

Swingolf



Swingolf is a variant of golf created in 1982 by Laurent de Vilmorin. By inventing this sport, this golfer wanted to share his passion with as many people as possible for a reasonable cost. Swing golf is played on rustic grounds with a single three-faced club and a soft ball slightly bigger than a golf ball. A real gateway to golf, swingolf is a hobby and also a demanding sport. Inspired by the old popular games of crosse and mail, and golf, it developed into a simple game concept that is safe and accessible to everyone. The swingolf was born from the desire to share the love for golf with as many people as possible. To be played with simple material: only one three-faced club and a soft ball.

With golf this sport has 9 or 18 holes in common and a playing ground of several hectares. However, the holes in swingolf have a diameter of 30 cm.

Golf is the only sport where players carry a bag or use a trolley to transport a complete golf set on the playing field. In mail, crosse and swingolf, players only use one club.



I only compare the equipment of the games in which people play with only one double- or three-faced club: mail, crosse and swingolf.

The game of colf, I leave deliberately aside. Nearly all the colf images we know, are from winter scene paintings, where colvers play on the ice. The many painters produced these pictures to decorate the houses of the many prosperous people rather than to give a proper presentation of the colf game.



The clubs

Palemardiens (club and ball makers) protected the two faces of the hardwood cylinder of the mail club against damage from the impact of the ball by iron rings. The iron rings improved the balance of the club as well. The head had two strike faces; in this picture, the left side with the angle is for distance and lifting the ball, and the right one is for pushing the ball when reaching the target.

All modern crosse clubs have three iron parts welded together: the 'plat' (straight), the 'pic' (concave) and the socket to insert a straight shaft. The straight striking face is for distance playing, and the extremely concave face is for playing in the rough and difficult positions. With its two faces, the crosse club combines the properties of two golf clubs: the 'plat' represents a long iron, and the 'pic' or 'bec' equals the pitching wedge.





Photo <https://swingolfdelaroche.fr>

The club for swingolf has a one-piece aluminium head, hollow at the underside.

The face on the left is for hitting far (in golf, iron or wood 3), the one in the middle is for lifting the ball (iron 7), and the right one is for rolling the ball (putter).



The balls

The biggest ball, is the mail ball, made of fine boxwood, full of knots, well-dried and with a weight in relation to its format. The diameter could vary a lot. The knots appearing on the two sides of the ball must be as small as possible. After being stricken at a stone, the ball is 'played in' before being sold.

Top right: The ball used in the crosse game in France is different from the balls used in Belgium. The proliferation of choulettes of other materials, sizes and weights disturbed

many French crosseurs. They preferred safeguarding the original jeu de crosse as much as possible to be played with only one oval wooden ball, as played since time immemorial. After lengthy discussions with the 'progressives', who believe that you cannot stop progress, the 'Ligue régionale de crosse-golf' defined the standards of the choulette: an elliptical ball turned of hornbeam with a size of (approximately) 4.4 x 3.6 centimetres and a weight of 27 grams. The surface should consist of five flat spheres.

The golf ball at the bottom left figures as a reference for the size of the other balls.

The yellow swin ball is of a compact mousse, bigger and lighter than the golf ball. Therefore, the ball is more supple and less dangerous. Hit with the same strength, the swin ball reaches half the distance of a golf ball.

The swing



Photos:
Top left: illustration from
Lauthier's 'Nouvelles règles pour
le jeu de mail'
Top right: Sara-Kieboom-Nijs
Bottom left:
<https://seancochran.com>
Bottom right:
<https://www.swingolf.de>

With the four games described in our trilogy 'Games for Kings & Commoners – Colf Crosse Golf Mail' - swingolf has the same swing in common. One could say that the four games have more or less the same swing.

The mailer has nearly the same swing as the crosseur, who still plays the traditional crosse swing, not influenced by golf.

The lady swings like the golfer on the left (photo <https://seancochran.com>). Perhaps she used to be one ... having changed from golf to swingolf, where a round costs less time and money than a round of golf.

The putt



Photos:
 Top left: illustration from
 Lauthier's 'Nouvelles règles pour
 le jeu de mail'
 Top right: Geert Nijs
 Bottom left:
<https://www.19hul.dk>
 Bottom right: Sara Kieboom-Nijs

Whereas the swin swing looks like the one in golf, mail and crosse, the putting position in the games is different.

According to the illustration in Lauthier's book, the mail player uses only one hand to play the ball through the 'archet' (iron hoop). The player uses a so-called 'lève' (lofter), a club which disappeared in later years, as we know from the name of the caddies, first called 'porte-lève' (carrier of the lofter) and later 'porte-mail' (carrier of the mail club).


The positions for touching the goal in jeu de crosse and holing out in golf are very much alike.

The swingolf putt is quite different: the player lowers one hand on the shaft, and with the other hand, one keeps the club sort of parallel with the lowered arm.

Where to play



 *Parcours affilié Fédération*

 *Espace swin-golf ou terrain non affilié*

This map, published in January 2023 by the Sports Federation of Swingolf, shows the affiliated swingolf clubs in Europe, as well as the other places where one can play the game. The region stretches from Flensburg near the Danish border upto Andorra in the Pyrenees and from Brest in Brittany upto nearly Vienna in Austria.

This game does not seduce sports freaks in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, or the there existing clubs are not (yet) in contact with the federation.

Sources: <http://www.leswin.com>
<http://mguiheneuc.free.fr/jouerauswin/index.html>