

Golf Croquet Handicaps by Hoop

(Thanks to Daniel Bennett for his suggestion of a golf-like handicap with trigger-points at regular intervals. Robert Miller has put in a huge amount of work to develop an online application.)

A player's handicap is based on his or her success in recent games against all opponents who also hold a handicap.

Each player must score as many hoops as the figure of his or her handicap to win the game. Play ceases when one player reaches his or her own figure (for handicap games between players of equal handicap, a regular 13-point game is played). Players without a handicap normally start at 7, but beginners may be started at 4. Present handicaps range from 3 to 12, and there is currently no limit on this range.

For the purpose of calculating each player's handicap, the positive and negative scores are equal to the **number of hoops that the loser was short** of the total he or she needed to win the game.

Scores of above plus or minus five are discounted to +5 or -5.

As scores are accumulated, the player's aggregate net hoop count is kept. When the aggregate reaches an agreed figure (at November 2016: +10), the player's handicap rises by one hoop. When it reaches minus the same figure (-10), the handicap falls by one hoop.

If an aggregate rises or falls past the trigger-point, the surplus or deficit becomes the player's new aggregate at the new handicap.

Example: A (handicap of 8, aggregate of +8) plays B (handicap of 6, aggregate of -3). The score is 8/2 to A. *B is 4 hoops short.* A's aggregate increases by 4, past the trigger point of +10, and A's handicap becomes 9 (+2). B's handicap remains 6, and B's aggregate falls to -7.

A and B now play again. This time, B wins 6/5. *A is 4 hoops short.* B's handicap remains 6, but the aggregate rises by 4 to -3. A's handicap is unchanged, but the aggregate falls by 4 to -2.

To incorporate scores from level-play competition, lower-handicapped players are allotted a "par" total of hoops in proportion to the handicap of the opponent. Their handicap aggregate is automatically adjusted according to whether they reach this "par", and the higher-handicapped player accordingly. This job is done by the online system.

Handicap Doubles: The pair's handicap is equal to half the sum of their individual handicaps. A half-hoop is rounded up to a full hoop. At present, doubles results cannot be used in the online system.

WHY A HOOP-BASED SYSTEM?

The system of Additional Strokes, as used in Great Britain and unofficially here, militates against the receiver of additional strokes, in that extra tactics need to be learned, and two shots have to be played accurately, without any assured advantage in the game. The range of abilities in Golf Croquet is such that a less exacting task should be set for the novice player, and a more challenging one for the expert. With hoop-counting, there is a direct correlation between results and handicaps, and – in particular – heavy wins and losses are distinguished from close matches, leading to more timely alterations.

INTRODUCING THE SYSTEM

A computer programme to calculate handicaps has been developed by Robert Miller, and is now available at www.croquetireland.com. Managers of handicap GC events register with the moderator, and they can then add new players to the handicap list and enter the scores of games. The Moderator will control results entered to ensure that all relevant results are included and that errors in data input are corrected.

Unofficial trials, chiefly at Carrickmines, have met with approval from players of all standards.

There will be a Consultation Period, and the distribution of a leaflet explaining the system to all clubs.

Following consultation, a motion to adopt the system (as amended) will go to the Council. If officially adopted, the system will complement the ranking system for selections and for segregation of classes in level-play events.

Simon Williams

11-7-17