

BADMINTON.

Notes.

We learn with much regret that that fine exponent of the game, Mr. F. S. Collier (Guildford B.C.) has, on account of ill-health, been obliged to give up Badminton. We trust, however, his absence from the Badminton world will only be a temporary one.

The recent improvement in shuttlecocks is doing a great deal, we feel sure, to improve the standard of all-round play. At the beginning of last season there were only two firms who could supply a good shuttle, true in flight and weight, and properly adapted for first-class play; whereas this season several have put on the market shuttles which (if the quality is maintained) appear to be "just the thing." However, "the proof of the pudding is in the eating." It seems strange, however, that notwithstanding the large demand for shuttles, the majority, if not all, are manufactured in France, although the finishing touches (a most important item) are usually done in England.

The Crystal Palace club system of playing what is styled amongst players as the "pivot game," viz. one up and one back, is undoubtedly a capital one, and the more one sees it played the more one admires it, although to be effective the players must thoroughly understand it, as well as each other's play.

It would, however, be a difficult task to pick out the winner, if two sides were equally matched, the one playing the "pivot," the other the "side by side" game, although we are rather inclined to favour the former. We shall be pleased if devotees of either system will send us their views, which we shall be happy to print as far as space permits.

In a Gentlemen's match at Ealing on Oct. 21, Ealing (C.C.H.) defeated Crystal Palace by 10 matches to 6, the visitors not being quite at full strength, Messrs. Campbell and Hanson being notable absentees. For the winners Messrs. Martin and Massey won all their matches, while Messrs. Vidal and Prebble for the losers placed three out of four matches to the credit of their club.

Badminton in Eastbourne has taken a strong hold, this popular resort now boasting of several clubs. If Eastbourne undertakes anything, it does it well, so we shall look forward to seeing representatives from that town taking part in the "All England Tournament" in March next.

Two clubs, under the respective titles of Eastbourne B.C. and Meads B.C., are joining the Association—the former, under the energetic auspices of Mr. Percy Wehner, numbers 40 members (the limit) and is, both as regards members and play, we think, the stronger club. The latter club has a membership of 30, and plays in the Gymnasium, Meads, while the former plays in the St. Anne's Parish Room.

Although up to the present only local matches have taken place, we hope to have the pleasure of reporting matches with clubs outside Eastbourne, such as St. Leonard's, Hurstpierpoint, etc., etc.

If Devonshire Park opened their large hall for Badminton, what excellent courts would be available. If the manager saw his way to do this, we feel sure, judging from other halls, it would be a great success financially, while it would greatly improve the standard of play—a good hall being "half the battle."

The number of Badminton clubs on the affiliated list of the Association at the close of last season was sixty-five. Amongst new clubs which have joined recently are Staines, Surbiton, Surbiton (Claremont), Eastbourne, Bodmin, Torquay, Kensington-park, Aberdeen, Dartford, Exeter (Mount Radford), Exeter (The Twenty B.C.). Col Leir's Cheltenham club has also been added to the list. Other clubs at St. Andrews, Hitchin, South Dulwich and Hayward's Heath are likely to join. The total number of clubs is thus likely to exceed 80. On this the

members of the Association must congratulate themselves. The healthy state of affairs is greatly due to the untiring efforts of Mr. G. W. Vidal (Hon. Sec.), to whom the utmost praise must be accorded.

"The King's" (Southport) Badminton Club is fortunate in having a very spacious drill hall for its meetings. The hall measures 144 by 54 feet, and provides space for six courts. It is 30 ft. high and is lighted by electricity.

There is a strong probability that the next annual championship tournament will be held in the spacious central transept of the Crystal Palace about the middle of March. The annually increasing number of entries for the Association tournament makes it necessary to secure a more ample floor space than has hitherto been at the disposal of the committee. This want will be fully met at the Crystal Palace, where, if necessary, 8 to 10 courts can be provided without difficulty. There is also a growing desire on the part of competitors to extend the time allotted for the tournament from two to three or more days. The ideal division of time would perhaps be one day for Mixed Doubles, a second day for Gentlemen's and Ladies' Doubles, a third for Singles, or three days in all for the championship events, and a fourth and extra days for handicaps.

A tournament is to be held at Sutton Coldfield, on Nov. 30. The events include Ladies', Gentlemen's, and Mixed Handicap Doubles. Entries close on Nov. 9, and should be addressed to the Hon. Secretary, F. Rathbone, Esq., Ladywood, Sutton Coldfield, Warwickshire.

The annual Cheltenham Tournament will, we hear, again take place in the Winter Gardens, under Col. Leir's management on March 19 and 20 next.

Amongst Badminton players who have figured prominently and successfully at lawn tennis tournaments during the past season may be mentioned Miss E. Thomson (the holder of the Badminton championship for Ladies' Singles), Miss E. M. Stawell Brown, the holder (with Mr. Collier) of the Mixed Doubles Badminton championship, Miss Douglas, Mr. S. H. Smith, Mr. H. W. Davies (holder of the championship for Men's Singles), Mr. S. Hillier, Mr. C. H. Martin and Mr. A. D. Prebble.

Major S. S. C. Dolby, whose long connection with the Badminton Association was interrupted—temporarily, we hope—by his departure for South Africa nearly two years ago, is not likely, we hear, to return to England till two or three more years have passed.

THE BADMINTON ASSOCIATION.

The annual general meeting of the Badminton Association was held in London on April 12: 15 clubs sent delegates to attend the meeting, while ten other clubs availed themselves of the privilege of voting by proxy.

A proposal to add to the committee a member to be elected by the Irish Badminton Union was carried unanimously, as a fitting recognition of the valuable work done by that body in promoting and stimulating the game in Ireland. The voting for the new committee resulted as follows:—

President—P. Buckley, Esq., Guildford.

Members—G. W. Vidal, Esq., Crystal Palace; S. M. Massey, Esq., Ealing; J. H. E. Hart, Esq., Crystal Palace and Streatham; R. F. St. A. St. John, Esq., Ealing; Major-General G. R. Shakespear, Southsea; Ralph Watling, Esq., Great Yarmouth; E. Young, Esq., Blackheath; G. Love, Esq., Paignton; J. F. Stokes, Esq., Sandford (Elected by the Irish Badminton Union).

Hon. Secretary and Treasurer—G. W. Vidal, Esq., Torrington, Sydenham, London, S.E.

The most important business of the meeting was the consideration of the amendments relating to the shape and dimensions of the courts. In the preceding year Gen. G. R. Shakespear had definitely proposed to substitute a rectangular court for the "waisted" court hitherto adopted by the Association. At that time, however, the sense of the meeting was

clearly expressed that so radical a change should not be introduced without giving the fullest opportunity to each unit of the Association for making a full and practical trial of the rectangular court before pronouncing a final decision. The history of this question, the arguments *pro* and *con*, and the probable effects of the proposed amendments were discussed very fully in our issue of Nov. 7, 1900, and need not be repeated. It is sufficient to observe that the interval for reflection afforded by the action taken by the meeting of last year has now resulted in practical unanimity amongst Badminton players generally that the rectangular court is in every way preferable to the "waisted" court. We were not, therefore, surprised to learn that the main proposition was (with some slight modifications, to be presently noticed) adopted by a majority of 23 to 2 votes. The modifications referred to consist in the addition of a note to the diagram (A) providing that the posts may be placed either on the side boundary lines or at any distance not exceeding two feet *outside* the said lines, and a consequent amendment of Law 2 to the effect that the net shall be from 20 to 24 ft. in length, according to the position of the posts. General Shakespear's amendments contemplated a net of a *fixed* length of 24 feet. It was felt that the passing of a rigid law compelling the use of the longer net might prove a serious obstacle to clubs playing in buildings not exceeding 20 feet in width, and that so long as the net extends the full width of the court, viz., 20 feet, it was immaterial whether the posts were placed on or outside the side boundary lines.

As regards the Singles Court, the original proposal was also modified. According to Gen. Shakespear's diagram, inner side lines were provided, contracting the width of the court from 17 to 17 ft., and, as a consequence, the width of the service courts from 10 to 8½ ft., the length of the entire court, as well as of the service courts, remaining unaltered. After some discussion, it was unanimously decided to add a note to the diagram providing that, "in the Singles court the long service lines do not apply, the back boundary lines becoming the long service lines, and the median lines being produced to join the back boundary lines." In other words, the dimensions of the service courts in the Singles game will in future be 15½ by 8½ ft., while in the Doubles game they remain unaltered, viz., 13 by 10 ft. Having regard to the well-known advantage which the "striker out" has over the server in the Singles game, it would certainly have been a mistake to increase that advantage by contracting the area of the service courts for that game. The reduction in the *width* of the service courts for Singles, which follows as a necessary result of the adoption of the inner side lines, will thus be compensated for by the increased *length*.

Several minor amendments of the laws, which were rendered necessary by the abolition of the "waist," were carried as a matter of course. The essential feature of the rectangular court is that it becomes unnecessary to define the vertical lines above the posts, and that all disputes as to whether a shuttle passes inside or outside the posts are avoided, the only material point being whether, if not returned, it falls within or without the boundary lines of the courts.

The net results of the various amendments are embodied in the revised official edition of the laws and rules for 1901-02, published by Horace Cox. The new diagram A is intended to give the dimensions of both Doubles and Singles courts. It would, perhaps, have been a clearer guide to the marking of courts had separate diagrams for each court been included. The chief point to remember is that in marking a court for the Doubles game the inner side lines must be disregarded, and the long and short service lines drawn the full width of the court, viz., 20 ft. In the diagram accompanying the rules the portions of these lines between the outer and inner side lines have been somewhat faintly denoted, and we have heard doubts expressed as to whether the service courts in the Doubles game are intended to be 10 ft. or 8½ ft. wide. It is necessary, therefore, to repeat that the service lines in the Doubles court are in no way altered by the substitution of the rectangular plan, and that they must extend on each side to the outer side boundary lines.

The change in shape, of course, necessitates an alteration in the *height* of the posts. These must now be flush with the net, *i.e.*, 5 ft. 1 in. in height, and with no projections above them. As regards nets, any length between 20 and 24 ft. may be adopted, provided they are of the regulation depth and mesh. With suitable 5ft. lin. posts there is no difficulty in straining the net to a height of 5 ft. at the centre. It may be useful also to call attention to the regulation, providing

that the top of the net shall be edged with a three-inch white tape (not red tape) doubled and supported by a cord run through the tape. Many of the nets supplied by manufacturers have the cord run through the *net*, leaving a portion of the tape projecting limply from half an-inch to an inch or so above the cord. In such cases a very unnecessary element of luck is introduced, the shuttle frequently striking the tape above the cord, losing thereby all impetus, and feebly dropping over. The annoyance can be easily prevented by taking out the cord, and running it through the tape only, and not through the net as well.

It may be confidently anticipated that the rectangular court has come to stay, and that no further material changes will hereafter be found desirable as regards the dimensions of the Doubles court. We are not, however, so sure that the dimensions of the Singles court, as now laid down, will stand the test of practical experience. The object in narrowing the court for Singles, is admittedly to mitigate the severity of the game, and possibly to assimilate the rules as far as possible to those of lawn tennis. If the full width of the Doubles court in lawn tennis were used for Singles matches, "passing" would be so comparatively easy that the game would become almost entirely a monotonous back court competition. In Badminton, on the other hand, even with the wider court (20 ft.) "passing" is not nearly so simple a matter. This is due principally to the rapid destruction of the initial velocity of a shuttle as compared with a ball, and the consequently greater ease with which it can be overtaken before it drops. The severity of Badminton is due mainly to the sustained *physical force* necessary to keep an adversary at the back of the court, and prevent his obtaining position for successful attack. In a less degree it is due to the comparatively long rallies which result from the difficulty of placing a shuttle beyond the reach of an active adversary. The first cause can only be removed by reducing the length of the court. This remedy has been tried, and has been found to be, if not worse than the disease, at least unsatisfactory, and a serious handicap to good play. The alternative of reducing the width of the court has now to be tried, but we fear that its effect will be rather to prolong than diminish the average duration of the rallies, and thus add to rather than lessen the strain.

EALING (C.C.H.) v. CRYSTAL PALACE.

(GENTLEMEN'S MATCH.)

This match was played at Ealing on Monday evening, Oct. 21. The visitors, although a strong combination, were not quite at full strength. Owing to want of practice the various couples on both sides were not "well together;" nevertheless some very good matches were witnessed. Messrs. Martin and Massey (Ealing) were the only pair to win all their matches, this they did somewhat comfortably, while Messrs. Harrison and Huson, also of Ealing, backed up in a capital fashion the above couple, and placed three out of four matches to the credit of their club. Messrs. Ashhurst and Barnes (Ealing) owing to time could not finish all their sets, so it was arranged that they should give a "walk over" to Messrs. Vidal and Prebble (C.P.) Notwithstanding this was the first time Ashhurst and Barnes have played together, they secured a love game against Messrs. Elliott Smith and McMullen (C.P.). For the visitors Vidal and Prebble were in excellent form. The brothers Ransford, although starting well and playing a very strong game *versus* Martin and Massey, did not maintain their form until the end, as did the former couple. Mr. Hart, who is playing as strong a game as ever, played remarkably well.

C. H. Martin and S. M. Massey (Ealing) bt R. B. Ransford and L. Ransford (15.4, 10.13, 15.8); bt G. W. Vidal and A. D. Prebble (15.6, 12.15, 15.2); bt J. H. Hart and P. Boyd (15.2, 15.2); bt H. Elliot-Smith and McMullen (15.0, 15.4).

J. Pedder and A. V. Cowley (Ealing) lost to R. B. and L. Ransford (11.15, 5.15); lost to Vidal and Prebble (9.15, 12.15); bt Hart and Boyd (15.5, 15.12); bt H. Elliot-Smith and McMullen (15.2, 15.5).

E. Harrison and E. Huson (Ealing) bt R. B. and L. Ransford (15.4, 15.6); lost to Vidal and Prebble (15.9, 15.13, 9.15); bt Hart and Boyd (8.15, 15.5, 15.11); bt H. Elliot-Smith and McMullen (15.4, 15.3).

F. H. Ashhurst and O. Barnes (Ealing) lost to R. B. and L. Ransford (2.15, 10.15); lost to Vidal and Prebble (w.o.); lost to Hart and Boyd (5.15, 8.15); bt H. Elliot-Smith and McMullen (15.4, 15.0).