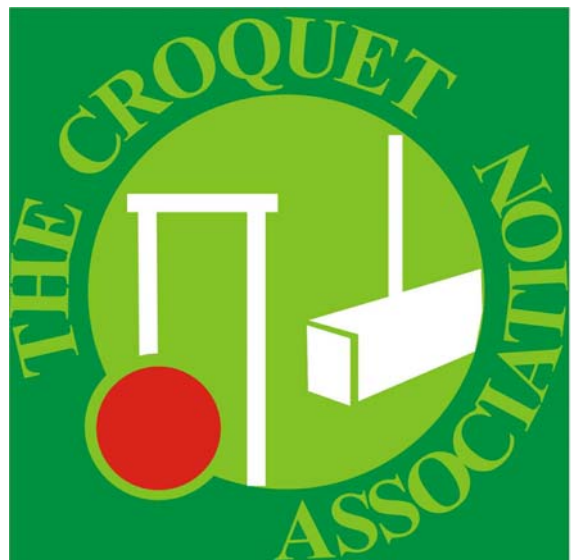


Association Croquet Coaching Manual

Published By The Croquet Association



Foreword

This manual is intended as a reference guide and a framework for coaching association croquet from beginners to aspiring 'A' class players. It is 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). 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.

I would like to express my thanks to all those members of the CA coaching committee, past or present, and others who have freely contributed to the preparation and production of this manual. In particular to Ray Ransom who did the major work in creating this new version of the manual. Ray is one of the senior coaches of the game in England and his wealth of experience is manifest in this manual. We are all extremely grateful for the time he has taken to share his experience with other coaches. He has, in turn, thanked a number of people in the introduction and I would like to add my thanks as well.

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March 2006

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Document Version 1.02 (29th March 2006)

Introduction

The last version of the coaching manual was produced in 1991 and although the content is just as valid now as it was at the time of its production, the structure of the coaching courses has changed sufficiently to force a complete revision. In the time that the manual has been in print the grade I, II and III programmes have been replaced by a series of 6 courses covering the participant's progression from beginner to the 'a' class. It has been recognised that more formal training of coaches is needed and as a result a coach qualification course (CQC) covering course planning and teaching techniques has been introduced. Successful completion of this course qualifies a participant as club coach.

This revision of the manual is based upon the main programmes, namely, beginners, improvers, bronze, silver, silver gilt and gold. The old grade II course has been replaced by the bronze and silver courses and the grade III by the silver gilt and gold courses. As a result the new courses are able to cover the techniques in greater depth and allow more time for practice. The improvers' course largely consists of revision of what was learned in the beginners' course although it does attempt to prepare the high handicap players for tournament and match play. The beginners' course is virtually unchanged.

Each of the courses assumes that the knowledge and techniques covered in previous courses is 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.

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. The format of production will be such that other courses may be added in the future with minimal expense.

The beginners section is more detailed than the other two sections. This is because, at this level, many coaches are less experienced players, and they may require more guidance than is necessary at higher levels. The work in producing this manual would have been enormous had it not been for the work done previously, initially by John McCullough and then later, when the scope was extended, by Bill Lamb with the help of others.

Although the programmes are based upon group tuition over a defined timescale, sections 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, I'd like to thank Dave Kibble for proof reading, pointing out the errors and for providing suggestions for improvements.

Ray Ransom

November 2005

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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.

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 course allowing for lawn and equipment availability, but consider also the requirement for individual tuition. A student/coach ratio of 4 to 1 is probably ideal at the beginner level but for a gold course 2 to 1 is to be preferred.

There is something to be said for having two coaches to a group. The second coach can demonstrate whilst the other explains. Activities can be set up more quickly, the group can hear a change of voice from time to time and they will get a change of views on discussion topics.

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, especially when it comes to the use of bisques in break building. There is almost always more than one way to set up a break and what matters most is spotting the opportunity.

Beginners

The beginners' course has been designed for complete beginners to the game. It is a course of six lessons, each lasting about an hour and a half, which usually take place once a week, although the course can be more concentrated if required. The sixth lesson is mainly revision and may be omitted or left to a later stage.

General points

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.

Define any new terms that are introduced (for example, 'roquet') 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 from a take-off, 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. To anticipate future questions, explain that croquet is a game with what at first seem to be complex tactics, and needing skills that require practice. If at first it seems that little croquet is being played, it will reassure the group members to know that all becomes clear eventually.

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 get class members to do likewise. They follow the ball and again hit it towards peg. A circle round the peg may try hitting any nearby ball on to 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.

The group pair up, standing about 8 to 10 yards apart and hit balls to one another. 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. 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.

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. 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. 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.

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 wire (this is a term that needs explanation), it will bounce away from the hoop but, if the ball hits the far wire, 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, the method for testing if a ball is through a hoop. Show how a mallet may be used for this test, but point out the dangers, particularly if the hoop is loose, and explain that this should never be done without the opponent's permission.

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.

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.

It is likely that someone will ask what the limit of angle is to allow a hoop to be run. It creates some interest to show one of the tests that may be used, but the jump shot should not be mentioned. Beginners often become more interested in the spectacular than the basics, and might waste their valuable practice time.

Crush Strokes

It will be possible at this stage to illustrate some of the relevant laws of croquet. It is tempting to 'run' an angled hoop either by pushing or crushing the ball (or both), especially if the ball is close to the hoop. The applicable laws can be demonstrated and the penalty for a fault explained. The push shot will be readily accepted as a fault, but the crush is more difficult for beginners to recognise.

The need to ask for the shots that are potential faults to be watched and the practice of otherwise being your own referee should be mentioned.

Replacing Balls on the Yard-Line

Encourage players to replace balls on the yard-line using the mallet as a measure and, right from the start, with their backs to the lawn. **Point out that this is a matter of law**, rather than etiquette, and they might be asked to consider the reason for this law. The answer will come in due course, but probably not during the first lesson. Emphasise that the ball is placed on the yard-line measured from the inner edge of the boundary line.

The need to know the length of your own mallet will emerge from the players' own queries.

The situation when a ball goes off near a corner should also be demonstrated, together with the procedure for placing balls on the yard-line or corner spot when touching balls result.

At this stage indicate the 'A and 'B' baulk lines and explain their purpose.

The First Six Hoops

Show the course of the first six hoops, being careful to make clear the direction in which each hoop is run.

The players individually take one ball round the first six hoops and peg it out, counting the strokes taken. This will help the players to memorise the route and give some purpose to the strokes that have been practised. Two (or more) turns at this activity will create an incentive to achieve some reduction in the number of strokes taken.

It will be necessary again to impress on some of the participants the need to follow the procedure for producing an accurate, controlled stroke.

Many players will be tempted to try impossible hoops or to crush balls through hoops. The latter must be corrected immediately, perhaps by making them play again but counting an additional stroke.

Golf Croquet

The participants will enjoy finishing the first lesson with a game of golf croquet (at least those who are in clubs that permit or do not discourage this game). The rules, of course, differ in some respects from those of association croquet.

Lesson Two

EQUIPMENT:

In addition to the equipment needed for Lesson One a number of bisque sticks, (two per person) should be made available.

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 and peg out in as few strokes as possible. 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.

The Roquet

Explain that running a ball through a hoop entitles the player to one more stroke. (The golf croquet game may still be uppermost in the players' minds.)

Explain that two strokes are earned if another ball is hit. The sequence of the two strokes (roquet, croquet, continuation) can be mentioned but not gone into in detail at this stage. The term 'roquet' will need explanation in itself. (You may find it helpful and less confusing to the players to say that each successful and lawful stroke in croquet earns a further stroke; the right to a continuation stroke in the above sequence is forfeit, of course, if the croquet stroke results in end of turn.)

Course members' pair up about six yards apart with a ball placed centrally between them. They hit another ball to and fro with the aim of hitting the ball in the middle. Check that they are still following the procedure for accurate shots, especially that heads are being kept down. The temptation is, of course, to lift the head too soon to see if a roquet has been made. This activity involves a certain amount of retrieving and replacing balls that have been successfully hit. Those who consistently achieve success should stand progressively further apart.

Explain to the group that it is not necessary to hit a ball square-on to qualify as a roquet and earn the two bonus strokes. Using one ball as a target, say **R** (red), show that another ball say **U**, (blue), needs only to brush the extreme right-hand edge of **R** to qualify as a roquet. Holding **R** still, mark the right-hand edge of **U** with a wooden pointer stuck into the ground. (Use a bisque stick but do not refer to it as such at present.) The pointer will, of course, be a ball's diameter from the edge of **R**. Repeat the process at the left-hand edge of **R**. Remove **R** from between the two pointers and show that the target for making a roquet is much wider than might have been imagined. A ball that runs through the pointers, without touching either of them, has made a 'roquet'. (It might be thought that the target is equal to three times the diameter of a ball but this is erroneous and should never be mentioned, as it can lead to a misconception later about the relative widths of single ball and double ball targets. The true target width is equal to twice the diameter of a ball.)

Members pair up about one yard either side of other pairs of pointers that have been set up in advance. The psychological effect of hitting a ball through these 'goal posts' is quite striking. Members will find it much easier to hit a ball between these pointers or 'goal

posts' because the target appears much larger than a single ball. Members may progressively stand further apart, as success in hitting the ball through the pointers is achieved.

One bonus with this practice activity is that time spent in retrieving balls is reduced to virtually nothing.

Conclude this activity by placing a ball between the goal posts which are then removed. The roquet appears more difficult when this genuine target is created. Suggest that it helps the aim to imagine the goal posts on either side of the ball to be roqueted.

Straight Croquet Strokes

The Drive

Demonstrate a normal, straight croquet stroke (neither stop shot nor roll) with medium strength. Before doing so ask which ball will go further and by how much? It appears to be common sense that the croqueted ball will go further, but the relative distances of travel will not, of course, be obvious.

Having made the stroke, place the mallet on the ground and pace out the distances travelled by both balls, calling out the number of paces so that members know what is being measured. The ratio will come to about 1:4. Repeat the stroke using less strength, and again pace out the distances travelled. If all has gone well, the ratio of distances will be close to that produced by the previous stroke.

Explain that there is no 'correct' ratio but that the weight of the mallet and an individual's method of producing the stroke (as well as the type of balls being used) will have an effect. The ratio of about 1:4 can be given as a rough average.

Members individually try the exercise for themselves a few times, using different strengths, and report back what ratios have been produced. The hope is that each member will have produced a fairly consistent ratio. Explain that it is desirable to have some idea of the positions to which each ball will roll following this croquet stroke from a standard position.

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 the positions of balls from a croquet stroke.

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. (The technique of stopping the shot by grounding the heel of the mallet at the moment of impact with the ball is 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 it is better left to a later course.)

Members individually practise the stop shot, with the aim of trying to produce a higher ratio than that achieved in the earlier practice on the straight drive. 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.

The Roll

It can be explained that, instead of making the striker's ball travel a relatively short distance, it is often desirable to make it travel rather further than achieved by executing a straight drive. Members are already aware that to produce a stop shot one stands back from the ball and they will readily volunteer that to produce a roll one must stand forward. (The term 'roll' needs some explanation. The balls always roll, and its use in this context is not self-explanatory.)

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.

Some members may have achieved quite spectacular rolls during this initial practice, but almost certainly due to the follow-through becoming 'push'. Before demonstrating a stroke to produce a fuller roll, it might be as well to explain that the mallet head may not be accelerated once the croqueted ball has departed.

It is not always advisable to demonstrate bad practice but members will instinctively recognise a demonstration of a roll shot produced with push. Explain that roll is produced by hitting downwards on to the ball, causing it to spin.

Demonstrate two or three strokes that produce a greater degree of roll, up to a full roll, at this stage still retaining the stance where the mallet is swung between the legs. Explain that the amount of roll that can be produced depends on:

- ◆ The forward position of the feet,

- ◆ The lower position of hands on mallet shaft,
- ◆ The forward tilt of the mallet, and
- ◆ The stroke hitting downwards on the ball.

Members practise producing various amounts of roll, from half-roll up to full-roll. Again, individual help will be much in demand; there are several points to be mastered before this stroke comes easily.

It is not worth demonstrating the pass-roll to beginners. It is far too difficult a shot for them (and high-bisquers) to play successfully and legally. The usual result is a pass 'push', particularly if the side style is used with the upper hand at the top of the mallet. Inaccurate attempts to produce the required amount of 'chop' for a proper pass-roll can also lead to damage to club mallets and balls. Beginners also have a tendency to spend a disproportionate amount of time practising what they regard as a spectacular shot.

The players have had much to absorb in this lesson. It might be preferable to end this stage of the lesson on a lighter note, either with another game of Golf Croquet, or with Two-Ball Croquet that has the merit of using some of the strokes practised during the lesson. It depends on how well the group members have reacted to your coaching.

Split Croquet Strokes

Demonstrate a relatively straightforward split shot where there is no need for either a stop shot or a roll. Choose targets on the lawn such as hoop 6 and hoop 5, or possibly two markers placed in a convenient position. Without explanation show that it is possible to place the croqueted ball close to one target and the striker's ball close to the other target.

At this stage time spent in further explanation and demonstration will be necessary. Use, say **R** (red) as the striker's ball and **U** (blue) as the croqueted ball.

Establish a target for **U** on the lawn. Ask the class for suggestions where **R** must be placed to ensure that **U** travels in the direction of the target. The answer is not self-evident and various suggestions will be put forward. The right answer will eventually emerge or can be prompted. Try to ensure that all understand that the centres of the two balls must be in line with the target. Spend a little time putting the ball in various positions with which the players have to agree or disagree. Participants should be asked to stand in line with the balls to satisfy themselves that the balls are in line with the target.

Next, raise the question of whether it matters in what direction **R** is struck by the mallet. Most people believe that the direction of **U** will be affected by the direction in which **R** is hit.

Invite two or three players to hit **R** in random directions. It creates considerable interest when **U** is observed to travel towards the target. If the target is another ball nearby, a convincing hit can be achieved on each attempt, provided that the balls have been set up correctly before the stroke is made.

The next point to be considered concerns the direction of aim of the mallet. Again set up two targets that are conveniently close to **R** and **U**. As an example, the target for **U** could be a **K** (black) ball and the target for **R** could be a bisque stick. Ensure that **R** and **U** are set up so that **U** will be croqueted towards the **K** ball and ensure that the participants agree with the placing. Ask for suggestions as to the direction in which the mallet should be swung to hit **R** in order for it to travel towards the bisque target. The likely answers will probably provide the consensus that the aim should be straight at the bisque target. Get one or two players to try

this aim. The resulting split away from the target will surprise most players. The need to correct the aim will be obvious.

At this point, some guidance needs to be given on the line of aim. It does not matter which of the two common methods, splitting the angle or splitting the distance, is used. The angle at which the balls split depends so much on the effective weight of the mallet that neither is truly accurate, and both should be regarded as not more than a rule of thumb. The coach should therefore use whichever method he prefers, but point out that the method is a starting point rather than an inflexible rule. However, it is important for a class of beginners that they should be taught consistently and, if more than one person is coaching the class, all should agree beforehand which method to adopt.

It is important to stress that to get consistent results the swing line must be straight with the follow-through continuing along this line. At this early stage, it is better not to confuse the issue by introducing roll or stop shot splits. All the splits should be played with a drive action.

The procedure for setting up a split shot should now be established:

- ◆ Place the striker's ball so that the line of centres of the two balls points towards the chosen target;
- ◆ Determine the line of aim for the mallet;
- ◆ Strike the ball with suitable strength.

Players practise split shots. The targets can be two nominated hoops, or bisque sticks, or balls if there are sufficient to spare. The important thing to establish is the angle of split, that is, the balls should travel in the right directions towards the targets but not necessarily with the right relative strengths, although it would help if suitable targets that can be reached with a drive are set up. Individual attention should be given. Emphasise the need to determine the line of aim and then to trust it. There will be considerable temptation for the players to finish the stroke by swinging the mallet in an arc towards the intended target for the striker's ball. This should be corrected immediately.

Finish the lesson with games of Two-Ball Croquet. A brief explanation and a demonstration of the start of the game should be sufficient, but point out the essential difference between Golf Croquet and Two-Ball Croquet that play does not move on to the next hoop for both players once a hoop has been scored. Group members pair up and play the first six hoops and peg. Waiting time can be reduced considerably by devising different courses (starting at hoop 3, for example), if there are several pairs of players per lawn.

Lesson Three

EQUIPMENT:

Each player needs a mallet; at least two balls for each player; court equipped fully including clips and bisques.

Revision:

Once again, allow about ten minutes for group members to practise freely on the lawn. If bisque sticks are already set up on a boundary line, many will use these to practise 'roquets'.

Demonstrate the execution of three or four stop shots and rolls. Reiterate the advice that there is a complete spectrum, from sharp stop shots to a full roll.

Demonstrate a few simple split croquet strokes using a drive action. Do not necessarily demonstrate every shot yourself. Those who have shown promise should be brought into any demonstration; be sure to ask for quite straightforward shots.

Split Croquet Strokes

The last two demonstrations of the revision will naturally lead to an extension of the previous lesson on split croquet strokes. First ask the members what they noticed about the relative distances travelled by the striker's ball and the croqueted ball as the split angle increases. If necessary, get someone to demonstrate two split croquet strokes, first with a swing angle (the angle between the line of centres and the line of aim) of about 20 degrees and then about 45 degrees. The strength of both shots should be the same. Of course, as the swing angle increases, the striker's ball travels further and the croqueted ball less far.

Explain that control of these relative distances can be achieved in exactly the same way as the straight strokes by using either a roll or stop shot action. Now demonstrate a series of splits with the same swing angle (be careful to choose a suitable and repeatable aiming point) played with a drive action, a roll action and a stop shot action, and ask the class to observe the effect.

The more observant members of the class will probably notice that the angle of split changes, as well as the relative distances travelled by the two balls. Point this out, if necessary. Show that the split angle closes up with a roll and opens out with a stop shot. It is not necessary to get too technical at this point: just say it is an extra complication to be taken account of when playing split croquet strokes.

The full procedure for setting up a split shot should now be established:

- ◆ Place the striker's ball so that the line of centres of the two balls points towards the chosen target;
- ◆ Decide what type of shot is required;
- ◆ Determine the line of aim for the mallet;
- ◆ Strike the ball with suitable strength.

The class now practise split croquet strokes on a short croquet lawn. It is always better to have recognisable and repeatable targets for practice purposes. Players will remember them and be able to practise by themselves later. The three particular splits to be practised are the ones most useful in playing a three-ball break:

- ◆ The split from hoop 2 to hoops 3 and 4;
- ◆ The split from hoop 4 to hoops 5 and 6;
- ◆ The split from hoop 1 to hoops 2 and 3.

Hoop Approaches

The previous section on split croquet strokes will lead into the way an approach shot is made. Take two balls; say Y and K, with Y being for the hoop for the purpose of the demonstration. Place K three or four feet from the playing side of a hoop, slightly to one side. Set up the scene by saying that 'we', playing Y, have just roqueted K and we now hope to make the hoop. Then ask a series of questions. The answers are unlikely to come confidently at this stage.

- ◆ To how many strokes are we now entitled?
- ◆ What is the first stroke?
- ◆ State that we generally want K, the croqueted ball, to go to the other side of the hoop, and indicate a spot about six feet beyond the hoop and a little to one side. Do not labour the point at this stage. In what position must we place Y to make K go towards that position? Invite suggestions. Ask someone to place the ball. Ask the others if they agree with the placing.
- ◆ Now that K has been dealt with, where do we want Y to go? (Not through the hoop, but directly in front about one foot away.)
- ◆ In what direction must we aim the mallet?
- ◆ What sort of shot is it? (Make sure that the initial demonstrations of this shot are straightforward drives requiring neither stop shot nor roll.)
- ◆ Perform the shot. How many shots are now left?
- ◆ Run the hoop aiming to get close to the K ball. How many shots have we now earned?
- ◆ Why do you think we placed the K ball beyond the hoop?

Repeat the demonstration from a slightly different angle to the hoop. Ask the same series of questions. Do not proceed too rapidly; there is a lot to think about in this situation.

Repeat the demonstration, asking the same series of questions, but get the members to place the balls for the croquet stroke and to play the strokes. If the shots go awry, either try the shot again or place the balls in the positions where they were supposed to go. It is a good idea to watch the croquet stroke from a position along the line of aim of the mallet. This gives the player a definite aiming point, and from there it is possible to see if the aim is maintained in a straight line. The temptation will be to try to steer the striker's ball towards its intended position. Tell the players to decide the aim and then to trust it, since the balls will steer themselves.

Individual practice follows, each member taking two balls to a hoop. Ensure that relatively straightforward hoop approaches are attempted. Each member will probably need help with memorising the order in which the different decisions have to be made. It is not obvious to beginners that the first task is to place the balls for the croquet stroke so as to ensure that the croqueted ball goes towards its position. Most will be thinking of trying to get the striker's ball through the hoop at this point. The temptation to steer the striker's ball towards the front of the hoop will also be much in evidence. Emphasise the need to determine the aim and then to trust it. When the second, hoop-running, stroke is made, many beginners will

forget all that has been practised and will casually knock, or fail to knock, the ball through. Encourage the playing of a correct stroke to get near to the previously croqueted ball. At this stage do not expect, or even refer to, the desirability of trying to get to a good rush position.

As success is achieved, beginners find this a very satisfying series of strokes. Commendation of any croquet strokes that result in both balls finishing in good positions will enhance their satisfaction and enjoyment.

Thin Take-Offs

Explain briefly the need at times to leave the croqueted ball in roughly the same position, whilst sending the striker's ball to some other point on the court.

From a position about ten yards from the peg, explain that you have just roqueted U with R and that you intend to leave U more or less in the same position and to send R towards the peg, using it simply as a target.

Set the balls up in a take-off position. It gives a good opportunity to remind the players of the law relating to the need for the balls to be touching and explain that you intend to make the croqueted ball move a few inches only in the stroke. It is probably better to suggest that the croquet ball should move rather than just shake. One or two inches per yard of take-off will suffice to clear the croqueted ball out of the path of a twisting mallet or to ensure that an imperfect swing will still move the ball. Very fine take-offs should be discouraged.

With the members gathered closely by the two balls, ask them to observe the shape made by the arcs where the two balls meet. Trace out the "arrow head" with your finger, and name it as an arrow head. The shape is not always easily identified by beginners and it is worth spending a little time to ensure that everyone can pick out the shape. A couple of bisque sticks can be placed to emphasise the arrow head (or 'V').

It also helps to lay the shaft of a mallet on the ground to give an idea of the shaft of an arrow. Ask members to judge where the arrow is pointing. Many will give the correct answer. Explain that it is necessary to stand back from the balls to be able to make a proper judgment.

Play the stroke, asking the members to make two observations.

- ◆ Did R move?
- ◆ In what direction did U travel?

Keep your head down for longer than necessary so that you are able to feign innocence as to where U travelled, and to confirm that R moved.

Repeat the shot, perhaps asking for a different target to be nominated. Ask members to confirm that the direction of the arrow head is accurate. Show that a minor adjustment in the position of the balls will produce a major variation of track. Emphasise the requirements of touching balls for the croquet stroke and some discernible movement of the croqueted ball.

Give one or two further demonstrations asking someone to set the balls in position and someone else to play the shot. In each case, ask the players to observe:

- ◆ The direction of the arrow,
- ◆ The movement of the croqueted ball, and
- ◆ The direction in which the striker's ball moves.

Either now, or when a few shots have been practised, give advice on the strength of shot required. This can be to the effect that, since only one ball is being moved effectively, virtually all of the energy is taken by the striker's ball. The strength of shot is therefore about the same as if a single ball is being struck towards the target.

Individual practice should follow. It can be done in pairs, sending the same ball to and from thin take-offs. This saves time in retrieving balls, but there is little variation in direction or distance of shot. Some of the shots should be done completely individually, with different targets chosen on each attempt. Many players will soon become very accurate with this shot; that again creates much satisfaction.

Show the use of backward take-offs for approach shots to the hoop. Almost invariably, beginners send the striker's ball much too far. The players can be advised to strike the ball with just sufficient strength to send a single ball in front of the hoop, since the energy transferred to the croqueted ball from the mallet is almost negligible, but practice seems to be the sole remedy for improving this shot.

The Three-Hoop Break

Demonstrate a three-hoop break. First set up a simple rush for R to hoop one. Place a ball about four or five feet in front of each of hoops two and three. Place clips on hoop one as an introduction to their use.

Explain that our turn has just started with R for hoop one. Ask a whole series of questions. The answers may be all too obvious to a coach or any player with considerable experience of the game, but do not be surprised, if it takes a little time for beginners to come to the right conclusions.

- ◆ Ask what the first shot should be, then make the roquet.
- ◆ Ask how many shots have been earned.
- ◆ Ask where the croqueted ball should be sent to.
- ◆ Ask where the striker's ball should be sent to.
- ◆ Ask how the balls should be placed for the croquet stroke.
- ◆ Play the shot.
- ◆ Ask how many shots remain.
- ◆ Ask where the ball should end up having gone through the hoop. (Some might suggest that you should send R through the hoop hard in order to get close to hoop two.)
- ◆ Play the shot.
- ◆ Ask how many shots have now been earned.
- ◆ Make the roquet.
- ◆ Ask how many shots have been earned.
- ◆ Ask what the first shot should be.
- ◆ Ask where R should ideally finish after the croquet shot. (Some will suggest that it should finish in front of hoop two. It is quite illuminating to send half of the group to point out an ideal position by hoop two. The remainder observe the placing of the balls for a thin take-off to an ideal position.)

- ◆ Play the shot. (If it does not achieve a good position, place it in a more advantageous place, saying that this would have been ideal.)
- ◆ Ask how many shots remain.
- ◆ Play the shot, nudging the croqueted ball into a better position for an approach shot. (Do not refer to a rush at this stage; the idea of using a roquet to improve a position has now been introduced.)

You have now reached the stage where the whole process can be repeated to make hoop two and then hoop three. Get the players to take turns to set up the balls and to play the shots, but do not ask this if it would cause embarrassment to any individual. It is instructive for the players to point to ideal positions for the balls to take up, especially from the take-offs. All sorts of opinions will be offered and the thinking aloud that takes place when unsuitable spots are chosen all aids the learning process.

This three-hoop break demonstrates how a single shot at the start of a turn can produce a break leading to the making of several hoops. At the end you will be unable to proceed because, regrettably, there is no ball waiting at hoop four. They have been left behind at hoops one, two, and three. The point can be brought up that it might be possible to manoeuvre the balls to leave one at hoop four. This break also demonstrates clearly the benefit of having a ball waiting at the next hoop.

The group play through a three-hoop break, the balls having been placed in position by the hoops. Encourage the players to nudge the ball placed by the hoop into a more favourable position for an approach.

Introduce the use of clips at this stage. Little use will be made of them but it shows the way they are removed from the hoop and carried around until the end of a break. It can be pointed out that a clip is a useful reminder of the ball that is being played, if any confusion arises.

Either individually, or in pairs, let the class play through the break again. Depending on the number of players and the facilities available, different starting points for the three-hoop break can be used.

Lesson Four

EQUIPMENT:

Lawns or half-lawns, mallets for each player, sets of balls, clips.

Revision

As always, allow a few minutes for freely hitting the ball around the court, running hoops, roll shots, or anything the individuals may choose.

Four-Ball Break

Remind players of the three-hoop break, the value of having a ball near a hoop, and the desirability of manoeuvring the balls into useful positions.

Place balls in position on court, with a simple rush to hoop one, ball near to peg, ball near hoop two. Ask players to note the layout as being ideal for a four-ball break.

Play through the break, up to hoop four or five, say, at each point asking a series of questions before proceeding to the next stroke. (Some coaches prefer to play through the break quickly simply as a demonstration of what is to be attempted, before talking through a more detailed demonstration.)

The following series of questions appears forbidding in print. The answers will not always come quickly. If they do, it means that the method of playing a four-ball break has been assimilated. (So that you can keep track of the situation, answers have been inserted.)

- ◆ What should be the first stroke? (Roquet)
- ◆ Play the shot, 'nudging' the roqueted ball into a better position.
- ◆ How many strokes have been earned? (Two)
- ◆ What is the first stroke? (Croquet)
- ◆ Where should the croqueted ball be sent to? (Past hoop 1)
- ◆ Where should the striker's ball be sent to? (In front of the hoop)
- ◆ What is the line of aim for the stroke? (Split angle or distance)
- ◆ What type of stroke is it? (Drive, roll, or stop shot)
- ◆ Play the croquet stroke.
- ◆ How many strokes remain? (One)
- ◆ Where should the striker's ball be sent to? (Through hoop near ball)
- ◆ Run the hoop.
- ◆ How many strokes have been earned? (One)
- ◆ What is the stroke? (Roquet)
- ◆ Make the roquet.
- ◆ How many strokes have been earned? (Two)
- ◆ What is the first stroke? (Croquet)

- ◆ Where should the croqueted ball be sent? (Hoop 3. Explain why)
- ◆ Where should the striker's ball be sent? (Near pivot. Explain why)
- ◆ Play the croquet stroke.
- ◆ How many strokes remain? (One)
- ◆ What should this stroke be? (Roquet)
- ◆ Make the roquet.
- ◆ How many strokes have been earned? (Two)
- ◆ What should the first stroke be? (Croquet)
- ◆ What type of stroke? (Take-off to pioneer)
- ◆ Where is an ideal spot to send the striker's ball? (Close to pioneer)

The demonstration break is now in a similar situation to that set up at the start and the whole process can be repeated by making hoop two followed by hoop three. The pattern of strokes needed to sustain a four-ball break will have started to become clear to beginners. Do not expect immediate assimilation. If the answers to any of the above questions come without lengthy pondering, it is time to drop them and move on more quickly.

In small groups (two, or three, or four) members play through a four-ball break. The balls should be set up at the start with an easy roquet near hoop one, pivot ball and pioneer ball at hoop two in position. Members of the group take shots in succession, each time explaining what it is they are trying to achieve. If the shots do not succeed, they should either take the shot again or place the ball(s) in the intended position(s).

If there is more than one group, a start can be made at hoop three, using secondary colours. The group will try to sustain a four-ball break of four hoops.

Bisques

It will be coming clear to some, if not all, of the beginners that an extensive break is possible provided that the balls are all placed in suitable positions initially, and that the shots all end up as planned. Doubt will be expressed that this ever happens in reality.

The notion of handicaps and bisques can now be introduced. A demonstration of how a four-ball break can be created from a seemingly unpromising situation by the use of one or two bisques is a convincing way of showing the constructive power of bisques.

Lesson Five

EQUIPMENT:

Lawns or half lawns, mallets, two balls for each player.

Revision

Allow free practice. Observe the individuals in action. Start the more formal revision by reminding the group of the way to produce the basic strokes.

Straight Rushes

The technique of nudging a ball into a more favourable position will have been noted from the demonstration and practise of three-hoop and four-ball breaks. It will be readily accepted that a nudge can be more than a matter of a few inches or a foot or two. A demonstration of a nudge of several yards makes quite plain how much ground may be gained by a stroke of this type, and illustrates the need for a more suitable term for this type of shot. The term 'rush' can now be introduced and the way to produce a straight rush can be demonstrated.

Place two balls about one foot apart, take up the stance for a normal drive and rush the forward ball about the distance of half a court. Ask the members to observe that the striker's ball stopped almost dead with nearly all the momentum being transferred to the roqueted ball. Remind them that a rush is simply a roquet executed with a view to placing the roqueted ball into a more advantageous position. (Some may not immediately grasp that the position of the striker's ball is unimportant, since it is picked up to take croquet from the position of the roqueted ball.)

Repeat the demonstration for a rush of a different strength, to bring out the point that a rush may be employed for short distances as well as long ones. The aim should be to hit the ball at the bottom of the swing or very slightly on the upswing, causing it to skid along the ground rather than roll.

Emphasise that it is important to maintain the concentration on the ball at one's feet and not to look towards the ball to be rushed. Otherwise, there is the danger of swaying forward, hitting the ball on the downswing and causing it to jump. It is quite interesting to demonstrate this effect.

Members practise straight rushes. The balls should be placed about one foot apart and rushes of different distances can be practised. If members pair up, they can rush balls to and from each other, gradually standing further apart. If some players cannot avoid making the ball jump, they may be advised to stand a couple of inches further back from the ball.

The Cut Rush

It will be readily understood that it is often necessary to rush a ball at an angle. If a ball, say **R**, is to be rushed to the right, by **U** say, members will volunteer that **R** has to be roqueted somewhere on the left. To achieve a more precise answer, ask where a mallet would have to strike **R** to send it in the desired direction. Indicate the spot with the finger.

Place another ball, say **K**, in contact with this spot to indicate the position of **U** when it strikes **R**. The correct aiming point for **U** will be at the centre of **K**. (Many players make the mistake of aiming at the contact spot and fail to achieve the correct degree of cut.)

Remove the **K** and ask someone to indicate where its centre was. Stalk this point and play the stroke. The striker's ball will not stop dead for a cut rush and this indicates the need for extra strength in the shot. Some players may have difficulty in visualising the centre of a missing ball; if so, place the fourth ball, **Y**, in line with **U** and **K** before removing **K**, then aim at **Y**.

Of course, the use of auxiliary balls is not allowed in play, but it is useful for beginners to get used to the cut rush. Players who have a good eye and an instinctive feel for where to aim may not need to find an aiming point. Some beginners will still mistakenly feel that the position of the striker's ball is relevant after this stroke and it is worth emphasising that **U** is a ball in hand and has to be picked up for the croquet stroke.

Members practise cut rushes. The balls should be placed about one foot apart and only gently-angled cuts should be practised initially. Hoops, the peg, or bisque sticks set in the ground may be used as targets.

The Use of Two Balls on a Yard-Line

Set up a situation, not uncommon in games, with an easy roquet for **R** and **Y**, with **K** and **U** near to each other on the yard-line, and the red clip on any hoop.

Demonstrate the following series of strokes:

- ◆ Roquet **Y** with **R**.

Take off to be close to **K** and **U**. Aim to take off to a position that gives a double target and explain the benefits of so doing.

- ◆ Roquet either ball.
- ◆ Take off to a position that gives a rush to red's hoop.
- ◆ Play the rush; this gives a clear demonstration of how much ground may be gained by a good rush.

Members practise a similar manoeuvre, using different positions of the red clip (they can be imagined) to show that the rush can be to any part of the court.

The Use of Rushes to Make Croquet Strokes in a Break Easier

Demonstrate how croquet strokes may be made much simpler by rushing part way towards the pivot ball in a four-ball break. Two or three hoops are sufficient.

Members play a doubles game from 3-back to peg. Each side may have a specific number of bisques, say six. It is instructive for the partners in a side to take alternate shots during a break, explaining to the other participants what they are trying to achieve with each shot. Members will learn much from talking to one another in this way.

Lesson Six

It is worth considering delaying a sixth lesson to a later stage when the beginners will have had opportunities to practise what has been learned and to play games. Much of the material becomes assimilated better as games are played, and a sixth lesson can be used to clear up any queries that may have arisen and to revise any strokes that the participants have found difficult.

Revision

After initial free practice revise any strokes that the participants request. It is likely that revision of the spectrum of strokes from stop-shots to full rolls will be necessary.

Start of a Game

Explain the choices available to the winner and loser of the toss at the start of a game, and point out that it is customary for the player with the lower handicap to toss the coin.

Demonstrate the conventional start of a game. Briefly indicate possible ways of continuing once four balls have been placed on the lawn.

Show how it is possible to set up a four-ball break by the use of a bisque if the balls are situated in reasonably suitable positions.

14-Point Games

Play doubles or singles games with bisques, say six, for each player. Alternate stroke doubles keeps both partners involved in the play. Time-share Croquet (see below) also avoids one pair or one player hogging the play.

Time-Share Croquet

There is no time during a normal weekend course for the players to have a full game of croquet. However, if approximately one hour is left at the end of a day for play, then this time could be used to play 'time-share' croquet. The time should be shared reasonably equally between players. The players should be into pairs, two pairs to double-bank on each court with a coach to supervise. As far as possible, players of equal ability should be paired off. The intention is to reinforce the previous session on constructing breaks using bisques, and at the same time to give the players the opportunity to put into practice the techniques covered earlier in the day.

The available time is split into an even number of intervals of approximately ten minutes. Each player has his full complement of bisques and plays his own game with both his clips starting on hoop 1 at the beginning of his first interval of play. He must set up a four-ball break and continue with it during his time on the court. He is not allowed to quit the court before the end of his time interval. The coach keeps the time and at the end of each time interval blows a whistle, rings a bell, or otherwise indicates audibly that the interval has ended. (One coach may do this for all of the courts.) The in-player must then stop immediately, leaving the balls as they lie, and place his clips on the appropriate hoops. The out-player now becomes the in-player and must assess the situation with regard to his own clip positions, setting up and playing a break with one of his balls.

The game is started with **R/Y** about three yards apart on the east boundary, **U/K** in second corner and tice position on the west boundary. Ray will start first. The players should be encouraged to play reasonably quickly, and the time intervals should not be so short that the first player cannot get past hoop 2. Otherwise, it would be too easy for the second player to set up his first break. An alternative and somewhat quicker start is for the coach to throw the balls on to the court either at random or in chosen places.

The out-player should be encouraged to criticize the play of the in-player to the coach. If the players are too equally matched on ability and speed of play, the first player may have an advantage because he is more likely to find a position to his advantage at the start of his turn. The coach can always adjust the length of each time interval to avoid this, provided that each player has the same total time on court.

There will be insufficient time to complete the game, so it does not really matter who is the 'winner'. Nevertheless, if you want to introduce a more competitive element, the winner could be the player with the higher hoop/bisques-used ratio. This works quite well for players paired with approximately the same handicap. If the handicaps are disparate, the winner could be the one with the greater percentage gain (or lower percentage loss) on the theoretical 26 points/handicap multiple.

Players usually enter into the spirit of this artificial form of croquet, but they may need to be reminded at the end of the time interval to leave the balls as they lie and that the second player is not merely continuing the break of the first player.

General

Answer any queries that members may raise.

Consider the desirability of showing faults that may occur near to hoops.

Consider explaining the law on wiring lifts.

Conclusion

At the end of the course players have to be encouraged to continue to play and practise. A small tournament for the beginners could be arranged.

Improvers' Course

The requirements are one lawn with two sets of balls and one qualified Grade 1 coach per 4 players; if trainee coaches are taking part, two trainee coaches may be assigned to a lawn under the supervision of a qualified coach.

The following notes are given in the order of the standard programme, but this may be modified by the course leader.

The standard course is largely revision of the Beginners' course but covers techniques to a greater level and prepares players for tournament and match play.

Croquet Strokes

This session is a revision of what the class learned as raw beginners. They may have picked up bad habits during the brief time that they have been playing and will almost certainly be having problems in producing some of the strokes effectively. The coach can look back through the beginners' lessons for more detail on croquet strokes.

The Drive

The coach should demonstrate a straight drive croquet stroke and comment that the stroke is played in the same way as a single ball shot. The hands should be in the same position and the mallet should follow through. Having made the stroke, pace out the distances travelled by both balls. The ratio should come to between 1:3 and 1:4.

Explain that there is no 'correct' ratio but that the weight of the mallet and an individual's method of producing the stroke (as well as the type of balls being used) will have an effect. The ratio of about 1:4 can be given as a rough average.

The class should try the exercise for themselves a few times, using different strengths, and report back what ratios have been produced. The hope is that each member will have produced a fairly consistent ratio. Explain that it is desirable to have some idea of the positions to which each ball will roll following this croquet stroke from a standard position.

The Stop Shot

This stroke is one that many of the class are likely to have trouble with.

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. The technique of stopping the shot by grounding the heel of the mallet at the moment of impact with the ball should be demonstrated at this stage. It should also be explained to the class that being relaxed during the stroke should enable them to improve their ratio.

Class members individually practise the stop shot, with the aim of improving their ratio over the course of the lesson. When the stroke is mastered it should be possible to achieve a ratio of 1:8 or even more. Explain that the best ratios are generally produced by lighter mallets.

The Roll

The roll is a stroke that produces varying ratios, but for the purpose of this session the coach should concentrate on the half roll and the full roll. It is important to observe during the exercises that the players are neither pushing nor shepherding the ball.

Explain the factors that govern the degree of roll that is implanted on the striker's ball. These will be:

- ◆ the position of the feet in relation to the balls,
- ◆ the position of hands on mallet shaft,
- ◆ the degree of tilt of the mallet, and the stroke hitting downwards on the ball.
- ◆ the weight and the mallet head and the flexibility of the shaft

The coach should firstly demonstrate the half roll. The mallet should be slightly inclined towards the balls with the lower hand about half way down the shaft and the upper hand just below the top of the shaft. The striker's ball should be just in front of the feet with the body slightly stooped and the head over on the croqueted ball. The shot is played with a sharp downward movement causing the ball to be squeezed between ground and mallet. Often this will cause the striker's ball to jump.

The class should now practise the half roll and after each attempt check the ratio that they have achieved. The objective will be to achieve a consistent 1:2 ratio.

Now demonstrate a full roll. For this shot the hands should move further down the shaft, the lower hand being about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way down and the higher hand about $\frac{1}{2}$ way down. The mallet should be inclined at a greater angle than for the half roll. Again the balls should be just in front of the feet with the body crouched over the balls. The stroke should be played with minimal follow through to avoid pushing.

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 Croquet Strokes

The class should be familiar with split croquet strokes but will probably be uncertain about the techniques necessary to produce the required result. They may well have been taught the split angle or divided line method. Splitting the angle will probably be the easier method for the class to understand and since neither is accurate in all situations it is better to stick with this for the session.

The procedure for setting up a split shot should now be established:

- ◆ place the striker's ball so that the line of centres of the two balls points towards the chosen target;
- ◆ determine the line of aim for the mallet;
- ◆ strike the ball with suitable strength.

The class can now practise split shots using suitable targets using markers, bisques or whatever is convenient. Emphasise the need to determine the line of aim and then to trust it. There will be considerable temptation for the players to finish the stroke by swinging the mallet in an arc towards the intended target for the striker's ball. This should be corrected immediately.

Hoop Approaches

The previous section on split croquet strokes will lead into the way an approach shot is made. Take two balls, say **Y** and **K**, with **Y** being for the hoop for the purpose of the demonstration. Place **K** three or four feet from the playing side of a hoop, slightly to one side. Set up the scene by saying that 'we', playing **Y**, have just roqueted **K** and we now hope to make the hoop. State that we generally want **K**, the croqueted ball, to go to the other side of the hoop, and indicate a spot about six feet beyond the hoop and a little to one side. Then ask a series of questions.

- ◆ Where must we place **Y** to make **K** go towards that position? Ask someone to place the ball. Ask the others if they agree with the placing.
- ◆ Now that **K** has been dealt with, where do we want **Y** to go? (Not through the hoop, but directly in front about one foot away.)
- ◆ In what direction must we aim the mallet?
- ◆ What sort of shot is it? (Make sure that the initial demonstrations of this shot are straightforward drives requiring neither stop shot nor roll.)

Perform the shot and run the hoop aiming to get close to the **K** ball and ask why we placed the **K** ball beyond the hoop?

Repeat the demonstration from a slightly different angle to the hoop. Ask the same series of questions.

Individual practice follows, each member taking two balls to a hoop. Ensure that relatively straightforward hoop approaches are attempted.

Straight Rushes

The rush can now be introduced and the way to produce a straight rush can be demonstrated. Remind them that a rush is simply a roquet executed with a view to placing the roqueted ball into a more advantageous position. Place two balls about one foot apart, take up the stance for a normal drive and rush the forward ball about the distance of half a court.

The aim should be to hit the ball at the bottom of the swing or very slightly on the upswing, causing it to skid along the ground rather than roll. Emphasise that it is important to maintain the concentration on the ball at one's feet, keep the body still and swing through with the mallet. Do not look towards the ball to be rushed; otherwise, there is the danger of leaning forward, hitting the ball on the downswing and causing it to jump.

Members practise straight rushes. The balls should be placed about one foot apart and rushes of different distances can be practised. If members pair up, they can rush balls to and from each other, gradually standing further apart. If some players cannot avoid making the ball jump, they may be advised to stand a couple of inches further back from the ball.

The Cut Rush

It will be readily understood that it is often necessary to rush a ball at an angle. Show where the impact of the striker's ball should be on the object ball, and thus where the mallet should be aimed.

The class should practise cut rushes with the balls being placed about one foot apart and only gentle-angled cuts should be practised initially. Use bisque sticks set in the ground or markers to be used as targets.

Openings

It is useful to run through the standard tice opening, explaining the reasons for it. This can take the form of a class discussion, encouraging the players to think for themselves. It is not necessary to go deeply into the subject at this level it is enough to get the class to understand the reasons why the standard opening has developed in the way that it has.

The common tice opening is discussed below. We assume in all cases that Blue (**U**) plays first, followed by Red (**R**), Black (**K**) and Y (**Y**) in that order.

U plays to 6 yards N of corner IV. **U** occupies the fourth corner area, with the option of being joined by **K**.

R plays to 10 yards N of corner I. **R/Y** lays a tice with the intention of shooting with **Y** from corner I, if **U/K** joins up; if **R** misses, **R** and **Y** will be widely separated for a good defensive position.

Alternatively, **K** shoots at **R** from corner I. **U/K** does not want to leave **Y** with a 10 yard 'free' shot at **R**, so elects to try to move **R**. If the shot hits, **K** can play a thick take-off to **U**, moving **R** further from A baulk. If **K** misses, **R/Y** has no easy prospect of a break with the longer, angled shot from A or B baulk. If **R/Y** misses, there is the possibility for **K** of a return shot.

Explain what can happen if **Y** joins with **R** on the West boundary if **U/K** are joined up on the East Boundary.

It is useful to ask the class what openings have been used against them in games they have played and use them in discussions.

Leaves

The coach should run this session along simple lines. The class cannot be expected to construct complex leaves and it is usually sufficient to get them to concentrate on finishing their turn with their own two balls together and their opponent's two apart and in positions that are useful. Finishing with a useful rush should also be encouraged. Topics that could usefully be discussed include:

Making sure that the opponent has no short shot or double target. Also take care that you are not giving a wiring lift.

Construct a position where you can make some progress if your opponent misses. Consider a squeeze (one opposing ball at each of your hoops) to maximise your chances of progressing.

Try to avoid the situation where your opponent has an easy break if they hit in. As an example, try not to lay up at your opponent's hoop.

Where possible make the last hoop off an opponent ball.

Timed Endings

The class may have little experience of the regulation governing timed games and the coach should discuss with the group the laws and tactics that arise in these situations.

When a time limit has been imposed on a game, if possible the players should arrange for an independent person to be responsible for announcing audibly that the time limit has been reached. If this is not possible they should arrange it between themselves.

Once time has been called, play continues for an extension period in which the striker completes his turn and his opponent plays one subsequent turn. For this purpose only the striker's turn ends and his opponent's turn begins as soon as he strikes his ball.

The side that has scored the greater number of points at the end of the extension period is the winner. If each side has scored the same number of points, play continues and the side for which the next point is scored is the winner.

No half-bisque or bisque may be used during the extension period. If points are level after the end of the extension period, any half-bisque or bisques which remain may then be played.

Tactics

- ◆ You should play at your normal speed and you are entitled to take your normal care and consideration. You must not waste time deliberately but you may, of course, play defensively.
- ◆ The choice of tactics is yours according to the spirit in which you play the game.
- ◆ If you are a few hoops ahead with time approaching towards the end of your turn, join up with your partner ball but make certain that all the balls are near the boundaries.
- ◆ If you are ahead and in play as time is called or about to be called, scatter all the balls to the boundaries. Do not join up.
- ◆ If you are many hoops ahead with 5 to 10 minutes left, consider yielding the innings to a weak player by placing your balls in or near corners. You should not do this against a strong player.
- ◆ If the scores are level when time is called, you cannot peg out a ball in handicap play unless both your balls have run rover or an opponent ball has been pegged out.
- ◆ If you are behind with time approaching, you will have to be aggressive whether you have the innings or not. Your opponent is not going to make things easy for you.

Laws Session

This session should be conducted as a class exercise on the lawn. Many players at this level are only vaguely aware of the laws of the game and the intention here is to remind them about the points of law that can occur during a game. Discuss with the class the following:

General Laws.

- ◆ The position when a ball starts to run a hoop, covering the points on hoop and roquet.
- ◆ Placing of balls on the yard line, especially corner balls and where their placing is restricted by the position of other balls. Include the laws concerning yard line cannons.

At this point you may wish to cover the simple type of cannon (perhaps corner one or the worm). If you do deal with the worm cannon, make sure that you point out the pitfalls.

Wiring

- ◆ Review law 13 relating to wiring lifts, remembering to include the position where the swing is impeded. Point out the possibility of hitting the non-wired ball into baulk and the situations where this can be of use. It could also be useful to cover the situation where a player can be responsible for the position of an opponent ball without having actually hit it.

Faults and Errors

- ◆ The main laws governing faults (law 28) and how they are remedied. Distinguish between those errors that are faults and those that are not and mention how the choice of remedy differs.

Calling referees and Umpires

- ◆ Cover the situations where a referee should be called and also those situations that require the services of an umpire. Where possible an umpire should be an independent person with a good degree of experience.

3-Ball Endings

When considering pegging out an opponent ball take into account the strength of the opposition and the relative positions of the two backward balls. At this level of experience pegging out a ball of an experienced opponent will probably result in failure to win the game. If the 2-ball player has bisques remaining then they will be devalued with only 3 balls left on the lawn.

For the 2-ball player

- ◆ Unless time is near, care and caution should be adopted.
- ◆ Do not leave your opponent free shots and doubles: guard the boundary whenever possible.
- ◆ Give up the innings rather than lay up in the middle of the lawn.
- ◆ If you have a bisque left, use it to set up a 3-ball break or pass your opponent's hoop quickly.
- ◆ Consider pegging out your forward ball if your other ball is well ahead.

For the 1-ball player

- ◆ If your opponent's balls are together, always shoot if you can do so without conceding an easy 3-ball break with a missed shot.
- ◆ If you cannot shoot, look for threatening positions; thin wire or on a boundary equidistant from opponent's separated balls.
- ◆ If opponent's balls are apart, consider taking position.
- ◆ Make the most of what chances you get. You need to play aggressively and take more chances than you would in normal play.

Use Of Bisques

General Principles

- ◆ Always consider which ball to roquet first, if you intend to take a bisque. Often the best choice is to go to the furthest ball first, which may well be on, or near a boundary. This means that the ball can be shot at hard without fear of finishing outside your comfortable roqueting distance. If you miss the ball, you may well finish with a useful rush.
- ◆ Priority is usually a good pioneer at the first hoop of the break. Look for situations where your opponent has left a ball, or balls, at one of your hoops.
- ◆ If you have a half bisque, use this to start setting up your break and then follow it with a full bisque so that you can run a hoop having set up your break.
- ◆ During your break **DO NOT** attempt a shot that is unlikely to come off. If faced with this situation think how you can best use another bisque to tidy up all the balls and then continue with your break. This sometimes applies to the situation where there is a very long or angled hoop to run.
- ◆ As a general principle, do not take a bisque unless you can see that it will enable you to make at least your current hoop and the next one.

Bronze Course

The requirements are one lawn with two sets of balls and one qualified Grade 1 coach per 4 players; if trainee coaches are taking part, two trainee coaches may be assigned to a lawn under the supervision of a qualified coach.

The following notes are given in the order of the standard programme, but this may be modified by the course leader.

Openings

The significance of the opening and the possible variations is sometimes lost on players, and the coach should stress the importance of the opening as a fight to get the innings with the first chance of a break.

It is useful to run through the standard tice opening, explaining the reasons for it. This can take the form of a class discussion, encouraging the players to think for themselves.

The common tice opening is discussed below. We assume in all cases that Blue (**U**) plays first, followed by Red (**R**), Black (**K**) and Y (**Y**) in that order.

U plays to 6 yards N of corner IV. **U** occupies the fourth corner area, with the option of being joined by **K**.

R plays to 10 yards N of corner I. **R/Y** lays a tice with the intention of shooting with **Y** from corner I, if **U/K** joins up; if **R** misses, **R** and **Y** will be widely separated for a good defensive position.

Alternatively, **K** shoots at **R** from corner I. **U/K** does not want to leave **Y** with a 10 yard 'free' shot at **R**, so elects to try to move **R**. If the shot hits, **K** can play a thick take-off to **U**, moving **R** further from A baulk. If **K** misses, **R/Y** has no easy prospect of a break with the longer, angled shot from A or B baulk. If **R/Y** misses, there is the possibility for **K** of a return shot.

Split Croquet Strokes

The effect of 'Pull' and 'Drag' on croquet strokes should be demonstrated by the coach. 'Pull' affects the croqueted ball and causes it to move away from the line joining the centres towards the line of swing. 'Drag' affects the striker's ball which is drawn in towards the line of mallet swing. The way to show this is to play three split croquet strokes from the same spot with the balls aligned in the same direction and with an identical swing line; the strokes should be played with stop shot, drive and roll actions.

Don't be dogmatic about the line of aim or swing line. Explain the two commonly used methods of either splitting the distance or splitting the angle and leave it at that.

The class should try this exercise for themselves to reinforce the idea in their minds. A common error in players of this level of experience is to turn the swing line of the mallet towards the point where they want the striker's ball to finish. This exercise provides an opportunity for the coach to check that their follow-through is along the line of aim.

Hoop Approaches

At this level the most important point to get across is the necessity of the player to stop and consider where he wants to go after running the hoop. Many players attending this class will invariably approach the hoop with a roll irrespective of the starting position. They will do this because they find that they can position the striker's ball more accurately for the hoop running stroke.

It must be emphasised that in order to play breaks successfully the final resting position of the croqueted ball is also important.

- ◆ If you want a forward rush, play a stop shot approach when close to the hoop aiming to put the ball 4 to 5 feet past the hoop, or a drive or half roll approach to put the ball 6 to 8 feet past the hoop when you are further away.
- ◆ When seeking a sideways rush, send the croqueted ball 2 or 3 feet wide of the hoop to allow a greater margin for error.
- ◆ If you wish to have a rush back into the court play the stroke with a roll putting the croqueted ball a little past the hoop and to the side.

Having decided on the stroke to be played, concentrate on the position of the striker's ball. No point in having the croqueted ball in the right position if you then cannot run the hoop!

Stress the need for repetitive, successful practice rather than moving on after the first successful attempt. Practice should be started with each player at a hoop with a couple of balls. Approaches should be practised from different positions in front of the hoops and after each approach the hoop should be run to get the required rush.

The Four-Ball Break

The aim of this session is to get players to improve their four-ball breaks, by thinking ahead to avoid problems, and by learning how to deal with problems that may occur. The initial session is best done by one coach with the aid of a magnetic demonstration board. It is much easier to play shots on the board than on the lawn! Remember, however, that you can move magnetic discs around a board much faster than most people can follow, particularly if your arms and body are getting in the way. If such a board is not available, one coach can demonstrate the points on the lawn whilst another commentates, but this requires some rehearsal beforehand and careful coordination during the demonstration.

Most players will be familiar with the principles of the four-ball break, so that you can start with an analysis of the beginner's four-ball break, i.e. pivot by the peg, hoop run too hard, pilot roqueted back behind the hoop leading to a big half-roll with the possibility of furniture in the way.

Explain that good players make the game easy for themselves by thinking ahead and by controlled play. Show that the previous exercise on hoop approaches has practical value in the four-ball break; a useful rush after a hoop makes it easier to place a pioneer and get on to the pivot with a drive or stop shot.

For group practice with the normal four players per court it is not possible to have all four practising at the same time in the session. For this reason, the players should be split into two groups. One group can practise the four-ball break from hoop 1 to the peg with two players per court, whilst a coach covers some of the laws of the game, such as replacement of line and

corner balls, endings on time etc., with the other group. The groups change places mid-way through the session.

Laws Session

This session should be conducted as a class exercise on the lawn. Many players are only vaguely aware of the laws of the game and the intention here is to remind them about the points of law that can occur during a game. Discuss with the class the following:

- ◆ The position when a ball starts to run a hoop, covering the points on hoop and roquet.
- ◆ Placing of balls on the yard line, especially corner balls and where their placing is restricted by the position of other balls. Include the laws concerning yard line cannons.
- ◆ Review law 13 relating to wiring lifts, remembering to include the position where the swing is impeded.
- ◆ The main laws governing faults (law 28) and how they are remedied.

Cannons

First Corner Cannon

The croqueted ball is sent to hoop 2 and the roqueted ball is rushed to hoop 1. This is a standard cannon that requires a fair amount of practice to perfect. For an initial try, according to most books, the balls should be placed at rather less than a right-angle with the line of centres pointing slightly to the west of hoop 2; the swing should be towards hoop 6. The stroke is best played with a normal drive for the most consistent results. A good exposition of how to experiment with the position of the balls and the swing line, should the initial attempts be unsuccessful, is given in 'Croquet: The Skills of the Game' - please see the appendices for further details of books.

Constructing Breaks Using Bisques

In the descriptions below the balls are denoted by **U** (blue), **R** (red), **K** (black) and **Y** (yellow). It is assumed in the discussions that the player with **U/K** will play first.

Review first of all the general principles of bisque-taking:

- ◆ The top priority must be to get a good pioneer at the first hoop of the intended break. However, this need not be done at the start of the turn, and it may be better to leave this to a later stroke.
- ◆ The second priority is to get a reasonable pioneer at the second hoop of the intended break.
- ◆ The final priority is to get a tolerable pivot.
- ◆ Pioneers should be placed in position from as short a distance as possible. It follows, therefore, that the pioneer to the first hoop of the break should be placed from closer range than the pioneer for the second hoop of the break, except when the latter is already close to the hoop, and this will influence which ball goes where.
- ◆ In general, the break should be set up before making a hoop, and it will pay to use all of the balls and strokes available.

- ◆ The choice of ball to go to first will be important, and this may well be the ball that is furthest away. Look for balls that are in a yard or so from the yard-lines, as these can be rushed into court easily.
- ◆ Once the decision has been taken to use a bisque, safety in setting up the break is paramount.

There is no doubt that in handicap play the most dangerous opponent one can have is the player with bisques who appreciates how powerful they can be. Alas, time and again one sees players neglect opportunities to set up an easy four-ball break with the use of one bisque. This session is intended to remedy those deficiencies, and is held with the whole group of players, preferably with the aid of a magnetic demonstration board.

The first thing players who have bisques in hand should think about at the start of their turn should be 'what can I do with one bisque?' This should be their automatic reaction even if the opponent has broken down and has given away the innings. If a four-ball break can be set up easily with the use of one bisque, then the opportunity should be taken. Remember, too, that the player should review the situation with respect to each of his balls and that it may be advisable to play with a ball that has a longer shot but would have a more advantageous position, if the shot is missed.

Fig 2.1a can be used as an example. All the clips are on hoop 1; **R/Y** to play with **U** and **K** in corners I and IV respectively. This is a position that might arise at the start of a game where **K** has been played into corner IV and **U** has had a shot through **R/Y**. Invite the class to consider the position for a few moments and to give then their suggestions how **R/Y** should proceed. You might forestall any suggestion that **R/Y** should rush **Y** to hoop 1, make it and roll towards hoop 2 by pointing out that a wide join on the south or west boundaries will leave **R/Y** with a worse position and the prospect of a much longer take-off to **U** and **K**.

Some players might suggest rushing **Y** to the hoop, preferably on the non-playing side, taking off to **U** and playing a stop shot approach from the corner. However, this is not normally a stroke within the compass of most players at this level. If it fails there is then the problem of getting **K** out of corner IV without a big split roll after a bisque has been taken.

Clearly, **Y** can be rushed as the pioneer for hoop 1 and examination of the position, bearing in mind the general principles, will reveal that **U** should be the pioneer for hoop 2. It is nearer and there is no furniture in the way. However, it is better to deal with **K** before that; therefore take off to **K**, roquet it and play it into court but on no account should any attempt be made to get near **U** on this croquet stroke. (A mishit stroke could send **R** off the south boundary some distance from **U**, forcing a bisque to be taken with no guarantee of hitting **U**. Remember, once the decision has been taken to use a bisque, safety is paramount.) The croquet stroke should be played with a normal straight drive taking care to leave an unobstructed shot to **U**. A bisque has to be taken before hoop 1 can be made, so it does not matter if **R** hits **U** or not. Leave for later discussion the best position to play **K**. For the moment, it will suffice that **K** is out of the corner.

Assume that **R** has missed **U**; the bisque is taken, **U** is roqueted and played to hoop 2, leaving **R** near **Y**. You might now invite the class to consider what is the best position to croquet **K** from corner IV. Somewhere by the peg, or better between hoop 1 and the peg, is an obvious position for the pivot, but remember **K** can be used again after the bisque is taken before hoop 1 is run. Consider, therefore, what might go wrong with the croquet stroke from corner I. One danger is that **R** may finish wired from **Y**, another is that **Y** may have been rushed initially a yard or two too far and may be roqueted even further from the hoop. **K** should therefore be played

somewhere near hoop 1, in a position where it would be well nigh impossible to become wired from both K and Y, and where K may be roqueted before Y.

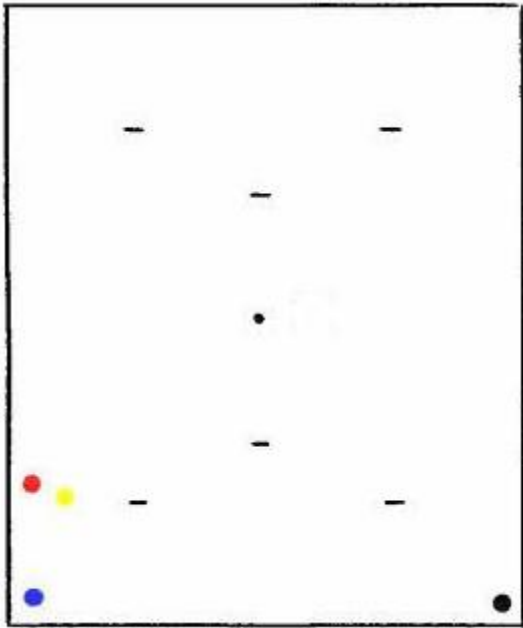


Fig 2.1a
R/Y to play; all clips on 1

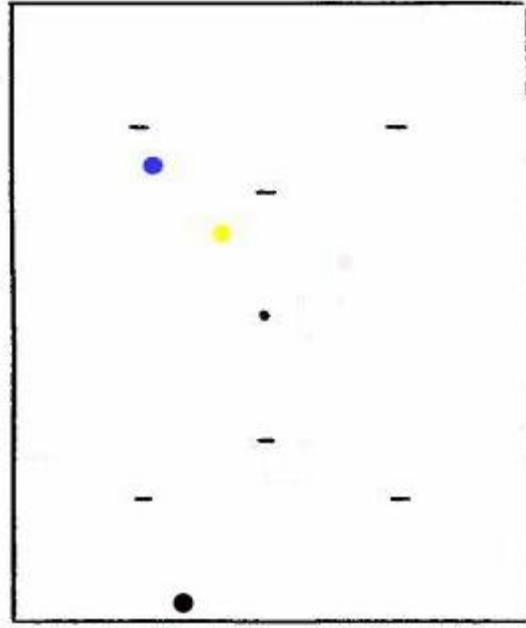


Fig 2.1b
R for 1b, has just run 6 and roqueted Y

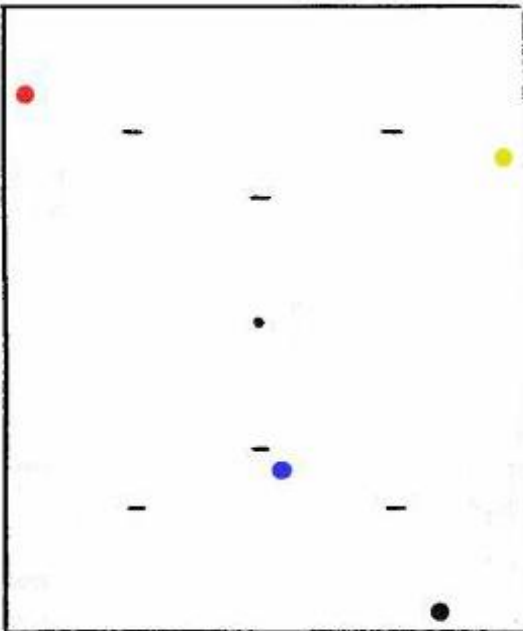


Fig 2.1c
R/Y to play; R for 4

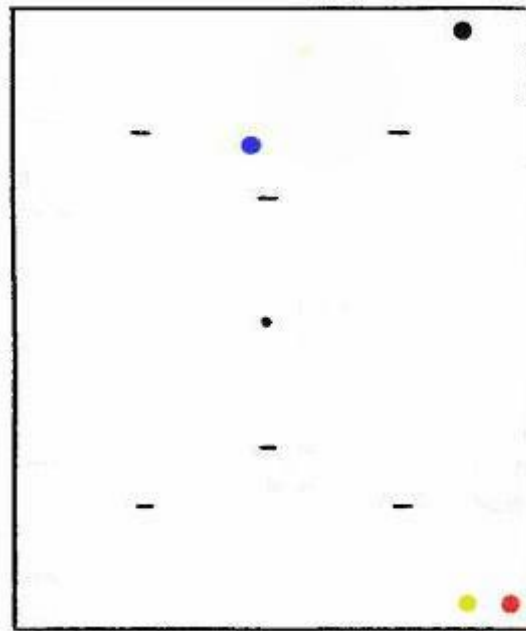


Fig 2.1d
R/Y to play; R for 5

Analysis of play along these lines, especially the safety aspects, will be new to most players. There is really no such thing as an unlucky player; there are plenty of careless, or thoughtless, players.

Fig 2.1 gives a further three exercises in bisque-taking. Each member of the class should be given a sheet with these exercises to consider in the evening, with a view to discussion the following day.

When a player has only one or two bisques available, the strategy of using those bisques arises. A bisque has its greatest potential if used early to set up a four-ball break. On the other hand, if the player cannot keep the break going on the more difficult outer hoops, it may pay to use the bisque to set up the break from hoop 3, ensuring its continuation through the easier hoops 4 to 1-back.

Game Strategy When Receiving Bisques

It will be useful to have the magnetic board available for this session. The coach should make and develop the following points:

Games Against 'A' Class Players (handicaps below 2)

- ◆ If you win the toss you must put your opponent in.
- ◆ If you lose the toss and your opponent puts you in, make sure that the leave at the end of the third turn is defensive. You do not want to provide your 'A' class opponent with an easy break if he hits on the 4th turn. Do not join up on the third turn.
- ◆ Do not try to make a break with only three balls on the lawn.
- ◆ Bisques should be used to set up a 4-ball break as quickly as possible (i.e. on 4th turn of the game if your opponent misses) and take your break round to the peg using bisques as necessary. Any half bisque should be used early in the game and followed with a full bisque. Use all your bisques in the fourth and sixth or fifth and seventh turns. The coach must discourage any suggestion that a bisque should be saved until the end and used to peg out.
- ◆ The first break should be taken to the peg with a defensive leave if at least half the bisques remain.
- ◆ With less than half the bisques remaining, the first ball should still be taken to the peg but this time with an attacking leave.
- ◆ If the first break stops short of the peg, the player will need another turn to finish and the opponent a further opportunity to hit in.
- ◆ The class should be discouraged from trying strokes that are unlikely to succeed, e.g. long or very angled hoops. It is better to plan to play a bisque and avoid a potential disaster.

Games Against 'B' Class Players (handicaps 2 - 5)

- ◆ Here the number of bisques given will be smaller and there is not the need to spend them on the 4th or 5th turn unless there is good opportunity. Wait until a favourable situation arises to make effective use of your bisques and then use your bisques to keep your break going.
- ◆ Bisques still have their greatest value when used to set up and continue a 4-ball break from an early hoop, but it is easier to gain control of a break from hoops 4 to 1-back.

Games Against 'C' Class Players (handicaps 6 - 11)

- ◆ There will be few if any bisques available in these games. Any that are available should be used when a good chance of making a break from one bisque appears.
- ◆ If giving bisques, be wary of leaving situations where the opponent can easily set up a break using a single bisque.

Bisque-Taking Against 'A' Class Players - Classic Opening

This is another session that is best tackled first with the aid of a magnetic demonstration board. The discussion below assumes that this is the case. Players will later have the opportunity to put into practice what they have learned from the theory.

Players should first be reminded that they have nothing to fear from A class players, particularly scratch and minus players. With the latter they have their full complement of bisques, or more. Provided that they use their bisques sensibly and give the opponent as few opportunities as possible, the game could be as easy as a practice session. There is no reason to feel intimidated or nervous in the presence of an expert opponent.

The general principle involved is to go for the quick kill. Use bisques to set up and continue four-ball breaks as soon as possible: the longer you let the game continue, the greater the danger of losing. In particular, the player must not let the expert get a ball round first.

The opening is therefore very important and the player must avoid at all costs giving a relatively easy break to the expert. For this reason, if the player goes in first, he must abandon the normal opening and play defensively. Playing balls into corners II and IV on 1st and 3rd turns will make it extremely difficult for the expert to get a break on the fourth turn. If he attempts to get a break and fails, he will usually leave the balls to the advantage of the player on the fifth turn.

On the other hand, if the player wins the toss, he must put the expert in. This gives the player the first opportunity to establish a break with four balls on the court and he must seek to take advantage of this. Once again the normal tice opening is avoided in favour of the 'classic' opening described below.

The expert will normally play his first ball (say, **R**) to the east boundary in the vicinity of hoop 4. The player should then play his first ball (say, **U**) on to the court somewhere to the southeast of the peg. The exact point to aim for will depend upon the individual player and is best left until the principles of the opening have been established. If the expert is trying to make things as difficult as possible for the player on the fourth turn, he will play his second ball into corner II.

The player then shoots at **R** on the east boundary and takes a bisque (or preferably a half-bisque, if one is available), if he misses. He then roquets **R** and croquets it with a normal drive as the pioneer at hoop 2, leaving **K** close to **U**. If the rush on **U** towards the first hoop presents itself, it is taken, but the important thing about the first croquet stroke is to get **R** as a reasonable pioneer at hoop 2. After roqueting **U**, it is croqueted to hoop 1 as the pioneer, taking care to leave **K** with a clear, but long, shot at **Y** in the second corner. It is likely that this shot will be missed, so the second bisque is taken here. With the pioneers already in position at hoops 1 and 2 it is easy to play **Y** into court as a pivot and continue. The opportunity will also be there to tidy up the pioneer at hoop 2, if necessary. (It is obviously better that **R** should be deep rather than short at hoop 2. **Y** can then replace **R** as the pioneer, leaving a rush on **R** into court.)

Now the discussion can return to the position of U on turn two. This will depend upon the distance ratio of the player's normal drive croquet stroke from the east boundary, and will vary from player to player. It is up to each player to establish for himself where U should be positioned.

Admittedly, there is some risk in following this line of play against an expert in the top flight. If the expert roquets **R** on the third turn, there is an opportunity for a three-ball break. However, it is rare for such experts to play handicap games and the risk can usually be ignored. If the shot is missed on the third turn, the position is then easier for U/K, as the pioneer for hoop 2 can be placed from shorter range.

Group practice should start with each player playing the croquet drive from the east boundary, in order to establish where to put his first ball. This needs to be done several times for each player, and the spot where the striker's ball finishes marked. Make certain that the players are playing their normal drive to get the croqueted ball at least as far as hoop 2.

The turn should then be played through several times as far as hoop 1 by each player to imprint the sequence of strokes in their minds. It is surprising how many players get lost somewhere in the sequence. To save time, **R** and **Y** can be placed in position by hand by the spare player. U/K should, however, play the second turn on to the court but can then go straight to the east boundary on the assumption that his fourth turn shot has missed.

Note that hoop 1 should not be made before bringing Y out of the second corner, except when a good rush on U has left an easy hoop approach. The aim is to set up a very good four-ball break, not a weak three-ball break.

The Three-Ball Break

Physically weaker players often have difficulty with the split from hoop 1 to hoops 2 and 3, demanding as it does a fairly powerful three-quarter roll. If the shot is played with the lower hand too close to the head of the mallet and with the upper hand too high, the mallet head cannot move much faster than the lower hand. More leverage and a higher mallet head speed can be obtained with the hands closer together and further up the shaft.

The coach has the option of describing the principles of a good three-ball break on the magnetic board or on the lawn. If the latter is the case, then it is better to have a second coach to give a commentary rather than try to communicate with the class from the distant hoops or to have them trailing around with the demonstrator. Even if the magnetic board is used, and it is much easier to 'play' on the board, the class will usually want to see the coach in action. An all-round three-ball break is best left to the grade II coach who is also an 'A' class player. Demonstrations that require too many 'bisques' are counter-productive, as they emphasise the difficulty, rather than the control that makes the break easy.

Control around the hoops should be stressed. The aim should always be to get a useful rush after running a hoop, so that the next croquet stroke is simple and preferably straight. The placing of pioneers is particularly important to avoid loss of control. Pioneers at hoops 3, 1-back and 3-back should be shallow, i.e. on the non-playing side of the hoop, if there is any doubt about getting a useful rush after the preceding hoops. This will guard against the impossible split, if the pilot is roqueted to an awkward position. Even so, point out that the three-ball break is much more likely to crumble than the four-ball break, and that the fourth ball should be picked up as soon as convenient.

If the fourth ball is not available, players are often incredibly optimistic. Emphasise that it is much better to avoid a two-bisque disaster at a hoop, particularly if the pioneer at the next

hoop is poor, by taking a bisque to tidy up the break. This is particularly relevant around the more difficult outer hoops.

Four players per lawn is too many for convenience. During the practice session, therefore, the group should be split into two: one pair can practise the three-ball break whilst all the unoccupied pairs are gathered off the lawn to discuss the solutions to the 'homework' on bisque-taking. Depending upon the speed of the players, the break can start from hoop 1 or any later hoop.

For the players' first attempt the emphasis should be on playing a good three-ball break. To this end, playing by 'cheating' is good practice: if a ball is out of position the coach should put it in its proper position. This will help to reinforce the player's impression of what he is attempting to do. In later attempts the player should play as best he can, using as few bisques as possible to complete the turn.

Three-ball break practice is very useful for the intermediate player, employing, as it usually does, a wide variety of strokes, and it can be an enjoyable form of practice. It will also expose any weaknesses in a player's technique. Such weaknesses can then be reduced by more concentrated practice.

Three-Ball Endings

Three-ball endings are usually of great interest and provide the opportunity for tactics to play a greater part than usual in handicap play. The coach should first review the possibilities for the single ball player and the two-ball player. If no bisques are available to the single-ball player, he has to decide whether to shoot, lurk or take position at his next hoop. Taking position is rarely of value, except when the opponent's balls are well separated or the opponent is a very much weaker player. The lurk in a threatening position is useful, if a sensible shot is not available. Otherwise, the single-ball player should shoot as often as possible, provided that a missed shot does not give away a three-ball break.

The two-ball player without bisques has the choice of trying to make rapid progress with a three-ball break or of ignoring the opponent ball and seeking a wired position at end of each turn. The latter requires a great deal of skill and may offer more opportunities to the opponent if not done successfully. The former is therefore to be preferred, if the opponent is sufficiently aggressive. It follows, therefore, that the two-ball player should end his turn with a trap. An open dolly rush merely invites a shot, even from a long distance, as there is little to give away.

The simplified discussion above is not meant to be exhaustive, and the coach should amplify the discussion with examples of positions.

Silver Coaching Course

Introduction

This course leads on from the Bronze and is intended for those players who are largely interested in handicap play. Two days, usually a weekend, should be allowed to complete the course although there is no reason why it should not be delivered in small bites over a longer period.

Four students require a grade 2 coach together with one lawn and two sets of balls. Trainee coaches should have good experience of handicap play and be qualified referees. They should be supervised by an experienced grade 2 coach whilst they are teaching. They will be assessed by the regional coaching officer or his nominee during the course.

It is assumed that those who attend this course have previously attended the Bronze course or have at least the knowledge covered by it.

Split Croquet Strokes

The effect of pull on the croqueted ball and mallet drag on the striker's ball should be demonstrated by the coach. A useful way to do this is to play three split croquet strokes from the same spot with the balls aligned in the same direction and with an identical swing line; the strokes should be played with stop shot, drive and roll actions. It helps if suitable hoops are chosen for ball and swing alignment. Pull may be variable if the balls are worn, but drag can be quite pronounced, particularly if the standard grip with separated hands is used with a strong follow-through.

If time allows, it is worth letting the players try this exercise for themselves to reinforce the idea in their minds. It also gives the opportunity to check that their follow-through is along the line of aim.

One can not be dogmatic about the line of aim or swing line. At this level most players will be either splitting the distance or splitting the angle, but these are only starting points for the inexperienced, and neither is correct in all circumstances. The exact outcome of any split croquet stroke depends considerably upon the weight of the mallet, the flexibility of its shaft and the position and strength of the player's grip. The difference between the two methods can easily be demonstrated by placing target balls one yard south of hoops 5 and 6 for a split from one yard south of hoop 4. Target balls can also be placed to give the line of aim; splitting the distance will give a line of aim to a point one yard south of the peg, whereas splitting the angle will be to a point approximately mid-way between hoop 5 and the peg.

Experienced players develop a feel for the split without needing to calculate where to aim. Players should be encouraged to experiment with their line of aim on standard split strokes to find the best result for them, rather than be told to aim at a particular point or in a particular direction. Swinging more towards the desired direction of the striker's ball will open out the split, send the striker's ball further and the croqueted ball less far; the opposite effects will be obtained if the swing line is more in the desired direction of the croqueted ball. Many players tend to follow through in the direction of the striker's ball. Whilst this is not necessarily a fault, it should be discouraged on the grounds that a straight swing line will give more consistent results. Of course, blatant shepherding should be pointed out immediately. If

the split is played with a stop shot action with a loose grip, the mallet will twist a little in the direction taken by the striker's ball, but should never finish exactly in that direction.

Group practice should be arranged so that readily identifiable and repeatable targets are used. The player will have to practise after the course on his own courts and without your help. Splits to that leaf over there and to that patch of clover are of little use, especially to the weaker players. Concentrate instead on the splits most useful in a three-ball break, starting with the easy split from hoop 4 to hoops 5 and 6 or from 4-back to penult and rover; follow this with the more difficult splits from hoop 2 to hoops 3 and 4 or from 2-back to 3-back and 4-back.

Weaker players often have difficulty with the split from hoop 1 to hoops 2 and 3, demanding as it does a fairly powerful three-quarter roll. If the shot is played with the lower hand too close to the head of the mallet and with the upper hand too high, the mallet head cannot move much faster than the lower hand. More leverage and a higher mallet head speed can be obtained with the hands closer together and further up the shaft.

A lot of time will be saved in group practice if the four players on each court are arranged at the four corner hoops; they will then be hitting balls towards each other, thus making it unnecessary to retrieve their own balls.

Hoop Approaches

Always plan your approach to get a useful rush after running the hoop. Control on hoop approaches and hoop running distinguishes the good from the weaker player.

Explain the advantage to be gained from a good approach and a controlled hoop to leave a useful rush. Demonstrate stop shot, drive and roll hoop approaches from various distances to get the required rush after running the hoop. Explain and demonstrate how the margin of error in hoop-running is increased by playing the pilot ball two or three feet to the side when a sideways rush is required.

Practice should be started with each player at a hoop with a couple of balls. Start first with the stop shot hoop approach from one foot in front of the hoop and slightly to one side. Players should plan to get a forward rush or a rush towards the peg after running the hoop. With this shot players will often aim the mallet towards the hoop and may have difficulty with the stop shot. Too often an attempt to ground the heel of the mallet will result in an uncontrolled and jerky jab at the ball with variable results. Encourage instead a smooth gentle action with a relaxed grip and hands well towards the top of the mallet. They will be surprised how much more consistently they will be able to play stop shots with this technique.

As they improve, they can ground the heel of the mallet at the moment of impact but the action should still be smooth.

After each approach the hoop should be run to get the required rush. It is not necessary to take the rush after running the hoop, but the exercise will only be successful if the rush is available. **Stress the need for repetitive, successful practice rather than moving on after the first successful attempt.**

The players can move gradually further away from the hoop for drive approaches and approaches with a slightly inclined mallet. The maximum distance from the hoop should be about two-and-a-half yards, and you may have to discourage players from going further away. Remember the whole exercise is about control, aiming to get the striker's ball within a foot of the hoop and the, croqueted ball two to three yards past the hoop.

Stuffing the pilot ball well past the hoop and running the hoop hard may have its merits but this is not part of this exercise.

Similarly, for sideways rushes the starting point for the hoop approach should not be too difficult. More difficult starting points can be attempted, but only if the easier positions have been mastered.

Hoop approaches from the side or from behind the hoop may be tried during the practice period for the stronger players, provided that the approach is played with a split or thick take-off to move the pilot ball to a useful position. There is little point in practising these approaches with a thin takeoff.

Remember to apply the same principles to hoop approaches as you would to in court croquet strokes.

Having decided on the stroke to be played, concentrate on the position of the striker's ball. No point in having the croqueted ball in the right position if you then cannot run the hoop!

Hoop Problems

This session should be conducted as a class exercise on the lawn. Many players are only vaguely aware of the laws of the game and the intention here is to familiarise them with the points of law that can occur when the striker's ball is in the vicinity of a hoop. All Grade 2 coaches must have passed the referees' examination, but make certain before leading this session that you are well-informed. If someone asks a question to which you have no immediate answer, say so and use the law book or refer to a colleague. Explain that referees are not expected to remember everything in the laws!

Start with the double tap and show examples. In general, fancy methods of avoiding them should not be introduced; in less than expert hands they often lead to other faults. However, players may ask about methods they have seen.

A quick revision of the simpler points such as when a ball starts to run a hoop and completes the running of a hoop will be required. Explain that this also applies when taking croquet from a ball that is just within or just without the hoop on the non-playing side. This will be a suitable time to demonstrate techniques for dealing with croquet strokes in awkward positions, e.g. a split to remove a ball that is partially blocking a hoop on the non-playing side.

The players may need some clarification of the law on hoop and roquet in the same stroke and the reason for it (to avoid an awkward measurement before the hoop is run).

The remainder of the session deals with hampered shots around hoops. Remind the players that this also applies to shots hampered by the peg or another ball. Point out the common faults that can occur under law 28 and that if in doubt you may ask the referee about faults. The referee is not permitted to give advice but is required to provide reasonable information on the laws.

Tell players to concentrate on a spot on the ball in line with the sight-line of the mallet and not on the centre of the ball, when they cannot strike the ball with the centre of the mallet face. Demonstrate such techniques as playing with one hand through the hoop, the chop into the back of the ball, etc. from relatively easy positions. Demonstrate that a ball which may appear to be impossible to hit (1 inch more than the mallet can reach) can be easily struck with a firm stroke through the hoop. In more difficult positions explain that it may be wiser to use the continuation stroke to retreat to a safer position.

Should time permit, you may wish to demonstrate one or two jump or half-jump shots.

Remind players that these shots should be practised off the lawn in order to avoid damage to the critical areas around hoops. Point out that damage to the lawn caused by a mallet can result in a fault.

Thick Take-Offs

The thick take-off is one of the most under-used strokes amongst intermediate players, and examples of its use in play form an important part of the coach's demonstration. These examples can either precede or follow the instruction on technique.

The demonstration should start first with a thin take-off played along the full length of the court not too far from a side boundary line, in order to show that even with a thin take-off there is a small amount of mallet drag. (It helps if a second coach can be stationed at the far boundary to retrieve the balls and put them on the boundary line.) At this point it is as well to point out that with all thin take-offs the croqueted ball should move an inch or two per yard of take-off. This will lessen the risk of an imperfect swing failing to move or shake the croqueted ball and will also clear it out of the way of the mallet if the ball is mishit.

Play a thick take-off from the same position with the balls aligned as in the previous example of the thin take-off. Choose a definite target for the swing line and point this out to the players. For example, from a spot on the south boundary near the first corner the swing could be directed towards hoop 6. Make certain that the ball travels the length of the court - it does not matter if it goes over the far boundary. There should be an appreciable amount of mallet drag, with the ball crossing the far boundary somewhere behind hoop 2. Ask the players to note this spot but point out that the exact amount of mallet drag will be dependent upon the player and his mallet. Stress the fact that, for consistent results, the shot is played with a normal drive action and that the follow-through is along the swing line.

Next, explain that the balls must be re-aligned if a thick take-off is to be played parallel to the side boundary. For example, if mallet drag has taken the previous shot five yards to the right on the far boundary, then the balls must be re-aligned so that a normal thin take-off would send the ball five yards to the left of the desired place. Explain that the swing line must also be adjusted through the same angle that the balls have been adjusted, i.e. in this example to the left of hoop 6. Then play the shot to show that this thick take-off will send the ball parallel to the side boundary. It is worth repeating the whole procedure slowly, stressing the above.

Practical examples of the use of the thick take-off should follow. Play a thick take-off from the west boundary near 2-back to put the croqueted ball as a pioneer at 2-back with the striker's ball going to a pioneer at 1-back. Show that the thick take-off can be used to move partner ball closer to a boundary for a better leave when one may not be certain of making another hoop off an opponent ball.

Group practice should be arranged with players paired off. One player of the pair will be on the north boundary, the other on the south boundary. The players can hit balls to each other and reduce the time wasted in retrieving them. The practice should start with a thin take-off to get the pace of the court and should then follow the lines of the previous demonstration. Weaker players may need some assistance with aligning the balls; if so, make certain they understand the principles. Points to watch out for are the straight follow-through and drive action. Correct any faults and explain again the reasons.

4-ball Breaks

The aim of this session is to get players to improve their four-ball breaks, by thinking ahead to avoid problems, and by learning how to deal with problems that may occur. The initial session is best done by one coach with the aid of a magnetic demonstration board. It is much easier to play shots on the board than on the lawn! Remember, however, that you can move magnetic discs around a board much faster than most people can follow, particularly if your arms and body are getting in the way. If such a board is not available, one coach can demonstrate the points on the lawn whilst another commentates, but this requires some rehearsal beforehand and careful coordination during the demonstration.

Most players will be familiar with the principles of the four-ball break, so that you can start with an analysis of the beginner's four-ball break, i.e. pivot by the peg, hoop run too hard, pilot roqueted back behind the hoop leading to a big half-roll with the possibility of furniture in the way. That is why the four-ball break is difficult for the beginner.

Explain that good players make the game easy for themselves by thinking ahead and by controlled play. Show that the previous exercise on hoop approaches has practical value in the four-ball break; a useful rush after a hoop makes it easier to place a pioneer and get on to the pivot with a drive or stop shot.

Point out that the best place for the pivot is not really around the peg, but rather closer to the hoop to be run. Then, if a rush is not obtained after making the hoop, a drive or stop shot can still be played to place the pilot as a pioneer at the next hoop but one and get a rush on the pivot towards the next hoop. (Concept of the mobile pivot.) The take-off to the next hoop is also shorter. At this level players will rarely have the skill to rush the pivot past the pioneer and play it back with a croquet stroke, but it may be worth mentioning this procedure for the better players. When the break is starting to crumble because it has not been possible to put a pioneer at the next hoop but one, show that it is better to try to put the pivot as a pioneer itself or close to the poor pioneer rather than leave it where it happens to be. Again, at this level players are often reluctant to keep balls close together for fear of breaking down.

Early pioneers can also be mentioned, if only to stress that they have little to recommend them in handicap play. In particular, they should not be used if the pioneer at the next hoop but one is out of place. It is better to continue with a normal break to tidy the situation up rather than attempt to emulate expert players.

For group practice, with the normal four players per court, it is not possible to have all four practising at the same time in the session. For this reason the players should be split into two groups. One group can practise the four-ball break from hoop 1 to the peg with two players per court, whilst a coach covers some of the laws of the game, such as replacement of line and corner balls, endings on time, etc., with the other group. The groups change places mid-way through the session.

The aim for the player is to take a ball round safely with as few bisques as possible. The starting point should be a fairly loose four-ball break with, perhaps, a poor pioneer for hoop 2, a pivot between hoop 5 and the peg, and a five or six yard dolly rush to hoop 1. During the practice session the coach should not follow the player round telling him what to do; instead he should keep a close eye on the progress of the break, but should not intervene until the player has made a mistake. Given the objective of using as few bisques as possible, players will sometimes be greedy and try to run long, angled hoops with a two-bisque disaster resulting. A bisque spent here, particularly if a crumbling break can be rescued, is a wise decision.

Ideally, when a mistake in planning has occurred, leading to a breakdown, the player should be advised of the right line of play and asked to play the sequence again. Bear in mind, however, that there will be a double-banker whose progress will be interrupted by lengthy discussions in the middle of the court. It may be better, particularly if the coach is looking after both players, to allow each to continue without interruption to the end of the break, and to take notes of mistakes. The correct play can then be tried, but make certain first that the player first remembers the position and what he did with it. Few players realise that a breakdown usually starts a few strokes in advance.

Constructing Breaks Using Bisques

There is no doubt that in handicap play the most dangerous opponent one can have is the player who has bisques and appreciates how powerful they are. Alas, time and again one sees players neglect opportunities to set up an easy four-ball break with the use of one bisque. This session is intended to remedy those deficiencies, and is held with the whole group of players, preferably with the aid of a magnetic demonstration board.

The first thing players who have bisques in hand should think about at the start of their turn should be 'what can I do with one bisque?' This should be their automatic reaction even if the opponent has broken down and has given away the innings. If a four-ball break can be set up easily with the use of one bisque, then the opportunity should be taken. Remember, too, that the player should review the situation with respect to each of his balls and that it may be advisable to play with a ball that has a longer shot but would have a more advantageous position, if the shot is missed.

Review first of all the general principles of bisque-taking:

- ◆ The top priority must be to get a good pioneer at the first hoop of the intended break. However, this need not be done at the start of the turn, and it may be better to leave this to a later stroke.
- ◆ The second priority is to get a reasonable pioneer at the second hoop of the intended break.
- ◆ The final priority is to get a tolerable pivot.
- ◆ Pioneers should be placed in position from as short a distance as possible. It follows, therefore, that the pioneer to the first hoop of the break should be placed from closer range than the pioneer for the second hoop of the break, except when the latter is already close to the hoop, and this will influence which ball goes where.
- ◆ In general, the break should be set up before making a hoop, and it will pay to use all of the balls and strokes available.
- ◆ The choice of ball to go to first will be important, and this may well be the ball that is furthest away. Look for balls that are in a yard or so from the yard-lines, as these can be rushed into court easily.
- ◆ Once the decision has been taken to use a bisque, safety in setting up the break is paramount.

Fig 2.1a can be used as an example. All the clips are on hoop 1; **R/Y** to play with **U** and **K** in corners I and IV respectively. This is a position that might arise at the start of a game where **K** has been played into corner IV and **U** has had a shot through **R/Y**. Invite the class to consider the position for a few moments and to give then their suggestions how Ray should proceed. You might forestall any suggestion that Ray should rush **Y** to hoop 1, make it and roll towards hoop 2

by pointing out that a wide join on the south or west boundaries will leave Ray with a worse position and the prospect of a much longer take-off to **U** and **K**.

Some players might suggest rushing **Y** to the hoop, preferably on the non-playing side, taking off to **U** and playing a stop shot approach from the corner. However, this is not normally a stroke within the compass of most players at this level. If it fails there is then the problem of getting **K** out of corner IV without a big split roll after a bisque has been taken.

Clearly, **Y** can be rushed as the pioneer for hoop 1; examination of the position, bearing in mind the general principles, will reveal that **U** should be the pioneer for hoop 2. (It is nearer and there is no furniture in the way.) However, it is better to deal with **K** before that; therefore take off to **K**, roquet it and play it into court but on no account should any attempt be made to get near **U** on this croquet stroke. (A mishit stroke could send **R** off the south boundary some distance from **U**, forcing a bisque to be taken with no guarantee of hitting **U**. Remember, once the decision has been taken to use a bisque, safety is paramount.) The croquet stroke should be played with a normal straight drive taking care to leave an unobstructed shot to **U**. A bisque has to be taken before hoop 1 can be made, so it does not matter if **R** hits **U** or not. Leave for later discussion the best position to play **K**. For the moment, it will suffice that **K** is out of the corner.

Assume that **R** has missed **U**; the bisque is taken, **U** is roqueted and played to hoop 2, leaving **R** near B. You might now invite the class to consider which is the best position to croquet **K** from corner IV. Somewhere by the peg, or better between hoop 1 and the peg, is an obvious position for the pivot, but remember **K** can be used again after the bisque is taken before hoop 1 is run. Consider, therefore, what might go wrong with the croquet stroke from corner I. One danger is that **R** may finish wired from **Y**, another is that **Y** may have been rushed initially a yard or two too far and may be roqueted even further from the hoop. **K** should therefore be played somewhere near hoop 1, in a position where it would be well nigh impossible to become wired from both **K** and **Y**, and where **K** may be roqueted before **Y**.

Analysis of play along these lines, especially the safety aspects, will be new to most players. There is really no such thing as an unlucky player; there are plenty of careless, or thoughtless, players.

Fig 2.1 gives a further three exercises in bisque-taking. Each member of the class should be given a sheet with these exercises to consider in the evening, with a view to discussion the following day.

When a player has only one or two bisques available, the strategy of using those bisques arises. A bisque has its greatest potential if used early to set up a four-ball break. On the other hand, if the player cannot keep the break going on the more difficult outer hoops, it may pay to use the bisque to set up the break from hoop 3, ensuring its continuation through the easier hoops 4 to 1-back.

The Three-Ball Break

The coach has the option of describing the principles of a good three-ball break on the magnetic board or on the lawn. If the latter is the case, then it is better to have a second coach to give a commentary rather than try to communicate with the class from the distant hoops or to have them trailing around with the demonstrator. Even if the magnetic board is used, and it is much easier to 'play' on the board, the class will usually want to see the coach in action. An all-round three-ball break is best left to the grade II coach who is also an 'A' class player.

Demonstrations that require too many 'bisques' are counter-productive, as they emphasise the difficulty rather than the control that makes the break easy.

Control around the hoops should be stressed. The aim should always be to get a useful rush after running a hoop, so that the next croquet stroke is simple and preferably straight. The placing of pioneers is particularly important to avoid loss of control. Pioneers at hoops 3, 1-back and 3-back should be shallow, i.e. on the non-playing side of the hoop, if there is any doubt about getting a useful rush after the preceding hoops. This will guard against the impossible split, if the pilot is roqueted to an awkward position. Even so, point out that the three-ball break is much more likely to crumble than the four-ball break, and that the fourth ball should be picked up as soon as convenient.

If the fourth ball is not available, players are often incredibly optimistic. Emphasise that it is much better to avoid a two-bisque disaster at a hoop, particularly if the pioneer at the next hoop is poor, by taking a bisque to tidy up the break. This is particularly relevant around the more difficult outer hoops.

Four players per lawn is too many for convenience. During the practice session, therefore, the group should be split into two: one pair can practise the three-ball break whilst all the unoccupied pairs are gathered off the lawn to discuss the solutions to the 'homework' on bisque-taking. Depending upon the speed of the players, the break can start from hoop 1 or any later hoop.

For the players' first attempt the emphasis should be on playing a good three-ball break. To this end, playing by 'cheating' is good practice; if a ball is out of position the coach should put it in its proper position. This will help to reinforce the player's impression of what he is attempting to do. In later attempts the player should play as best he can, using as few bisques as possible to complete the turn.

Three-ball break practice is very useful for the intermediate player, employing, as it usually does, a wide variety of strokes, and it can be an enjoyable form of practice. It will also expose any weaknesses in a player's technique. Such weaknesses can then be reduced by more concentrated practice.

3-Ball Endings

Three-ball endings are usually of great interest and provide the opportunity for tactics to play a greater part than usual in handicap play. The coach should first review the possibilities for the single ball player and the two-ball player. If no bisques are available to the single-ball player, he has to decide whether to shoot, lurk or take position at his next hoop. Taking position is rarely of value, except when the opponent's balls are well separated or the opponent is a very much weaker player. The lurk in a threatening position is useful, if a sensible shot is not available. Otherwise, the single-ball player should shoot as often as possible, provided that a missed shot does not give away a three-ball break.

The two-ball player without bisques has the choice of trying to make rapid progress with a three-ball break or of ignoring the opponent ball and seeking a wired position at end of each turn. The latter requires a great deal of skill and may offer more opportunities to the opponent if not done successfully. The former is therefore to be preferred, if the opponent is sufficiently aggressive. It follows, therefore, that the two-ball player should end his turn with a trap. An open dolly rush merely invites a shot, even from a long distance, as there is little to give away.

If the two-ball player has bisques, it will usually be better to set up a three-ball break as soon as possible with a single bisque. The single-ball player will not usually be able to do so with a single bisque, and it may pay him to wait until the opponent is for the same hoop.

The simplified discussion above is not meant to be exhaustive, and the coach should amplify the discussion with examples of positions.

The practice session starts with the players split into pairs of comparable ability. The available time should also be split into two periods.

The starting position is with the two-ball player for peg and 1-back, and the single-ball player for penult. (One player of the pair is assumed to have pegged out one of his opponent's balls.) For the purpose of the exercise, the single ball player will play first. The two-ball player may place his balls by hand anywhere on the lawn and the single ball player may play from anywhere along either baulk line. Most players choose to leave a dolly rush from the west boundary to 1-back, hidden from the end of B baulk by the hoop. However, this gives the game away, if the long shot from A baulk is hit. A wide join is safer.

The position is reasonably evenly balanced, although the single-ball player wins more often than not. At the end of the game or at the end of the first period, whichever comes sooner, the players change roles and start again. The players should not be prevented from making mistakes in tactics, but the errors should be pointed out after they have occurred. It may even be advisable to reserve a little time for class discussion of a game, although the players should not be identified to spare them some embarrassment.

When considering pegging out an opponent ball, take into account the strength of the opposition and the relative positions of the two backward balls. Pegging out an opponent ball does not guarantee success.

Bisque-Taking Against 'A' Class Players - Classic Opening

This is another session that is best tackled first with the aid of a magnetic demonstration board. The discussion below assumes that this is the case. Players will later have the opportunity to put into practice what they have learned from the theory.

Players should first be reminded that they have nothing to fear from A class players, particularly scratch and minus players. With the latter they have their full complement of bisques, or more. Provided that they use their bisques sensibly and give the opponent as few opportunities as possible, the game could be as easy as a practice session. There is no reason to feel intimidated or nervous in the presence of an expert opponent.

The general principal involved is to go for the quick kill. Use bisques to set up and continue four-ball breaks as soon as possible: the longer you let the game continue, the greater the danger of losing. In particular, the player must not let the expert get a ball round first.

The opening is therefore very important and the player must avoid at all costs giving a relatively easy break to the expert. For this reason, if the player goes in first, he must abandon the normal opening and play defensively. Playing balls into corners II and IV on 1st and 3rd turns will make it extremely difficult for the expert to get a break on the fourth turn. If he attempts to get a break and fails, he will usually leave the balls to the advantage of the player on the fifth turn.

On the other hand, if the player wins the toss, he must put the expert in. This gives the player the first opportunity to establish a break with four balls on the court and he must seek to take advantage of this. Once again the normal tice opening is avoided in favour of the 'classic' opening described below.

The expert will normally play his first ball (say, R) to the east boundary in the vicinity of hoop 4. The player should then play his first ball (say, U) on to the court somewhere to the southeast of

the peg. The exact point to aim for will depend upon the individual player and is best left until the principles of the opening have been established. If the expert is trying to make things as difficult as possible for the player on the fourth turn, he will play his second ball into corner II.

The player then shoots at R on the east boundary and takes a bisque (or preferably a half-bisque, if one is available), if he misses. He then roquets R and croquets it with a normal drive as the pioneer at hoop 2, leaving K close to U. If the rush on U towards the first hoop presents itself, it is taken, but the important thing about the first croquet stroke is to get R as a reasonable pioneer at hoop 2. After roqueting U, it is croqueted to hoop 1 as the pioneer, taking care to leave K with a clear, but long, shot at Y in the second corner. It is likely that this shot will be missed, so the second bisque is taken here. With the pioneers already in position at hoops 1 and 2 it is easy to play Y into court as a pivot and continue. The opportunity will also be there to tidy up the pioneer at hoop 2, if necessary. (It is obviously better that R should be deep rather than short at hoop 2. Y can then replace R as the pioneer, leaving a rush on R into court.)

Now the discussion can return to the position of U on turn two. This will depend upon the distance ratio of the player's normal drive croquet stroke from the east boundary, and will vary from player to player. It is up to each player to establish for himself where U should be positioned.

Admittedly, there is some risk in following this line of play against an expert in the top flight. If the expert roquets R on the third turn, there is an opportunity for a three-ball break. However, it is rare for such experts to play handicap games and the risk can usually be ignored. If the shot is missed on the third turn, the position is then easier for U/K, as the pioneer for hoop 2 can be placed from shorter range.

Group practice should start with each player playing the croquet drive from the east boundary, in order to establish where to put his first ball. This needs to be done several times for each player, and the spot where the striker's ball finishes marked. Make certain that the players are playing their normal drive to get the croqueted ball at least as far as hoop 2.

The turn should then be played through several times as far as hoop 1 by each player to imprint the sequence of strokes in their minds. It is surprising how many players get lost somewhere in the sequence. To save time, R and Y can be placed in position by hand by the spare player. U/K should, however, play the second turn on to the court but can then go straight to the east boundary on the assumption that his fourth turn shot has missed.

Note that hoop 1 should not be made before bringing Y out of the second corner, except when a good rush on U has left an easy hoop approach. The aim is to set up a very good four-ball break, not a weak three-ball break.

Leaves At The End Of The First Break Against 'A' Class Players

A class discussion is held first to consider the options available to the player according to his progress on the first break. The review point is usually around 3-back/4-back. Three cases can be classified at this point, as follow:

- ◆ (a) The player has used rather fewer than half of his bisques;
- ◆ (b) The player has used about half of his bisques;
- ◆ (c) The player has used rather more than half of his bisques.

Case (a). The player is obviously doing well and there is no doubt that the break should be taken to the peg. The danger that this ball will be pegged out if the expert hits in must,

however, be minimised. This is done with a defensive leave in which all the balls are well separated and on, or near, yard-lines. In particular, no ball should be in court in the vicinity of hoop 1 and the player's balls must not be joined up. With more than half the bisques left, a couple can be used to construct the break for the second ball. (Many players are quite happy to set up a break for the first ball using bisques, but are reluctant to do so for the second ball. You may need to emphasise the necessity of getting the second ball round as soon as possible.) Demonstrate on the board how such a leave can be constructed by making partner ball the last ball to be roqueted after running rover and then playing a split croquet stroke to send both balls off the court and well separated.

Case (b). The game is still going according to plan, so the player should continue to the peg, but this time the player may not be able to afford the luxury of a defensive leave. Instead, a more aggressive leave is required, where only one bisque will be required to set up the break, if the expert misses his shot. At the same time, the expert, particularly if he is a weaker 'A' class player, should still be made to work for the break, if he hits. The player's balls should be joined up with a useful rush near a yard-line, but it may be unwise for one of the opponent's balls to be at hoop 1 or hoop 2, except when a leave has been constructed giving the opponent no shot shorter than twenty yards.

Case (c). This case is not quite so clear cut. One school of thought says that the break should continue to the peg; the other says that the break should stop at 4-back. A very aggressive leave will be required in any case, one where the player will hope to set up the break without a bisque if the shot is missed. The opponent's balls can be left at hoop 1 and hoop 2, with a rush to hoop 1, preferably wired from the pioneer there.

Discuss with the class the probable outcome for each school of thought. The advantage of going to the peg with the first ball lies in making the finish easier, if the player can make better progress with the second ball than the first. The disadvantage is that the rover ball will certainly be pegged out if the expert hits, thus reducing the value of the remaining bisques. Note that there is no point in stopping at penult or rover; the single or double peel should present no difficulty to a true 'A' class player.

The likely outcome, however, is that the bisques will run out before the second ball can get round, perhaps at 1-back and peg or with both balls at 4-back. The latter is probably a slightly better position, but the odds are that the game will be lost from either. In the end the choice will depend very much on the frame of mind of the player. To go for broke or to prolong the game? Whichever is chosen, the player's form will have to improve with the second ball, if he is to have a chance of winning.

During group practice each player in the group should be given the opportunity to play through each of the leaves as often as time permits. Some concentration should be given, however, to the defensive leave and particularly to the last split croquet stroke. Players can practise in turn from 4-back or penult with a laid break. You can try having two players practising at the same time, one playing through 2-back, 5 and 6, but it does lead to interference with a lot of balls in the middle of the court.

Silver Gilt Coaching

Introduction

This course is concerned entirely with advanced play and is intended for those players who have reached a good standard in handicap play but have little or no experience of advanced. Two days, usually a weekend, should be allowed to complete the course although there is no reason why it should not be delivered in small bites over a longer period.

4 students require an experienced grade 2 or a grade 3 coach together with 1 lawn and 2 sets of balls. Trainee coaches should have good experience of advanced play and be supervised during the course by an experienced coach.

Advanced Play - A Review Of Law 36

Explain that the entitlement to a lift or contact is an option and not mandatory. A lift may always be taken where contact has been conceded.

A player cannot avoid conceding a contact by peeling partner ball through 1-back in the same turn as he scores 1-back and 4-back with his own ball.

A player who pegs out any ball during the game is not entitled to any further lift or contact under Law 36, but does not lose the entitlement to any lift under Law 13 (wiring). (Some players wrongly assume that wiring lifts are also forfeited).

Where on the third or fourth turn a contact has been conceded under Law 36, the contact releases you from the obligation to play your second ball from a baulk-line.

Explain that unlike in handicap play, where a player may not peg out one of his balls before the other has become a rover, either ball may be pegged out (provided that it is a rover) at any time, and that can happen unintentionally.

Openings

The opening is a tussle to gain the innings and chance of the first break.

Have it clear in your own mind how to deal with the common openings. If you are presented with an opening you have not seen before, think carefully before you play the next ball. If you have not come across the opening before the chances are that it is unsound and your opponent is using it simply to panic you into an ill considered response.

Standard Opening.

The standard opening gives each side a more or less equal chance of winning the innings. Player 1 plays a ball to the East boundary, somewhere between corner VI and level with hoop 4. Player 2 will lay a tice on the West boundary. How far up from corner I this should be will depend on his critical distance, but they should give themselves a reasonable chance (about 50%) of hitting it on the 4th turn. Rover to peg high might be considered appropriate.

What Player 1 does with his second ball will depend on their view of the likelihood of the opponent hitting the tice. If the tice is short they should shoot at it themselves, missing into corner II. If it is hit, then a thick takeoff will move it further up and into the lawn and should enable a strong leave to be constructed with a rush towards the tice ball. This is known as the "Dream Leave". If the tice is overly long then player 1 will likely send his second

ball to join partner on the East boundary. Player 1 might consider playing his second ball from corner III towards partner ball if he were uncertain about the tice length. If he hits with this shot then the tice could be moved as before. If not then the aim should be for the 2 balls to finish with a join of around 6 yards. This is what dictates where the first ball is placed.

Duffer Tice.

In this opening the tice is placed from 'B' baulk to the East of hoop 6 and about 9-10 yards from baulk. Player 1 now has to decide whether to take the short shot gently at the tice, in which case a miss would leave 2 balls in the middle and a probable good double target. A firm shot although more likely to hit, were it to be missed would leave the ball just outside 'A' baulk. Alternatives are:

- ◆ A shot at the tice from corner III aiming to finish on the West boundary around 15 yards or so from corner I.
- ◆ A shot at partner ball from corner III. If this shot is hit then the tice ball can be moved else if missed a wide join should be the result.
- ◆ Play from 'B' baulk into corner II, hoping to join up if the tice is missed.

Anti-Duffer Tice.

The first stroke is played to approximately 1 or 2 yards off the East boundary yard line between hoop 6 and peg high. This discourages the Duffer Tice since if the player of the 3rd ball hits the tice he has a good chance of getting a 3-ball break going.

If the Duffer Tice is still played on turn three, instead of shooting at the Duffer you can go to corner II. If the tice is hit, there is no easy break. However, if the Duffer is missed, the corner two ball can now shoot at it, joining with partner if it misses.

The Corner II Opening.

U is played to the East boundary at a position North of hoop 4.

In this case instead of setting a West boundary tice, R is played to a position about 6 inches South of the corner II spot. K now has a choice. To shoot at R and miss would leave a large target and a break chance if, as is likely, Y hits the double.

A successful shot at U would enable K to move R and return to partner leaving a rush to R. A miss at U would give Y (if he hits) a chance of the first break although a miss gives U/K the first chance. Whoever has the innings at this point still has to deal with the ball in corner II to capitalize on the opportunity.

A wide U/K join on the East boundary makes it more difficult for Y to make use of a successful hit.

Exercise

In pairs, first to make hoop 2 and make a roquet wins, then re-start.

Picking Up Breaks

Precision Croquet.

With precision croquet the emphasis is on playing relatively easy shots with a great deal of control. On the hoop approach the player should aim to get as close as possible to the hoop before running it. This should be followed by a controlled hoop leaving a good rush to a useful place, usually to another ball.

If the rush is to another ball, usually on a yard-line, a little croquet stroke will bring the rushed ball out from the boundary and leave a rush on the yard-line ball to the next hoop. With sequences of hoops, rushes and croquet strokes the balls will be brought out into the lawn into positions where it will be possible to play a croquet stroke that actually sends out a pioneer. The break is then established.

Aggressive Croquet.

In aggressive croquet the object of getting as close as possible to a hoop is temporarily abandoned in favour of getting out a pioneer to the next hoop but one. Then, if the next hoop is made, the break is quickly established. This type of play will often involve playing a hoop approach from a corner.

Break Management

The break must be managed in such a way as to reduce the risk of breaking down as much as possible, and this is even more important when the conditions are difficult.

The essence of good break management lies in good control of all the strokes, particularly hoop running, and in thinking ahead to make the next stroke as easy as possible. For example, good control at a hoop can leave a rush towards the pivot, thus reducing the distance from which the pioneer is sent out, as well as enabling the croquet stroke to be played with a drive or stop shot instead of a half-roll. With this croquet stroke an attempt can be made to get a rush on the pivot towards the next hoop, in order to reduce the distance between the pivot and the pioneer.

The pivot need not 'hug' the peg but can move around with the break. A position half way between the hoop and peg can be used to advantage if the player is not certain to get a rush after running the hoop. Once control of the break has been gained, a position roughly half way between the next two hoops is useful. If it is impossible to get the intended ball as a good pioneer at the next hoop but one, or if the attempt has been unsuccessful, the pivot and pioneer can be interchanged.

Early pioneers become more appropriate in advanced play than in handicap play. In this respect, the early pioneer to 2-back is customary with expert players, as is the early pioneer to hoop 6 provided that control of the break has been achieved. However, players should not slavishly follow what they may regard as expert play. It is almost a prerequisite that the pioneer at the next hoop should be in the right position before considering an early pioneer.

As a general rule every shot should be played to make the next shot as easy as possible. This is the basis of precision croquet and its application to break play will considerably reduce the risk of breaking down.

Cannons

Players are not always aware of what may, and what may not, be moved when placing the balls for a cannon, or of the options available when replacing two balls on the yard-line or corner spot. A review of Laws 12 and 19 would not go amiss.

The Wafer Cannon.

The gap between the striker's ball and the ball to be roqueted is 'wafer-thin', hence the name of the cannon. The line of swing is usually, but not necessarily, along the line joining the centres of the striker's ball and the ball to be roqueted. To a good approximation, the roqueted ball is rushed along this line. Note, however, that it is not exact, and you should experiment to ascertain the extent of the deviation. Invariably, the croqueted ball will move

several yards in a hard stroke, so that this cannon is not advisable where there is a danger of sending the croqueted ball off the lawn. The aim of the mallet can be varied to impart less energy to the croqueted ball to prevent it moving as far allowing greater control of the rushed ball.

Instead of the wafer cannon it is possible to play to get a 'dolly' rush by playing the croqueted ball into the yard-line area without disturbing the third ball. The 3 balls forming the cannon should be set up forming an approximate right angle and a split croquet shot played to give the rush. The croqueted ball should, of course, be replaced on the yard-line before taking the rush. Point out that where the corner spot area is in poor condition the result can be a lottery.

Principles Of Leaves

In this section we are concerned only with 'lift' leaves that ensue after the first nine hoops have been negotiated successfully. The leave should be planned as early as possible during the break and certainly not left to be sorted out after 3-back.

The New Standard and Diagonal Spread leaves are included for completeness. The coach should, however, concentrate on the Old Standard Leave (OSL) allowing the class adequate time to achieve a good leave. Point out that the OSL is a good fallback position from a failed Diagonal Spread.

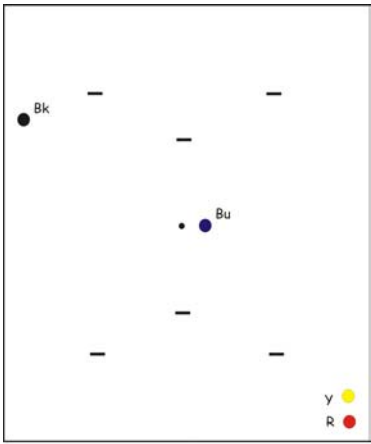
Bearing in mind that the lift may be taken from either baulk, the player should be thinking about the following points when planning a leave:

Lengthening the opponent's shot,

The chance to pick up a break, should the opponent not hit in,

The chance for the opponent to pick up a break, if he does hit,

'Forcing' the opponent to lift a particular ball;

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|  | <p>The Old Standard Leave (OSL)</p> <p>K/U has available a shot of some 13/14 yards at R or Y (the so-called 'short' lift shot), or can shoot with K at U. If any shot is missed then R (for hoop 1) has a good chance to pick up a break. Equally, if K/U hits the short lift shot, their chances are good. There is no element of forcing.</p> <p>This is a good fall back when the Diagonal Spread looks to be not under control. Choose it rather than an optimistic last croquet shot.</p> |
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| | <p>The New Standard Leave (NSL)</p> <p>K/U has no shot less than 17 yards. If K shoots from third corner at R/Y, R has a good chance of the break. If U shoots at R/Y from third corner, there is still a good chance of picking up a three-ball break.</p> <p>Explain that lifting the hoop 2 ball and shooting to corner IV allows a standard TP. A better option is to lift the hoop 4 ball and shoot from corner III.</p> |
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| | <p>The Diagonal Spread (DS)</p> <p>Once again K/U has no shot less than 17 yards. If the shot misses, R has a good chance of a three-ball break, whichever ball has been lifted and whichever shot has been taken.</p> <p>Explain that the best option is to lift the West boundary ball since a hit lift gives an easier break.</p> |
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Pick-Up Of The Break From The Missed Lift

This is one of the rare occasions when the disposition of the balls will be fixed at the start of the turn, and it occurs often enough to demand practice. There is little point in making a particular leave if the player can not make the pick-up.

The **OSL** after the 'short' lift shot. The opponent's ball is croqueted towards hoop 4, leaving a rush on partner ball to either the ball by the peg or the ball near hoop 2, depending on which has been lifted. Partner ball is croqueted to hoop 2, leaving a rush on the opponent ball to hoop 1.

The **NSL**. Partner ball is roqueted gently and the take-off is played to the ball in the fourth corner. This ball is then roqueted and croqueted to hoop 2, leaving a rush on the ball at hoop 4 to hoop 1. The key shot is the croquet stroke from corner IV to hoop 2, leaving a rush on the ball by hoop 4. It is worth concentrating on this one particular shot if the NSL is a favoured option. If U is lifted, take the rush to K and play the 3-ball break, picking up U before hoop 4.

The **Diagonal Spread**. Partner ball is rushed to whichever opponent ball has not been lifted and then stopped to hoop 2, leaving a rush on the opponent ball to hoop 1. The lifted ball in corner IV is picked up before hoop 4.

Peeling Principles

The break should not be sacrificed for the sake of the peels.

Peeling requires good control of rushing, hoop approaches and hoop running. Practise these skills and once you acquire them, single and double peels will follow naturally.

Make an allowance for pull where a peel is attempted in a split stroke.

Types of Peels

Straight - the peel is done immediately before making the same hoop.

After Hoop - the peel is done immediately after making the same hoop but in the opposite direction; e.g. peeling penult after making hoop 6.

Going to another Hoop - the peel is done using a split croquet stroke with the striker's ball going to the pioneer for its next hoop; e.g. peeling rover going to a 3-back pioneer.

Rush Peel - the peel is done by rushing the peelee through its hoop. This is usually only successful if the peelee is in the jaws of its hoop or very close and directly in front.

The Rover Peel

Use the peelee as pioneer at 3-back or 4-back. Plan ahead for this.

Try to approach penult with the peelee in front of rover and the pivot between the peg and rover.

After penult send the original penult pioneer close to the south boundary with your ball going to the pivot. It is a good idea to have a ball near the south boundary, to guard against a jump or half-jump over the peelee, should the peel crawl through or stick.

Send the pivot about 3 feet to the side of and just past rover with your ball going to the peelee.

Peel with a firm grip. A drive is best if you have room. If you must peel with a stop shot, take care not to let the mallet twist. If the position is within 18 inches consider an Irish peel putting both balls through in the stroke.

If possible make the peel before 3-back or even after hoop 5. An unsuccessful early attempt will leave later opportunities whereas a failed straight rover peel often leads to disaster.

The Penult Peel

Arrange to have the peelee as pioneer at hoop 6. This may be achieved by putting it there as an early pioneer after making hoop 3 or as part of a normal 4-ball break after making hoop 4.

Before making hoop 5 arrange to have the pivot ball between the peg and hoop 6.

After 5 sent the croqueted ball to 1-back finishing near the pivot.

Send the pivot about 2 feet to the West of hoop 6. This will be the escape ball.

Roquet the ball to be peeled in front of hoop 6 and slightly to the side. Croquet it directly behind the hoop into a peeling position.

After running hoop 6 roquet the ball to be peeled and peel it in the croquet stroke with a stop shot getting a rush on the escape ball to the North boundary from where it is croqueted to 2-back. It is best to have the 1-back pioneer North of the hoop.

Tactics In The Advanced Game

The In-Player

The objective is to set up a break as soon as possible. Weigh up the options and choose between going for the immediate break, which risks losing the innings if unsuccessful, and making a leave, that gives the opponent the chance to hit in.

When going for the immediate break, decide on the precision or aggressive approach and plan accordingly.

Try to make a leave that yields a break from a missed shot. This could be an 'aggressive' leave, which will encourage the opponent to shoot but should result in a break if the shot is missed.

Where possible move opponent's balls away from the boundaries.

The Out-Player

The thoughts of the out-player should concentrate on how best to get back the innings. The choice is usually between shooting at every available opportunity or playing a defensive, waiting game, hoping that the opponent will make a mistake. Which way will suit a player best will depend upon his prowess as a shot and the strength of the opposition. The player must gauge whether he can shoot safely, i.e. the missed shot will not be punished, or whether he 'must' shoot because, whatever he does, the opponent will make a pick-up.

Although the out-player is usually advised to think about what he will give away with a missed shot, he should not always be discouraged by these thoughts. There are positions where it is right to shoot even though a miss could make matters easy for the opponent. For example, a shortish shot or one that could win the game should not be refused for fear of the consequences. A better opportunity might not present itself later.

Conceding Contact- Three-Ball Endings

It is not easy to decide when to peg out an opponent's ball. It is not necessarily a decisive advantage to peg out an opponent ball, however big the lead.

If the single-ball player does not give away a three-ball break with a missed shot, then generally the two-ball player must proceed on a succession of two-ball breaks, laying up in a guarded or wired position at the end of each turn. Where time is approaching and the 2-ball player is behind, then he must adopt more aggressive tactics.

The 2-ball player should not join up in the middle of the lawn, or where the opponent has a short shot. Be especially careful where a lift shot is coming up.

The single-ball player must become very aggressive in his attempts to pick up a break. He must shoot at anything that does not give away the three-ball break.

When the two-ball player has not joined up, the single ball player can shoot with relative impunity at the peg ball. Even if he misses, he will get both another turn later and an open shot because the two-ball player will be obliged to play with his peg ball. Alternatively the single ball player can take position.

If you cannot shoot, look for threatening positions: thin wire or on a boundary equidistant from opponent's separated ball

Gold Course

The ideal requirements are one lawn with two sets of balls and one qualified Grade 3 coach per 2 players; if trainee coaches are taking part, their performance should be monitored by a qualified coach.

It is assumed that those who attend this course have previously attended the Silver Gilt course or have a good knowledge of advanced play and the techniques covered by previous material.

Openings

The more common openings (the 'Tice' and 'Duffer Tice') have been dealt with in previous courses and the players attending should be encouraged to discuss the pros and cons of these in conjunction with the additions covered on this session.

As with previous discussions it is assumed that the balls are played onto the lawn in the order of the colours on the peg; blue (**U**), red (**R**), black (**K**) and Y (**Y**).

The Corner II Opening.

U is played to the East boundary at a position North of hoop 4.

In this case instead of setting a West boundary tice, **R** is played to a position about 6 inches South of the corner II spot.

K now has a choice. To shoot at **R** and miss would leave a large target and a break chance if, as is likely, **Y** hits the double.

A successful shot at **U** would enable **K** to move **R** and return to partner leaving a rush to **R**. A miss at **U** would give **Y** (if he hits) a chance of the first break although a miss gives **U/K** the first chance. Whoever has the innings at this point still has to deal with the ball in corner II to capitalize on the opportunity.

A wide **U/K** join on the East boundary makes it more difficult for **Y** to make use of a successful hit.

The Corner IV Opening.

An aggressive opening on the part of **R/Y**. **U** is played to the standard position on the East boundary.

R is played a little North of the corner IV spot.

The choice is now to shoot at **R** or **U**. If **K** misses on the 3rd turn it is likely that **R** will be hit anyway so perhaps the shorter shot should be taken. A hit on the 3rd turn should result in the 'Dream Leave' (a laid rush to the third ball towards the West boundary and North of the peg leaving **Y** with a 4th turn shot of about 19 yards).

A common variation on this opening is for **R** to shoot at **U**. If **U** is hit both balls are rolled to the centre leaving a double target from 'A' baulk. **K** can then trickle at the 2 balls which, if the shot is hit, gives a 3-ball break, but will provide a better target for **Y** if it is missed.

The Supershot Opening

U is played from the end of 'A' baulk towards hoop 2 to come to rest about 5 yards past hoop 5. The idea behind the opening is to hit on the 3rd turn and go round on a 3-ball break. This opening is only included for the sake of information. It is really only worth playing if you expect to hit on third turn and are confident in playing a 3-ball break.

There are a number of replies, perhaps the more usual ones are:

Trickle R at U from 'A' baulk. If K hits on the 3rd turn the 3-ball break is there.

Place R just South of corner II. K shoots at R and if successful plays a pass roll putting R at hoop 2 and getting the rush on U to hoop 1. A difficult stroke to achieve! A miss will give a double target for ball 4.

Play R to a long tice position on the East boundary. K can play through this from corner III and if the shot is hit then R is croqueted to hoop 2 with a rush to 1. If the tice is too long then K simply joins R on the East boundary, taking care not to leave a double, hoping that Y will miss.

Cannons

Cannons can be divided into four main types, and a proper appreciation of these types will enable the player to spot which cannon should be used in a practical situation in a game. The coach should review these types using material from this course and previous courses if thought appropriate. The common cannons, corner I and its variations and the wafer, should be well understood by those attending this course.

The coach should be able to demonstrate these cannons well. (A poor demonstration may either destroy the respect of the players for the coach, or suggest that cannons are difficult).

He should explain how he places the balls and where his aiming point is. At the same time he should point out that the exact outcome is very much a personal affair; the weight of the mallet, the stiffness of its shaft, as well as the player's grip and style all have a major influence. It follows, therefore, that the coach should not be dogmatic about the placement of the balls or the aiming point when the players are practising. Instead, the coach's ideas should be used as a starting point for the players to experiment individually.

The types of cannon are:

- ◆ Cannons to get rushes;
- ◆ Cannons to bring out the croqueted ball;
- ◆ Promotion cannons;
- ◆ Open cannons.

The Promotion Cannon.

This is most useful when the fourth ball may still be roqueted and is nearby. It is then possible to promote the third ball to the next hoop as a pioneer, whilst remaining in position to roquet the fourth ball. The four-ball cannon is a special case of the promotion cannon, where the fourth ball is actually roqueted in the same stroke.

The Open Cannon.

Strictly speaking, the open cannon is not a true cannon (it is sometimes called a pseudo-cannon), as it does not arise from a three-ball group. However, the third ball is sufficiently close so that it may confidently be roqueted in the croquet stroke. The position sometimes occurs at the first corner, when a return shot at the tice finishes on the south boundary a short distance from the corner spot. The tice is then rushed into first corner. The cannon is easier than it looks, but it requires a good feel for the croquet stroke to get a good rush of the third ball.

Principles Of Leaves

In this section we are concerned only with 'lift' leaves after the first nine hoops have been negotiated successfully. The coach should review the general principles and then discuss with the class how the standard leaves fulfil these requirements.

Bearing in mind that the lift may be taken from either baulk, the player should be thinking about the following points when planning a leave:

- ◆ Lengthening the opponent's shot;
- ◆ The chance to pick up a break, should the opponent not hit in;
- ◆ The chance for the opponent to pick up a break, if he does hit;
- ◆ The possibility of a triple peel;
- ◆ 'Forcing' the opponent to lift a particular ball;

Lift leaves tend to go in and out of fashion, but the following standard leaves can be discussed in relation to the above points. The coach should also show how the leaves may best be arranged, either on the demonstration board or on the lawn.

The Old Standard Leave (OSL)

U/K has available a shot of some 13/14 yards at **R** or **Y** (the so-called 'short' lift shot), or can shoot with **K** at **U**. If any shot is missed then **R/Y** for hoop 1 with **R** has a good chance both to pick up a break and a standard triple peel, i.e. 4-back peel after hoop 3. Equally, if **U/K** hits the short lift shot, then chances are good. There is no element of forcing.

This is a good fall back when the Diagonal Spread looks to be not under control. Choose it rather than an optimistic last croquet shot.

The New Standard Leave (NSL)

U/K has no shot less than 17 yards. A missed shot from third corner with **K** at **R/Y**, provides **R** with a chance of the break and the standard triple. If **U** shoots at **R/Y** from third corner, the three-ball break is still there, but the standard triple is unlikely.

The Diagonal Spread

Once again **U/K** has no shot less than 17 yards. If the shot is missed, **R** has a good chance of a three-ball break, whichever ball has been lifted and whichever shot has been taken, but again the standard triple is unlikely. If the shot is **K** at **U**, then the standard triple for **R/Y** is a possibility.

In the above examples it has been assumed that U, K and R are all for hoop 1, but this will not necessarily be the case. For example, if U is for 4-back, R/Y might consider the forcing leave shown.

It would be dangerous for U/B to leave U as a pioneer at R's hoop. However, it is also a pioneer for K and, if U/B is a good shot, she may be tempted to lift K and shoot. Of course, if K were not for hoop 1, U/B would feel a greater compulsion to play with U.

In the time available the coach cannot discuss leaves appropriate to all possible clip positions. It is better to concentrate on the examples of standard leaves most likely to be met. However, it is one of the joys of the game to think up leaves for the various clip positions that can arise. The player should be encouraged to retain some flexibility in the leaves that he makes in these circumstances. A predictable opponent is much easier to play against than an unpredictable one.

Some attention has to be given to the arrangement of the balls well in advance of the leave. For example, if R/Y is making 1-back off Y, then it would normally be the pioneer at 3-back. But does he want that? Certainly not, if he is planning a diagonal spread. If an opponent ball is to be placed accurately by the peg, it is necessary to do so from short range to the east of the peg and to have Y as an escape ball nearby. The coach should demonstrate how these leaves are arranged, and how much thinking ahead is necessary.

The practise session should be devoted to the three standard leaves discussed. The break can start at 1-back, either off partner ball or an opponent ball, with the break under tight control. Each player should play through all of these standard leaves as often as time permits. If the break gets out of control, it is better to continue by 'cheating' rather than attempt to continue from a difficult position. The practise is for making good leaves, not sloppy ones. At the same time, the player must recognise why he has got into difficulties and work on his technique later.

The DS or reverse DS is good for all clip positions. Think about the polarity for forcing the opponent.

Pick-Up Of The Break From The Missed Lift

This is one of the rare occasions when the disposition of the balls will be fixed at the start of the turn, and it occurs often enough to demand practise. The coach should stress that the leave and the pick-up go hand in hand; there is little point in making a particular leave, if the player can not make the pick-up. The normal leaves all have their standard pick-ups, and these are discussed briefly below.

The OSL after the 'short' lift shot

The opponent's ball is croqueted towards hoop 4, leaving a rush on partner ball to either the ball by the peg or the ball near hoop 2, Depending on which has been lifted, partner ball is croqueted to hoop 2, leaving a rush on the opponent ball to hoop 1.

The NSL

If K shoots at R/Y then Partner ball is roqueted gently and the take-off is played to K in the fourth corner. This ball is then roqueted and croqueted to hoop 2, leaving a rush on U at hoop 4 to hoop 1.

If U is lifted and shot at R/Y take the rush to K, stop Y to hoop 2 getting the rush to 1.

The Diagonal Spread

Partner ball is rushed to whichever opponent ball has not been lifted and then stopped to hoop 2, leaving a rush on the opponent ball to hoop 1.

During the practise session on the leave, players will have discovered for themselves which leave is easiest for them to arrange. This will often be the OSL, if only because attempts at other leaves that go wrong can often be converted to some kind of OSL. In the limited time available for this practise session more attention should be given, therefore, to the OSL.

The Diagonal Spread is similar to the OSL, if the ball by hoop 2 has been lifted, except that the rush to the ball by the peg is already there for the taking. There is little point in continuing with this variation if the OSL has already been covered. However, it is worth playing the variation where the ball by the peg has been lifted.

The key shot in the NSL is the croquet stroke from corner IV to hoop 2, leaving a rush on the ball by hoop 4. It is almost worth forgetting about the rest of the pick-up in order to concentrate on this one particular shot. Some players may find that it is a natural straight drive and will have no difficulty; others may have to get some action into the back ball or stop it short and will find it difficult to get consistency. Players who do have difficulty would be well advised to forgo the NSL.

In general, players should play the pick-up through as far as hoop 1 but no further. To save time, the opponent need not take the lift shot; instead, the coach should place the balls by hand.

The Triple Peel

The magnetic board will be useful in demonstrating the various options that arise in executing a triple peel. The coach, taking into account the experience of the class, may have doubts about how far it is profitable to go but he must remember that most of the class are attending specifically for coaching on the triple. At the weaker end of the range the triple will usually be beyond the capabilities of the players, in any case. Even for the stronger players the standard triple will usually not be straightforward. For this reason not too much time should be spent upon delayed triples. The players should be reminded that the break is more important than the triple: if the second ball does not go round, the triple fails anyway.

Many players become addicted to practising triple peels, but this is not the most efficient form of practise. A triple requires good control of rushing, hoop approaches and hoop running. If a player has these skills, triples will follow; without them an occasional triple will occur by accident, if tried often enough.

The 4-back Peel

Y may be the pioneer at hoop 2 or hoop 3. If the former is the case, **Y** is rushed to hoop 3 after making hoop 2. It is best to have the pioneer at hoop 3 to the south of the hoop. **Y** should be rushed south of this ball and croqueted into position, leaving a rush to the hoop. If the latter is the case, **U** is rushed to a position where it may be croqueted about a yard south of hoop 3, leaving a rush on **Y** to the side of hoop 3. Novice peelers often make the mistake of rushing **Y** directly behind the hoop, where it is difficult to croquet into position.

After making hoop 3 with **R**, **Y** is roqueted and peeled, leaving a rush on the escape ball, **U**, towards **K**.

The Penult Peel

The position (**R** has just roqueted **Y** after making hoop 6) is reached by rushing **K** to the third corner after making hoop 4. **K** is croqueted to hoop 6, leaving a rush on **Y** to hoop 6, or to the south of **U** where it may be croqueted to hoop 6. After hoop 5, **U** is sent to 1-back

and the positions of **K** and **Y** adjusted before running hoop 6. **Y** is then peeled, leaving a rush on **K** to the north boundary, where it is croqueted to 2-back.

The Rover Peel

After 1-back **U** is sent to 3-back, leaving a rush on **Y** to the west of **K**, where it may be croqueted to rover. After 2-back **K** is sent to 4-back leaving a gentle rush on **Y** to position it in front of Rover. This will be the first real chance to make the rover peel. If successful, it only remains to play a 4-ball break to the peg.

The Delayed 4-back Peel

R is for hoop 6, and the 4-back peel is made leaving a rush on **K** to hoop 6. This is the position to aim for, if it has not been possible to arrange the balls for a standard 4-back peel. There is some danger, of course, because the pioneer for hoop 6 is some 7 yards from the hoop. This play demands a high standard of accuracy in playing the croquet stroke to get the rush, as well as the rush itself.

An alternative is to make hoop 6 off **Y** and to rush it to 4-back. **Y** is then peeled, leaving a rush on **K** with **U** waiting as the pioneer at 1-back

The Delayed Penult Peel

With **Y** and **K** waiting at penult, **U** is rushed towards them after 3-back. **U** is left 2 yards south of penult, **Y** is rushed gently into position and peeled, leaving the rush on **K** to 4-back. If the peel is successful, both **Y** and **K** are sent to rover and penult is made off **U**.

The Straight Rover Peel

It is a good idea to have **U** near the south boundary, to guard against a jump or half-jump over **Y**, should the peel crawl through or stick.

The Straight 4-back Peel

If it has proved impossible to make the 4-back peel any earlier, it may be advisable to try the straight 4-back peel, in order to avoid possibly conceding two lifts to the opponent. Note that it is not worthwhile achieving this at the expense of a good leave and certainly not worth trying a posthumous 4-back peel.

Practise should start with all the players attempting the three standard peels separately, from a position where they have to play the strokes necessary to position the balls before running the hoop. The peel should then be played, finishing with the rush on the escape ball, but going no further at this stage. It is worth letting each player have several attempts at each peel to reinforce the idea of positioning the balls correctly.

Only when the individual peels have been achieved with reasonable consistency should the players progress to the stage of linking them together. This is the difficult part and can be time consuming if the break gets out of control. At this stage, practising by 'cheating' will help to speed things up: if a stroke goes wrong, place the balls where they should have gone. As an alternative to half the players sitting out at any one time they may be paired up to play alternate strokes during the break. They are usually quite happy to do this, as it can relieve a single player of pressure and it may help to stimulate some discussion between the players. They can practise singly later during the lunch break.

All players should get some practise also at the straight 4-back peel leading to a good peg and penult leave. The best starting point is with the peelee ready as a pioneer at 4-back. Note however, the point of this practise period is to retain sufficient control of the break to achieve a good peg and penult leave. It is not a practise period on the straight triple-peel.

The weaker players may get no further than this. There is no point in spending practise time on the delayed peels, if they are having difficulty with the standard triple. If the group splits conveniently into strong and weak sub-groups, the stronger group could have a short practise on the more difficult positions.

Tactics For The In-Player And The Out-Player

It is difficult for the coach to discuss tactics in more than general terms. So much depends upon the ability of the players, and there will probably be a wide range of ability within any one course. The common ground should be this: the course is intended for those players who wish to raise their game to the 'A-class'. Therefore, tactics should be discussed from the point of view of what an 'A-class' player would do when playing against another 'A-class' player. Even then, there is a wide range of ability within the 'A-class', and the coach might well decide to concentrate on the weaker end rather than the highest levels of play. Examples are important, and some are discussed below.

The In-Player

The tactics for the in-player are quite straightforward. He should be trying to set up a break as soon as possible. That does not mean as soon as he takes croquet. He should weigh up the options and choose between going for the immediate break, that may mean losing the innings if unsuccessful, and making a leave, that gives the opponent the chance to hit in.

Picking up the break has already been discussed, so we deal here only with making a leave. Since the opponent will be able to shoot next turn (but may choose not to do so), it is essential to make a leave that yields a break from a missed shot. In a real game it is often necessary to decide whether there is anything to be gained by making a leave that allows an opponent to corner or otherwise play defensively, after which the pick-up may be very difficult. The alternative is to make a so-called 'aggressive' leave, from which there will probably be a pickup, whether the opponent shoots or not. There is no universally correct answer to this question, as much depends upon the frame of mind of both the player and his opponent, the state of the game, playing conditions, etc.

If **U** can see **K** in Fig 3.5a, then that would be the safest (and, of course, the longest) shot. **U** could play to the east boundary, or to second corner, and thus severely reduce **R/Y**'s chance of picking up a break.

In Fig 3.5b, as **K** is off the boundary and near hoop 3, **R/Y** would have a three-ball break, if he could make the first two hoops. In 'A' class play this is highly probable, so **U/B** should shoot with **U** anyway, particularly as the position of **K** has given **U/B** a shorter shot.

Leaves that do not punish a missed shot should be avoided. An obvious example would be leaving the in-player's balls on a boundary. If the opponent has one ball safely tucked away, a missed shot with the other may leave an easy rush, but (unless the cannon is gained) a second ball will be left near a boundary, with little prospect of a pick-up.

A classic example is guarding a corner as in Fig 3.5c. If **R** is for hoop 2 a missed shot by **U/B** with **K** at **R/Y** would leave **R/Y** with an easy three-ball break pick-up. However, if **R** is for

hoop 1, U/B's missed shot with U at R/Y may leave a pickup, but it is considerably more difficult to achieve, due to the rush over a long distance to hoop 1.

The Out-Player

The tactics for the out-player amount to judging how best to get back the innings. The choice is usually between shooting at every available opportunity or playing a defensive, waiting game, hoping that the opponent will make a mistake. Which way will suit a player best will depend upon his prowess as a shot and the strength of the opposition, etc.. The player must gauge whether he can shoot safely, i.e. the missed shot will not be punished, or whether he 'must' shoot because, whatever he does, the opponent will make a pick-up.

Although the out-player is usually advised to think about what he will give away with a missed shot, he should not always be discouraged by these thoughts. There are positions where it is right to shoot even though a miss could make matters easy for the opponent. For example, a shortish shot or one that could win the game should not be refused for fear of the consequences. A better opportunity might not present itself later.

Conceding Contact - Three-Ball Endings

Whilst the coach can advise upon the tactics of three-ball endings for both the single-ball player and the two-ball player, it is not easy to decide when to peg out an opponent's ball. Two points must be borne in mind:

Yes, it is easier to play with two balls against one;

No, it is not a decisive advantage, however big the lead.

If the single-ball player does not give away a three-ball break with a missed shot, then generally the two-ball player must proceed on a succession of two-ball breaks, laying up in a guarded or wired position at the end of each turn. The single ball will usually be on a boundary, and it will not be easy to pick up a three-ball break.

On the other hand, if the single-ball player should hit in, the balls will usually be out in the lawn, and it may be easy for him to pick up the break.

The single-ball player must become very aggressive in his attempts to gain the break by attempting long, angled hoops, big roll-approaches. He must shoot at anything that does not give away the three-ball break. For this reason it is sometimes difficult for the two-ball player to gain control of the game; he may not be able to join up, if the single-ball player has a reasonable shot. When the two-ball player has not joined up, the single ball player can shoot with relative impunity at the peg ball. Even if he misses, he will get both another turn later and an open shot because the two-ball player will be obliged to play with his peg ball.

If the first ball has been taken to the peg, thereby conceding contact, with the intention of putting the opponent under the pressure of knowing that one break to the peg will finish the game, then it is imperative to make a good contact leave. It is very difficult to leave all four balls in corners, and failure to leave a ball in either corner I or III could leave a rush from the lift. There is no need even to make the attempt. Provided that all the balls are on boundaries, the opponent balls can be left quite close together (without a rush, of course), as long as the in-player's balls are well separated on the opposite boundary. To make this kind of a leave, it is best to have two balls on boundaries before running rover.

Practising

The coach 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.

General Points

- (a) If it is to provide value, practise should be enjoyable and structured. Routines should concentrate on perceived weaknesses.
- (b) Divide your practise session into stages, each of which has a purpose and is aimed at improving technique or correcting weaknesses.
- (c) Loosen up a little before starting to practise seriously. Start 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.
- (d) There are certain strokes and lines of play that occur time after time in Advanced play and it is essential to master them. Examples include the sequence of strokes needed to make a pickup after a missed lift. Cannons occur less frequently but when they do occur in a game you will appreciate the time spent in practising them.
- (e) Set yourself targets and at the end of a session review your progress. If you feel that the session was not successful, analyse the reasons for this and address them the next time.

Ideas for Skills Practice

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.

4-ball breaks. Lay out the perfect 4-ball break with a pioneer at hoop 2, a pivot in the centre, a ball close to hoop 1 and your ball ready to rush it to hoop 1. Play the break taking bisques as you need them. Count the number of bisques you need.

Croquet Strokes. Know your own ratios? If you know how far your ball travels in relation to the croqueted ball you will know when you need a drive, a stop shot or a half roll. Don't guess but know it. Use bisques, or sticks, as markers.

Hoop Approaches. Practise approaches from a circle drawn around the hoop and from 1 - 3 yards away. From behind the hoop try thick take-offs in order to move the croqueted ball to a desired position.

Hoop running. Practise from different angles and distances. Run through a hoop by 6-12 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.

Cannons. Make sure that you can successfully use the 'Corner I' cannon for hoop 1 and its variations. Practise using the other cannons, especially the wafer cannon.

Stop Shot Approach. Play a croquet stroke from Corner I putting the croqueted ball to hoop 2 and getting the striker's ball in a position to run hoop 1.

Controlled Hoop Running. Play a croquet stroke from a yard line ball level with hoop 1 to get a rush on another yard line ball about 1 yard away. Rush to hoop 1 and get a rush back to the first ball. Repeat this process, each time leaving a ball on the yard line. Count your successes and try to improve your score.

The Clinic

The final session of the course is the coaches' clinic. The idea is that class members may have five minutes each with a coach to discuss any individual problems with their game or their 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. However, in practice, what usually happens is that players want to know how to shoot straight, and will usually congregate around the course leader, or the coach with the lowest handicap, or simply the coach who seems to be the most authoritative. It may be better, therefore, for the coaches to decide in advance who will take this topic, and to announce it to the players. If there are several players who want advice on shooting, a lot of repetition can be avoided if the coach takes this group together and runs through the general principals first. The swing needs to be 'grooved', that is repeatable, and this can only be achieved by practise. Unfortunately, practising a poor swing may make it more repeatable but it will also limit the consistency of shooting, particularly if the player feels under pressure.

Although there are many different styles used by the top class, consistent shots in the game, they all have some things in common. These are: good, square stance; rhythmic swing with the arms, hands and mallet moving in sympathy and not fighting each other; and, for consistency, a 'straight' swing, free from excessive curves and especially twists.

The players can shoot individually at a suitable target, with the coach standing behind to examine and criticise the swing. If a monitor is available for quick playback, a video camcorder is very useful to show players what they are doing.

Books Available For Croquet Players

Books For Beginners

How to play Croquet

A beginners guide to how to play Association Croquet, written by Mike Shaw and Nigel Aspinall. 48 colour pages soft back booklet, with lots of helpful diagrams.

Know the Game

Produced in collaboration with the Croquet Association. Soft back 48 pages colour illustrations. A comprehensive introduction with a summary of the laws, information on equipment, fully illustrated explanations of strokes and a guide to tactics. Mostly about Association croquet, but with a useful section on Golf croquet too.

Books For Intermediate Skill Levels

Plus one on time

Author: Don Gaunt. Soft back. 160 pages. Illustrated with b/w diagrams.

A distillation of tactical skills for the 6 to 18 handicap player that will enable readers to improve their game significantly

The Skills of the Game

Author: Bill Lamb. Hardback 124 pages. Illustrated in b/w. Published 1990.

For players who already know the basics and are intent on improving their play and getting more enjoyment from the game. Full of advice on techniques and tactics.

Books For The 'A-Class' Or Aspiring 'A-Class' Player

Croquet by John Solomon

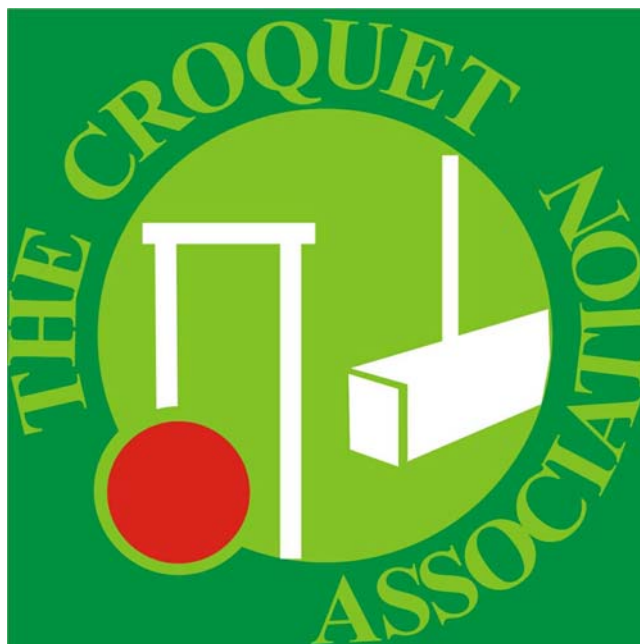
Author: John Solomon. Soft back 120 pages. Illustrated in b/w. Published in this edition 1989. The intricacies of play, techniques and tournament strategy are explained by an acknowledged authority and master of the game. Lots of detailed instruction including more advanced play.

Expert Croquet Tactics

Author: Keith Wylie. Soft back. 154 pages. Illustrated with b/w diagrams. Published 1991.

Aims to help the improving player climb from the bottom of the A class to the top of it. A highly personal, detailed guide to standard openings, break play, the triple peel and leaves.

Appendix 1



IMPROVERS' COACHING COURSE

COURSE NOTES

Improvers' Coaching Weekend

Principles

Hoop Approaches

Always plan your approach to get a useful rush after running the hoop.

If you want a forward rush, play a stop shot approach when close to the hoop aiming to put the ball 4 to 5 feet past the hoop, or a drive or half roll approach to put the ball 6 to 8 feet past the hoop when you are further away.

When seeking a sideways rush, send the croqueted ball 2 or 3 feet wide of the hoop to allow a greater margin for error.

If you wish to have a rush back into the court play the stroke with a roll putting the croqueted ball a little past the hoop and to the side.

Remember to apply the same principles to hoop approaches as you would to in court croquet strokes.

Having decided on the stroke to be played, concentrate on the position of the striker's ball. No point in having the croqueted ball in the right position if you then cannot run the hoop!

Hoop Problems

Know your laws, e.g. when a ball starts to run a hoop; hoop and roquet.

If the stroke is dubious, perhaps you have a hampered shot, call a referee. Acquaint yourself with the likely faults which you could commit during the stroke. If in doubt you may ask the referee about faults. The referee is not permitted to give you advice but is required to provide reasonable information on the laws.

Thick Take-offs

Keep a straight swing and follow through.

Allow for 'drag'.

Keep the mallet swinging in the same plane throughout the stroke and follow through. Do not twist the mallet to follow the required direction of the striker's ball.

Remember the defensive applications as well as the break building applications.

4-ball Breaks

Plan ahead to avoid the furniture.

Anticipate 2 bisque disasters - don't be greedy; spend a bisque to avoid them.

Be prepared to invest a bisque to tidy up a disintegrating break.

Use rushes to make croquet strokes easier.

Use a mobile pivot to avoid long take offs to pioneers and half roll croquet strokes.

Openings

The Tice Opening

The first ball is played to the East boundary within 7 yards of corner IV.

The opponent plays a ball to the tice position, between 8 - 10 yards from corner I.

Player 1 now decides whether to shoot at the tice or join partner ball on the East boundary. The decision will depend on their assessment of the probability of player 2 hitting the tice.

This opening is well balanced and offers both players a roughly equal chance of gaining the innings.

The Duffer Tice

The first ball is played to the East boundary as for the normal tice opening.

A tice is now laid from 'B' baulk 8 -10 yards from baulk and a little East of hoop 6.

It is now difficult for player 1 to shoot at the tice from the west side of 'B' baulk. A hard shot missed will finish just outside 'A' baulk and a trickle at the tice may leave a double target for player 2.

The Principles Of Constructing Leaves

Make sure that your opponent has no short shot or double target. Also take care that you are not giving a wiring lift.

Make it expensive for your opponent to shoot if they miss. Leave trap shots to achieve this.

Construct a position where you can make some progress if your opponent misses. Consider a squeeze (one opposing ball at each of your hoops) to maximise your chances of progressing.

Try to avoid the situation where your opponent has an easy break if they hit in.

Where possible make the last hoop off an opponent ball.

Wiring

Be alert to the dangers of giving away a lift.

If your opponent leaves one of your balls in a hoop and does not join up, remember you can play the fourth ball into baulk for a lift next turn.

Cannons

Cannons can give you easy breaks. Learn how to play the standard corner cannons and practice them.

The 'wafer' cannon is usually much more useful than the 'worm' (or banana) cannon.

Tactics In 3-Ball Endings

When considering pegging out an opponent ball take into account the strength of the opposition and the relative positions of the two backward balls. *Pegging out an opponent ball does not guarantee success.*

For the 2-ball player

Unless time is near, care and caution should be adopted.

Do not leave your opponent free shots and doubles: guard the boundary whenever possible.

Look for opportunities to wire.

Give up the innings rather than lay up in the middle of the lawn.

If you have a bisque left, use it to set up a 3-ball break or pass your opponent's hoop quickly.

Consider pegging out your forward ball if your other ball is well ahead.

For the 1-ball player

If your opponent's balls are together, always shoot if you can do so without conceding an easy 3-ball break with a missed shot.

If you cannot shoot, look for threatening positions; thin wire or on a boundary equidistant from opponent's separated balls.

If opponent's balls are apart consider taking position.

Make the most of what chances you get. You need to play aggressively and take more chances than you would in normal play.

If you have to play a 3-ball break to win, consider using bisques to avoid big splits.

Strategy In Timed Endings

You should play at your normal speed and you are entitled to take your normal care and consideration. You must not waste time deliberately but you may of course play defensively.

The choice of tactics is yours according to the spirit in which you play the game.

If you are a few hoops ahead with time approaching towards the end of your turn, join up with your partner ball but make certain that all the balls are near the boundaries.

If you are ahead and in play as time is called or about to be called, scatter all the balls to the boundaries. Do not join up.

If you are many hoops ahead with 5 to 10 minutes left, consider yielding the innings to a weak player by placing your balls in or near corners. You should not do this against a strong player.

If the scores are level when time is called, you cannot peg out a ball in handicap play unless both your balls have run rover or an opponent ball has been pegged out.

If you are behind with time approaching, you will have to be aggressive whether you have the innings or not. Your opponent is not going to make things easy for you.

Playing Breaks**4-Ball Breaks**

Establish a *pioneer* at your next hoop but one (e.g. if you are for hoop 1 your pioneer should be at hoop 2; if you are for hoop 2 your pioneer should be at hoop 3; etc.) and a *pivot* in the centre with a rush on the fourth ball to your next hoop.

Rush the fourth ball to your hoop. Approach your hoop putting the other ball to the other side of the hoop. Make the hoop and roquet the other ball again. On your croquet shot send it to your next but one hoop to become a new pioneer sending your ball to the pivot in the middle (e.g. after you have made hoop 1 send a pioneer to hoop 3; after you have made hoop 2 send a pioneer to hoop 4; etc.). Roquet the pivot in the centre and take off to the ball waiting at your next hoop.

3-Ball Breaks

Establish a position with a pioneer at your next hoop but one and a rush on the third ball to the hoop you want.

Rush the third ball to your hoop, take croquet from it putting it to the position which will give you the rush you need after making the hoop; and make the hoop. Then rush the ball to the point where you have a simple drive or stop shot to put a new pioneer to your next but one hoop and your own ball to the ball that is waiting at your next hoop.

Examples of the rushes needed are:-

- ◆ After hoop 1, rush to the west boundary a little South of hoop 2 to give yourself a simple drive to put a pioneer to hoop 3 and send your own ball to the ball at hoop 2.
- ◆ After hoop 5, rush east of hoop 6 to give yourself a simple shot to put a pioneer to 1-back and get to the ball waiting for you.

If you do not get a satisfactory rush after a hoop then you will need a more difficult split shot to keep the break going.

Try to pick up the fourth ball at your first opportunity as a 4-ball break is more easily kept going.

2-Ball Breaks

This break needs a good rush to your next hoop after making each hoop. So it can only be achieved with good control and a little luck.

However it should be possible even for moderate players to make hoops 4, 5, 6, and 1-back with a 2-ball break. Practising a 2-ball break around these hoops gives good practice in hoop running, controlling rushes and a variety of shots to retrieve the situation.

Useful Techniques in Play

In a 4-ball break keep the balls within the rectangle formed by the outer hoops in order to give yourself shorter shots.

Approach the ball at your hoop along its rush line by rushing the pivot ball to the appropriate position before your take off.

Always aim to get a rush to somewhere useful after a hoop.

To convert a 3-ball break into a 4-ball break if the fourth ball is in a corner try to bring it into the game just before you make the hoop in that corner.

If you approach a hoop from the side don't try to get too close to it. Aim to be about 18 inches to two feet away then the angle will not be so difficult if you don't play a perfect shot.

Think before you play a shot. Where do you want to play your next shot from? Can you get there in this shot?

Use Of Bisques

General Principles

Always consider which ball to go to first.

Priority is usually a good pioneer at the first hoop of the break.

Recognise promising situations, e.g. ball just off the yard Line behind hoops 2, 4 etc.

Try to play strokes where the position of only one ball is important.

If you have a half bisque, use this to start setting up your break and then follow it with a full bisque so that you can run a hoop having set up your break.

During your break DO NOT attempt a shot that is unlikely to come off. If faced with this situation think how you can best use another bisque to tidy up all the balls and then continue with your break.

As a general principle, do not take a bisque unless you can see that it will enable you to make at least your current hoop and the next one.

General Strategy Against an 'A' Class Player (handicaps below 2)

If you win the toss you must put your opponent in.

If you lose the toss, be prepared to spend a half bisque or a full bisque to improve the leave at the end of the third turn. Do not try to make a break with only three balls on the lawn.

If you have a half bisque use it early in the game to improve the position on the third turn or follow it with a full bisque in setting up a 4-ball break .

Set up a 4-ball break as quickly as possible with your bisques (i.e. on 4th turn of the game if your opponent misses) and take your break round to the peg using bisques as necessary. Use all your bisques in the fourth and sixth or fifth and seventh turns.

Go to the peg with a defensive leave if you have at least half your bisques left.

If you use more than half your bisques in taking your first ball round go to the peg with an attacking leave.

If you lose the toss and your opponent puts you in, set up your break and take it round as soon as you can. Do not join up on the third turn. Consider shooting at the tice or perhaps a wide join.

Strategy of Bisque Taking Against 'B' Class Players (handicaps 2 - 5)

There is no need to spend bisques on the 4th or 5th turn unless you have a good opportunity.

Wait until a favourable situation arises to make effective use of your bisques and then use your bisques to keep your break going.

A bisque has its greatest value if you can set up a 4-ball break from an early hoop, but it is easier to gain control of a break from hoops 4 to 1-back.

General Strategy Against a 'C' Class Player (handicaps 6 - 11)

Here you will have few if any bisques. Keep any that you do have until you have a good chance of making a break from one bisque or to make the last few hoops and peg out.

If you are giving bisques be wary of leaving situations where your opponent can easily set up a break using a single bisque.

Setting Up A Break Against An "A" Class Player

If You Have Won the Toss

You win the toss and put your opponent in. He plays Blue to the 4th corner or somewhere off the boundary near hoop 4. You play Red to about 3 yards south-east of the peg.

The most difficult position now is if your opponent plays Black to the second corner.

Assume he does. Then you shoot at Blue with Yellow. Take a bisque if you miss.

Now you have to get a ball to the first hoop and a ball to the second hoop to set up a 4-ball break. Take croquet off Blue putting Blue to hoop 1 and Yellow to Red in the centre.

- (a) Yellow has a rush on Red to hoop 2. Rush Red to hoop 2. Take off to Black in the second corner. Roquet Black and with your croquet shot give Yellow a rush on Black towards hoop 1. Take a second bisque, rush Black between hoops 1 and 2 and take off to Blue at hoop 1. You now have a 4-ball break.
- (b) Yellow has a rush on Red to hoop 1. Rush Red south of hoop 1. Then stop shot it to hoop 2 and give yourself a rush on Blue to hoop 1. Approach hoop 1 putting Blue beyond hoop 1. Make hoop 1 then rush Blue to the centre. Take off from Blue to Black in the second corner. Roquet Black. Croquet Black to hoop 3 getting your Yellow close to Red at hoop 2. You now have a 4-ball break ahead of you.
- (c) Yellow has no useful rush on Red. Roquet Red. Roll both balls to hoop 2. Shoot at Black in the second corner. If you miss, take a bisque. Put Black near the peg and send Yellow to Red near hoop 2. In your continuation stroke play Yellow to a point where it can rush Red closer to hoop 2. Take a bisque. Rush Red closer to hoop 2 and take off to Blue at hoop 1. Your 4-ball break is waiting for you.

An alternative to 4 above is to play Blue to hoop 2 on the first croquet shot putting your Yellow near Red in the centre. If Yellow gets a rush on Red to hoop 1 take it and make hoop 1. Rush Red to the centre. Take off to Black in the second corner. Roquet Black. Croquet

Black to hoop 3 getting Yellow close to Blue at hoop 2.

But if Yellow does not have a rush on Red to hoop 1, roquet Red. Take off to Black in corner II and roquet it. Croquet Black to hoop 1 and Yellow to Blue at hoop 2. Play your continuation shot to get a rush on Blue closer to hoop 2. Take a bisque and tidy up Blue. Then take off to Red in the centre. Roquet Red and take off to Black at hoop 1. Again you have a 4-ball break.

If You Have Lost the Toss

Play your first ball, Red say, to the East boundary a foot outside the corner. Your opponent will probably lay a tice with Blue. If you think that there is a reasonable chance that your opponent will hit the tice, you should shoot at it going off near corner II if you miss. Otherwise play Yellow to a spot on the east boundary level with hoop 4 to make it as difficult as possible for your opponent to get a break if Black hits Blue in the fourth turn. If you hit the tice move blue up the boundary and play yellow to a point about 6 yards North of red.

Suppose Black misses and ends up near the second corner. Shoot at Red with yellow and hope to hit it saving a bisque. Split Red to hoop 1 and Yellow towards Black in the second corner. You will not get Black all the way, concentrate on getting Red to hoop 1. Shoot at Black take a bisque if you miss. In the croquet stroke roll Black to hoop 2 and yellow a couple of yards south of hoop 2. Shoot at Blue, take a bisque if you miss. Croquet Blue to the centre and Yellow to Red at hoop 1. You have now got a 4-ball break.

Note that if your opponent hits the tice you will be very unlucky if, at the end of the turn, you do not have a ball on the boundary that you can shoot firmly at and take a bisque if you miss it. Then work out how you can set up a break with one, two or more bisque

Some Ideas For Practising

Make sure that you are loosened up before you commence your practice. Set yourself a target for your practice and a time that you will spend on each phase.

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.

4-ball breaks. Lay out the perfect 4-ball break with a pioneer at hoop 2, a pivot in the centre, a ball close to hoop 1 and your ball ready to rush it to hoop 1. Play the break taking bisques as you need them. Count the number of bisques you need.

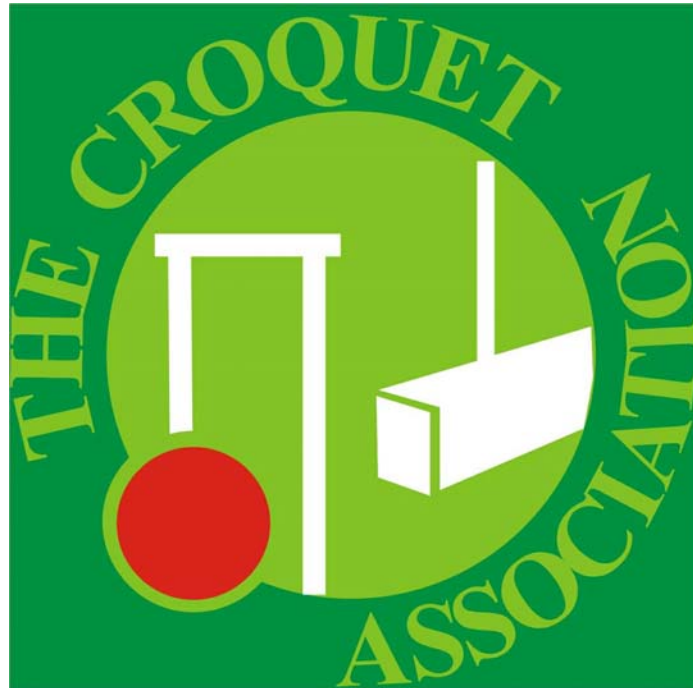
Croquet Strokes. Know your own ratios? If you know how far your ball travels in relation to the croqueted ball you will know when you need a drive, a stop shot or a half roll. Don't guess but know it.

Hoop Approaches. Practice approaches from a circle drawn around the hoop and from 1 - 3 yards away. From behind the hoop try thick take-offs in order to move the croqueted ball to a desired position.

Hoop running. Practice from different angles and distances.

Cannons. Make sure that you can successfully use the 'Corner I' cannon for hoop 1 and its variations. Practice using the other cannons, especially the wafer cannon.

Appendix 2



BRONZE COACHING COURSE

COURSE NOTES

CA Bronze Coaching Weekend

Principles

Hoop Approaches

1. Always plan your approach to get a useful rush after running the hoop.
2. If you want a forward rush, play a stop shot approach when close to the hoop aiming to put the ball 4 to 5 feet past the hoop, or a drive or half roll approach to put the ball 6 to 8 feet past the hoop when you are further away.
3. When seeking a sideways rush, send the croqueted ball 2 or 3 feet wide of the hoop to allow a greater margin for error.
4. If you wish to have a rush back into the court play the stroke with a roll putting the croqueted ball a little past the hoop and to the side.
5. Remember to apply the same principles to hoop approaches as you would to in court croquet strokes.
6. Having decided on the stroke to be played, concentrate on the position of the striker's ball. No point in having the croqueted ball in the right position if you then cannot run the hoop!

Hoop Problems

Know your laws, e.g. when a ball starts to run a hoop; hoop and roquet.

If the stroke is dubious, perhaps you have a hampered shot, call a referee. Acquaint yourself with the likely faults which you could commit during the stroke. If in doubt you may ask the referee about faults. The referee is not permitted to give you advice but is required to provide reasonable information on the laws.

Thick Take-offs

Keep a straight swing and follow through.

Allow for 'drag'.

Keep the mallet swinging in the same plane throughout the stroke and follow through. Do not twist the mallet to follow the required direction of the striker's ball.

Remember the defensive applications as well as the break building applications.

4-ball Breaks

Plan ahead to avoid the furniture.

Anticipate 2 bisque disasters - don't be greedy; spend a bisque to avoid them.

Be prepared to invest a bisque to tidy up a disintegrating break.

Use rushes to make croquet strokes easier.

Use a mobile pivot to avoid long take offs to pioneers and half roll croquet strokes.

Openings

The Tice Opening

The first ball is played to the East boundary within 7 yards of corner IV.

The opponent plays a ball to the tice position, between 8 - 10 yards from corner I.

Player 1 now decides whether to shoot at the tice or join partner ball on the East boundary. The decision will depend on their assessment of the probability of player 2 hitting the tice.

This opening is well balanced and offers both players a roughly equal chance of gaining the innings.

The Duffer Tice

The first ball is played to the East boundary as for the normal tice opening.

A tice is now laid from 'B' baulk 8 -10 yards from baulk and a little East of hoop 6.

It is now difficult for player 1 to shoot at the tice from the west side of 'B' baulk. A hard shot missed will finish just outside 'A' baulk and a trickle at the tice may leave a double target for player 2.

The Principles Of Constructing Leaves

Make sure that your opponent has no short shot or double target. Also take care that you are not giving a wiring lift.

Make it expensive for your opponent to shoot if they miss. Leave trap shots to achieve this.

Construct a position where you can make some progress if your opponent misses. Consider a squeeze (one opposing ball at each of your hoops) to maximise your chances of progressing.

Try to avoid the situation where your opponent has an easy break if they hit in.

Where possible make the last hoop off an opponent ball.

Wiring

Be alert to the dangers of giving away a lift.

If your opponent leaves one of your balls in a hoop and does not join up, remember you can play the fourth ball into baulk for a lift next turn.

Cannons

Cannons can give you easy breaks. Learn how to play the standard corner cannons and practice them.

The 'wafer' cannon is usually much more useful than the 'worm' (or banana) cannon.

Tactics In 3 -Ball Endings

When considering pegging out an opponent ball take into account the strength of the opposition and the relative positions of the two backward balls. *Pegging out an opponent ball does not guarantee success.*

For the 2-ball player

Unless time is near, care and caution should be adopted.

Do not leave your opponent free shots and doubles: guard the boundary whenever possible.

Look for opportunities to wire.

Give up the innings rather than lay up in the middle of the lawn.

If you have a bisque left, use it to set up a 3-ball break or pass your opponent's hoop quickly.

Consider pegging out your forward ball if your other ball is well ahead.

For the 1-ball player

If your opponent's balls are together, always shoot if you can do so without conceding an easy 3-ball break with a missed shot.

If you cannot shoot, look for threatening positions; thin wire or on a boundary equidistant from opponent's separated balls.

If opponent's balls are apart consider taking position.

Make the most of what chances you get. You need to play aggressively and take more chances than you would in normal play.

If you have to play a 3-ball break to win, consider using bisques to avoid big splits.

Strategy In Timed Endings

You should play at your normal speed and you are entitled to take your normal care and consideration. You must not waste time deliberately but you may of course play defensively. The choice of tactics is yours according to the spirit in which you play the game.

If you are a few hoops ahead with time approaching towards the end of your turn, join up with your partner ball but make certain that all the balls are near the boundaries.

If you are ahead and in play as time is called or about to be called, scatter all the balls to the boundaries. Do not join up.

If you are many hoops ahead with 5 to 10 minutes left, consider yielding the innings to a weak player by placing your balls in or near corners. You should not do this against a strong player.

If the scores are level when time is called, you cannot peg out a ball in handicap play unless both your balls have run rover or an opponent ball has been pegged out.

If you are behind with time approaching, you will have to be aggressive whether you have the innings or not. Remember your opponent is not going to make things easy for you.

Playing Breaks

4-Ball Breaks

Establish a *pioneer* at your next hoop but one (e.g. if you are for hoop 1 your pioneer should be at hoop 2; if you are for hoop 2 your pioneer should be at hoop 3; etc.) and a *pivot* in the centre with a rush on the fourth ball to your next hoop.

Rush the fourth ball to your hoop. Approach your hoop putting the other ball to the other side of the hoop. Make the hoop and roquet the other ball again. On your croquet shot send it to your next but one hoop to become a new pioneer sending your ball to the pivot in the middle (e.g. after you have made hoop 1 send a pioneer to hoop 3; after you have made hoop 2 send a pioneer to hoop 4; etc.). Roquet the pivot in the centre and take off to the ball waiting at your next hoop.

3-Ball Breaks

Establish a position with a pioneer at your next hoop but one and a rush on the third ball to the hoop you want.

Rush the third ball to your hoop, take croquet from it putting it to the position which will give you the rush you need after making the hoop; and make the hoop. Then rush the ball to the point where you have a simple drive or stop shot to put a new pioneer to your next but one hoop and your own ball to the ball that is waiting at your next hoop.

Examples of the rushes needed are:-

-After hoop 1, rush to the west boundary a little South of hoop 2 to give yourself a simple drive to put a pioneer to hoop 3 and send your own ball to the ball at hoop 2.

-After hoop 5, rush east of hoop 6 to give yourself a simple shot to put a pioneer to 1-back and get to the ball waiting for you.

If you do not get a satisfactory rush after a hoop then you will need a more difficult split shot to keep the break going.

Try to pick up the fourth ball at your first opportunity as a 4-ball break is more easily kept going.

2-Ball Breaks

This break needs a good rush to your next hoop after making each hoop. So it can only be achieved with good control and a little luck.

However it should be possible even for moderate players to make hoops 4, 5, 6, and 1-back with a 2-ball break. Practising a 2-ball break around these hoops gives good practice in hoop running, controlling rushes and a variety of shots to retrieve the situation.

Useful Techniques in Play

In a 4-ball break keep the balls within the rectangle formed by the outer hoops in order to give yourself shorter shots.

Approach the ball at your hoop along its rush line by rushing the pivot ball to the appropriate position before your take off.

Always aim to get a rush to somewhere useful after a hoop.

To convert a 3-ball break into a 4-ball break if the fourth ball is in a corner try to bring it into the game just before you make the hoop in that corner.

If you approach a hoop from the side don't try to get too close to it. Aim to be about 18 inches to two feet away then the angle will not be so difficult if you don't play a perfect shot.

Think before you play a shot. Where do you want to play your next shot from? Can you get there in this shot?

Use Of Bisques

General Principles

Always consider which ball to go to first.

Priority is usually a good pioneer at the first hoop of the break.

Recognise promising situations, e.g. ball just off the yard Line behind hoops 2, 4 etc.

Try to play strokes where the position of only one ball is important.

If you have a half bisque, use this to start setting up your break and then follow it with a full bisque so that you can run a hoop having set up your break.

During your break DO NOT attempt a shot that is unlikely to come off. If faced with this situation think how you can best use another bisque to tidy up all the balls and then continue with your break.

As a general principle, do not take a bisque unless you can see that it will enable you to make at least your current hoop and the next one.

General Strategy Against an 'A' Class Player (handicaps below 2)

If you win the toss you must put your opponent in.

If you lose the toss, be prepared to spend a half bisque or a full bisque to improve the leave at the end of the third turn. Do not try to make a break with only three balls on the lawn.

If you have a half bisque use it early in the game to improve the position on the third turn or follow it with a full bisque in setting up a 4-ball break .

Set up a 4-ball break as quickly as possible with your bisques (i.e. on 4th turn of the game if your opponent misses) and take your break round to the peg using bisques as necessary. Use all your bisques in the fourth and sixth or fifth and seventh turns.

Go to the peg with a defensive leave if you have at least half your bisques left.

If you use more than half your bisques in taking your first ball round go to the peg with an attacking leave.

If you lose the toss and your opponent puts you in, set up your break and take it round as soon as you can. Do not join up on the third turn. Consider shooting at the tice or perhaps a wide join.

Strategy of Bisque Taking Against 'B' Class Players (handicaps 2 - 5)

There is no need to spend bisques on the 4th or 5th turn unless you have a good opportunity. Wait until a favourable situation arises to make effective use of your bisques and then use your bisques to keep your break going.

A bisque has its greatest value if you can set up a 4-ball break from an early hoop, but it is easier to gain control of a break from hoops 4 to 1-back.

General Strategy Against a 'C' Class Player (handicaps 6 - 11)

Here you will have few if any bisques. Keep any that you do have until you have a good chance of making a break from one bisque or to make the last few hoops and peg out.

If you are giving bisques be wary of leaving situations where your opponent can easily set up a break using a single bisque.

Setting Up A Break Against An "A" Class Player

If You Have Won the Toss

You win the toss and put your opponent in. He plays Blue to the 4th corner or somewhere off the boundary near hoop 4. You play Red to about 3 yards south-east of the peg.

She most difficult position now is if your opponent plays Black to the second corner.

Assume he does. Then you shoot at Blue with Yellow. Take a bisque if you miss.

Now you have to get a ball to the first hoop and a ball to the second hoop to set up a 4-ball break. Take croquet off Blue putting Blue to hoop 1 and Yellow to Red in the centre.

(a) Yellow has a rush on Red to hoop 2. Rush Red to hoop 2. Take off to Black in the second corner. Roquet Black and with your croquet shot give Yellow a rush on Black towards hoop 1. Take a second bisque, rush Black between hoops 1 and 2 and take off to Blue at hoop 1 You now have a 4-ball break.

(b) Yellow has a rush on Red to hoop 1. Rush Red south of hoop 1. Then stop shot it to hoop 2 and give yourself a rush on Blue to hoop 1. Approach hoop 1 putting Blue

beyond hoop 1. Make hoop 1 then rush Blue to the centre. Take off from Blue to Black in the second corner. Roquet Black. Croquet Black to hoop 3 getting your Yellow close to Red at hoop 2. You now have a 4-ball break ahead of you.

(c) Yellow has no useful rush on Red. Roquet Red. Roll both balls to hoop 2. Shoot at Black in the second corner. If you miss, take a bisque. Put Black near the peg and send Yellow to Red near hoop 2. In your continuation stroke play Yellow to a point where it can rush Red closer to hoop 2. Take a bisque. Rush Red closer to hoop 2 and take off to Blue at hoop 1. Your 4-ball break is waiting for you.

An alternative to 4 above is to play Blue to hoop 2 on the first croquet shot putting your Yellow near Red in the centre. If Yellow gets a rush on Red to hoop 1 take it and make hoop 1. Rush Red to the centre. Take off to Black in the second corner. Roquet Black. Croquet Black to hoop 3 getting Yellow close to Blue at hoop 2.

But if Yellow does not have a rush on Red to hoop 1, roquet Red. Take off to Black in corner II and roquet it. Croquet Black to hoop 1 and Yellow to Blue at hoop 2. Play your continuation shot to get a rush on Blue closer to hoop 2. Take a bisque and tidy up Blue. Then take off to Red in the centre. Roquet Red and take off to Black at hoop 1. Again you have a 4-ball break.

If You Have Lost the Toss

Play your first ball, Red say, to the East boundary a foot outside the corner. Your opponent will probably lay a tice with Blue. If you think that there is a reasonable chance that your opponent will hit the tice, you should shoot at it going off near corner II if you miss. Otherwise play Yellow to a spot on the east boundary level with hoop 4 to make it as difficult as possible for your opponent to get a break if Black hits Blue in the fourth turn. If you hit the tice move blue up the boundary and play yellow to a point about 6 yards North of red.

Suppose Black misses and ends up near the second corner. Shoot at Red with yellow and hope to hit it saving a bisque. Split Red to hoop 1 and Yellow towards Black in the second corner. You will not get Black all the way, concentrate on getting Red to hoop 1. Shoot at Black take a bisque if you miss. In the croquet stroke roll Black to hoop 2 and yellow a couple of yards south of hoop 2. Shoot at Blue, take a bisque if you miss. Croquet Blue to the centre and Yellow to Red at hoop 1. You have now got a 4-ball break.

Note that if your opponent hits the tice you will be very unlucky if, at the end of the turn, you do not have a ball on the boundary that you can shoot firmly at and take a bisque if you miss it. Then work out how you can set up a break with one, two or more bisque

Some Ideas For Practising

Make sure that you are loosened up before you commence your practice. Set yourself a target for your practice and a time that you will spend on each phase.

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.

4-ball breaks. Lay out the perfect 4-ball break with a pioneer at hoop 2, a pivot in the centre, a ball close to hoop 1 and your ball ready to rush it to hoop 1. Play the break taking bisques as you need them. Count the number of bisques you need.

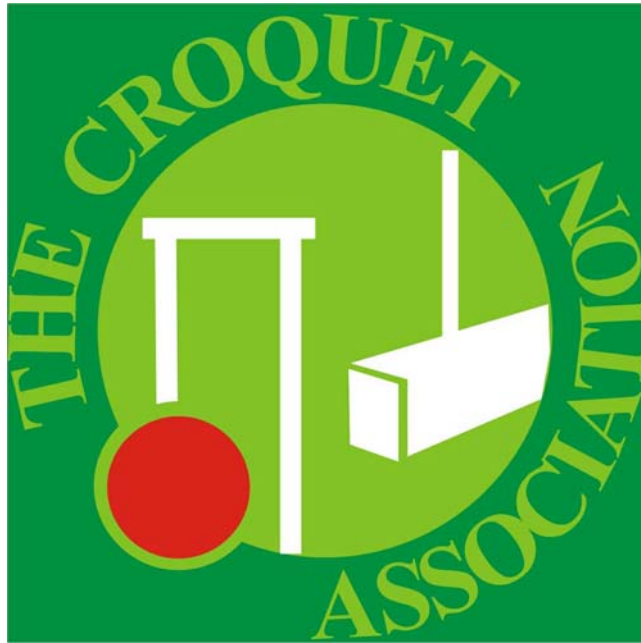
Croquet Strokes. Know your own ratios? If you know how far your ball travels in relation to the croqueted ball you will know when you need a drive, a stop shot or a half roll. Don't guess but know it.

Hoop Approaches. Practice approaches from a circle drawn around the hoop and from 1 - 3 yards away. From behind the hoop try thick take-offs in order to move the croqueted ball to a desired position.

Hoop running. Practice from different angles and distances.

Cannons. Make sure that you can successfully use the 'Corner I' cannon for hoop 1 and its variations. Practice using the other cannons, especially the wafer cannon.

Appendix 3



SILVER COACHING COURSE *COURSE NOTES*

CA Silver Coaching Weekend

Hoop Approaches

Always plan your approach to get a useful rush after running the hoop.

If you want a forward rush, play a stop shot approach when close to the hoop aiming to put the ball 4 to 5 feet past the hoop, or a drive or half roll approach to put the ball 6 to 8 feet past the hoop when you are further away.

When seeking a sideways rush, send the croqueted ball 2 or 3 feet wide of the hoop to allow a greater margin for error.

If you wish to have a rush back into the court play the stroke with a roll putting the croqueted ball a little past the hoop and to the side.

Remember to apply the same principles to hoop approaches as you would to in court croquet strokes.

Having decided on the stroke to be played, concentrate on the position of the striker's ball. No point in having the croqueted ball in the right position if you then cannot run the hoop!

Hoop Problems

Know your laws, e.g. when a ball starts to run a hoop; hoop and roquet.

If the stroke is dubious, perhaps you have a hampered shot, call a referee. Acquaint yourself with the likely faults which you could commit during the stroke. If in doubt you may ask the referee about faults. The referee is not permitted to give you advice but is required to provide reasonable information on the laws.

Thick Take-offs

Keep a straight swing and follow through.

Allow for 'drag'.

Keep the mallet swinging in the same plane throughout the stroke and follow through. Do not twist the mallet to follow the required direction of the striker's ball.

Remember the defensive applications as well as the break building applications.

4-ball Breaks

Plan ahead to avoid the furniture.

Anticipate 2 bisque disasters - don't be greedy; spend a bisque to avoid them.

Be prepared to invest a bisque to tidy up a disintegrating break.

Use rushes to make croquet strokes easier.

Use a mobile pivot to avoid long take offs to pioneers and half roll croquet strokes.

Remember early pioneers, e.g. 3 to 6; 5 to 2-back; 3-back to rover, if appropriate.

Openings

The Tice Opening

The first ball is played to the East boundary within 7 yards of corner IV.

The opponent plays a ball to the tice position, between 7 - 10 yards from corner I.

Player 1 now decides whether to shoot at the tice or join partner ball on the East boundary. The decision will depend on their assessment of the probability of player 2 hitting the tice.

This opening is well balanced and offers both players a roughly equal chance of gaining the innings.

The Duffer Tice

The first ball is played to the East boundary as for the normal tice opening.

A tice is now laid from 'B' baulk 7 -10 yards from baulk and a little East of hoop 6.

It is now difficult for player 1 to shoot at the tice from the west side of 'B' baulk. A hard shot missed will finish just outside 'A' baulk and a trickle at the tice may leave a double target for player 2.

The Principles of Constructing Leaves

Make sure that your opponent has no short shot or double target. Also take care that you are not giving a wiring lift.

Make it expensive for your opponent to shoot if they miss. Leave trap shots to achieve this.

Construct a position where you can make some progress if your opponent misses. Consider a squeeze (one opposing ball at each of your hoops) to maximise your chances of progressing.

Try to avoid the situation where your opponent has an easy break if they hit in.

Where possible make the last hoop off an opponent ball.

For a wired leave use your partner ball as the get-away ball.

Wiring

Be alert to the dangers of giving away a lift.

If your opponent leaves one of your balls in a hoop and does not join up, remember you can play the fourth ball into baulk for a lift next turn.

3-Ball Breaks Using Bisques

If you have been pegged out and have to play a 3-ball break to win, consider using bisques to avoid big splits.

Cannons

Cannons can give you easy breaks. Learn how to play the standard corner cannons and practice them.

The 'wafer' cannon is usually much more useful than the 'worm' (or banana) cannon.

Tactics in 3-Ball Endings

When considering pegging out an opponent ball take into account the strength of the opposition and the relative positions of the two backward balls. *Pegging out an opponent ball does not guarantee success*

For the 2-ball player

Unless time is near, care and caution should be adopted.

Do not leave your opponent free shots and doubles: guard the boundary whenever possible.

Look for opportunities to wire.

Give up the innings rather than lay up in the middle of the lawn.

If you have a bisque left, use it to set up a 3-ball break or pass your opponent's hoop quickly.

Consider pegging out your forward ball if your other ball is well ahead.

For the 1-ball player

If your opponent's balls are together, always shoot if you can do so without conceding an easy 3-ball break with a missed shot.

If you cannot shoot, look for threatening positions; thin wire or on a boundary equidistant from opponent's separated balls.

If opponent's balls are apart consider taking position.

Make the most of what chances you get. You need to play aggressively and take more chances than you would in normal play.

Strategy in Timed Endings

You should play at your normal speed and you are entitled to take your normal care and consideration. You must not waste time deliberately but you may of course play defensively.

The choice of tactics is yours according to the spirit in which you play the game.

- ◆ If you are a few hoops ahead with time approaching towards the end of your turn, join up with your partner ball but make certain that all the balls are near the boundaries.
- ◆ If you are ahead and in play as time is called or about to be called, scatter all the balls to the boundaries. Do not join up.
- ◆ If you are many hoops ahead with 5 to 10 minutes left, consider yielding the innings to a weak player by placing your balls in or near corners. You should not do this against a strong player.
- ◆ If the scores are level when time is called, you cannot peg out a ball in handicap play unless both your balls have run rover or an opponent ball has been pegged out.
- ◆ If you are behind with time approaching, you will have to be aggressive whether you have the innings or not. Remember your opponent is not going to make things easy for you.

Rover Peels

Use the peelee as pioneer at 3-back or 4-back. Plan ahead for this.

Try to approach penult with the peelee in front of rover and the pivot between the peg and rover.

After penult send the original penult pioneer close to the south boundary with your ball going to the pivot.

Send the pivot about 3 feet to the side of and just past rover with your ball going to the peelee

Peel with a firm grip. A drive is best if you have room. If you must peel with a stop shot, take care not to let the mallet twist. If you are close to rover and directly in front use an Irish peel with both balls going through in the croquet stroke.

Avoid fancy cannons after rover.

Playing Breaks

4-Ball Breaks

Establish a *pioneer* at your next hoop but one (e.g. if you are for hoop 1 your pioneer should be at hoop 2; if you are for hoop 2 your pioneer should be at hoop 3; etc.) and a *pivot* in the centre with a rush on the fourth ball to your next hoop.

Rush the fourth ball to your hoop. Approach your hoop putting the other ball to the other side of the hoop. Make the hoop and roquet the other ball again. On your croquet shot send it to your next but one hoop to become a new pioneer sending your ball to the pivot in the middle (e.g. after you have made hoop 1 send a pioneer to hoop 3; after you have made hoop 2 send a pioneer to hoop 4; etc.). Roquet the pivot in the centre and take off to the ball waiting at your next hoop.

3-Ball Breaks

Establish a position with a pioneer at your next hoop but one and a rush on the third ball to the hoop you want.

Rush the third ball to your hoop, take croquet from it putting it to the position which will give you the rush you need after making the hoop; and make the hoop. Then rush the ball to the point where you have a simple drive or stop shot to put a new pioneer to your next but one hoop and your own ball to the ball that is waiting at your next hoop.

Examples of the rushes needed are:-

- ◆ After hoop 1, rush to the west boundary a little South of hoop 2 to give yourself a simple drive to put a pioneer to hoop 3 and send your own ball to the ball at hoop 2.
- ◆ After hoop 5, rush east of hoop 6 to give yourself a simple shot to put a pioneer to 1-back and get to the ball waiting for you.

If you do not get a satisfactory rush after a hoop then you will need a more difficult split shot to keep the break going.

Try to pick up the fourth ball at your first opportunity as a 4-ball break is more easily kept going.

2-Ball Breaks

This break needs a good rush to your next hoop after making each hoop. So it can only be achieved with good control and a little luck.

However it should be possible even for moderate players to make hoops 4, 5, 6, and 1-back with a 2-ball break. Practising a 2-ball break around these hoops gives good practice in hoop running, controlling rushes and a variety of shots to retrieve the situation.

Useful Techniques in Play

In a 4-ball break keep the balls within the rectangle formed by the outer hoops in order to give yourself shorter shots.

Approach the ball at your hoop along its rush line by rushing the pivot ball to the appropriate position before your take off.

Always aim to get a rush to somewhere useful after a hoop.

To convert a 3-ball break into a 4-ball break if the fourth ball is in a corner try to bring it into the game just before you make the hoop in that corner.

If you approach a hoop from the side don't try to get too close to it. Aim to be about 18 inches to two feet away then the angle will not be so difficult if you don't play a perfect shot.

Think before you play a shot. Where do you want to play your next shot from? Can you get there in this shot?

Use of Bisques

General Principles

Always consider which ball to go to first.

Priority is usually a good pioneer at the first hoop of the break.

Recognise promising situations, e.g. ball just off the yard line behind hoops 2, 4 etc.

Try to play strokes where the position of only one ball is important.

If you have a half bisque, use this to start setting up your break and then follow it with a full bisque so that you can run a hoop having set up your break.

During your break DO NOT attempt a shot that is unlikely to come off. If faced with this situation think how you can best use another bisque to tidy up all the balls and then continue with your break.

As a general principle, do not take a bisque unless you can see that it will enable you to make at least your current hoop and the next one.

General Strategy Against an 'A' Class Player (handicaps below 2)

If you win the toss you must put your opponent in.

If you lose the toss, be prepared to spend a half bisque or a full bisque to improve the leave at the end of the third turn. Do not try to make a break with only three balls on the lawn.

If you have a half bisque use it early in the game to improve the position on the third turn or follow it with a full bisque in setting up a 4-ball break.

Set up a 4-ball break as quickly as possible with your bisques (i.e. on 4th turn of the game if your opponent misses) and take your break round to the peg using bisques as necessary. Use all your bisques in the fourth and sixth or fifth and seventh turns.

Go to the peg with a defensive leave if you have at least half your bisques left.

If you use more than half your bisques in taking your first ball round go to the peg with an attacking leave.

If you lose the toss and your opponent puts you in, set up your break and take it round as soon as you can. Do not join up on the third turn. Consider shooting at the tice or perhaps a wide join.

Strategy of Bisque Taking Against 'B' Class Players (handicaps 2 - 5)

There is no need to spend bisques on the 4th or 5th turn unless you have a good opportunity. Wait until a favourable situation arises to make effective use of your bisques and then use your bisques to keep your break going.

A bisque has its greatest value if you can set up a 4-ball break from an early hoop, but it is easier to gain control of a break from hoops 4 to 1-back.

General Strategy Against a 'C' Class Player (handicaps 6 - 11)

Here you will have few if any bisques. Keep any that you do have until you have a good chance of making a break from one bisque or to make the last few hoops and peg out.

If you are giving bisques be wary of leaving situations where your opponent can easily set up a break using a single bisque.

Setting up a Break Against an "A" Class Player

If You Have Won the Toss

You win the toss and put your opponent in. He plays Blue to the 4th corner or somewhere off the boundary near hoop 4. You play Red to about 3 yards south-east of the peg.

The most difficult position now is if your opponent plays Black to the second corner.

Assume he does. Then you shoot at Blue with Yellow. Take a bisque if you miss.

Now you have to get a ball to the first hoop and a ball to the second hoop to set up a 4-ball break. Take croquet off Blue putting Blue to hoop 1 and Yellow to Red in the centre.

- (a) Yellow has a rush on Red to hoop 2. Rush Red to hoop 2. Take off to Black in the second corner. Roquet Black and with your croquet shot give Yellow a rush on Black towards hoop 1. Take a second bisque, rush Black between hoops 1 and 2 and take off to Blue at hoop 1 You now have a 4-ball break.
- (b) Yellow has a rush on Red to hoop 1. Rush Red south of hoop 1. Then stop shot it to hoop 2 and give yourself a rush on Blue to hoop 1. Approach hoop 1 putting Blue beyond hoop 1. Make hoop 1 then rush Blue to the centre. Take off from Blue to Black in the second corner. Roquet Black. Croquet Black to hoop 3 getting your Yellow close to Red at hoop 2. You now have a 4-ball break ahead of you.
- (c) Yellow has no useful rush on Red. Roquet Red. Roll both balls to hoop 2. Shoot at Black in the second corner. If you miss, take a bisque. Put Black near the peg and send Yellow to Red near hoop 2. In your continuation stroke play Yellow to a point where it can rush Red closer to hoop 2. Take a bisque. Rush Red closer to hoop 2 and take off to Blue at hoop 1. Your 4-ball break is waiting for you.

An alternative to 4 above is to play Blue to hoop 2 on the first croquet shot putting your Yellow near Red in the centre. If Yellow gets a rush on Red to hoop 1 take it and make hoop 1. Rush Red to the centre. Take off to Black in the second corner. Roquet Black. Croquet Black to hoop 3 getting Yellow close to Blue at hoop 2. But if Yellow does not have a rush on Red to hoop 1, roquet Red. Take off to Black in corner II and roquet it. Croquet Black to hoop 1 and Yellow to Blue at hoop 2. Play your continuation shot to get a rush on Blue closer to hoop 2. Take a bisque and tidy up Blue. Then take off to Red in the centre. Roquet Red and take off to Black at hoop 1. Again you have a 4-ball break.

If You Have Lost the Toss

Play your first ball, Red say, to the East boundary a foot outside the corner. Your opponent will probably lay a tice with Blue. If you think that there is a reasonable chance that your opponent will hit the tice, you should shoot at it going off near corner II if you miss. Otherwise play Yellow to a spot on the east boundary level with hoop 4 to make it as difficult as possible for your opponent to get a break if Black hits Blue in the fourth turn. If you hit the tice move blue up the boundary and play yellow to a point about 6 yards North of red.

Suppose Black misses and ends up near the second corner. Shoot at Red with yellow and hope to hit it saving a bisque. Split Red to hoop 1 and Yellow towards Black in the second corner. You will not get Black all the way, concentrate on getting Red to hoop 1. Shoot at Black take a

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Note that if your opponent hits the tice you will be very unlucky if, at the end of the turn, you do not have a ball on the boundary that you can shoot firmly at and take a bisque if you miss it. Then work out how you can set up a break with one, two or more bisque

Some Ideas for Practising

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4-ball breaks. Lay out the perfect 4-ball break with a pioneer at hoop 2, a pivot in the centre, a ball close to hoop 1 and your ball ready to rush it to hoop 1. Play the break taking bisques as you need them. Count the number of bisques you need.

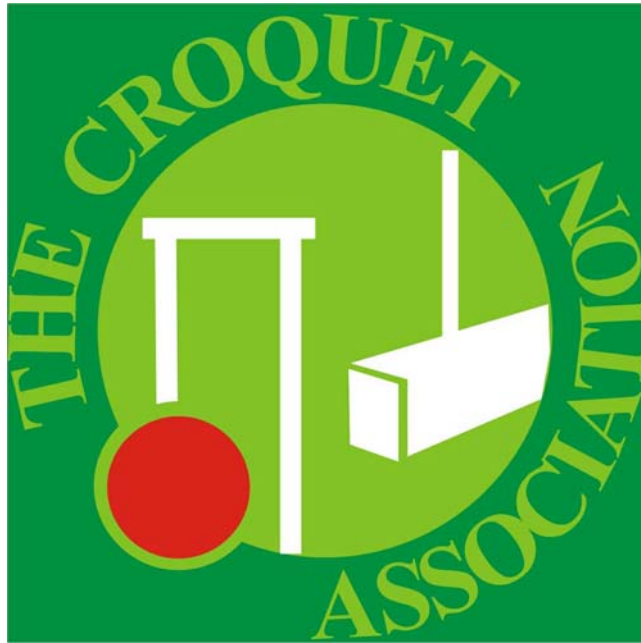
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Hoop Approaches. Practice approaches from a circle drawn around the hoop and from 1 - 3 yards away. From behind the hoop try thick take-offs in order to move the croqueted ball to a desired position.

Hoop running. Practice from different angles and distances.

Cannons. Make sure that you can successfully use the 'Corner I' cannon for hoop 1 and its variations. Practice using the other cannons, especially the wafer cannon.

Appendix 4



SILVER GILT COACHING COURSE *COURSE NOTES*

CA Silver Gilt Coaching Weekend

Advanced Play - A Review Of Law 36

The entitlement to a lift or contact is an option and not mandatory. A lift may always be taken where contact has been conceded.

A player cannot avoid conceding a contact by peeling partner ball through 1-back in the same turn as he scores 1-back and 4-back with his other ball.

A player who pegs out any ball during the game is not entitled to any further lift or contact under Law 36, but does not lose the entitlement to any lift under Law 13 (wiring). (Some players wrongly assume that wiring lifts are also forfeited).

Where on the third or fourth turn if a contact has been conceded under Law 36, the contact releases you from the obligation to play your second ball from a baulk-line.

Unlike in handicap play, where a player may not peg out one of his balls before the other has become a rover, either ball may be pegged out (provided that it is a rover) at any time, and that can happen unintentionally.

In doubles play, the number of peels done on partner ball are restricted in handicap play. There are no such restrictions in advanced doubles.

Openings

The opening is a tussle to gain the innings with a chance of the first break.

Have it clear in your own mind how to deal with the common openings. If you are presented with an opening you have not seen before, think carefully before you play the next ball. If you have not come across the opening before the chances are that it is unsound and your opponent is using it simply to panic you into an ill considered response.

Standard Opening. The standard opening gives each side a more or less equal chance of winning the innings. Player 1 plays a ball to the East boundary, somewhere between corner VI and level with hoop 4. Player 2 will lay a tice on the West boundary. How far up from corner I this should be will depend on shooting ability, but they should give themselves a reasonable chance (perhaps 50%) of hitting it on the 4th turn. 12 to 13 yards might be considered appropriate.

What Player 1 does with their second ball will depend on their view of the likelihood of the opponent hitting the tice. If the tice is short they should shoot at it themselves, missing into corner II. If it is hit, then a thick takeoff will move it further up and into the lawn and should enable a strong leave to be constructed with a rush towards the tice ball (known as the "Dream Leave"). If the tice is overly long then player 1 will likely send their second ball to join partner on the East boundary. Player 1 might consider playing their second ball from corner III towards partner ball if they were uncertain about the tice length. If this shot is hit then the tice could be moved as before. If not then the aim should be for the 2 balls to finish with a join of around 6 yards. This dictates where the first ball is placed.

Duffer Tice. In this opening the tice is placed from 'B' baulk to the East of hoop 6 and about 9- 10 yards from baulk. Player 1 now has to decide whether to take the short shot gently at the tice, in which case a miss would leave 2 balls in the middle and a probable good double

target. A firm shot although more likely to hit, were it to be missed would leave the ball just outside 'A' baulk. Alternatives are:

A shot at the tice from corner III aiming to finish on the West boundary around 15 yards or so from corner I.

A shot at partner ball from corner III. If this shot is hit then the tice ball can be moved else if missed a wide join should be the result.

Play from 'B' baulk into corner II, joining up if the tice is missed.

Anti-Duffer Tice. The anti-duffer can be used by the first player on the first turn to discourage the use of the duffer tice. The first stroke is played to between 2 and 3 yards off the East boundary around peg high. If the duffer tice is hit after this opening, the player of the 3rd ball can take off to get a rush on the partner ball with a good chance of getting a 3-ball break going.

Picking Up Breaks

Precision Croquet. With precision croquet the emphasis is on playing relatively easy shots with a great deal of control. On the hoop approach the player should aim to get as close as possible to the hoop before running it. This should be followed by a controlled hoop leaving a good rush to a useful place, usually to another ball.

If the rush is to another ball, usually on a yard-line, a little croquet stroke will bring the rushed ball out from the boundary and leave a rush on the yard-line ball to the next hoop. With sequences of hoops, rushes and croquet strokes the balls will be brought out into the lawn into positions where it will be possible to play a croquet stroke which actually sends out a pioneer. The break is then established.

Aggressive Croquet. In aggressive croquet the object of getting as close as possible to a hoop is temporarily abandoned in favour of getting out a pioneer to the next hoop but one. Then, if the next hoop is made, the break is quickly established. This type of play will often involve playing a hoop approach from a corner.

Break Management

The break must be managed in such a way as to reduce the risk of breaking down as much as possible, and this is even more important when the conditions are difficult.

The essence of good break management lies in good control of all the strokes, particularly hoop running, and in thinking ahead to make the next stroke as easy as possible. For example, good control at a hoop can leave a rush towards the pivot, thus reducing the distance from which the pioneer is sent out, as well as enabling the croquet stroke to be played with a drive or stop shot instead of a half-roll. With this croquet stroke an attempt can be made to get a rush on the pivot towards the next hoop, in order to reduce the distance between the pivot and the pioneer.

The pivot need not 'hug' the peg but can move around with the break. A position half way between the hoop and peg can be used to advantage if the player is not certain to get a rush after running the hoop. Once control of the break has been gained, a position roughly half way between the next two hoops is useful. If it is impossible to get the intended ball as a good pioneer at the next hoop but one, or if the attempt has been unsuccessful, the pivot and pioneer can be interchanged.

Early pioneers become more appropriate in advanced play than in handicap play. In this respect, the early pioneer to 2-back is often used in advanced games, as is the early pioneer to hoop 6

provided that control of the break has been achieved. However, players should not slavishly follow what they may regard as expert play. **It is almost a prerequisite that the pioneer at the next hoop should be in the right position before considering an early pioneer.**

As a general rule every shot should be played to make the next shot as easy as possible. This is the basis of precision croquet and its application to break play will considerably reduce the risk of breaking down.

Cannons

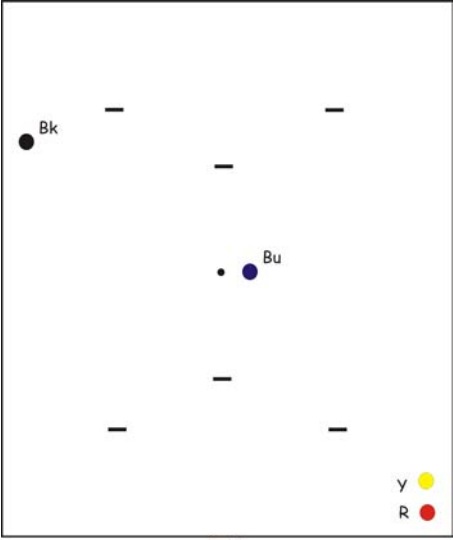
The Wafer Cannon. The gap between the striker's ball and the ball to be roqueted is 'wafer-thin', hence the name of the cannon. The line of swing is usually, but not necessarily, along the line joining the centres of the striker's ball and the ball to be roqueted. To a good approximation, the roqueted ball is rushed along this line. Note, however, that it is not exact, and you should experiment to ascertain the extent of the deviation. Invariably, the croqueted ball will move several yards in a hard stroke, so that this cannon is not advisable where there is a danger of sending the croqueted ball off the lawn. The aim of the mallet can be varied to impart less energy to the croqueted ball to prevent it moving as far without much effect on the rushed ball.

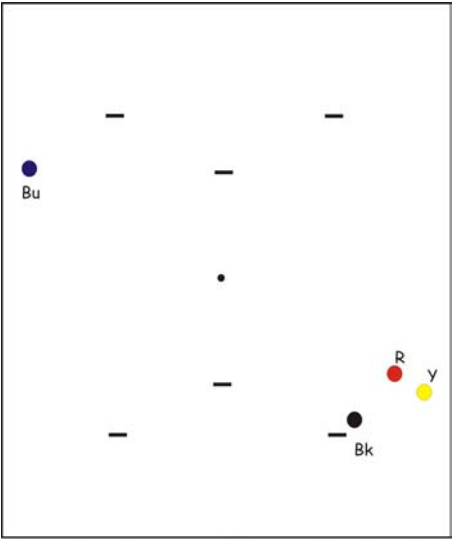
Instead of the wafer cannon it is possible to play to get a 'dolly' rush by playing the croqueted ball into the yard-line area without disturbing the third ball. The 3 balls forming the cannon should be set up forming an approximate right angle and a split croquet shot played to give the rush. The croqueted ball should, of course, be replaced on the yard-line before taking the rush. This can be risky when played on a poor surface.

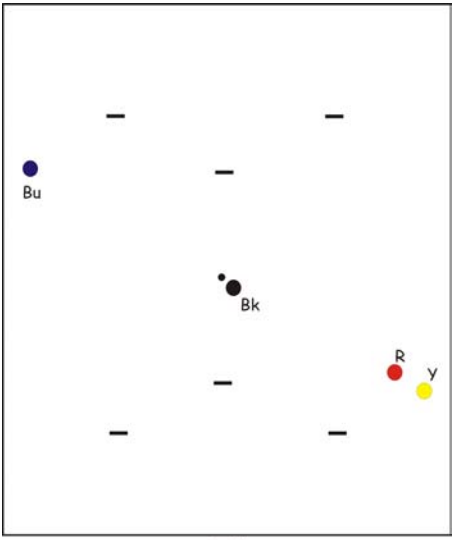
Principles Of Leaves

In this section we are concerned only with 'lift' leaves which ensue after the first nine hoops have been negotiated successfully. The leave should be planned as early as possible during the break and certainly not left to be sorted out after 3-back.

- (a) Bearing in mind that the lift may be taken from either baulk, the player should be thinking about the following points when planning a leave:
- ◆ Lengthening the opponent's shot,
 - ◆ The chance to pick up a break, should the opponent not hit in,
 - ◆ The chance for the opponent to pick up a break, if he does hit,
 - ◆ 'Forcing' the opponent to lift a particular ball;

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|  | <p>The Old Standard Leave (OSL)</p> <p>Black/blue has available a shot of some 13/14 yards at</p> <p>Red or Yellow (the so-called 'short' lift shot), or can shoot with Black at Blue. If any shot is missed then Red (for hoop 1) has a good chance to pick up a break. Equally, if Black/blue hits the short lift shot, their chances are good. There is no element of forcing.</p> |
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|  | <p>The New Standard Leave (NSL)</p> <p>Black/blue has no shot less than 17 yards.</p> <p>If black shoots from third corner at Red/Yellow, Red has a good chance of the break. If Blue shoots at Red/Yellow from third corner, there is still a good chance of picking up a three-ball break.</p> |
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|  | <p>The Diagonal Spread</p> <p>Once again Black/blue has no shot less than 17 yards. If the shot misses, Red has a good chance of a three-ball break, whichever ball has been lifted and whichever shot has been taken.</p> |
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Pick-Up Of The Break From The Missed Lift

This is one of the rare occasions when the disposition of the balls will be fixed at the start of the turn, and it occurs often enough to demand practise. There is little point in making a particular leave if the player can not make the pick-up.

The OSL after the 'short' lift shot. The opponent's ball is croqueted towards hoop 4, leaving a rush on partner ball to either the ball by the peg or the ball near hoop 2, depending on which has been lifted. Partner ball is croqueted to hoop 2, leaving a rush on the opponent ball to hoop 1.

The NSL. Partner ball is roqueted gently and the take-off is played to the ball in the fourth corner. This ball is then roqueted and croqueted to hoop 2, leaving a rush on the ball at hoop 4 to hoop 1. The key shot is the croquet stroke from corner IV to hoop 2, leaving a rush on the ball by hoop 4. It is worth concentrating on this one particular shot if the NSL is a favoured option. If the blue ball is lifted, take the rush to black and play the 3-ball break, picking up blue before hoop 4.

The Diagonal Spread. Partner ball is rushed to whichever opponent ball has not been lifted and then stopped to hoop 2, leaving a rush on the opponent ball to hoop 1. The lifted ball, in corner IV is picked up before hoop 4.

Peeling Principles

The break should not be sacrificed for the sake of the peels.

Peeling requires good control of rushing, hoop approaches and hoop running. Practise these skills and once you acquire them, single and double peels will follow naturally.

Make an allowance for pull where a peel is attempted in a split stroke.

The Rover Peel

Use the peelee as pioneer at 3-back or 4-back. Plan ahead for this.

Try to approach penult with the peelee in front of rover and the pivot between the peg and rover.

After penult send the original penult pioneer close to the south boundary with your ball going to the pivot. It is a good idea to have a ball near the south boundary, to guard against a jump or half-jump over the peelee, should the peel crawl through or stick.

Send the pivot about 3 feet to the side of and just past rover with your ball going to the peelee.

Peel with a firm grip. A drive is best if you have room. If you must peel with a stop shot, take care not to let the mallet twist. If the position is within 18 inches consider an Irish peel putting both balls through in the stroke.

If possible make the peel before 3-back or even after hoop 5. An unsuccessful early attempt will leave later opportunities whereas a failed straight rover peel often leads to disaster.

The Penult Peel

Arrange to have the peelee as pioneer at hoop 6. This may be achieved by putting it there as an early pioneer after making hoop 3 or as part of a normal 4-ball break after making hoop 4.

Before making hoop 5 arrange to have the pivot ball between the peg and hoop 6.

After 5 sent the croqueted ball to 1-back finishing near the pivot.

Send the pivot about 2 feet to the West of hoop 6. This will be the escape ball.

Roquet the ball to be peeled in front of hoop 6 and slightly to the side. Croquet it directly behind the hoop into a peeling position.

After running hoop 6 roquet the ball to be peeled and peel it in the croquet stroke with a stop shot getting a rush on the escape ball to the North boundary from where it is croqueted to 2-back.

Tactics In The Advanced Game

The In-Player

The objective is to set up a break as soon as possible. Weigh up the options and choose between going for the immediate break, which risks losing the innings if unsuccessful, and making a leave, which gives the opponent the chance to hit in.

When going for the immediate break, decide on the precision or aggressive approach and plan accordingly.

Try to make a leave which yields a break from a missed shot. This could be an 'aggressive' leave, which will encourage the opponent to shoot but should result in a break if the shot is missed.

Where possible move opponent's balls away from the boundaries.

Take into account the lawn conditions. If conditions are difficult and time is a consideration, consider giving opponent contact. But do not give the innings away unnecessarily.

The Out-Player

The thoughts of the out-player should concentrate on how best to get back the innings. The choice is usually between shooting at every available opportunity or playing a defensive, waiting game, hoping that the opponent will make a mistake. Which way will suit a player best will depend upon his prowess as a shot and the strength of the opposition. The player must gauge whether he can shoot safely, i.e. the missed shot will not be punished, or whether he 'must' shoot because, whatever he does, the opponent will make a pick-up.

Although the out-player is usually advised to think about what he will give away with a missed shot, he should not always be discouraged by these thoughts. There are positions where it is right to shoot even though a miss could make matters easy for the opponent. For example, a shortish shot or one which could win the game should not be refused for fear of the consequences. A better opportunity might not present itself later.

Conceding Contact- Three-Ball Endings

It is not easy to decide when to peg out an opponent's ball. It is not necessarily a decisive advantage to peg out an opponent ball, however big the lead.

If the single-ball player does not give away a three-ball break with a missed shot, then generally the two-ball player must proceed on a succession of two-ball breaks, laying up in a

guarded or wired position at the end of each turn. Where time is approaching and the 2-ball player is behind, then he must adopt more aggressive tactics.

The 2-ball player should not join up in the middle of the lawn, or where the opponent has a short shot. Be especially careful where a lift shot is coming up.

The single-ball player must become very aggressive in his attempts to pick up a break. He must shoot at anything that does not give away the three-ball break.

When the two-ball player has not joined up, the single ball player can shoot with relative impunity at the peg ball. Even if he misses, he will get both another turn later and an open shot because the two-ball player will be obliged to play with his peg ball. Alternatively the single ball player can take position.

If you cannot shoot, look for threatening positions; thin wire or on a boundary equidistant from opponent's separated balls.

Practice

If it is to provide value, practice should be enjoyable and structured. Routines should concentrate on perceived weaknesses.

Divide your practice session into stages, each of which has a purpose and is aimed at improving technique or correct weaknesses.

Loosen up a little before starting to practice seriously. Start 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.

There are certain strokes and lines of play that occur time after time in A-play and it is essential to master them. Examples include the sequence of strokes needed to make a pickup after a missed lift. Cannons occur less frequently but when they do occur in a game you will appreciate the time spent in practising them.

Set yourself targets and at the end of a session review your progress. If you feel that the session was not successful, analyse the reasons for this and address them the next time.

