

Dear WCF Member Association,

The WCFMC is proposing to hold a new World Championship in Association Croquet for Women only.

Before approving this event WCF would like to know the following:

**Do you have any comments you wish to make for the WCF Management Committee regarding this proposed tournament prior to them making a final decision?**

**Please reply as soon as possible and no later than 22nd March 2010.**

Please note all responses will be made public on via the WCF web site.

Regards

Brian Storey  
WCF Secretary-General  
8<sup>th</sup> March 2010.

## **Responses to the Consultation:**

### **Belgium**

The Croquet Federation of Belgium has no objection to this proposal.

### **England**

I am writing on behalf of the CA to reply to the consultation on a proposed Women's Association Croquet World Championship. We have discussed this in the CA International Committee and I have got comments from all of the top 10 British women players. Our views are as follows:

- 1) A clear majority of the top British women players are not in favour of a women-only world championship, mainly because they prefer playing in mixed events or because they want women and men to be treated equally in croquet.
- 2) Two or three women players are keen on the idea, and would like to play in a women's world championship if it were at a convenient time for them.
- 3) The CA actively promotes croquet on the basis that men and women play on equal terms. Many players value this aspect of croquet. If there were a separate World Championship just for women, that would not sit well with our claim.
- 4) Very few women choose to play in the British Women's Championship (only 4 entries in each of the last 4 years) and the Women's selection events are no longer held for lack of interest.
- 5) The CA is unlikely to host such an event given that it is already hosting a lot of international events and is struggling to find clubs to host all its own events, although there may be willing hosts elsewhere in the world.
- 6) The Golf croquet women's worlds is perhaps a different situation, because Egypt is the main GC force, and being a Muslim country it has very different cultural reasons for wanting separate events for women, which do not apply in Association croquet.
- 7) Overall, we believe that such a big decision as introducing a new class of world championship should be discussed at a WCF Council meeting. We hope that this consultation will lead to a discussion at the meeting in August, including the broader picture of having a coherent schedule of all future world championships.

### **New Zealand**

New Zealand is willing to host the inaugural event.

New Zealand believes that a Women's AC Championships will be a positive addition to the international tournament programme.

We note that in New Zealand the attraction of playing in the women's GC World Championships has

been a driver in the general improvement in skills of our women GC players. Several of our young women players were given an opportunity to play at the women's GC worlds which they would not have received at the Open Worlds. This additional opportunity keeps their enthusiasm high, gives them targets to aim for and encourages others. We believe that a Women's AC World Championship will have the same effect within our AC ranks.

Repeated success in the Women's GC has also increased the visibility of croquet within the Government Sports Funding body in New Zealand.

### Scotland

1. Proposal for the WCF Over 50's World GC Championship
2. Consultation for the WCF Women's Association Croquet Championship

The SCA was initially intending on responding to the first championship proposal, but the consultation on the latter meant that it seemed sensible to respond to both simultaneously. Moreover, it is difficult to assess the proposals and consultations when it is unclear how many more Championships the WCF might propose.

The recent proposal and consultation seemed independent of one another being received separated by just a week apart. It would seem appropriate that both the proposal and consultation are simultaneously placed within the context of all the WCF World Championships in both AC and GC, taking account of:

- the WCF's overall objectives for the development and promotion of croquet;
- the ability of players to take part in so many championships when they have to take time off work and family and fund the expense themselves;
- the ability to schedule the championships evenly, avoiding clashes or near-clashes;
- the ability of the WCF to find host organisations;
- consideration of the financial structure of World Championships and whether the burden of hosting a championship is too much for an individual country.

In particular, there are concerns that:

- There are already too many World Championships (both AC and GC) as it is, with events occurring too frequently. In GC there is already the main championship, the Women's championship and the Under 21 championships. These events each occur roughly every two years. Indeed, in 2011 the main GC championship and the women's event are less than a month apart.
- It is arguable that there would be little overlap between the main championships and the "Over 50's" event. How many of the competitors at the last World GC champs were over 50?
- A major concern is that establishing an "Over 50's" event would tend to reinforce the public view that croquet is not a game for young people (i.e. a game for older generations), and therefore make it even more difficult to recruit young people in the game. Although there might be an argument that the fact that there is an Over 50's event in itself must mean that young people dominate the main event, the publicity around the event will of necessity focus on the age bias within the sport.

Despite these concerns, the **SCA is not against the proposed event**, but questions whether all WCF events have to have the title "World Championships". Perhaps if the event was renamed to something else (the Senior Championship, Masters, or whatever other sports might have come up with), that might help and it will avoid devaluing the title "World championship". The phrase "World Championship" should really be the *Champion of the World* and not conditional on a whole lot of other conditions. That said, the SCA sees justification for U21s (to promote the sport amongst young people) and Women's Golf.

### South Africa

"The South African Croquet Association do not wish to comment on the matter".

### Spain

No problem from our point of view.

### USA

I have, for a second time, canvassed the USCA's International Committee on this issue. And for the second time, the committee (of eleven) has indicated its opposition to the proposal by a clear majority. This committee includes two women and both are also lukewarm to the proposal.

Our reasons are simple:

1. We are concerned about the dilution of the WCF's "world championship" brand and feel it may fall into a wash of secondary tournaments.
2. We do not support any sort of segregation in our sport, either age or gender. We believe world championships should be open to and contested by all, equally.

We offer this compromise position: Instead of creating a "WCF Women's AC World Championship," we suggest a "WCF Women's AC Open." This would further the goal of expanding croquet. It would also, at least semantically, protect the "world championship" brand.

I hope those who support the proposal in its current form will consider this compromise.

### Wales

Comments made by members of the Welsh CA include

"I would like to make the comment that the last thing croquet needs is more gender-specific events - men's or women's!

And yes, having a women's event without an associated male event is patronising and demeaning"

"I cannot believe that the WCF are trying to get another World Champs off the ground (that goes for the over 50s too which I believe they are seeking opinions too). To be fair however it is at least consistent with having a Womens GC Worlds and it would seem odd to have one and not the other (although of course you could chose to have neither).

Womens events it would make sense to make the existing event a Mens event. If women can play in both you get the problem that the better ones may not choose to play in the Womens thereby devaluing it or if not choice be unable to do so due to the cost (time and money) resulting in the same effect. The only way all these Worlds can exist and attract the strongest possible entry is if they have their own target playing group and there is no overlap between the groups. If the best player in the World becomes a woman u21 and she chooses to play in the AC and GC Worlds with her available time and money all the Womens and u21 events are immediately devalued by her absence."

"I am against a Women's Worlds because I think it is discriminatory and taking the sport back 80 years or so"

"I feel that there are becoming far too many events being called World Championship and it will really dilute the brand if they continue to proliferate. The WCF needs to put together a realistic timetable and one that does not allow similar Worlds to be less than 2 years, and preferably 3 years apart."

"Holding a Women's World Championship for development purposes means it is not a World Championship"

And from a lady member

"If I can improve a bit more, I'd certainly be interested in playing, but I wonder if the event might struggle as the British Women's Championship does? Last year, it was very disappointing to have only the 4 entrants with 3 of those being Cheltenham members.

Hopefully, with a bit more encouragement this year, there may be more entrants.

You can definitely put me down as "interested" though."

From another lady member

"I am very much against holding a Women's World Championship, because I think that croquet has always been built on equality and having a separate World Championship is a step backwards."