

Developing a gateball lifter

In 2011, Pat Lyle, a member of the Blue Mountains Croquet Club, wanted to play gateball but had difficulty bending and placing a ball for sparking. For a while, we placed the ball manually under Pat's foot but recognized this was not a long term solution.

To solve this problem, we obtained advice from an occupational therapist who drew our attention to the use of bowler's arms and lifters in lawn bowls.

As a result we have developed a gateball lifter that enables Pat to place the ball in the starting area and to collect and position balls for sparking. A series of pictures demonstrates how the lifter is used:



Ball being lifted into position for a spark



Lifter behind play during sparking



View of the prototype lifter from above



Close up of the prototype lifter

Pat enjoyed playing gateball at our club and expressed a wish to play in the Australian Gateball Championships in 2011. We were keen to support her. We had noted that Bowls Australia approved the use lifters in competition subject to certain conditions. (<http://www.bowlsaustralia.com.au/index.php?id=3029>) We were also aware that the Disability Discrimination Act obliges us to make "reasonable adjustments" to allow a

person with a disability to participate. Although we did not expect to have to use such processes we did note that the Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission also documents a number of instances where conciliation has been necessary when parties concerned have not been able to make an initial agreement about appropriate adjustments.

(http://www.hreoc.gov.au/disability_rights/decisions/conciliation/sport_conciliation.html)

The Blue Mountains club decided to write formally to the respective State and National Directors to ask for permission to use the lifter in competition. The response was positive and the conditions imposed were reasonable and in line with what the club had expected. Pat was asked to provide a medical certificate indicating why she needed to use the device and it was stressed that the normal rules of gateball would apply to her actions on the court.

We thought that ball touch fouls would be the most likely result from the use of the lifter especially if it fell and hit some balls. We stressed to Pat that it was her responsibility to ensure this did not happen.

As a result, we have been able to include a long term member in the club's venture into gateball. We have been encouraged by the supportive attitude of gateball administrators and players. Everyone has been really positive and has expressed interest in our device. Some have even gone as far as to assist Pat to pick up her lifter despite the fact that we warned her that gateball referees were ruthless sticklers for formality and that she was responsible for her own aid!

A second document shows how to make a simple lifter for under \$20