



Cammeray Croquet Club

<http://www.cammeray-croquet.org.au>

February Newsletter

Annual General Meeting

The AGM was conducted with the usual efficiency, being concluded in around half an hour. The new President is Michael Strickland, and Margaret O'Brien was the new member elected to the Committee. The Committee consists of:

Michael Strickland (President), Joanne Brown (Vice President), Mike Hughes (treasurer), Warren Yates (secretary), Rob Barrie, Mary Goldsack, Margaret O'Brien (housekeeper), Ian Lucas, Gail Parrott, Alan Walsh.

Sue Nicholas has volunteered to be Assistant Secretary.

The Return of Stricko

At the Club AGM on 8th February, Michael Strickland was elected President, a position he occupied a few years ago – from 2016 to 2019.



Your editor caught up with him not long after the Meeting.

NH So, you've come back for more?

MS Well, yes. But I am not the first person to do that. You had made a return, back in 2008, I think, and that was after an even shorter 'rest'!

NH True. But I did come back for only one year. Are you thinking of staying for a full three years?

MS I haven't put any limit on my stay, although the members may do! But there are things I would like to achieve which may well take a fair bit of that time.

NH So, what are you hoping to achieve?

MS Well, sadly, the Council have made it clear that we cannot expect any renovation or repainting of the clubhouse soon. Although, if they succeed in getting their proposed rate rises through, we may get some attention. But until that happens, we can just be very thankful that the Council ground staff are still able to put so much time and effort into our lawns.

NH And do you have any plans in the meantime?

MS It has occurred to me that, even if we can't get the Council to do their bit, there is still plenty that we can do ourselves. I have plans to restore the Honour Boards, some of which are sadly neglected, and a

few of which could safely be removed, or even re-used. And, alongside the Life Members board, I would like to put up a few photos of some of those who are honoured there. I have also sought a quote for a Mallet Rack to go in the clubhouse, now that we have a little more room.

NH Oh, good.

MS And I would very much like to organise a 'working bee' sometime in the Autumn.

Technically, the seats and shelters around our lawns are the Council's responsibility, but we have in the past given them a lick of paint, and some of them are looking a bit tired! (Not the ones that I painted, of course!)

NH And, apart from the clubhouse and grounds?

MS Before we move on, can I just say that I am constantly surprised and saddened by the amount of litter that finds its way onto our premises. This is invariably left by 'outsiders' – people who have been using the football field, or is blown across from the tennis courts. But why would any self-respecting member of the club ignore it? We do have bins by the gate, but I have it in mind to put one or two quite unobtrusive receptacles around the lawns!

NH I can quite understand.

MS And, having got that of my chest, I shall move on and say that I am keen to resurrect the sort of Social Days we used to run before Covid changed everything. In those days, we would set aside any fifth Sunday in a month, for a few social or 'fun' games, and a spot of lunch. I am pleased to say that we can expect the first such event on Sunday 30th March. And we shall particularly want to involve those who have joined us in recent times, and who may not have met many other members at all.

NH Anything else?

MS Well, now that we have a full set of new batteries for it, I thought we should have some further instruction in the use of the Defibrillator. So, we shall be offering this at the social day on 30th March. And I should add that Julian Todd, of BackVintage fame, is back from his European sabbatical, and back in a new wine business. He has already indicated a willingness to come along to one of our social days later in the year, with the usual generous sample tastings of his new products.

NH And anything that may take you three years?

MS Well, apart from getting the clubhouse repaired and painted, although I hope it won't take nearly that long, there is one matter, which I am quietly pursuing. But I cannot say anything more at this stage. And it may well be quite a while before I can. Patience is the operative word!

NH Sounds interesting.

MS Mmmm.

NSW 3 & Under Singles **by Jo Brown**



Canberra Croquet Club, with Mike Gidding, Stephen Pearce and Paul Skvorc

The NSW AC 3 & Under Singles was held in Canberra on the weekend of 1 and 2 February. This tournament was originally established to give the NSW AC Eire Cup team some practice against quality players in the

lead up to the interstate tournament in March each year. All State team members played in the tournament, including Cammeray's Alison Sharpe, Jo Brown and Paul Skvorc. Cammeray's Mike Hughes and James Carlisle also played.

This year, the competition was fierce. The field of 19 was particularly strong and too big for the 3 lawns at the Canberra Croquet Club, so Queanbeyan Croquet Club came to the rescue, providing an additional lawn, and an extra session of 6 games was played on Friday night at Canberra thanks to daylight savings.

Three blocks of 5 played at Canberra and a block of 4 played at Queanbeyan, all qualifying block games were completed by the end of play on Saturday. Alison won her block, James came second in his block, Jo and Mike came third in their blocks, and Paul came 4th in his block.

On Sunday, the top two in each block played in an XZ knock-out, 3rd place-getters went to Queanbeyan to play in a Y knock-out, 4th places played the W and the three 5th places played in a plate block.

The winners were -

Plate - Ted Woodley, Chatswood

W - Tim Murphy, Canberra, by one hoop over Paul Skvorc, Cooks River & Cammeray

Y - Kerri-Ann Organ, Canberra. Cammeray's Mike Hughes and Jo Brown played off for 3rd and 4th in the Y, Mike getting up for 3rd.

Z - Stephen Richards, Canberra, beating Alison Sharpe, Mosman & Cammeray, in the Z final

X - Mike Gidding, Ballina, beating Trevor Bassett, Cooks River, for his second win of this tournament in consecutive years.

The hospitality at Canberra and Queanbeyan was top notch and, despite the fierce competition on the lawns, the atmosphere off the lawns was, as always, fun and friendly.



Mike Gidding



Mike Hughes



James Carlisle

Upcoming Tournaments

22-23 February: 5 and under mixed doubles – Jo Brown, Peter and Rosie Landrebe, James Carlisle

8-11 March: Australia Men's and Women's Singles – Jo Brown

12-16 March: Eire Cup (matches between state teams) – Alison Sharpe, Jo Brown

Muscle Memory And Croquet

by Neil Hardie

When an experienced person plays croquet, they do not have to think about how to play each shot. When they have decided what kind of shot to play, the body remembers how to play the shot. This is called 'muscle memory', but it is not the muscles that 'remember' how to play the shot - it is the brain, which sends appropriate signals to the muscles to execute the shot.

This 'muscle memory' is developed by regular practice. If you have played a particular shot often enough, it gets stored in the neurons and synapses of the brain. As the shot is played more often, the relevant neural pathways in the brain get faster and more efficient, and easier to activate.

'When a new skill or task is first learnt, the brain begins to create new neural pathways. These pathways connect regions involved in motor planning and execution. The primary motor cortex is a key player in initiating and controlling voluntary movements ... Learning involves strengthening the connections (synapses) between neurons. As movements are practiced, these synaptic connections become more efficient, allowing signals to travel more quickly and reliably along the neural pathways ... With repeated practice, the neural pathways become more insulated with myelin, a fatty substance that speeds up the transmission of signals. Thicker myelin sheaths enhance the efficiency of communication between neurons, allowing for smoother and faster execution of movements' (www.scienceforsport.com/muscle-memory/)

When you are relying on muscle memory, you do not have to decide how to hold the mallet, or how to swing it – that is done for you. You need to visualize the shot itself (i.e. where the ball or balls are going to go), line the mallet up accurately, and watch the striker's ball as you play the shot.

Having muscle memory makes playing croquet much easier.

Developing Muscle Memory

The main mechanism for developing muscle memory is playing the same shot many times until you are confident that you can do it competently. That is why sensible practice is so important. However, a recent study (*June 8 issue of Cell Reports*) has discovered that continuous practice for a long time is less effective than practising, taking a break, and then coming back to practise more. The study found that *'New research monitoring brain activity reveals that the same neural networks that are coordinately activated during a practice session automatically replay the same sequence mentally during the breaks between repetitions. This accounts for why interspersing short breaks between repetitions encodes skill memories much better than doggedly repeating the same number of practice sessions back-to-back'*.

In combination with physical practice, playing through a practice session in your mind also helps the muscle memory. The great cellist YoY o Ma said: *'Practicing is not only playing your instrument, either by yourself or rehearsing with others - it also includes imagining yourself practicing. Your brain forms the same neural connections and muscle memory whether you are imagining the task or actually doing it'*. Reg Bamford (multiple croquet world champion) told us that one of his practice sequences is lying in bed and imagining playing a break.

Choking

Nearly all good sports players have experienced 'choking' when all the skills they have developed vanish, and the simplest actions become difficult. (Note that this is different from the case when you have problems with a particular shot (e.g. hoop running), which is usually caused by a technical issue.)

Choking probably occurs when the muscle memory fails to activate. Most players respond by concentrating hard on how to play the shot; but for experienced players, this is something that they have not done for years, and it reduces them to beginner status. The solution is to try and re-activate the muscle memory, not replace it. This may involve a clear focus on visualisation of the shot, and trying to relax so the brain can take over.

(see the excellent book 'Bounce' by Matthew Syed 2010 – Chapter 6 on choking p.168-186)