

Bear of Rodborough Croquet

Newsletter - July 2013



EDITORIAL

At last the weather is sunny and warm (read hot) and croquet players are, at last, leaving waterproofs and fleecy vests at home, before embarking on their travels to matches!

All matches except one have now been played. The final Parkstone match versus Bath is scheduled for Sunday August 11th at home, all spectators welcome, I'm sure.

A **BIG** thank you to those Team Captains who have already contributed their match reports. Any outstanding reports just email Keith or Kate.

The Perfect Evening

Sometimes, everything just seems to come together to make for the most perfect of events. Sometimes, you come away from a party feeling that it just could not have been better. Sometimes, in the following days, you just get a warm glow when you think of that most perfect of evenings.

Richard and Joy kindly offered the venue: a delightful garden in the most perfect of settings. The chums brought spectacular food to add to the groaning table and drink which raised the bar. All this, added to perfect company, and topped off with one of the warmest, sunniest and calmest evenings in living British memory put the 2013 club barbecue right at the top of club events.

Enormous thanks go to Richard and Joy for all their hard work and attention to detail in preparing for our invasion. To get the garden up to scratch, they had worked on it all year to ensure it was ready for us. In fact, it was so good, they opened it to the public a fortnight ago as a precursor to our inspection.

Thanks to everyone who came and provided the feast but most of all to our gallant hosts for making this the perfect evening.

Robert

Thank you to Faith and Don, who took the photographs below.



Saturday 13th June Federation away at Cheltenham

Still trying to regain the form from last year, the Federation team travelled to Cheltenham in order to secure the first win of the season. Alas, it was not meant to be. Faced with Caroline, remember she of the high handicap at the beginning of the season and now a 10, Robert valiantly battled against 7½ bisques but was unable to spend much time on the lawn due to Caroline's very good play. A disappointing morning was nearly overturned with both Kate and Keith managing to win their singles. Not a win, but getting closer.

Bear team: Keith, Kate and Robert

B' League v Swindon (away) 27th June

Inspired by my absence (well, the best leaders always lead from behind, don't they?) the chaps stormed to the team's first victory this season – obviously saving the best until last! And what a victory it was. Well done, all of you. Here's Crawford's match report, with a little input from Nick. (il Capitano)

On what turned out to be a fine sunny morning our Captain Nick drove Crawford, Ian and John for the B League at Swindon. We only got slightly lost on the way but arrived a few minutes before our scheduled time of 10.00. Nick blamed the shifting road patterns in Swindon, but the reality was a wrong turn in Malmesbury. We were met by a very friendly and enthusiastic team and saw the splendid new pavilion, largely lottery funded. No more hiking to the loo or having tea in the gazebo as it was blowing away in the rain.

We were surprised to be playing full 26 point games on half lawns as the team had been training on 14 point games on full lawns.

Ian and Nick both won their morning singles fairly convincingly, Ian 26-9 to Bill Marner and Nick 20-9 to Tony Mayer, the Swindon rookie. Crawford and John played doubles, against Roger Bedells and Terry Walton, and were trailing for most of the match, but in the last few minutes Crawford managed a spurt to peg when time was called to tie the game. The opposition failed to hit in and John was set up for his hoop. He failed on the first attempt but the pressure was too much for the opposition who missed a fairly easy roquet to leave John to claim the golden hoop, running out winners at 18-17.

In the afternoon we drew for opponents. John had a quick win, which took the match, beating Bill 26-9. Crawford had a tight game against Mary Bedells, playing the pm slot instead of Tony. Mary got round to rover with one ball and two bisques, but Crawford then took his second ball round to peg with his 3 bisques but failed to peel his opponent through the last hoop to peg out. After a fairly scrappy game Crawford pegged out with plenty of time to spare, taking the leg 26-13.

Nick played Terry, who had played well in the morning doubles and again in the afternoon to give Swindon their only victory, just before the rain came on. Terry took the game 26-7.

The rest of us were sheltering happily in the fine new club room admiring the tea, while Ian was battling away in the rain. The incentive to get out of the rain and attack the egg and cress sandwiches was enough to speed Ian to peg and our 6 : 1 victory.

I think we were all surprised how easy the small, well cut and level small lawns were and the hoops seemed much easier than at the Bear, although the widths were supposed to be correct. We look forward to future games when Swindon should have three full lawns as they now have extra land where the third lawn is in preparation.

Team: Nick, Ian, Crawford, John

Sunday 14th July Federation home v Dffryn

Let's just say that a rainforest is now much smaller due to the number of bisques that has to be made to enable this match to go ahead. Unfortunately the Dffryn Federation team players were at Nailsea playing in Golf tournament (shouldn't be allowed) and so the Intermediate team were dispatched to dispatch us! I don't want to keep mentioning the VAST numbers of bisques but let's just say that the lawn looked like we had decided to fence it off! If that's not enough of a picture, 20½ bisques were in play during the morning and 29½ in the afternoon. Result? Robert won his singles in the morning despite the forest of sticks, Keith and Kate lost by 5 on time. In the afternoon Kate won her singles but both Robert and Keith, despite their best efforts, lost, but only just... nearly won a match!

Bear team: Keith, Kate and Robert

Sunday 21st July Federation away at Nailsea

One bright and sunny morning the four bears arose from their beds early to journey into the unknown (apparently neither Matthew nor Paul have been to Nailsea croquet club before!). They were met, as usual, by the delightful Kathy and her team with steaming hot tea and a promise of very fine weather for the day. Less promising, unfortunately were the lawns, which were looking a little bruised due to the very long, hot, dry spell of weather. (If I mention the weather a lot, it is because it is so not usual!) Kate and Keith promised not to fall out and played the doubles in the morning, keeping their promise and actually winning their match. Paul struggled with a lawn that was so fast, he thought he was at the Grand Prix, but discovered his delicate touch and came out a deserving winner too. Matthew, not wanting to be left out, also played with a keen touch and beat the host (shame on you), so a good morning's play.

The afternoon, still hot, dry and sunny, saw all four bears, double-banking on the less, dry, parched lawns. Kate and Matthew kept cool heads (well you know I always sit in the shade) and despite giving bisques away won their singles. The others felt that it was kinder to allow the home team at least a couple of wins (Keith wanted to stay for tea). Hooray, first win of the season, shame it was the last match!

Bear team: Keith, Kate, Matthew and Paul

Chairman's Comments.

The mighty duo continue to advance.

Congratulations to Keith who has now entered the world rankings having played in enough qualifying tournaments to enter the lists and is currently 535th best player in the world. As he enters more tournaments, we will watch his progress with interest.

Kate, too, has made some notable gains. Playing in her first B Level tournament in Nailsea, she beat Andrew Wise (h/c 1) taking 19 points from him. This followed beating your chairman in an advanced club match the previous week taking 17 points off him and beating him again in a handicap match the following week taking another 10 points onto her card.

Kate won a bottle of wine at Nailsea for creating the "Biggest upset of the tournament" and your chairman is arguing for a substantial cut in her handicap!

Caroline does it again!

It is difficult to believe that the season is still less than half way through because at the start, Caroline's handicap was 20. It is now 10 (at least it was at the time of writing this). Being a fast learner and entering so many competitions is clearly a winning combination and we can only guess where she will be by the start of next season. Having just beaten your chairman in a handicap event, he is also arguing for a substantial cut in her handicap too!

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An invitation from Edgebaston CC.

A few vacancies exist in the Edgbaston B Class (GC Handicaps 5 - 8) Golf Croquet Tournament, to be held on Tuesday 10th September 2013. If you are interested in applying, details can be found in the Fixtures Book.

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Water, water, everywhere.

After contacting the manager of the hotel asking her permission to water the lawn (at our own expense) I was delighted to receive a reply that not only did she think this should be done but that the hotel would fund the equipment and the water. We cannot thank her enough for this and should see the current challenging conditions easing shortly.

CROQUET ASSOCIATION CONSULTATION.

Fundamental and far-reaching changes have been suggested by a working party set up to advise the CA about a way forward and we are being asked to consider the proposals and respond.

For the benefit of newer members, the **CA** is the sport's governing body and is responsible for the laws and conduct of the game, tournament fixtures, training and examining coaches and referees, supporting new and existing clubs, awarding grants and a range of other activities.

The **FEDERATIONS** are separate and autonomous. I had assumed that all 11 federations were broadly similar but this is not the case. The South West Federation and South East Federation are the largest, each with 42 member clubs (and growing). Some other federations are very much smaller. The South-West Federation is often regarded as the most successful and dynamic, organising far more leagues and league matches involving significantly more players than any other federation.

Currently, clubs can choose to join either a federation or the CA or both – but do not have to.

Currently, croquet players can choose to join the CA as individual members or not. In our club, we have a higher proportion of individual CA members than is the norm.

There has been debate for a long time as to whether this unusual arrangement (when compared with other sports) should continue or change and feelings range from one extreme to the other. Many have deeply held views which should be respected.

The CA Working Party (chaired by Brian Shorney) has produced its recommendations and these are now published at the start of a lengthy consultation period. It has been stressed that because the federations are autonomous, no change can be forced on them and that change can only come about through cooperation and a mutual willingness to change. You will receive a copy of the report separately in a few days' time and, at 24 pages, it will take time to read and digest but I urge you to do this and give it very careful thought. We may decide to collect views through a special meeting or at our AGM in October and our collective views will eventually be forwarded to the CA.

In order to aid understanding and debate, the South West Federation is having a special meeting for all clubs and interested individuals immediately after its AGM on Sunday 24th November. It is hoped that a presentation by one of the CA working party will be made at this meeting though this is yet to be confirmed. It is also hoped that all clubs will send several representatives to this meeting.

For more information:

Our Club Website- <http://www.faydon.com/Bear/Bear.html>

Archived newsletters and coaching hints - <http://www.faydon.com/Bear/News.html>

Croquet Association (of which the club is a member) -www.croquet.org.uk

South West Federation of Croquet Clubs (to which we are affiliated) – <http://www.swfcroquet.org.uk>

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The Bear of Rodborough Croquet Club.

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