

Nottingham Croquet Club – Occasional Guidance Paper – Half and Full lawns

We have to deal with many uncertainties in the 2021 season, particularly around the CoViD-19 pandemic and any lockdowns or easing of restrictions, and the effect they may have on demand for our facilities. One factor which is less uncertain is that the west lawns will not be ready for play for at least the first part of the season. We hope they will be ready for the Annual tournament in August but we have to plan for the possibility that they may not be ready for club play until 2022.

Therefore for at least the first part of 2021 lawn space will be under pressure at times. Part of our strategy to share our facilities among members will include increased use of half lawns. Plans are tentative at the moment but we may have lawns 2 & 3 marked out and equipped for normal use as half lawns¹ (but reinstated as full lawns for certain tournaments and matches). These lawns will be particularly useful for coaching (at all or most levels), for Short Croquet, for individual practice, for members – particularly older or less muscular members – who find certain strokes difficult on a full lawn especially in wet conditions, for social groups, and for anyone who chooses to play on those lawns or is willing to allow other members who need them more to use the full sized lawns.

For anyone who has always played on 35 yard lawns, it's worth noting that croquet (both AC and GC) on a 28 yard lawn has a lot to offer. We commend everyone to try it.

Attached are some hints for adapting from 35 yards lawns to 28 yard lawns, and vice versa.

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¹ The hoop positions on the half sized lawns may be slightly different to previous seasons, in accordance with latest guidance from the Croquet Association.

Nottingham Croquet Club – Occasional Guidance Paper #2 – Half and Full lawns

Adapting to 28 yard lawns

Golf Croquet

Play around hoops is much the same as on a 35 yard lawn. The main difference will be that clearances from boundaries will often be from less far away and therefore more likely to succeed. (For instance if on the first turn blue gets dead in front of hoop 1, red and yellow will have two 15-yard shots to clear it, rather than two 21-yard shots). This will affect tactics. Entry level players may learn some Intermediate tactics; Intermediate players may learn Advanced tactics, and Advanced players may learn some Elite tactics. We hope this will be interesting and enjoyable.

Association Croquet

Hit-ins will be shorter on average and breaks easier to sustain. Note that the angles and proportions are slightly different, not just the scale. Players who habitually do familiar large croquet strokes (e.g. to hoops 2 & 3 from a bit north of hoop 1) from memory may tend to over-hit such strokes. You have to think “from here to there and there” rather than “from just north of H1 to H2 and H3”. The other thing to notice is that there is more wiring available, and more often a hoop is in the way of a stroke you want to make. So after running a hoop, before your next roquet it’s worth checking whether you need to rush the reception ball somewhere to give it a clear line to where you want to send it. Because of smaller scale, ultra-defensive “Aunt Emma” strategies are less effective. These differences keep you on your toes and affect tactics a bit, hopefully in a stimulating and enjoyable way.

Short Croquet

This lawn size is the natural environment for SC. For those who don’t know, SC is really good fun; it’s rather like AC but with different rules for wiring lifts, and requirements for mandatory peels for low handicap players.

Adapting to 35 yard lawns

Golf Croquet

Play around hoops is much the same as on a 28 yard lawn. The main difference will be that many strokes are at longer range, and therefore clearances from distant boundaries are mainly the province of elite players. Strokes to take position from afar or to run an odd numbered hoop and get into position for the next hoop require more accuracy of touch (and a bit more energy).

Association Croquet

If you have never played on 35 yard lawns then some of the larger split shots will take some practice. (A rule of thumb is that if you can play successful 3-ball breaks on a half lawn then you can probably play successful 4-ball breaks on a full lawn). If lawns are slow or wet, some of the larger split shots may be too difficult for some players to attempt. Hit-ins will be further and rarer on average and breakdowns during breaks more frequent.

Short Croquet

Short Croquet is never played on 35 yard lawns.

When to use which lawn format

For club play we hope members will fluently choose either format according to lawn availability, personal preferences and consideration for others. When lawn capacity is limited (as it will be in 2021 until the western lawns are fully available) we would like all coaching sessions, from Beginner to Advanced and maybe even Elite, and including Juniors, to use half lawns. Beginners are encouraged to continue using half lawns for at least their first season. If beginners are keen to move to full sized lawns for AC, a rough guideline is that if you can play a reasonable 3-ball break on a half lawn then you may be ready. Most club competitions will generally be played on full lawns except when both players agree to a half lawn, but some club competitions may be designated as half lawns. Anyone who is about to play in a CA tournament or represent the club in a match on full sized lawns is encouraged to play club games or practice on full sized lawns, and we may find a way to give them priority. For other practice sessions we encourage half sized lawns except possibly for "Elite" players (scratch or below in AC or GC).

Some AC players on half lawns may like to experiment to see if a best-of-three 14-point (or 14-point advanced) is more enjoyable and engaging than a 26-point game.

Handicaps for smaller lawn sizes

In GC, there is currently no adjustment to bisques depending on the lawn size.

For AC, this table <https://www.croquet.org.uk/?p=games/association/handicapping/SmallLawns> defines the adjustment in number of bisques.

SC has its own handicapping system which applies specifically to half sized lawns.

Double banking on 28 yard lawns

It is possible to double bank on half lawns (if/when lockdown rules permit) but there will be more occasions when the 2 games interact, so it is preferable to double bank on a full sized lawn than on a half sized one.

Coaching on 28 yard lawns

Most theory is arguably easier to teach on a half sized lawn as there is less walking involved and it is easier to see the positions of distant balls. The vast majority of strokes can be practiced too, with a little improvisation from the coach. Teaching / practicing advanced AC whole-break manoeuvres such as peeling breaks will involve easier strokes than on a full sized lawn, which has the benefit of building up confidence while the theory is learned, but at some point the player will need to practice it on a full lawn.