

Effective March 27th a new version of the rules for GC comes into force. This 6th edition replaces the 5th edition (blue book) which was published in March 2019. The purpose of the changes is declared as:

- Improving the use of English and expanding the Glossary.
- Further alignment with the new AC Laws 7th edition.
- Reordering some rules, in particular to separate out issues related to double-banking, time-limited games, handicap play and Advantage play.
- A few actual rule changes.
- Minor amendments to clarify obscure situations and to improve guidance for referees.

From the above it should be clear that the majority of the changes are relatively cosmetic. However there are some things for players to note.

Notable Rule Changes

There are 2 things that all players need to understand and take on board:

- **The Start.** The side winning the toss is no longer obliged to play first. They may now choose to play second. There is probably no value in this in singles games but in doubles games some advantage can be had by being able to choose your partnership's playing order after you have seen that of the opponents.
- **Wrong Ball Play.** There is one important simplification to this complex rule. In the situation where a side plays (any ball) when it is not their side's turn to play, the remedy is now that the erroneous shot is simply annulled (i.e. treated as if it did not happen) and play continues with the non-offending side playing the correct ball in sequence. The non-offending side no longer has the previous options of leaving or replacing all balls moved and deciding with which of their balls to continue.

Refereeing Changes

The majority of the changes aimed at referees do not need to concern the average player but, if you are going to play in a match or tournament at which it is likely that a referee will be present, you will need to be aware of the following 3 points:

- **Wrong Hoop Play.** A referee may now intervene as soon as he / she sees that both sides are contesting the wrong hoop. Previously nobody (spectators, other players, referees) could intervene until the wrong hoop was actually run. That remains the case for spectators and players from other games.
- **Ball played into another at an angle.** Where two balls are close together but not touching, the striker needs to play at angle to avoid committing the fault of 'double-tap'. Previously the guidance to referees was to judge this on the basis of the angle of swing of the striker's mallet. This has been changed to judging it on the departure angle of the two balls. Specifically this should be more than 60 degrees if the balls were more than 4 mm apart, 90 degrees if they were less than 4 mm apart.
- **Adjudicating Uncertain Situations.** A new appendix summarises guidance on situations where it is extremely difficult to make a definitive decision. The one that occurs most frequently is deciding whether a ball has completed running a hoop or not. There is now a presumption that it has if the decision is borderline.

Further Information

If anyone wishes to study the changes in more detail follow this link to the CA website: www.croquet.org.uk/?p=games/golf/rules/gcRules6th. There you find an explanation of the changes, a full navigable version of the new rules, and a further link to the World Croquet Federation website for a complete comparison between the 5th and 6th editions.

If you wish to have your own copy of the new Rule Book (red) it should be available to purchase from the CA online shop close to the end of this month.

I will be holding a few short (around 15 minute) explanation sessions at the start of some of the Wednesday Club Days early in the new season.

Keith Southern
GC Referee