

Croquet competition formats

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Introduction: Croquet competitions can be played in a number of formats, some familiar from other sports, one or two unique to croquet. This note describes how they work. It must be borne in mind that additional conditions/restrictions (handicap play, handicap limits, level play, ladies only, gentlemen only, age limits) may be applied to any of these formats. At Compton only knockouts, draw & process and blocks are used for the internal competitions.

If you want to study the nitty gritty details of the various formats used more widely in croquet, see this section of the CA's tournament regulations:

<https://www.croquet.org.uk/?p=tournament/regulations#F>

Knockout: Probably the best known format. The names of all entrants are put into the proverbial hat, drawn out at random and entered on a result sheet; if the number of entrants is not a power of 2 (i.e. 4,8,16,32...) some players are given a bye into the second round. Play proceeds according to how the entrants are paired in each round. There may be single game matches or best-of-3 games in each round. Winners go on to play in the next round; losers take no further part in the competition. The format is easy to understand and produces a definitive winner.

Draw and Process: This form of competition, peculiar to croquet, is a variation on the knockout described above and is designed to give entrants more games while retaining the advantage of producing a definitive winner. **Two** result sheets are prepared: the first - the draw - is produced in exactly the manner described above for a knockout, again allocating byes if necessary; the second - the process - as the name suggests, processes (i.e. reorders) the players' names on a second result sheet according to the scheme set out in **CA Regulation F1d**, cunningly arranged to ensure that winning players who meet in the early rounds of the draw do not meet until the later rounds of the process. Players given byes in the draw do not generally get another in the process. Both sheets are then played out to a conclusion, each producing a unique winner. If different players win, they play an additional game to decide who wins the competition; if the same player wins on both sheets, she/he is the outright winner.

Block play: (also called "American blocks" or "Round robins" or "All-play-all") In the simplest form of this format each entrant plays all the other entrants in the block. In cases where the entry is large the players may be divided into two blocks in each of which each entrant plays all the other entrants in her/his block. In the case of a two block competition the winner is decided by means of a play off between the top two players in each block. In a "semi-final" the winner of each block plays the runner-up in the other block; the winners of these two games/matches then play each other for the trophy.

The winner of a block is the player who wins most games or best-of-3 matches. If two or more players are tied winners are decided as follows:

Tie-breaks: if there is a tie on games (AC) or best-of-three matches (GC)

- a) between two players, the winner is the winner of the game/match between them; or
- b) between more than two players, the winner is the player who has won most of the games/matches between the players in the tie; or if there is still a tie
- c) then, considering only the games/matches between the players in the tie, the winner is the player with the highest number of:
 - (i) (AC) net hoop points (sum of winning and losing margins);
 - (ii) (GC) net games (sum of winning and losing games);
 - (iii) or if there is still a tie
- d) criteria a), b) and c) will be applied successively until there is a unique winner.

Swiss format: This format is similar to that used in chess. It is best to have an even number of entrants. Its principal advantage is that all entrants continue to play in every round. To determine play in the first round players' names are drawn one by one from the hat and written in that order on a result sheet. The names are then paired (1v2, 3v4 ...) and the players play. At the completion of these games half the players will have one win and half one loss. For the second round the names of the winners are entered in the top half of the result sheet (maintaining the order of round one) and those of the losers similarly entered on the bottom half; the names are again paired and **everyone** continues to play. In subsequent rounds the same procedure is applied: winners migrate towards the top of the result sheet while losers migrate downwards; as far as possible games between players who have already met should be avoided. The number of rounds to be played is usually considered to be two more than the number that would be required for a knockout with the same number of entrants. With any luck, at this point one player should have emerged having won more games than anyone else; if this is not the case then some secondary criterion has to be applied to those tied on games (see above for ties in events played in blocks for some examples) or, if time permits, additional (possibly shortened) games can be played to decide the winner.

There are other varieties of the Swiss concept (often used for consolation events for those who have been knocked out of other events in a tournament) where the number of players participating changes from round to round - again see CA Regulations F4, F5 and F6 for details.

XY and XYZ formats: These are variations used to give opportunities for continuing play to entrants who lose in the early rounds of a single life knockout. The main competition, designated X, is drawn and played as described above. Players who lose their first match in the X are entered into another knockout in the same order they appeared in the X and that sheet is played to a conclusion (maybe for a minor trophy?). If numbers permit a third knockout, the Z, may be offered to players who have lost their first match in the Y and those who have lost their second match in the X. The names are entered on the result sheet in any order at the manager's discretion.

Summary:

- **Matches.** Single or best-of-3 games.
- **Knockout.** Single life; winners play on, losers drop out.
- **Draw & process.** Two lives, two knockout result sheets; winners play off.
- **Blocks.** All play all. Play-off(s) to determine winner if more than one block.
- **Swiss.** All play every round; players paired with opponents on same number of wins.
- **XY, XYZ.** Knockout (X) + knockout consolation competitions (Y,Z) for early losers.