper (AUS), Brian Lozano (MEX/USA), Logan McCorkindale (NZL), David Openshaw (ENG), Roberts Stafeckis (LVA), John Swabey (DEU) and Rick Zazueta (MEX/USA). The group recommended the formation of four specialist working groups which are detailed at paragraph 2.6.

WCF Media Working Group

This working group is chaired by Debbie Lines (ENG). The other members are Begoña Elizaburu (ESP), Brian Lozano (MEX), Eugene Chang (ENG), Logan McCorkindale (NZL) and Samir Patel (ENG). The group began work in November 2020 and its two first initiatives were to create a WCF YouTube channel and to recommend the replacement of the WCF's Joomla-based website with a new WordPress-based website that should be easier to administer going forward.

2.2 Strategy

- 2.2.1 The MC's development strategy has been based historically on the recognition that the WCF is not resourced to be a missionary organisation. It has been instead founded on the principle of supporting national organisations because they are best placed to provide the continuous support necessary for the growth of croquet at club level within their own domains.
- 2.2.2 Organisation support takes two main forms, namely providing coaching to Members and RCOs (see paragraph 2.3) and making capital grants to help develop croquet playing facilities (see paragraph 2.4).
- 2.2.3 The MC's development approach has now been expanded to include the provision of online resources intended to be of general benefit to clubs and croquet players (see paragraph 2.5) and tackling issues that would benefit from a global approach, such as a global handicap system, a global player and games database and designing a new form of handicap GC (see paragraph 2.6).

2.3 Coaching

- 2.3.1 Coaching can be in relation to improving playing and refereeing standards and in developing coaching skills so that Members can become self-sufficient in this regard.
- 2.3.2 Coaching assistance can take place either by arranging for a coach to visit a Member's country or by offering courses for representatives of several of the smaller Members in one of the larger and more established Members, typically England to date. Attending a "coaches' course" is the best way to develop more qualified coaches in smaller and more recent Members.
- 2.3.3 The WCF will fund the travel expenses of a coach from their home to the WCF Member where the coaching will take place. The cost of an economy air ticket is the main item. The Member is then responsible for meeting all the travel, accommodation and subsistence expenses of the coach inside the Member's country.

2.3.4 The MC remains willing to provide financial support for those who wish to attend such courses for players, referees and coaches from smaller WCF Members at the Croquet Academies in England. The WCF pays for the course fees and provides a small travel grant for those travelling from outside the UK.

2.4 **Capital grants**

2.4.1 The MC encourages any Member that does not yet have a top-class venue with at least **two** full-size courts to consider putting together a project which the WCF can part-fund. The WCF will always limit itself to match-funding which means that the Member must expect to raise at least 50% of the project funds itself.

2.4.2 Latvia

In 2020, the Latvian Croquet Federation was awarded a grant of €15,000 to assist in building a new three-court club at Ikskile, about 30 km east of Riga. The grant amounts to 30% of the project cost and work began in May. Progress has been encouraging and play is expected to start in May 2021.

2.5 **Global resources**

The WCF website now includes Global Resources and Advice Sheets under the Croquet Information tab on the home page. The Global Resources category includes links to court booking systems, a Swiss tournament management spreadsheet, a guide to developing a croquet club, a YouTube video index and to CroquetScores, the main online event reporting system. The Advice Sheets category currently includes one item relating to handicap play. It is intended to add to both categories in future as suitable items become available.

2.6 **Working Groups**

The WCF MC has established four Working Groups to investigate the feasibility of the following projects:

- WG 1: Development of a global handicap system
- WG 2: Development of a global player and games database
- WG 3: Development of a form of handicap GC which does not use extra strokes ("Advantage GC")
- WG 4: Development of online referee training and accreditation

Interim reports will be provided shortly and made available on the WCF website.

Three of the groups are chaired by MC members but otherwise consist of volunteers from the global playing community whose enthusiasm and interest is gratefully acknowledged.

2.7 Any other ideas from Members for boosting Development are very welcome and will always be actively considered by the MC.

3. COMMUNICATION WITH MEMBERS

Council decision-making

The Council took five decisions in 2020. These were:

- 83: Approval of Latvian Croquet Federation grant
- 84: Temporary amendment of age regulations for postponed U21 GCWC
- 85: Election of the Swedish Croquet Association to Full Membership
- 86: Approval of 2021 Budget
- 87: Election of Brian Havill as Independent Examiner for 2021

Surveys

Membership survey

The MC conducted a membership survey in January which asked for views on where the WCF should focus, what services Members would like it to provide and the world championship schedule. The survey also asked for census-style information, including the number of clubs and players affiliated to each Member and the amount and type of tournament activity. The number of clubs and players is now a question that forms part of the annual membership renewal form.

GAISF and multi-sport survey

Following the helpful advice of Enrique Prados (Spain), the MC reviewed the prospects of the WCF being able to join GAISF (Global Association of International Sports Federations) and for croquet to take part in international multi-sport events. There is little short-term prospect of reaching the 40 member requirement but the MC conducted a short member survey in November to check on Members' links with their National Olympic Committees and their opinion about the MC's approach, namely to remain ready to work towards GAISF membership if WCF membership reaches at least 30.

Elections

There were no elections in 2020.

World Championships

Members receive direct email communication from the MC about all matters relating to the administration of championships, the key dates for Member action and player entries. The information is also posted on the WCF website. In May, there was additional consultation with the larger Members who supply World Championship venues to discuss the best way forward in the light of the pandemic.

Newsletters

Newsletters are published on the WCF website at least every three months depending on activity and are intended to ensure that all those interested in what the WCF and the MC are doing are adequately informed and kept up-to-date.

Website

The WCF website continues to be hosted by SiteGround who have proved both reliable and helpful. A new WordPress website is under development.

WCF Facebook page

The WCF Facebook page has continued to gain followers, with a 33% increase in page “likes” during 2020. The most viewed post was the report and photo of Reg Bamford being congratulated by Matthew Essick immediately after the final of the ACWC, with 1910 views and 248 reactions.

The page also proved to be a popular route for COVID news, with such posts being regularly reviewed by over 1000 people. Throughout August and September, the citations of the WCF Hall of Fame members were posted, with a cumulative 8000 views.

WCF YouTube channel

The new WCF YouTube channel was launched in December 2020 and can be accessed from <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UMCeyP1BjtSwyDF3A5n142ffw/>

It provides a range of playlists which will be added to as new material becomes available. The third playlist is entitled ‘Croquet World Championship – recent finals’ and contains some excellent footage from the 2020 ACWC.

4. ADMINISTRATION

WCF Statutes and Regulations

Work has continued on producing Ranking Regulations which are intended to formalise eligibility of results and other aspects of the AC and GC Grading Systems and the ranking lists that they generate. A submission draft for approval is expected to be sent to Council in early 2021. A new version of the Refereeing Regulations will also be needed if the 7th Edition of the AC Laws are approved and will be sent to Council shortly after that approval.

WCF Laws of Association Croquet

The WCF Association Croquet Laws Committee completed its work on the new 7th Edition of the AC Laws in December 2020. A final draft has been sent to the Council for approval with a closing date of 24 January 2021. This has been a major undertaking because the new Laws incorporate many years of Official Rulings. The MC is very grateful to the chairman, Graeme Roberts (NZL), and his colleagues Liz Fleming (AUS), Martyn Selman (USA) and Ian Vincent (ENG). All four have been re-appointed by their respective national bodies to serve from 2021 to 2024.

WCF Rules of Golf Croquet

The WCF Golf Croquet Rules Committee has been working on a draft 6th Edition of the GC Rules with a view to publishing a consultation draft later in 2021 and being able to submit a final draft for approval in 2022. Brian Boutel (NZL), the chairman, Jeff Hill (USA), Stephen Mulliner (ENG) and Amir Ramsis (EGY) have all been re-appointed by their respective national bodies to serve from 2021 to 2024. The MC thanks Georg Dej (CAN), Luis de Gortazar (ESP) and Bernie Pfitzner (AUS) who all retired on 31 December 2020. John van der Touw (AUS) and Alfonso Urbano (ESP) have joined the committee. One place to represent other countries remains unfilled at present.

Hall of Fame

Bob Alman (USA), Jenny Clarke (NZL), Jose Alvarez-Sala (ESP), Salah Hassan (EGY) and the late Chris Hudson (ENG) were inducted into the WCF Hall of Fame in December 2020. Many congratulations to them all.

Secretary-General

Stephen Mulliner (ENG) will retire as Secretary-General on 31 August 2021 after completing his second four-year term. The MC appointed Debbie Lines (ENG) as Deputy Secretary-General with effect from 1 September 2020 with the intention that she will become Acting Secretary-General on 1 September 2021 and Secretary-General on 1 January 2022.

Management Committee matters

There were no other matters of note to report which have not been covered elsewhere. The MC continues to operate efficiently by email discussions and decisions with the added support of monthly conference calls.

Yousry Ghamry (EGY) decided to retire as Treasurer with effect from 31 December 2020. The MC is grateful to him for being prepared to stand for election to the role in 2018 following the retirement of Martin French and for his contribution to the work of the MC over the past two years. The MC will advertise the post in the near future.

The members of the WCF Management Committee for 2020 were:

Ian Burrige (WAL), President
Hal Denton (USA)
Yousry Ghamry (EGY), Treasurer
Peter Landrebe (AUS)
Stephen Mulliner (ENG), Secretary-General
Samir Patel (ENG)
Amir Ramsis (EGY)
Roberts Stafeckis (LVA)
Geoff Young (NZL)

Stephen Mulliner
Secretary-General
13 January 2021