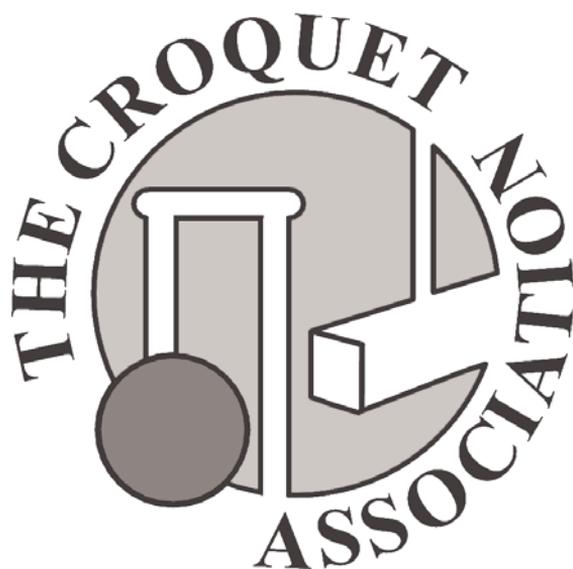


# Golf Croquet Coaching Manual

*Published By The Croquet Association*



## Foreword

This manual is intended as a reference guide and a framework for the coaching of Golf Croquet from beginners to improvers and aspiring tournament players. It has been produced by the Coaching Committee of The Croquet Association (CA) which is the governing body of the sport in England and Wales.

It is the intention of the CA that this manual should be freely available to all croquet coaches. To further that intent it is published in electronic format and may be freely downloaded from the CA web site ([www.croquet.org.uk](http://www.croquet.org.uk)). (Printed copies may be obtained from the CA shop for a small fee to cover costs). Copies may be made for private use but selling, altering the text in any way, or inclusion in whole or part in any other document is not permitted without the express permission of the CA. The course notes provided are not intended to be prescriptive, but to give the Coach a framework on which to develop a suitable lesson or give instruction to players at an elementary level through tried and tested methods.

I would like to express my thanks to the authors for their diligence in providing this guidance to Golf Coaches. The framework they have mapped out is based on considerable experience and is a result of discussion with some of the top players. They should be congratulated for their comprehensive coverage of the techniques and tactics that need to be coached at the elementary level. The CA is extremely grateful to the reviewers and proof readers who have freely given their time to scrutinise this advice so that this knowledge and experience can be made available to all coaches.

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June 2015

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Document Version 12 - June 2015

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# Introduction

It has long been appreciated that Golf Croquet coaches have lacked a manual on which to base their coaching sessions. This need has applied both to Club Coaches wishing to coach this very popular version of the game to their members and also to aspiring and qualified Golf Coaches who are keen to develop their skills away from their own clubs. This manual is an attempt to address this need and it is hoped that there will be numerous suggestions as to how it may be expanded and improved. Also the format of production is such that other courses may be added in the future with minimal expense.

Since 2000, the formal training of coaches has commenced with a Coaches' Training Course (CTC) which covers course planning and teaching techniques. Successful completion of this course qualifies a participant as a Club Coach once he has satisfied an Examining Coach of his fitness to coach within his own club after conducting at least five coaching sessions there.

This manual offers a Beginners' Course and an Improvers' Course which consists of revision and a more detailed study of strategy and tactics. The aim is to encourage competitive play at all levels.

Each of the courses assumes that the knowledge and techniques covered in previous courses are understood by those in attendance. However the lead coach can always decide to include topics which have been covered previously if thought to be beneficial.

It is anticipated that each Lesson will last about 1.5 hours, making it possible for each course comprising 4 Lessons to be completed in one day. However, this may be found to be too ambitious and a coach should feel free to adopt a pick and mix approach to topics in each Lesson, and select only those appropriate for his group of players. He may choose to do this himself or by prior consultation with group members. Some coaches may prefer to extend the course by coaching one Lesson at a time at a more leisurely pace over half a day or perhaps organising one Lesson each week for 4 weeks.

The manual is intended for qualified CA coaches and those who wish to qualify. It is not an ABC of how to play croquet; there are plenty of good books available for that purpose. In order to keep the manual to a reasonable length, much of the detail that coaches might be expected to know has been omitted. It is not, therefore, a manual for players to study by themselves, although many could benefit from its use.

Although the lessons are based upon group tuition over a defined timescale, parts of each programme could be adopted for a more leisurely approach or for individual tuition. In the latter case, coaches should beware of being too dogmatic. There are so many variables, particularly in playing croquet strokes, that analysis and guidance are more useful to players than insistence that they should imitate the coach. Coaching is a two-way process. The coach has to recognise the difficulties and the needs of the players and has to be able to adapt to those requirements; the player has to be willing to learn and, where necessary, to change his techniques.

Finally, we would like to thank Daphne Gaitley, Michael Hague and members of the CA Coaching Committee for proof reading, pointing out the errors and for providing suggestions for improvements. Any mistakes which remain are those of the authors alone.

## **Richard Keighley and John Cundell**

Richard Keighley and John Cundell are members of Leighton-Linslade Club formed in 2000. Richard is also a member of the Wingrave and Wrest Park Clubs. Both play regularly in the Regional Golf Croquet Leagues and in tournaments. Richard is a Golf Croquet Coach and an Examining Coach. He is the Southern Federation Coaching Officer and a member of the CA Coaching Committee. John is also a Golf Croquet Coach and was awarded a CA Diploma in 2011.

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## General Points Applicable To All Coaching

Have a clear idea in your mind of the points to be covered, the skills to be practised, and the activities to be carried out in the forthcoming lesson. Memory cards listing bullet points can be a useful aid to be slipped into a pocket.

Arrive in good time for the lesson and check that all necessary equipment is readily to hand. Try to spend some time practising the shots you intend to demonstrate, especially if you are coaching away from your home club. Demonstrating croquet strokes, for example, needs a little practice when the balls provided are not the same as those you are familiar with.

When the group is practising some activity, give each individual instruction according to the ability of the player. It may be tempting to spend more time with the better players, but each member of the group merits your full attention, even if progress seems negligible.

The size of the group has a bearing on the effectiveness of the tuition. Eight may be a convenient number to accommodate on a single lawn, but consider also the requirement for individual tuition. A student/coach ratio of 4 to 1 is probably ideal at the beginner level. You may benefit from the help of an assistant coach.

Ensure that all members of the group can see what you are demonstrating and can hear what you are saying. You may wish to position yourself in front of the group, or it may be better for each member to stand at one side. It depends on the specific point that you are trying to put across. Question the group to reassure yourself that they understand the points that you are making.

The group are not there to admire your playing prowess so keep your demonstrations to a minimum and ensure that there is sufficient opportunity for them to practise.

Your general manner as a coach is of overriding importance; be as patient and encouraging as you possibly can. The participants will expect to enjoy themselves, and you will have a major influence on the enjoyment that they get from the sessions.

Coaching should be an active process. Croquet coaching seems to present endless opportunities for talking about the game rather than doing it. Try to reduce talking and explanation to an absolute minimum and then only about the session subject. Any general croquet chat should be confined to midday or tea breaks.

Do not be too dogmatic - a friendly approach is preferable. In fact, try to inject a little humour into each Lesson.

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# Beginners

The Beginners' Course has been designed for complete beginners to the game but it can be adapted for near beginners. Ideally it is a course of four lessons, each lasting about half a day. However, it is appreciated that availability or time considerations may mean that a coach has to compress lessons into a shorter time frame. If so, it is recommended that a coach prepares each lesson in detail using a memory card to list the most important aspects to ensure that nothing is missed.

Always bear in mind that it is a mistake to burden beginners with too much information too quickly.

## General points

At the commencement of each Lesson, encourage participants to carry out simple warm up exercises. At the very least, invite them to swing both arms backwards and forwards in the manner of a pendulum. Exercise also aids concentration on what is to follow.

Assume that all participants have no knowledge at all of the game. There may be some who have played a little in the past but they are likely to be glad of the opportunity of starting afresh.

Ensure that there is some progression from one lesson to the next, but do not expect too much from the players. Some will advance fairly rapidly, most will not.

Make sure that any shot you demonstrate is well within your compass. There is no point in failing to run a hoop from two feet, when the shot can be demonstrated perfectly adequately from one foot. A promising learner can often be asked to demonstrate a shot, and this helps to draw people into the learning process.

Most beginners will be reluctant, in the early stages at any rate, to tell you that they have been unable to see, or hear, what you have been demonstrating. It is up to you to ensure, perhaps by careful questioning, that your demonstrations have been seen, and that your explanations have been heard and understood.

It is important to develop a questioning technique to assess whether players have grasped what you have told them. Your aim should be to obtain the maximum mental and physical involvement of your group.

Define any new terms that are introduced and repeat the definition each time that you use it until you are certain that its meaning has been assimilated. Repetition may seem monotonous to you, but there is much for beginners to learn, and this repetition aids the process.

Some reduction in the sound of your voice can be achieved by asking questions rather than making statements. When, for example, players are asked to indicate the ideal spot for a ball to be hit towards the next hoop, this draws them into thinking about the game and is more effective than simply telling them the appropriate answer.

The group members will soon depart to try other games if they do not enjoy the experience of learning the rudiments of croquet.

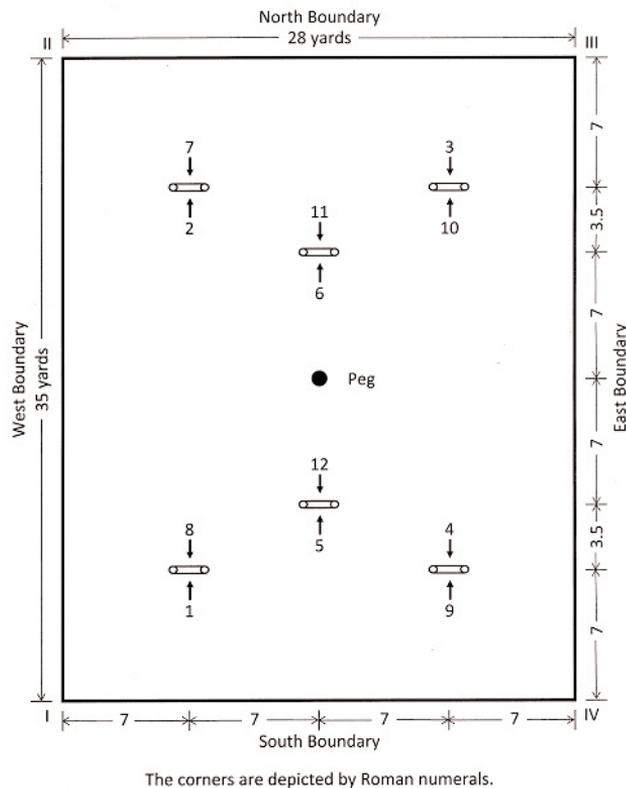
# Lesson One

## Equipment

Each player needs a mallet. Allow sufficient balls for at least one per player and a croquet court (or half court) for every four players. Hoops could be set a little generously at this stage.

## Explanation

Briefly explain the object of the game. Indicate the six hoops. Give names of the four boundaries.



**Figure 1. Golf Croquet Layout and Playing Route.**

## Stance, Grip and Swing

Say a few words about the design and weight of both mallet and ball. Try to allocate each participant with a mallet of suitable length.

Shoot a ball towards the peg and invite class members to form a circle around the peg and take it in turns to shoot a ball towards the peg. This will give an introduction for the feel of mallet on ball and will also bring home the difficulty of producing an accurate shot.

After a few minutes demonstrate a normal stance and explain the desirability of the following points:

- ◆ Grasp the mallet quite firmly;
- ◆ Place the mallet head a little behind the ball;
- ◆ Eyes looking down on the ball at a point along the line of swing -this will usually be at the back or centre of the ball;
- ◆ Keep the body as still as possible;
- ◆ Make a smooth, straight, rhythmic swing both backwards and forwards, hitting the ball at the bottom of the swing;
- ◆ Do not lift the head;
- ◆ Follow through with the mallet.

These last two points may be exaggerated in the demonstration, but not to excess.

Most players will adopt a centre-style stance - it should be explained that the position of the feet is a matter of individual preference, so long as a firm base is attained. However, a symmetric stance with the feet side by side, not too far apart, and parallel with the line of swing will help to keep the swing straight. It may well be necessary to demonstrate the side-style stance, as some players may not be comfortable using the centre-style.

Most players will take up the mallet with a grip that comes naturally. The question of what is a correct grip may not even arise from the players themselves. However, the generally recognised grips should be demonstrated. Opinions differ, but it is probably better to allow players to retain their natural grip unless adjustment is clearly desirable.



**Figure 2. The types of grip.**

## The Drive Shot

Stress to the group that the drive is both the basic and the most important shot.

Invite each player to stand back from his ball and swing his mallet as though he is hitting it. Check that the mallet is swinging in a true line and it is equidistant from each foot.

Request each player to move forward and place his mallet head just behind the ball. Then, keeping his eye on the ball, encourage him to swing the mallet back gently and to allow it to come forward and strike the ball.

Ensure that the player's head is kept down with his eyes on the ball until the stroke has been completed. A tip is to suggest that he counts to 2 before lifting his head to see the progress of his ball.

Pair up the group and request them to stand about 5 yards apart and hit balls to one another. When they can do this accurately they can extend the distance gradually until they are apart for almost the full length of the court.

Check that each member is adopting a firm stance and is following your advice.

Follow this activity by showing how the accuracy of aim can be improved by stalking the ball. Make sure your players understand what is meant by "stalking", and stress that this is a habit they need to adopt before each shot. Demonstrate by standing back several yards from your ball and then walk towards it along the line of the shot. Explain that this action means that your body will continue to face forwards and that if your shoulders are pointing in the right direction your swing should be directly towards the target.

A useful practice drill is to invite class members to gather round the peg again and to repeat the attempt to hit the peg with the aim of demonstrating that stalking improves accuracy. Reassure the members that, although this may at first seem an affectation, it is an effective method for improving aim which should become habitual. Repeat the activity of hitting balls to one another. The target can be the partner's feet. Give individual attention to each member.

### ***Exercise to improve accuracy:***

Set up 3 balls in a row with a gap of a foot between balls. Stalk and play a straight shot on 1 to hit 2 to hit 3. Increase distances between balls.



## **Running a Straight Hoop**

Place a ball in the jaws of a hoop and move it from side to side to show the small amount of play available, and to bring home the need for accuracy of aim.

Demonstrate the running of a straight hoop by placing the ball about one foot in front of the hoop and executing the same type of shot that has already been practised (Figures 3 and 4). The whole procedure, from stalking the ball to following through, may be slightly exaggerated. A pretence may be made of not knowing whether the ball has gone through, since the head will have been kept down for rather longer than necessary. A couple of examples will be enough, but emphasise that there is no need to hit the ball with great force; the ball should be stroked through the hoop with some follow through of the mallet. The group members may be surprised to see how far a one-pound ball will travel when hit gently by a three-pound mallet.

Group members pair up and run a ball to each other through a hoop. The ball should initially be placed about one foot from the hoop but as success is achieved the distance may be progressively lengthened. However, the class should be discouraged from trying to run hoops from more than a yard; explain that in play the aim is always to get close to a hoop. Check that each player is adopting the systematic procedure for running a hoop. Encourage the use of a slow, straight swing with a follow-through, and discourage those who, from the beginning, attempt very lengthy hoops or use brute force.

(If half a day has been allowed for this first lesson, this may be a convenient moment to take a break. After the break, the coach may wish to briefly revise how to run a straight hoop before proceeding to angled hoops).

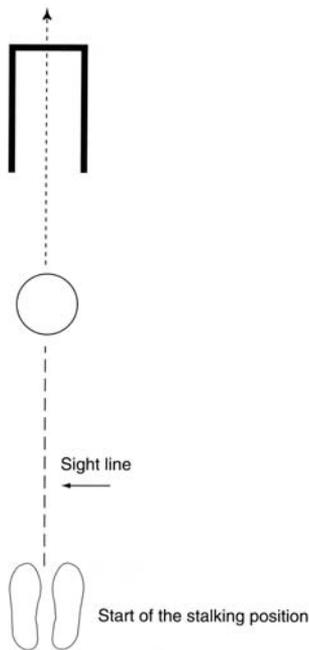
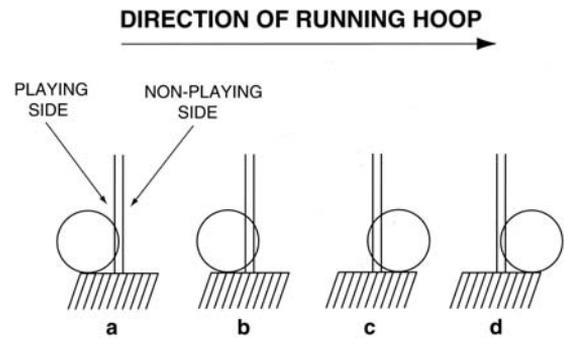


Figure 3. Running a straight hoop.



- a) Ball has not started to run the hoop.  
 b) Ball has started running the hoop.  
 c) Ball has not completed running the hoop.  
 d) Ball has completed running the hoop.

Figure 4. The ball running the hoop.

### Running an Angled Hoop

Place a ball about one foot from a hoop but slightly angled to it. Show that, if the ball hits the near upright, it will bounce away from the hoop but, if the ball hits the far upright, it is likely to be diverted through the hoop.

At this stage the question of whether a ball has or has not run a hoop will arise. Show, preferably with a piece of fine cord or a rubber band, the method for testing if a ball is through a hoop.

Demonstrate the running of a slightly angled hoop and ask for two or three players in succession to demonstrate similar shots, angled from either side of the hoop. At some time it will be seen that the ball hesitates in the jaws of the hoop, and then spins itself through. Point out that a smooth, gentle swing will help the ball to roll: if the ball is hit hard, it will skid along the ground.

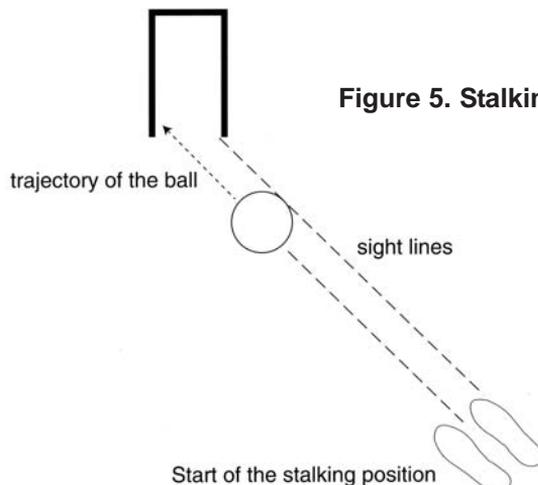


Figure 5. Stalking to run angled hoop.

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Invite players to practise from either side of the hoop but discourage them from attempting shots which are too angled at this stage.

Once again, encourage players to stalk the ball before striking it.

Group members pair up to run slightly angled hoops to each other from opposite sides of a hoop. Again, check that each player is adopting the systematic procedure. As confidence increases, the angle should become more pronounced.

### **Start of Game**

Explain that a game begins with the toss of a coin and the winner must start with the blue ball. He has no choice in the matter and he cannot elect to go second.

Balls are then played in the sequence of colours on the centre peg with each turn consisting of a single stroke. Blue (Bl) is partnered by the black (Bk) ball and red (R) is partnered by the yellow (Y) ball.

Encourage beginners to play a 13 point game (i.e., the first to score 7 points is the winner) pointing out that hoop 3 may be played again as the 13th and deciding hoop.

Explain that the inside of the white line is the boundary of the court, and that if more than half of the ball crosses the boundary line it is considered to be out of play and becomes an 'outside agency'. It is good practice to notice where a ball crosses the line, and to mark the spot with the mallet, but there is no need for the player to replace it on the line until his next turn unless requested to do so by his opponent. If the replaced ball is hit by a ball in play then the latter is positioned where it would otherwise have finished if the 'outside agency' had not been there.

Pair up the group and invite them to toss up and start the game with each ball being positioned inside the court within 0.9m (1 yard) of the corner nearest to hoop 4 (see Figure 1) and played towards hoop 1 (the blue hoop).

## Lesson Two

### Revision

At the start of this, and every lesson, ensure that each member of the course has from five to ten minutes freely knocking a ball on the lawn and practising the shots that have been dealt with previously. Encourage them to run the first six hoops in order. This warm-up period helps to give the feel of mallet on ball and the speed of the lawn. It will also give the coach an indication of those who have taken the lessons to heart and whether more extensive revision is needed.

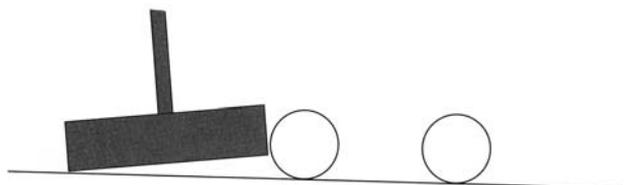
Emphasise the standard procedure for striking a ball in Lesson 1.

### The Stop Shot

Explain that one of the skills of croquet is to place both balls in specific positions and that, within limits, it is possible to control both their positions with one stroke.

Point out that you are about to demonstrate a shot which is relatively easy to achieve if the balls are 3ins to 6ins apart, still possible with good technique at up to a yard but much more difficult to accomplish with greater separation.

Demonstrate the stop shot that produces relatively little movement from the striker's ball. This is achieved by taking up the standard position and then deliberately standing back a couple of inches. For demonstration purposes this might be exaggerated initially, but as always some care needs to be taken with exaggeration. The hands should be towards the top of the mallet and the grip should be quite loose - just tight enough to stop the mallet slipping out of the hands. The swing should be quite normal, except that no attempt is made to follow through. The shot itself will need to be demonstrated three or four times, possibly with some slow motion action replay. You may wish to demonstrate the technique of stopping the shot by grounding the heel of the mallet at the moment of impact with the ball. Bear in mind that this not easily grasped and even less readily achieved, especially by beginners. All too often the result is a stab forwards that is entirely counter-productive, or a hit with the bottom bevel edge of the mallet. (For this reason, you may wish to postpone this to a later course.)



**Figure 6. The stop shot.**

*The player's feet are slightly further back than for the standard drive shot so that the mallet is tilted with the forward end slightly raised. The mallet must be stopped at the moment of impact with the ball.*

Invite individual members to practise the stop shot. A useful indication of the amount of follow-through can be given by placing a marker (the coach's finger is quite suitable) level with the back edge of the striker's ball before the shot is made, and noting how far forward the mallet head stops once the shot has been made. The ideal is for the mallet head to travel no distance at all beyond the marker. This stroke is not readily mastered by all players but some are fairly quickly able to achieve a ratio of 1:8 or even more.

In attempting this stroke during practice, some members will stop the mallet before contact

with the balls has been made. This gives a good opportunity to explain the law that deals with this situation. It also allows you to reinforce the message that croquet players normally act as their own referees, and that scrupulous honesty in observing the laws is expected.

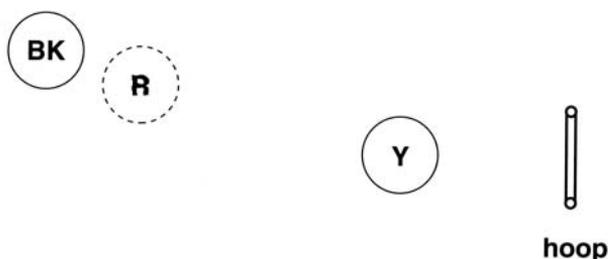
**(Break time? This may be a convenient time to break even if half the time allowed for the lesson has not elapsed.)**

## Introduction to Tactical Play

Explain that it is essential to consider the position of the next ball in sequence to be played before deciding what is the best course of action.

Demonstrate that, depending upon the position of all balls on the court, there may be a number of possibilities:

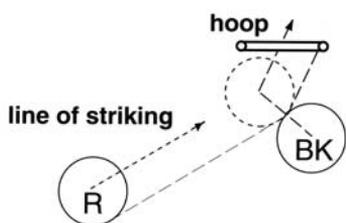
- ◆ The striker's ball may be in a good position to run the hoop, and he should be encouraged to try to do so. If his ball might be able to run the hoop but only with difficulty and the opponent ball which is next to play is better placed, he can remove the opponent ball, possibly with a stop shot, and hope to leave his ball in a better position for running the hoop later.
- ◆ The striker cannot run the hoop but his partner ball is in a good position to do so and needs protection from removal by the next opponent ball to play. The striker can remove the opponent ball with a stop shot, or he can place his ball between those of his partner and the opponent. The maximum blocking effect is obtained by rolling up close to, but not quite touching, the opponent ball.



**Figure 7. Positioning a ball.**

*Yellow ball (Y) is in the position to run the hoop so red (R) is played close to, but not touching black (BK) to give maximum blocking effect to prevent BK removing Y. With R close to BK, BK must play at an angle to avoid a double tap, which is a fault (see later). If R is nearer to Y, then BK has more options available.*

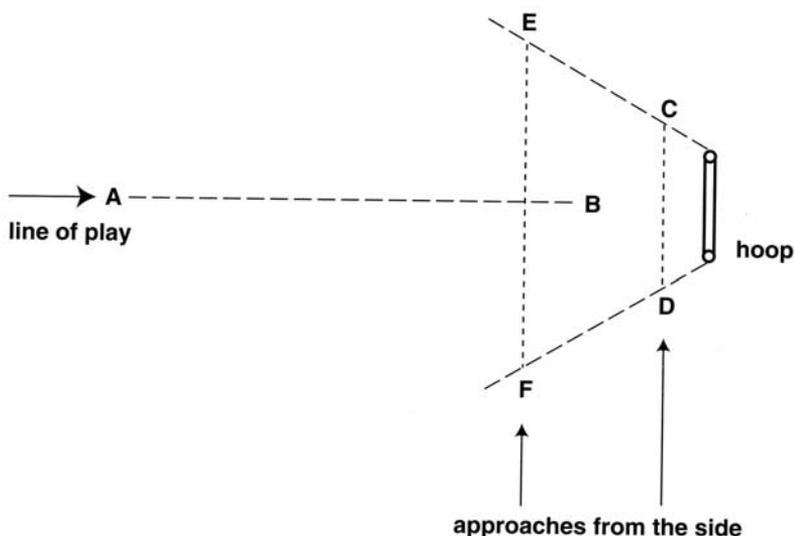
- ◆ The opponent ball which was played just before the striker's turn may be in a position to run the hoop. It may be best to leave this ball to be removed by his partner ball, whilst he plays his ball to an improved position.
- ◆ If no ball is in a good position to run the hoop, the striker can play to maximise his own or his partner's chances on the next turn.
- ◆ If a ball is close to the hoop, the striker may be able to run the hoop with an in-off shot. You can demonstrate the conditions under which this may be successful.



**Figure 8. An example of the in-off shot.**  
*Red plays off black and should be able to run the hoop without difficulty, despite the acute angle and, sometimes, the blocking of the hoop by Black.*

## Hoop Approaches

A player can often make use of the fact that a ball travelling along the line of play can be placed much more accurately in front of the hoop, even if the length is not right, than if it is played across the line of play where there is little margin for error.



**Figure 9. Hoop approaches.**

*Hoop approach along line of play to finish anywhere along A - B will give a good hoop position. Hoop approach from the side between C - D must be accurate to give a good hoop position, whereas less accuracy is needed if the ball is placed between E and F.*

Stress that it is a mistake for beginners to aim too close to the hoop when approaching from the side as the shot is often wasted by over- or under-shooting.

Set up balls in various positions approaching a hoop and discuss with the players what stroke they might play. Consider if there is more than one possibility and try them out.

End the lesson by playing a competitive doubles game, ensuring that playing partners discuss shots with each other and with the coach.

## Lesson Three

### Revision

Warm up exercise!

Start this lesson by practising the shots learned in the previous lesson. Remind players that they should be able to drive a ball accurately over several yards, but success or failure can be affected by the state of the court. On a good court a player should be able to shoot across the court on an accurate line, but the distance the ball travels will be affected by the surface of the court as well as by the strength of your stroke.

Encourage each player to review his striking position by thinking of the mallet as a pendulum and trying to use the weight of the mallet head in your shots, rather than using the effort of his body. A player may find that hands together near the top of the mallet is good for a long drive shot, but that separation of the hands gives greater accuracy on short shots. This is not necessarily the case, but players should endeavour to find their own best hand positions.

### The Roll

Point out that this shot is not often used in golf croquet, but that it can be very useful in some situations. Give examples such as promotion of a partner ball or running a hoop where an opponent's ball is in the jaws but has approached from the non-playing side. It can also be played when running a hoop as, if the striker's ball hits an upright instead of passing through cleanly, it will often rebound and the spin on the ball will help it claw its way through the hoop.

Request your player to stand forward over his ball and to hit slightly down on it with an exaggerated follow through. Explain that the aim is to impart extra spin to his ball, so after hitting another ball it will roll further than in a standard shot.



**Figure 10. The roll shot.**

*The player's feet are slightly further forward than for the standard drive shot so that the back of the mallet is raised to strike the ball just above its centre. One hand may be placed down the mallet handle and there is some follow-through.*

Do not attempt too much roll with a first demonstration. Start with the feet further forward than for the standard drive, perhaps with the toes level with the back edge of the striker's ball, still adopting the stance of mallet swung between the legs. It is equally important to demonstrate the tilting forward of the mallet shaft, achieved by moving the hands down the mallet, and the way the mallet hits down on the ball.

Many beginners will find it helpful to follow a simple procedure.

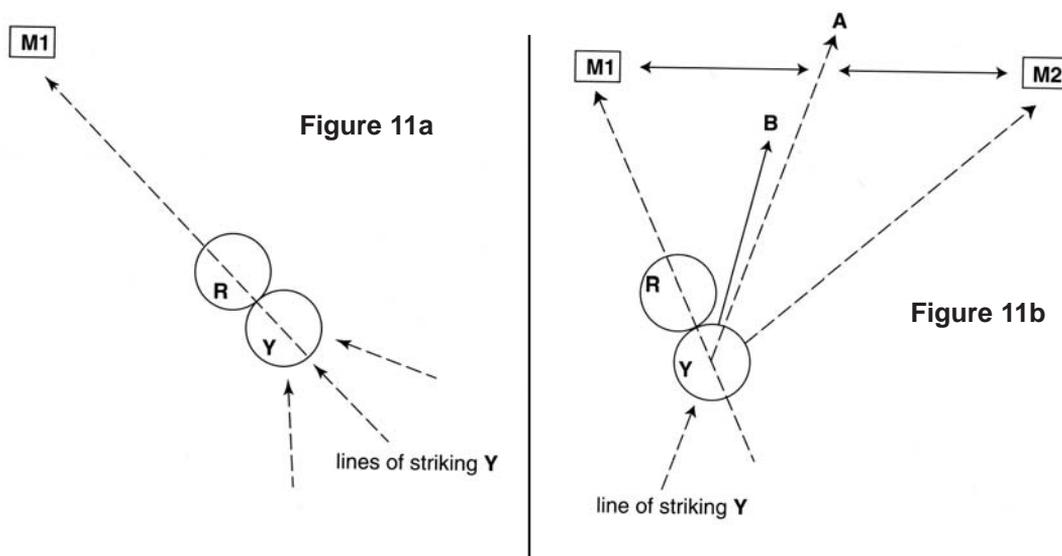
- ◆ Take up a normal stance;
- ◆ Deliberately move feet forward;
- ◆ Move the hands down the mallet shaft;
- ◆ Tilt mallet forward;
- ◆ Address a point on the ball that the mallet is to hit - this may entail some bending of the knees;

- ◆ Make the stroke with some follow-through.

Individual coaching during practice will be more necessary than usual. The position of hands and feet, the bending of the knees, the point of impact between mallet and ball, and the amount of follow-through will all need attention.

## Split Shots

Explain that, in golf croquet, it is not very usual to have to play a ball when it is actually touching another ball but it can occur and knowing how to deal with such a situation is important, see Fig 11a. Understanding angles and the mechanics of two ball shots will also help a player to understand what happens in a non-touching situation.



**Figure 11. The split shot with touching balls.**

- Regardless of striking direction on Y, R will always go towards marker 1 (M1) initially.
- To send Y to marker 2 (M2) Y must be struck either on line A which travels to the midpoint between the markers or on line B which bisects the angle between Y and the two markers. R will always travel towards M1 when the line of centres of R and Y passes through M1.

Set up two markers about 5 metres (5 yards) apart and a pair of touching balls about 2.5 metres (2.5 yards) from the marker M1. The aim is to get one ball to travel to each marker. Set up the balls and invite a player to play a shot which he thinks will do this. What happens? You will probably find that the split is much greater than you expected.

Explain that in order to achieve his aim he needs to set the two balls with their centres lined up towards the first marker M1. Request him to strike the rear ball towards any point which he chooses, and then to repeat the stroke towards a different point. In each case the forward ball travels towards marker M1, see Fig11b. It will be found that when two balls are touching, the forward ball will always tend to deviate slightly inwards and to the right towards marker M2. In the mirror image of the ball positions, the deviation will also be inwards but will be to the left. The amount of the deviation will depend on the amount of the split and could be up to 10 degrees with the angle shown in Fig 11b.

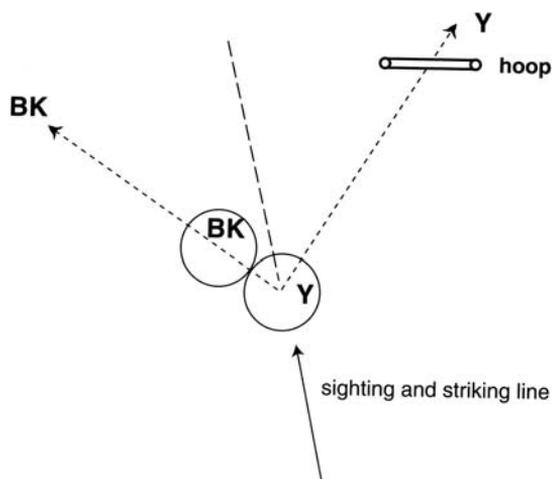
Explain that to get the rear ball to go to the second marker he needs to calculate at which point he should strike it. Two options are shown in Figure 11b; he can either strike on the line which bisects the angle between his ball and the markers or towards the midpoint of the

line which runs between the two markers. Neither calculation will always give him a perfect split, but they are both useful approximations.

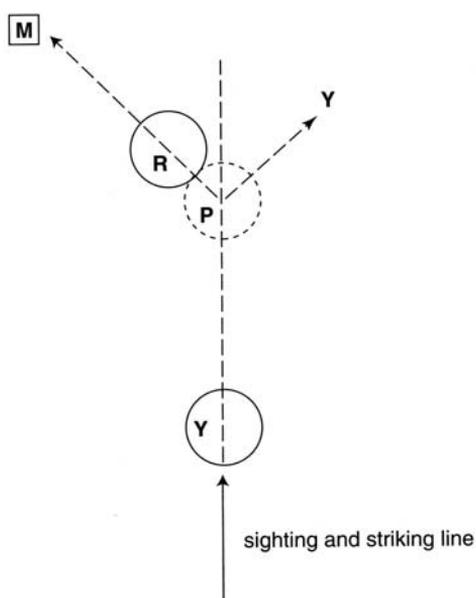
Encourage the player to practise this type of shot which enables him to place his ball where he wishes whilst sending his opponent's ball away. He should notice that as the angle between the line of centres and the line of aim increases, his ball travels further and the forward ball less far for the same strength of shot.

Make the player aware that the split shot may enable him to run a hoop to which his approach is blocked by an opponent ball. He should practise setting up two touching balls about 0.5 metre (0.5 yard) in front of, or slightly to one side of, the upright of a hoop and striking to get his ball through the hoop.

The players need to be made aware that within a game, the two balls are played from where they lie and cannot be moved.



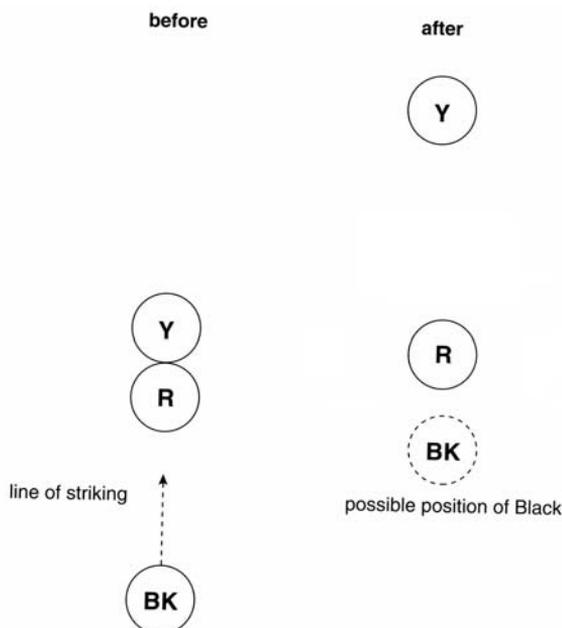
**Figure 12. The use of a split shot to obtain a good position or to run a hoop.**



**Figure 13. The split shot when the balls are not touching.**

*If R is to be sent to the marker (M) by Y, imagine a phantom ball (P) on the lines of the centres R and the marker. Strike Y to take the exact place of the phantom ball and R will travel to the marker.*

The next stage is for the player to consider what might happen when two balls are not touching. The forward ball will travel on the line running through the centres of the two balls at the point of contact. But how does he achieve the exact point of contact which he wants? It is helpful to imagine a 'phantom ball' sitting to the side of the forward ball and he will then be striking the centre of his ball to the centre of the phantom ball. A possible situation, with its result, is shown in Figure 13. The situation is complex and any results may not be as he hopes. When the player realises that all split shots can be taken as (i) a drive or (ii) a stop shot or (iii) a roll shot, he will understand that he can obtain an almost infinite range of results. He should not be too ambitious to succeed, but slowly build up his expertise over time.



**Figure 14. Three balls involved in one shot.**

*Black strikes Red which moves slightly forward, whilst Yellow travels well forward. Black can finish in a variety of positions depending on the type of shot used.*

Point out to the player that where two balls are in line with his ball which he strikes directly onto the two balls, the middle ball will move very little Figure 14. The forward ball will travel a good distance, but the final position of his own ball is difficult to calculate. It may climb over the middle ball or go off at an angle. However if the middle ball is struck slightly off-centre, using the concept of the phantom ball, then it will move further. In both situations the outcome can vary depending on the type of shot played.

(Break no later than this point in the lesson)

### Playing for the Next Hoop

Start a game, preferably in pairs, stating that you intend to demonstrate when it is appropriate to play to the next hoop even if the hoop being played has not yet been run.

If the opponent's ball is in the hoop, a player needs to consider if he can remove it or whether he should play on to the next hoop. He should not remove it if, by doing so, he allows his opponent's partner ball to run the hoop. He may remove the ball in the hoop if his ball is already on the far side of the hoop but if it is not, he may be able to send his partner

ball to the far side of the hoop so that his partner can remove the ball in the hoop. This is only a useful tactic if his opponent's partner ball cannot strike the hoop ball through the hoop.

If his opponent's ball has just started to run the hoop (Figures 3a and 3b) or nearly finished running it (Figure 3c), then the player may be able to remove it if he has a ball at a suitable angle at the side. He needs to make such shots with confidence and, particularly when playing on the far side of the hoop, with sufficient power to remove the hoop ball to a considerable distance.

## Offside Ball

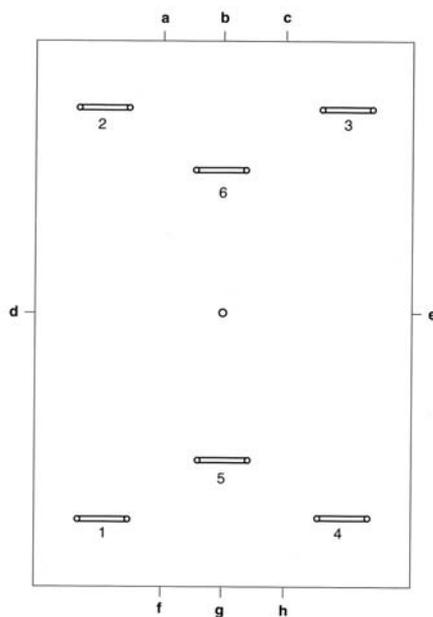
During the course of a game, you may wish to stop play to explain the half way rule.

Point out that, if a player considers that the ball in the hoop cannot be removed, then he is entitled to play for the next hoop, but must not proceed beyond the halfway line between the two hoops, beyond which the ball becomes offside when the hoop is run. Demonstrate where (Figure 15) the halfway lines are between all the pairs of hoops, especially between hoops 12 to hoop 13. (See also Figure 1 on p8 as a reminder to hoop numbers. Hoop 3/10 serves as a deciding hoop 13 in a 13 point game.)

You should also point out that there are exceptions to the offside rule which are set out in Rule 10(b) 1-4 of the WCF Rules (See p 40). The main ones are if the player's ball has reached the position after having contact with an opponent's ball, or as a result of the stroke just played. It is not then 'offside'. Remembering the difficulty of achieving a good hoop position when approaching across the line of play, stress that it is better to play towards the boundary between hoops 4 and 5, 6 and 7 etc. so that the player will have a better line of approach to the next hoop (Figure 9). A similar situation arises with the approach to hoop 13.

Emphasise that when a hoop has been run and all the balls have stopped, any ball beyond the halfway line which is 'offside' may be subject to a penalty. Explain that an offside ball is removed from its position on the court and played from either of the two penalty spots which are marked (d) and (e) on the side boundaries (Figure 15). Emphasise that the opponent is entitled to direct that the player's ball be removed to a penalty spot, and, importantly, to choose which one. A player should be wary of playing his ball before his opponent has given a direction for its removal and before the opponent has played himself. If this happens, the opponent may require the player to replay his stroke after all balls moved by his first stroke are replaced. (Rule 10(c) 2).

Emphasise that a ball which reached its position after hitting or being hit by an opponent's ball (even if that shot is a faulty stroke), cannot become an offside ball.



**Figure 15. Halfway Lines and Penalty Spots.**

*a to f is the halfway line between hoops 1 and 5, 2 and 6.  
c to h is the halfway line between hoops 3 and 6, 4 and 5.  
b to g is the halfway line between hoops 1 and 4, 2 and 3.  
d to e is the halfway line between hoops 1 and 2, 3 and 4  
and between 12 and 13.*

## Lesson Four

### Revision

#### Warm up!

Invite players to spend a short time practising strokes which they have learned in previous lessons. Encourage them to think about their body position to maximise the effectiveness of their shots with the minimum expenditure of energy.

#### Jump Shots

Mention of jump shots almost always causes amusement or even expressions of fear typified by someone saying "I can't do jump shots!" Your immediate response is to reassure them that everybody can achieve a jump shot with practice.

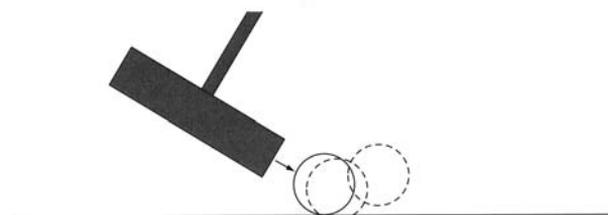
Next, move your group to outside the area of the court well away from any hoops.

Point out that jump shots have a number of uses in golf croquet. These include:

- ◆ To run a hoop from an acute angle where the ball is deflected through the hoop off the far upright, but high up, i.e., not at ground level. A player can then run hoops at more acute angles than is normally possible.
- ◆ To run a hoop which has an opponent ball in the jaws or between the hoop and the player's ball. However, stress that if the player's ball causes the ball in front of his to run or finish running the hoop, then that ball scores the hoop.
- ◆ To play towards a target (either a hoop or another ball) without promoting an opponent ball which is blocking the path.

Allocate plenty of time to demonstrate the jump shot. Demonstrate it by a step by step approach:-

- ◆ Stalk the ball and the target as if the obstacle is not there
- ◆ Then, line up your mallet with the ball as if to play a normal drive and move your feet forward so that they are on either side of the ball. This means that you are leaning forward, with the mallet handle sloping towards the target, Fig 16.



**Figure 16. The jump shot.**

*Stand well forward with the mallet head at approximately 45 degrees and hit down on the ball so that it is forced into the ground and rebounds into the air.*

- ◆ Strike the ball on the top surface at approximately  $45^\circ$  to the vertical with a sharp downward stroke and retract the mallet very smartly so as to avoid damage to the court and to avoid continued contact with the ball. With this stroke the ball should have been struck into the ground and rebounded upwards. If the downward and forward angle of striking the ball was correct, the ball will have had top-spin and hopefully it will have clawed its way through the hoop and over the obstruction and speeded up in its forward path.

Point out that this stroke may be more difficult on a wet lawn. Also, some players find that they can strike the ball in the same way by standing at the side of the ball, facing across the line of play, and making a 'chopping' movement with the mallet. It is sensible to demonstrate this alternative method.

You may need to supervise practice of this shot on a one-to-one basis. Invite each player to attempt a jump shot in order to jump over another ball. Only when this skill is mastered is it appropriate to encourage the use of jump shots in matchplay.

A tip from a coach is that if a player cannot rely on making successful jump shots during a game, it is best to keep a watchful eye on opponent balls and remove them when possible rather than trying and failing to jump his own ball.

## Striking Faults

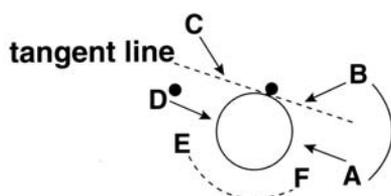
You must appreciate that you have a duty to contribute to the understanding of players of the long list of possible faults detailed in the Rules. There are a few to which beginners may be prone, but which they may not easily recognise. The following faults come in to this category and you may wish to concentrate on these initially:

### (a) Striking Face of the Mallet

Demonstrate that the only part of a mallet which is legitimately allowed to touch a ball is the end face and that deliberate use of the bevelled edge is not legal.

### (b) Crush Shot around Hoop

Take time to explain and demonstrate that when a ball is touching the upright of a hoop there is a danger of the mallet crushing the ball against the upright at the moment of impact. Point out that this is a fault as this would have steered the ball through the hoop illegally.



**Figure 17. Avoiding a crush shot, seen from above.**

*The ball is touching the upright of the hoop (● ●). The striking line can only be on the arc between A and B or from the direction C or D. Any striking line between E and F will result in a crush shot, which is a fault.*

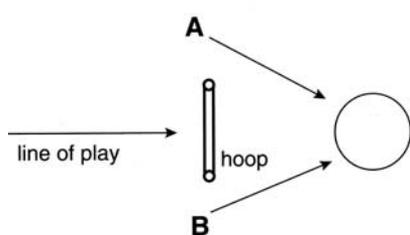
Make players aware that a ball that is very close (less than 4mm) to a hoop upright must be played away from that hoop so it does not touch it, Figure 17.

By means of demonstration, point out that if an attempt is made to run the hoop from this situation, the striker has to take care to avoid having his mallet in contact with his ball when

it hits the other upright and that this shot needs to be played as a sharp tap with rapid withdrawal of the mallet.

### **(c) Maintained Contact (Push or Pull Shots)**

You need to demonstrate that this fault occurs when a player maintains contact between the mallet and the ball in an attempt to steer the ball in other than a straight line or alternatively to accelerate the ball when the mallet back swing is limited. Show how the former may occur when a player is trying to make a hoop from too acute an angle and the latter when the player is trying to propel a ball that has only just cleared one hoop towards the next hoop. Under these latter circumstances, emphasise that it is better to hit away from the required direction of travel as shown in Figure 18.



**Figure 18. Avoiding a push or pull shot.**

*The ball has travelled through the hoop and stopped too close to it to allow a normal stroke to be played. There is a temptation to try and place the mallet between the hoop and the ball so that the ball can be hit directly to the next hoop.*

*Beginners should avoid this temptation which will almost certainly result in a push or pull shot. Instead they should play a drive well down the court in the direction of either of the arrows A or B.*

It is sensible to say that a maintained contact shot is usually recognized from the sound made by the contact between the ball and the mallet. It produces a prolonged sound whereas a clean shot gives a sharp 'clonk'.

State that Push shots occur when the striker is playing away from the body and pull shots where the mallet travels towards the body.

### **(d) 'Double Tap'**

You should demonstrate that a striking fault can also occur where two balls are close together. Show how, on striking, the striker's ball moves forward to the second ball but rebounds against the mallet giving a 'double tap' or hit which can be seen or heard. The striker has committed a 'crush'. Fast photography has shown that striking along the line of centres with two balls that are not touching but within 4mm (1/4in) or less will always be a fault. Emphasise that the striker has no option but to play away.

It is worth your while to explain that striking when balls are close but further apart than 4mm - say up to 4cms (2ins) - often causes a 'double tap' or 'crush' if the striker follows through during the stroke.

If the striker feels he can strike his ball with a very good shot stop so that no double tap occurs, it is advisable to have his shot watched by a third party.

If the striker decides to strike his ball at an angle, he should avoid playing at a very narrow angle. A practical tip for a coach to pass on is for a striker to align the centre line marked on the head of his mallet through the centre of his ball and missing the outside edge of the second ball.

### **Practice drill:**

Invite players to see how close they can allow balls to be in order to execute a very good

stop shot so that no "double tap" occurs. Suggest that they have the shot watched by a third party.

N.B. "WF Rules GC - 2014 (Appendix B) - For separations above 4mm, where contact is made along the line of centres, a double tap will have occurred if the ratio of front ball travel to back ball travel does not exceed 8:1, measured from the point of contact."

## Penalties For Faults

You should emphasise that the faults so far demonstrated by you are known as 'striking faults' which can only be committed from the time the striker's ball is struck by the mallet until the striker leaves his stance under control. You will stress that the penalty in all cases is that the opponent has the choice of allowing the balls to stay where they are or insist that they be replaced to where they were before the turn started. No hoop may be scored or run by the faulty stroke and the opponent continues play in the original sequence.

## Non-Striking Faults

It is suggested that you explain the difference between striking and non-striking faults emphasising that the latter usually involve accidental contact of a ball with a mallet or player. Use as an example a striker, whilst attempting to play a stroke, touches another ball with the mallet, his body or clothes, before hitting his own ball.

If the fault is noticed, the side involved loses its current turn, and the opponents can choose whether the balls are left where they are or replaced.

Damage to the court may be made by a mallet outside the time when a stroke is being played. If the damage requires repair, or if it interferes with the true running of the ball over it, then it is a fault and the player responsible loses his current turn.

## Playing a Wrong Ball

All coaches are strongly recommended to study *Rule 11 "Playing a Wrong Ball" in the 4th edition of the WCF Rules published in March 2014 and to note the helpful CA commentary and diagram.*

You will also find it helpful to begin by stressing that the correct ball is defined as the next ball in sequence even if the previous ball played was a wrong ball. You will also stress that no rule is broken until any player has noticed that a wrong ball has been played.

You must emphasise that singles and doubles are treated differently.

In Singles, explain and demonstrate that if the striker plays the partner ball (e.g., Blue plays Black instead of Blue) the opponent should stop play before the next turn. No points are scored and any balls moved are replaced and the striker then plays the correct ball. Point out that to avoid delay the opponent should stop play if he sees that the striker is about to play his partner ball as there is no penalty, but distinguish what happens if the striker plays an opponent's ball, namely that the full penalty defined below applies and that his opponent has no duty to forewarn in this case.

By way of comparison, explain that in doubles, any ball played out of sequence, other than a ball belonging to the striker's partner and played by him, will attract a full penalty if noticed.

Set up a demonstration in which 'out of sequence' play is stopped before the opponent has played his next ball. Emphasise that the full penalty applies and the opponent firstly chooses whether to leave any balls moved where they have stopped, or to have all balls replaced in the positions in which they were before the wrong ball was played. No points are scored. As the sequence has been broken the opponent may play either of his balls to start

a new sequence. Neither a referee or an opponent should stop play before a wrong ball is played except in singles when the striker is about to play his partner ball out of sequence. In singles and doubles, if a wrong ball is played but play goes back into sequence before the wrong ball is noticed and play is stopped, play continues in sequence with the last ball played and all hoops are scored.

All players, but especially beginners, find this a difficult rule to understand and you must expect to be patient when offering an explanation and demonstration of it.

### **Mishits**

Beginners may tend to mishit a ball. You should explain that if, when a player moves into position to play a stroke, his mallet accidentally touches the ball, then this is a stroke or a fault.

### **Courtesy on Court**

It is important to point out that each player needs to show consideration for the other players on court by keeping quiet and by moving as little as possible whilst the striker is addressing and hitting the ball. Stress that they must not stand, or move across, the line of vision of the striker or let their shadows fall anywhere between the ball being played and its intended target.

### **Stop and Start Game**

To put everything into practice you may decide to organise a game, which you will stop from time to time when an opportunity occurs to demonstrate the possibility of a fault being committed.

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## Improvers Course

**Bear in mind that all instructions are addressed to "you" as coach.**

There is no definition of an "improver" and your first task as coach is to discover the playing experience of those attending the course you propose to run. The best way of achieving this is to obviously to ask them prior to the course as your assessment will have a clear bearing on the design of the course by you.

It is important to plan the course in detail. Circulate all the coaches and assistants who will be involved in the running of the course with you. Prepare memory joggers cards for use on the day.

It is anticipated that most courses will be one day courses divided into four sessions of 1 to 1.5 hours. Inevitably you may have to adopt a pick-and-mix approach as you will be unable to cover all topics in one day.

However, a course could equally be run on two days with half a day for each lesson. The likelihood is that each lesson will not run exactly as set out below. Variables will include how quick on the uptake your players are and how quickly it will be possible to move from one topic to another.

The basic requirements are one lawn with two sets of balls per qualified coach per 4 players. If available, assistant coaches may be assigned to a lawn under the supervision of a qualified coach.

### Warming up

Before you begin a lesson, stress to your players how important it is to warm up before playing.

Chris Clarke recommends an exercise which can be carried out between car and clubhouse, or between clubhouse and court. Clench both fists tightly and then extend fingers as far as possible- repeat 6 times. This warms up tendons and muscles in hands and forearms and prevents injury.

Suggest that a player takes time to warm up on court before he plays a game, whether socially or in a match. Ideally, he will work out a short exercise routine for himself - it ought to include practice swinging, positional shots to find the pace of the court and long shots between hoops to learn where slopes are.

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## Lesson One

It is always wise to begin with revision of what the class will have learned as 'beginners'. You will be keen to discover how proficient your players are.

### Shot making

Your players may have picked up bad habits during the brief time that they have been playing and they will almost certainly be having problems in producing some of the strokes effectively. The coach can test each player's ability to hit the ball accurately at various ranges. Set target balls at different ranges varying from a few feet to critical cross-lawn shots. It is important to see that player's shots do not fall apart completely when long distances are involved.

Assuming a group of four, pair off the players and ask them to demonstrate how they would play the drive shot, run straight and angled hoops, and play the stop shot. The purpose of this exercise is to enable you to spot any flaws in technique and for players to admit to any difficulties.

Rather than propose a gradual increase of target distance, you may choose random target distances to reflect normal game play.

### Shooting

Remind your players that hitting a striker's ball along the intended line of aim consistently well is the most difficult aspect of croquet. Ask them to concentrate on striking the centre of the ball with the middle of the mallet face.

To improve rate of success, recommend that players create and develop a routine which they will follow with every shot. The routine ought to include:

- ◆ Aim.
- ◆ Stalk
- ◆ Stance
- ◆ Swing and watch the mallet hit the ball. Whilst the general advice is to "keep your head down "and "keep your body still", the key with the swing is to watch the mallet make contact and swing through the target ball.
- ◆ Follow through

### Positional play

You ought also to remind players that the ability of a player to hit a ball to stop on a specific spot is very important. This shot requires both accurate direction and the correct strength.

#### *Practice drill:*

Request players to work in pairs and to select and aim for a precise spot in front of the next hoop. Observe the length of backswing used and whether or not there is any head or body movement when the shot is being played. Stress that the accurate positioning of a ball, where it can score a hoop on its next turn, will force the opponent to do something about it and thus take away the initiative from him. It is worthwhile to state and often repeat how important it is to play accurately.

Hoop running and hitting another ball often have to be attempted from long distances. Balls have to be positioned with accuracy to block others. There may be a need to remove an opponent ball from the jaws of a hoop.

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## Lesson Two

### Handicap Play

In advance of any coaching session it is sensible to find out whether or not all the players in your group have acquired a handicap. If not, it is preferable for this to be achieved before the session and you ought to encourage these players to request the services of their club handicapper.

Make a point of explaining the significance of keeping a record of the results of both handicap and level-play games on a handicap card.

### Introduction

It is important for you to stress to high handicappers that they must value their extra shots. Even if they demonstrate good skills with a mallet and a sound understanding of tactics, they must learn to use their extra shots effectively. They must ensure that they use these shots and not forget they are at their disposal.

Explain that there is a tendency for players to waste extra shots even if they do remember to use them. In principle, an extra shot should always be used positively to gain an advantage, i.e., it should only be taken when it will enable a player to gain a hoop which would otherwise be taken by his opponent. However tempting it may appear, a player should understand that it is a mistake to use an extra shot to redeem a bad situation. It is better to let the opponent run the hoop and for the player to concentrate on setting himself up to gain the next hoop. Wasting an extra shot can undermine morale and it is certain to increase the opponent's confidence.

### Examples of when to use extra shots:

#### **a) At the start of a game.**

It is worth making the point that a good start is important. If a player is receiving a number of extra shots (say, more than 3) and he wins the toss, he will be playing first. He will aim his Blue ball towards Hoop 1. He ought to consider using an extra shot to position his ball right in front of the hoop in order to place his opponent under pressure immediately.

**Practice drill:** Request a player to play all 4 balls towards the 1st hoop and to consider whether or not it is worth taking an extra shot with each ball.

#### **b) First to a distant hoop.**

Similarly to (a) above, encourage a player with the benefit of extra shots to consider taking one if he is playing first to a distant hoop. He will look where his opponent's balls are placed because both will be available for clearing purposes. If he decides to use his extra shot to place his ball directly in front of the hoop, he will again put pressure on his opponent.

Ascertain the ability of the player to jaws his ball as this would ensure he would be able to run the hoop with his next shot.

Practice drill: Invite player to consider using this tactic on each of the first 4 hoops.

### **c) Creating an opportunity for partner ball to run a hoop.**

You may need to set up this example. Black is in front of a hoop with a clear hoop-running opportunity. However, Red is in a position to clear it if left undisturbed. Yellow is not in the vicinity. Blue is to play.

You will explain that there is an alternative to Blue attempting to clear Red from a distance. It is to use an extra shot to take up position to clear Red with an extra shot. The skill is to place Blue in the most advantageous position to do this.

Point out that this is a tactic which is of advantage to players capable of clearing an opponent ball a significant distance, ideally to a far boundary. Players not capable of executing such a shot would be better advised to use their extra shots as in (a) and (b) above.

**Practice drill:** Play Blue into a position to clear Red with an extra shot. Repeat 3 times assessing the best position to do this.

### **d) Opponent's ball in the jaws of a hoop.**

Again, you may need to set up this example. Red is in the jaws. Black is in a good hoop-running position, if Red is moved. Yellow is far away. Blue to play.

Demonstrate that Blue should play to the far side of the hoop. If possible, it ought to be played accurately so that it is capable of removing Red to the far end of the court. Check whether there is any risk of moving Black in the course of playing the removal shot. If not, Blue uses extra shot to remove Red.

Stress that this use of an extra shot is only of real value if Black is in a hoop running position. If it is not, it is arguably a waste of a shot to remove Red from the jaws as in all likelihood the winner of the hoop will remain 50:50, whereas extra shots as in (a) and (b) above may provide greater benefit.

**Practice drill:** Play Blue to the far side of the hoop from different distances and angles.

## **Guidelines when giving away extra shots**

You may introduce this topic with general advice:

- ◆ When playing against an opponent with the benefit of extra shots, the first priority is to assess his capability and adjust play accordingly.
  - Is he accurate with a long shot?
  - Is he able to set up a good hoop-running position with one shot?
  - Is he an accurate hoop-runner?
  - Has he attempted any jump shots?
  - How is he using his extra shots?
- ◆ Try to make sure that for each hoop won by an opponent, at least one extra shot has been used. An inexperienced player with the benefit of a large number of extra shots may be unsure about when to use them and can often be encouraged to use them wastefully.

Using examples, you can demonstrate how a player can modify the way he plays to minimise the effective use of extra shots by his opponent:

- ◆ Always expect a ball in a hoop-running position to be cleared by the use of an extra shot. Go for a back-up ball rather than assume the hoop will be run and go halfway.

- ◆ Position your ball as close as possible to a hoop or even in the jaws before running that hoop. The purpose is to get as close as possible to the next hoop when running it.
- ◆ Use the delayed-hoop procedure.  
Practice drills: Practice the tactics and techniques required to play (a) to (c) above.

## Lesson Three

Having tested the shot-making ability and accuracy of your players, you may move on to an appreciation of tactical play.

Please point out that the use of tactics begins with the striking of the first ball and each player has to be on his mettle immediately. Explain that this requirement for concentration can be best demonstrated by playing a game and proceed to organise this between the players in your group. If you have the benefit of an assistant, you could split the group into two pairs with one coach for each pair.

### Foresight

Invite all 4 players to play their respective balls to the first hoop. Before Blue plays his second shot, invite him to inspect how the balls lie, to state what options he has for his next shot, what shot he has chosen and why. When Blue has played, Red should be given a similar opportunity to state his shot options and the reason for his choice of shot.

Do emphasise the need to keep in mind the order in which the balls are to be played, starting with the ball following the turn being taken. Explain the difference between defensive play, that is trying to anticipate and thwart the likely moves of an opponent, and aggressive play being an effort to create opportunities for the player himself.

### Exploitation of strengths and weaknesses

After 3 hoops have been played, invite each player (or pair of players) to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the opponent(s).

From what distance has he attempted /succeeded in running a hoop?

Does he clear well? If yes, from what distance?

How accurate is he in playing to the next hoop?

Has he played a stop shot or a jump shot; if so, how well or badly?

Make clear that it is the essence of the game to exploit the weaknesses of an opponent but at the same time to play to one's own strengths as decisively as possible. Point out that a lot can be learned from the demeanour of an opponent and the extent to which he shows a degree of disappointment. By the same token, a player should be aware that his opponent will be studying his behaviour!

### Decision making

For the purposes of this exercise, stop play from time to time when it is clear that a player has a choice of shot and must make his mind up which to play. His choice is likely to include 2 or more of the following shots:-

- ◆ To attempt to run a hoop  
Point out that it is perfectly reasonable to be aggressive by attempting a hoop from a distance by a player who prides himself on shooting accurately. Similarly, there is nothing to lose and everything to gain by attempting to steal a point with a jump shot from under the nose of a well-positioned opponent
- ◆ To clear an opponent ball.

Clearing an opponent's ball to as far away as possible will make it much more difficult for that ball to be played effectively on its next turn.

### Practice drill:

You may wish to set up a variety of positions from which Blue might have to deal with Red who is lined up nicely to run the hoop.

Example of these positions (Figure 19):

- ◆ Blue is several yards away from Red. Discuss with players what prospects there are of hitting Red fair and square. What is the likely outcome?
- ◆ Blue is 5 feet from Red. Is Blue able to rush Red near to or off the boundary? State the pros and cons of driving the opponent ball as far away as possible.
- ◆ Blue is two feet or less from Red. The use of the stop shot is appropriate. Stress the importance of hitting Red absolutely square on without any follow through, and the use of a light grip.

Whichever shot is chosen, make an effort to keep Blue near the hoop.

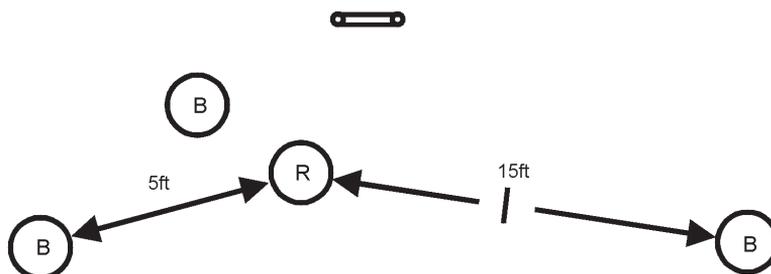


Figure 19. Blue to clear red from different distances.

- ◆ Two on one (Figure 20). Blue is five feet away from Red, but Black is in a good hoop running position. Blue can attempt to hit away Red, but explore the possibility of Blue moving in to a hoop running position. Red (assuming Yellow is well away) can clear either Black or Blue, but not both.

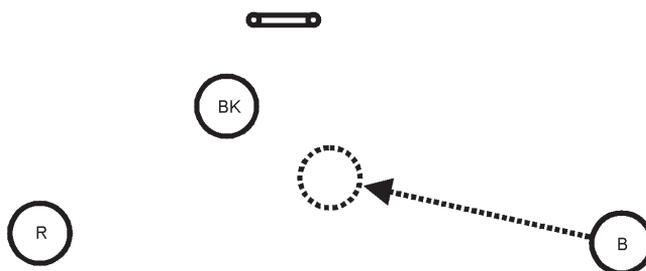
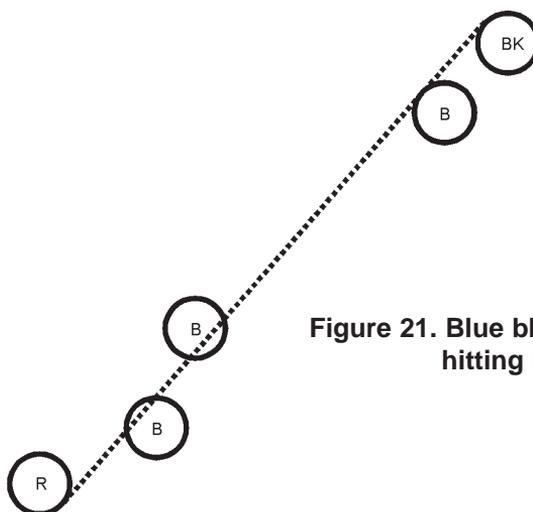


Figure 20. Two on one.

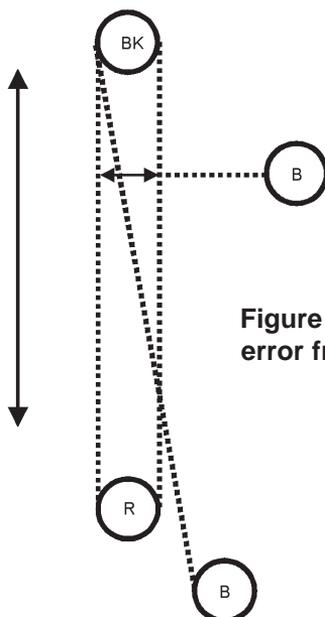
- ◆ **To block**  
You may introduce this exercise by saying that this technique may be used both defensively and aggressively. It may also provide a useful opportunity to consider the strengths and weaknesses of the player and his opponent.

- ◆ Blue has a choice of blocking Red from hitting Black, which is in a hoop-running position, or of hitting Red away (Figure 21). Questions for Blue to ask himself are:
  - How confident is he of placing himself on a precise spot to block?
  - If he blocks successfully, is his opponent likely to consider a jump shot?



**Figure 21. Blue blocking red from hitting black.**

- ◆ Assuming Blue has decided to try to block Red, consider the best spot to try to place Blue. If too close to Red, Red may be able to rush Blue to hit Black clear of its hoop running position. Similarly, if Blue is placed too close to Black.
- ◆ Consider the margin of error (Figure 22). Blue has several times the margin of error if trying to place a block from an acute angle rather than a right angle.



**Figure 22. Consider margin of error from different positions.**

## Lesson Four

You may have found that you have run out of time to demonstrate and to supervise practice of the techniques and tactics covered in Lesson 3. It is quite in order to complete these routines before proceeding.

In this session, you will be aiming to demonstrate that a tactical situation facing a player when taking his or her one shot turn may involve one of other playing techniques not yet described. It is a session when the services of an assistant would be most useful so that the group can be split up into pairs.

### Use of other balls

Emphasise that as each turn consists of a single stroke, full advantage should be made of other balls on the court. Players should be watchful for opportunities at all times.

Point out that you propose to demonstrate examples of using other balls and then invite players to practice the techniques involved.

### Promoting Partner Ball

You may preface your demonstration by saying that this technique can be used to significant effect during a game either defensively or aggressively.

*Examples:*

- ◆ Blue to play. Yellow is in the jaws of hoop (Figure 23). Blue promotes Black to the non-playing side of the hoop from where it can hit Yellow hard to well back from the hoop.

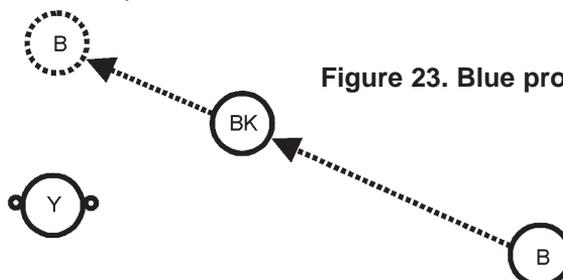


Figure 23. Blue promotes black.

- ◆ Blue is able to promote Black to the back of hoop and place itself in a hoop running position (Figure 24). You explain that this is an example of seizing the initiative from an opponent just when he seemed in an excellent position to score the hoop.

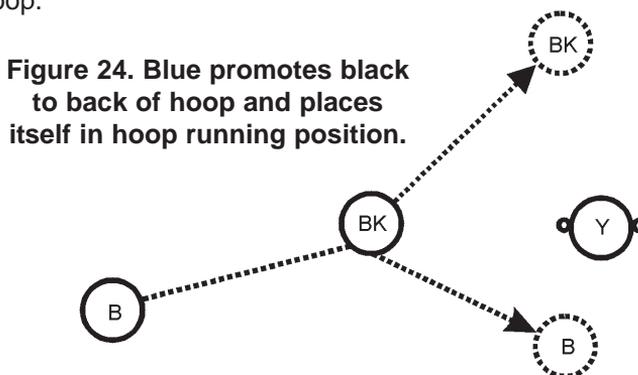
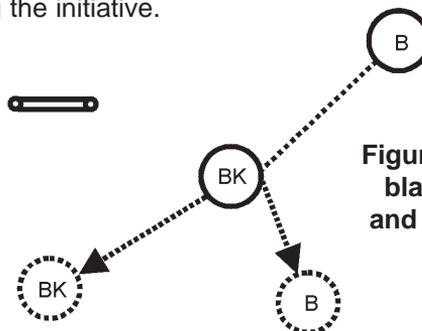


Figure 24. Blue promotes black to back of hoop and places itself in hoop running position.

- ◆ Blue promotes Black to in front of the hoop, but can play off Black to end up where it too is threatening the hoop (Figure 25). This is another example of seizing the initiative.



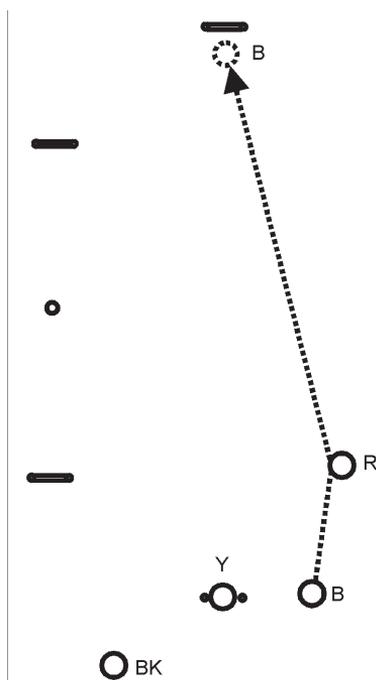
**Figure 25. Blue promotes black to front of hoop and itself also threatens the hoop.**

### Going into an offside position legally

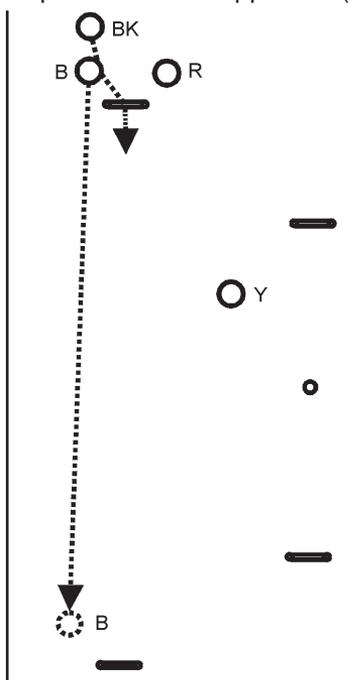
Please remind players of one important aspect of the offside rule. When a hoop point is scored, any ball resting beyond the half-way line between the hoop scored and the next hoop in order is offside and the opponent has the choice of its being moved to one or other of the two penalty spots.

Equally, point out that there are exceptions where a ball is in an offside position but may be played from where it lies, namely if the ball has come off an opponent's ball (Figure 26a) or where a point has been scored in the shot that got it there or as a result of a shot played by an opponent (Figure 26b).

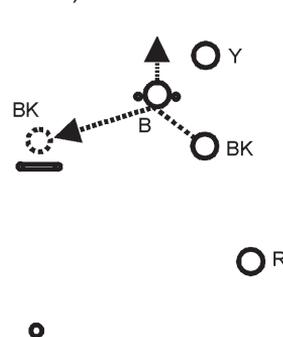
Tactically, emphasise that it is obviously useful to exploit this exception for a player to get his ball into the area of the next hoop ahead of his opponent (Figure 26c).



**Figure 26a. Blue plays off Red to hoop 10.**



**Figure 26b. Black promotes Blue to hoop 8 and runs hoop 7.**



**Figure 26c. Black pushes blue through hoop 10 and finishes ready to run hoop 11.**

## Countering an opponent's tactical advantage

You may follow up the previous technique by showing how it may be countered.

The solution may be simply not to run the hoop at the first opportunity so that an offside ball has to return to an onside position on its next shot or face being sent to a penalty spot (Figure 27).

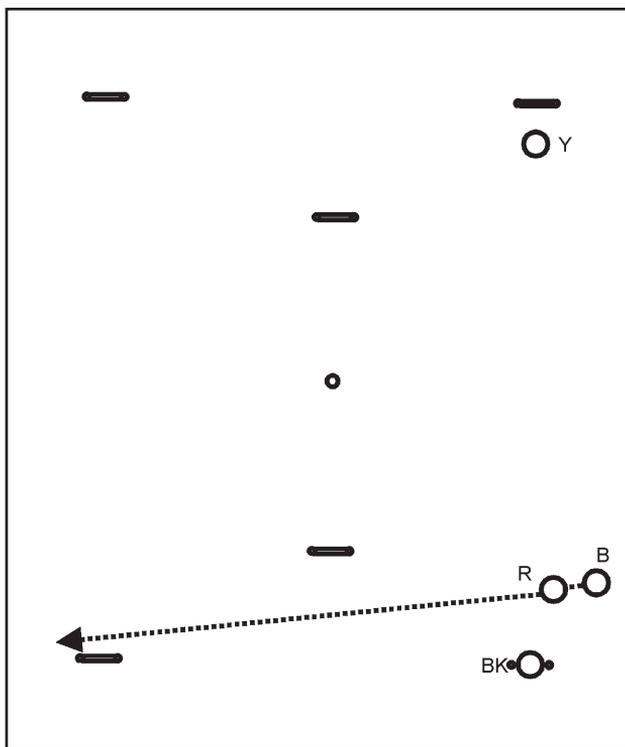


Figure 27. Hoop 9 to be run. Yellow is onside in front of hoop 10. Blue dispatches Red to boundary. Black is lightly touched to remain in hoop, forcing Yellow to play back onside.

## Delay running the hoop

Point out that another use of this tactical play is where the player is in a sure position to run a hoop, e.g. nestling in the jaws and the opponent's balls are no threat to its doing so.

In such circumstances, the ball in the jaws can be tapped carefully so that it does not complete the running of the hoop and its partner ball is positioned on the far side of the hoop so that it can be rushed to the next hoop so that it can be rushed to the next hoop when the hoop is run.

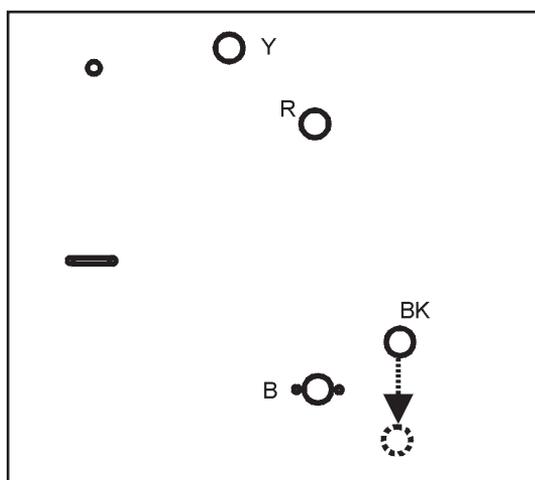


Figure 28. Blue played gently to remain in hoop 4 until Black is in a position to promote it.

## Nestling

Point out that nestling (or jawsing) a ball in the jaws of a hoop has two big advantages. It can be very difficult and often impossible for the opponent to remove it. If it subsequently runs the hoop( ie all the odd numbered hoops), it ought to be the first ball to the next hoop in order.

Demonstrate three possible situations to nestle a ball:

- ◆ From a distance, to play a careful shot with sufficient strength to come up gently to the inside edge of far upright.
- ◆ Caress a ball from the non-playing side into the jaws of a hoop.
- ◆ Playing from an angle in front of a hoop but close to it, play ball to the inside edge of far upright.

Players should be encouraged to practise playing shots to achieve each of the above situations, The weight of the shot is critical.

## Countering the nestle

A good opportunity for the coach to discuss and demonstrate possible ways of achieving this:

- ◆ Promoting partner ball to non-playing side of the hoop.
- ◆ Nestling up to an opponent's ball in the jaws of the hoop. A very difficult shot, but the object is to make it very difficult for an opponent to hit his ball through the hoop without a fault being committed.  
Recommend that this shot should only be attempted from a short range. It is high risk because failure will not only allow an opponent to run the hoop but also leave a difficult shot for the striker to the next hoop.
- ◆ A jump shot.

## Wiring from an opponent ball

It may be stating the obvious, but do not forget to mention that it is almost always a good tactic for a striker to wire his ball from an opponent ball which has been played to the non-playing side of the hoop. The object is to prevent the striker's ball from being cleared.

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## Practising

You should make the point that practising is an essential requirement if a player wishes to improve and should discuss the principles necessary for a successful practise session.

Ideas for improving elements of a player's game are provided below:-

- ◆ If it is to provide value, practise should be enjoyable and structured. Routines should concentrate on perceived weaknesses.
- ◆ The players should divide their practise session into stages, each of which has a purpose and is aimed at improving technique or correcting weaknesses.
- ◆ Encourage the players to loosen up a little before starting to practise seriously, beginning with the more repetitive aspects. If they are left to the end, they are more likely to be omitted. Above all, a considerable amount of time must be spent in developing and refining the basic skills to achieve control.
- ◆ Targets should be set and progress reviewed at the end of each session. If a session is not successful, the reasons should be analysed and addressed the next time.

## Ideas for Skills Practice

You will have prepared a hand out for circulation, but do summarise the skills and give players an opportunity to ask questions about them. These ideas are addressed to players :

### ***“Shooting***

Try shooting 8 balls at another from about 5 yards. If you hit with them all increase the distance by a yard and try again. Keep increasing the distance if you are 100% successful. When you start missing a few decrease the distance by a yard. Keep decreasing the distance until you are hitting them all again. In this way you will determine the distance that you are confident of hitting. By determining the distance where you hit 4 out of 8 shots you will ascertain your 50% confidence distance and so on.

### ***Hoop Approaches***

Practise approaches to a particular target in front of the hoop - even a specific blade of grass or a discoloured patch.

### ***Hoop running***

Practise from different angles and distances. Run through a hoop by 12 to 18 inches, no more, then back again. Repeat this and count how many times you can do it. Try to increase the number with each practise session.

### ***Stop Shot Approach***

Play a stop shot with the aim of moving the target ball to identified positions.

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***Jump shot***

Remember that your ball will take off from the ground at the same angle as that at which it is hit. It is only necessary to attempt the harder jump shot, i.e., hitting the ball at a steep angle, when the blocking ball is very close.

Practise not only using a jump shot to run a hoop (preferably off the lawn) but also, when blocked, from hitting first to the next hoop when blocked.”

## **Winding up the course**

Do set aside time at the conclusion of the course for a coaches' "wash up".

This may take one of two main forms:

- ◆ Give each individual class member an opportunity to discuss any individual problems with his game or technique. This can be organised in advance with the players assigned to the coaches available, or the players can be left to grab a coach for their individual clinic.
- ◆ Call all course members together either on court, or preferably whilst they are relaxing with a cup of tea, and invite questions.

## **Books Available For Golf Croquet Players**

### **Books For Beginners**

#### **Golf Croquet Rules: CA version**

The Croquet Association Fourth Edition, March 2014 - with latest rulings and time limit regulations. The Rules of Golf Croquet as played in the CA's domain and other countries. Based on the 2014 WCF Rules, but with some additional rulings and commentary added by the CA.

#### **A Guide to Golf Croquet**

Author: Jennet Blake and Gerald Mitchell. Softback. 42 pages. Third Edition updated by John Cundell and Richard Keighley. January 2010. Illustrated with b/w diagrams. Contains all the basic rules and tactics for playing Golf Croquet. John and Richard have rewritten the sections on the Laws amongst other alterations.

### **Books For Improvers and Advanced**

#### **Golf Croquet Tactics 2nd Edition**

Author: Michael Hague, Softback, 84 pages. 2nd Edition - Published 2012.

A look at golf croquet tactics, including a description of the principles involved, and lots of problems and solutions to get the points across. As the title suggests, this book is all about tactics, and does not discuss stroke play. This book is an ideal extension to 'A guide to Golf Croquet', which covers stroke play and basic principles, but little on more advanced tactics.

#### **Shortening the Odds**

Author: Bill Arliss, Softback. Published 2009.

This book is aimed at GC and AC players who are proficient with a mallet, and want to extend their repertoire of winning tactics. The author considers the factors that lead to success on a Golf Croquet court and provides a detailed analysis of the complex tactical decision making that is essential with the very interactive nature of the game. By taking the opponent's capabilities into consideration, the approach to tactics can be applied to a wide range of playing abilities. Suggested training/coaching routines for both stroke play and tactical coaching are also outlined.

#### **Through the Hoops - Golf Croquet**

Techniques for Golf Croquet. Written by Greg Bury, an Australian GC International player, this book is a well illustrated guide to the fundamentals of the game with tips on more advanced play. A4 size, 42 pages - First Published in November 2010.