

# **FEDERATION OF EAST MIDLANDS CROQUET CLUBS**

## **LEAGUE MANAGER'S REPORT – 2023 SEASON**

This is a long report mainly due to the need to analyse the outcome of the AGC trial.

Overall there were 98 matches (1176 games) involving 180 different players.

Part A of this report contains data to assist in making decisions in Part B

### **ADVANTAGE PLAY – PART A – factual data**

6 of the 22 clubs in the Federation entered a team for this trial league. 3 from each of the A6 'corridor' and 3 from Lincs . 53 players took part in the 14 matches played.

Leicester were the league winners

There was one match not played, due to problems with the away team raising a team on available dates supplied by the home team. (Woodhall Spa v Leicester). As this was a trial I did not, under rule D02, determine the result.

### **Players' feedback**

I received useful feedback during the season, here are some quotes

Length of game too long especially when lunch and travel time included, croquet is an aging population.

Despite initially being unsure we had an enjoyable day, and I'm sure everyone was somewhat wiser how to play Advantage.

Some players would prefer to work with positive figures (instead of starting at -2 and getting to +7, start at 0 and get to +9)

Allowing 1 hour seemed perfect

No problem with scoring – if players agree on the score after each hoop

Most games finished well within the time

High Handicap player – more opportunities for players to play without feeling demoralised when playing level play. I am in with a chance.

Some of our better players do not really enjoy the format. With a time limit they really find it hard to fight their way back from, say, a -2 and win in 'time'.

Time taken would have been an issue had there been a greater travelling time.

The feedback at the end of the season from the 6 teams was

4 do not want to have a formal AGC league and 2 do.

Issues raised include difficulty in keeping score (both for the players and spectators)

Lower handicap players feel the system favours higher handicap players

No one in some teams expressed enthusiasm for the format but in other teams players did

Lower handicap players feel, as a proper league, would have a disadvantage to their handicap level (via their Handicap Cards).

As league manager I am trying to be neutral but it seems to me that low handicap players do not know how us high handicap players (I am a 9 – 10) feel getting a huge lift when we win a few games using AGC. It improves our relationship with the game, we learn from playing with more skilful players as against constantly losing and getting fed up.

**Time limit** I have analysed the time taken per game – this shows that 84% of games were completed in time

| game time | 30 mins and under | 31-35 mins | 36-40mins | 41-45mins | 46-50mins | 51-55mins | 56-60mins | not completed |
|-----------|-------------------|------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|---------------|
| percent   | 18%               | 12%        | 14%       | 15%       | 6%        | 9%        | 10%       | 16%           |
| accm %    | 18%               | 30%        | 44%       | 59%       | 65%       | 74%       | 84%       | 100%          |

## Away teams time commitment

This ranged from 7hr 50min to 10hr 10min with an average of 8hr 45min.

Travel time ex Google maps plus 40 mins for pre and post match knock-up/close down. Teams with one –way travel time below 30 minutes excluded (only effects level play time later in report)

## Match statistics

50% of matches were home wins; 28.5% away wins and 21.5% drawn

95% of games reached +6 or +7 in time

I have compared the result of unfinished games with the Tillcock formulae, set to determine the winner of such games. With the exception of drawn games, the result of games at time produced the same result using the formulae. One match finishing at time 7:5 changed to 6:6 by this formula. There were a couple of other matches where the score changed but not the winning team. I have sent this data to Roy Tillcock.

## LEVEL PLAY - PART A – factual data

Figures in brackets are the same data from 2022.

At the time of writing there is still one match to play.

14 (14) of the 22 (22) clubs in the Federation took part involving 24 (23) teams over 84 (77) matches with 170 (165) different players participating assuming no significant change results from the outstanding match.

### Division 1

Ashby A top the division with 4 wins and 3 draws (narrowly beating Leicester A whom had less game wins)

### Division 2

Bakewell A won the division with 7 wins

### Division 3

Leicester B won the division with 6 wins and 1 draw.

Derby played in the league for the first time and came 6th

## Promotions/relegations

If next season the number of teams is 24 or less, then we will continue on a three division basis with promotions and relegations from this year's results in the usual way. If there are 25 or more teams, the previous decision to move to four divisions will come into effect which will mean a more significant adjustment to division allocations – this will become clear at our next meeting.

## Other Facts

8 Clubs, provided teams, relate to (roughly) the A6 'corridor' and 5 clubs from Lincs plus Southwell somewhere in-between.

14 (15) Teams relate to the A6 'corridor' and 8 (8) from Lincs - + 2 from Southwell. (Div 1: 4/4; Div 2: 5/2 +Southwell; Div 3: 5/2 + Southwell ).

One team (Long Eaton) this year only used three players, whereas Nottingham B had a pool of 11 and two teams (Ashby C and Bakewell B) utilised 10 different players (last season the highest was 11 different players).

Of the 170 different players; 50 played in Div 1, 52 in Div 2 and 68 in Div 3.

Out of the 84 (77) matches. There were 37 (42) home wins, 32 (24) away wins and 14 (11) drawn with one match still to play. One strange thing was of the first 12 matches played 7 were away wins, 4 drawn and only 1 home win.

About 20% (15%) of matches were won by teams with a poorer handicap than their opponents (drawn matches excluded).

There were 4 (4) players with a handicap better than zero.

One match in Division 3 (Leicester B v Nottingham B) all games went to time, 3 games finished 2:1 with the highest hoop score of 5:4 – match hoop score was 42:25

In Div 1 - 84% of games finished in time plus 8 shots etc; Div 2 - 96% and Div 3 - 46%.

In Div 1 - 34% of players had a handicap of 3 or better; Div 2 - 15% of 5 or better and Div 3 - 15% of 7 or better.

## Away time commitment

This ranged from 5hr 30min to 9hr 40min with an average of 7hr 27min again one-way travel 30 mins and below ignored. Therefore 1hr 18min, on average, shorter than for AGC.

**The meeting is invited to accept Part A of the report.**

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## PART B - Decisions

In this part, the meeting needs to make some decisions

### What is the future of Advantage GC?

Should we have an Advantage League **YES/NO** (perhaps we preface that with a separate league needs a minimum of 5 teams)

Should the present level play League we converted to Advantage **YES/NO**

### Advantage Play

If at least one of the answers above is YES then we need deal with this section and decide –

**Time limits** - I am convinced we need a time limit as otherwise some matches could force an extremely long day, some already being over 10 hours for the away team. I am aware that some low handicap players think it is unfair to have any time limit as they 'cannot catch up' from a negative start but surely making it possible for the high handicap players to win a game or two is to be encouraged. Whereas 84% of games were completed in time, 95% games reached 6 or 7 in time, therefore it could be said that extending time would not change many results.

I propose that we either

**A** leave a time limit of 60 mins (no extra shots and draws are allowed) or

**B** reduce the time limit to 50 mins, as proposed by two of this year's teams (plus 8 shots and draws not allowed) **VOTE A or B**

**Unfinished games** – should the score at time in such games be the game score or should the Roy Tillcock formula be applied? Although I found that applying the formula did not change the result (except in drawn games), I am assured that in certain situations it does. There are available tables that can be used without needing a calculator. I propose that the Tillcock formula be applied and that it is carried out by the match manager before signing the result sheet. **YES/NO**

### Level Play

If this league continues we need to consider the old chestnut of handicaps. The disparity between interpretations of handicaps in different clubs is startling. I do not have any suggestions but hope others might.

Some players, particularly in division 3, still object to one of the three players in a team having a significantly lower handicap, as against the more normal handicap for that division. This potentially leads to the player winning 4 or 5 of their games. Usually their involvement just meets the present handicap limit I have been encouraged to seek a further review of my proposal that in Division 3 individual handicaps should be in the range 6 – 20 (inclusive) Based on this season three individuals would be affected and were spread over 7 matches **YES/NO**

Personally I would also be open to see the total team handicap limit in Division 3 increased from 18 to 22 affecting 5 match teams in 2023. The average team total handicap in Div 3 was 28

**Time limits** - I have been asked to include two other issues for division 3; reporting ranking and increasing the time limit of 30 minutes. To be reported to ranking games must be 40 minutes or more, so we can take these issues together. This is the observation I received -

*An issue which keeps cropping up is that if people want to enter a CA C level ( or B or A) competition and it is over subscribed, which nearly all of them are, the allocation of places is done in ranking order. In order to get on the rankings people need to have played some games which go on the rankings. Games in Division 3 are not currently counting towards the rankings because their time limit is less than 40 minutes which means players will be missing out on being able to enter competitions.*

In anticipation of this discussion I asked the 8 Division 3 coordinators whether or not ranking was an issue for their club – 5 said no and 3 said yes

The question of increasing the time limit from 30 to 45 minutes produced an even response however those opposed were very critical, some of their comments

As far as I can ascertain the time limit of 30 minutes was set to encourage social type players to take part in some competition,

It could add 90 minutes to the day where 6 rounds are played

Unanimous view was not to play 45 minutes as it would deter members from playing

Originally intended at 30 minutes to encourage new players

Ranking is not important to us but playing the game is

30 minutes is more than enough

It is quite daunting for inexperienced players to attempt to play in the league and playing for 45 minutes would add to this feeling.

From the files I see that increasing the time limit from 30 minutes to 45 minutes was discussed in 2011 and defeated. Some clubs even saying they might leave the league if it increased.

Of the teams who report that they have a ranking issue, two of the three have teams in higher divisions that are reported to ranking.

I propose no change to the present 30 minute limit for division 3. **YES/NO**

### **Other issues**

Two further issues have been drawn to my attention

*In National Interclub games it is normal for the host club to minimise the lawn changes for visitors to try to minimise the home advantage, some clubs seem to be un-aware of this and it may be worth talking about it and potentially including it in the league rules.*

I have no problem with putting a clause in the rules in terms of, where practical, to do this – do you want me to do so? **YES/NO**

*Next, Richard Bilton has raised the issue of how tight hoops are set, he feels some of them are too loose*

I am not sure how this can be cured – I am unaware of the issue, here in Darley Dale we made a tool for forming the holes at season set up, and the rigid hoops just drop in. **Comments please**

David Gregory

13<sup>th</sup> October 2023