



MODULE L1M6

BREAK PLAY



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Introduction

The key to association croquet is the 4-ball break. This is where all of the balls of the game are used with the sequence **roquet – croquet – continuation** to build up a series of strokes and hoop points in a single turn – otherwise known as a break. When all 4 balls are used, the break can survive the occasional imperfect stroke.

“Breaks Win Games” and the first goal of an Association Croquet player is to achieve a CNZ Bronze Merit Award by completing a break of 10 hoops or more in a match that is won (with or without bisques – discussed in Handicap play later)

After 4-ball breaks have been mastered, it will be time to move onto the next challenge: 3-ball breaks. These are covered in the Level 2 coaching programme.

- Beginning players should make use of extra turns, known as bisques (see Module L1M9, Handicap Play – Association Croquet)
 - Obtaining a ‘feel’ of the layout and dimensions of the court helps prepare for playing the physical strokes. Simply walk around and across the court to acquire a feel for distances and perspective.
 - Players need to now be completely comfortable with the sequence: **Roquet – Croquet – Continuation**.

Basic principles when teaching/learning break play

- When playing a croquet stroke to approach a hoop, send the croqueted ball well ahead of the hoop to attain a rush in a useful direction after running the hoop.
- Try to keep all balls within the rectangle bounded by the four outside hoops, thus lessening the distances to be covered in stroke play.
- Make breaks easier through controlled play with:
 - Short rushes to hoops
 - Short hoop approaches (from the playing side to the hoop)
 - Short hoops to run



Accuracy

Always strive for accuracy. In every stroke choose the exact spot on the lawn where each ball should go. Pay attention to where any ball moved in a stroke goes, building up a mental database of strokes played and the effect of those strokes is the key to learning good croquet strokes. Be specific – choose the blade of grass to stop on.

The 4-Ball Break

The **objective** for all players of association croquet is to obtain a 4-ball break where

- There are no long or difficult shots to be played
- The player has control over all four balls

The balls of a 4-ball break

A tidy 4-ball break always has 4 components:

1. **The striker's ball** – the ball which is making the hoops
2. **The pilot** – the ball that's at the hoop which is due to be run
3. **The pioneer** – the ball that's at the hoop which will be run next
4. **The pivot** – a really useful ball which is used to move the striker's ball around the lawn easily.

Pivot ball

In the basic 4-ball break, the pivot ball stays within a few yards of the peg. The player should always aim to move the pivot slightly closer to the 'next hoop but 1', but keep it generally near to the peg.

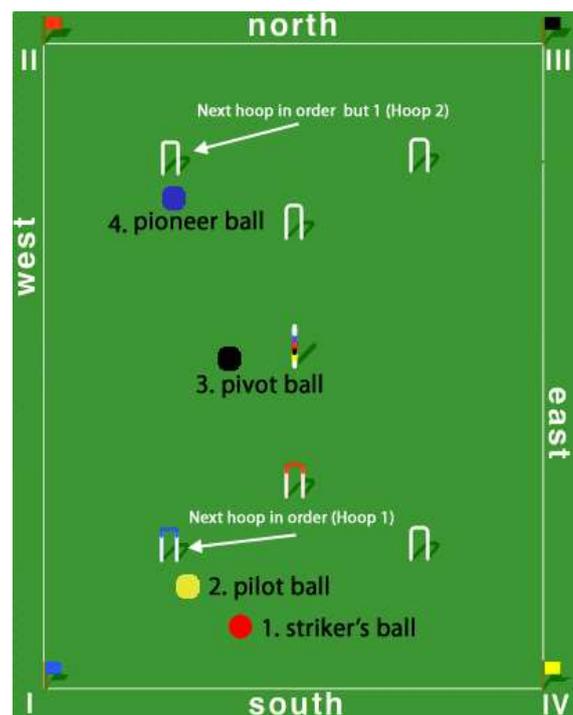


Figure 1: Ball positions and terms of a 4 ball pivot break

The pivot is one of the most useful balls in an association croquet game – it can be used:

- As a *stepping stone* for the striker's ball to go to after a croquet stroke in which a pioneer is sent out to the next-but-one hoop,
- As a replacement pioneer if the previous croquet stroke goes badly, or
- As a buddy to put next to a poorly placed pioneer, or
- As an "escape ball" for a peel (Level 2 and 3 coaching).

Dolly Rush

Often referred to in a break, a "*Dolly Rush*" is a short & straight rush. In Figure 1, the striker's ball (Red) has a *dolly rush* on the pilot ball (Yellow) towards the 1st hoop. Obtaining a *dolly rush* on the ball to be roqueted will help to improve the accuracy of the rush to a specific destination.

How to play a 4 ball break

Start with the standard break shown in Figure 1. This position will become most familiar to a player starting out with breaks, and is the position from where most players will start breaks in practice.

Set up a dolly rush to hoop 1, with a pivot ball a couple of yards west of the peg and a good pioneer for hoop 2.

Sequence of Strokes

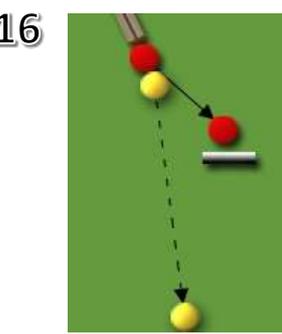
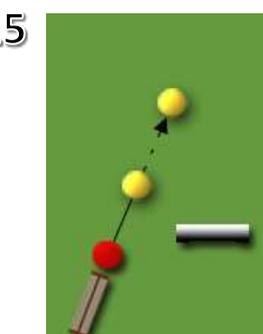
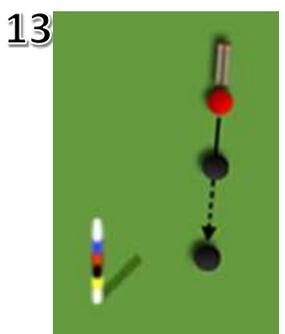
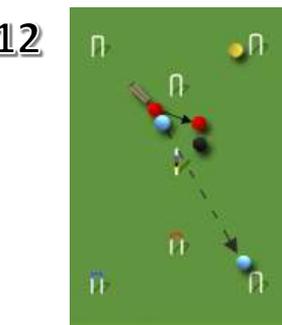
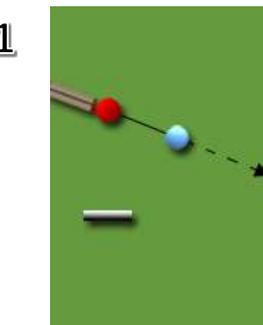
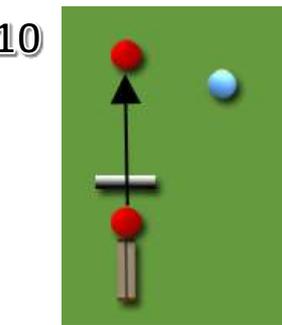
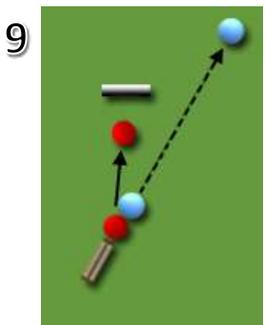
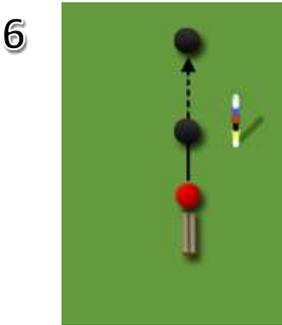
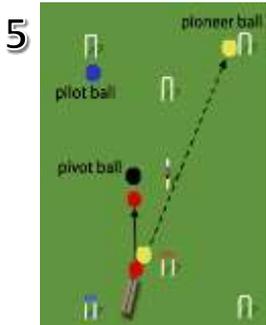
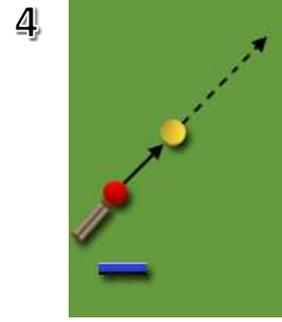
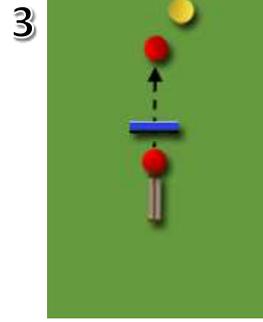
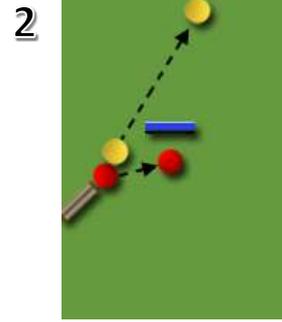
Players should be completely familiar with the ROQUET – CROQUET – CONTINUATION sequence of strokes explained in [MODULE L1M4](#) which explains ***'what to do'***.

The information in [MODULE L1M2](#) Single Ball Strokes, and [MODULE L1M5](#) Croquet Strokes, explains ***'how to do it'***.

This commentary of strokes, (illustrated on the next page) describe a 4 ball pivot ball break that includes the terminologies and sequences discussed: Red is the striker's ball and hoop 1 is the next hoop in order:

1. Dolly rush yellow to in front of hoop 1
2. A split stop shot hoop approach placing Red in position to run hoop 1 and sending Yellow beyond the hoop.
3. Red runs hoop 1, achieving a rush on Yellow towards the pivot ball.
4. Red rushes Yellow toward the pivot ball, leaving room and a clear line for the croquet stroke.
5. The stop or drive croquet stroke sends yellow to a hoop 3 pioneer position, and the Red Striker's ball close to the pivot ball.
6. Red roquets the pivot ball lightly to keep it in the middle of the lawn as a pivot ball.
7. Red takes-off from the pivot ball to the hoop 2 pioneer, leaving the pivot ball in the middle of the lawn.
8. Dolly rush blue to in front of hoop 2.
9. A stop or drive croquet stroke hoop approach placing Red in position to run the hoop and sending blue beyond the hoop
10. Red runs hoop 2, achieving a rush on blue towards the pivot ball
11. Red rushes Yellow toward the pivot ball, leaving room and a clear line for the croquet stroke.
12. The stop or drive croquet stroke sends blue to a hoop 4 pioneer position, and the Red striker's ball to the pivot ball.
13. Red roquets the pivot ball lightly to keep it in the middle of the lawn as a pivot ball
14. Red takes-off from the pivot ball to the hoop 3 pioneer, leaving the pivot ball in the middle of the lawn.
15. Dolly rush yellow to in front of hoop 3.
16. A stop or drive croquet stroke hoop approach placing Red in position to run the hoop and sending yellow beyond the hoop.

...and so on until a Bronze Merit Award is achieved!



Key objectives to playing the 4 Ball pivot Break

- Ball control is the key to success
- Always endeavour to establish an accurate pioneer at every hoop
- Seek to obtain a useful rush after every hoop

Useful guidelines to remember

- The shorter the distance that the striker's ball needs to travel, the more likely the accuracy.

This is obvious for single ball strokes however, keep this in mind when rushing to a position for the next croquet stroke.

- Straight croquet strokes are more reliable and easier to play than split croquet strokes.

Pick a spot to rush a ball to that will provide a line clear of obstacles, and from where a straight, or nearly straight croquet stroke can be played.

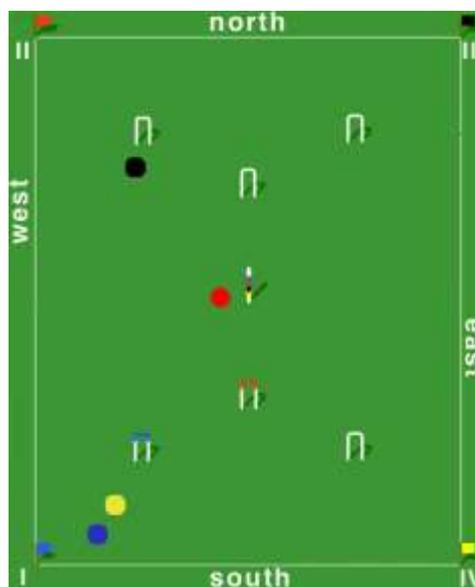
There are **3** secrets to perfecting 4 ball breaks; **1) PRACTICE 2) PRACTICE** and **3) PRACTICE**



Practice



To minimise distances, start with a croquet stroke from $\frac{1}{2}$ way along the East boundary with a pioneer at hoop 4 and a pivot ball in lawn. Run a 4 ball break through 4, 5, 6, 1-back...



Set up a standard 4 ball pivot ball break with a dolly rush to hoop 1. Try to reduce the number of strokes that have to be 'tried again' to play a break through all 12 hoops.

Correcting Breaks.

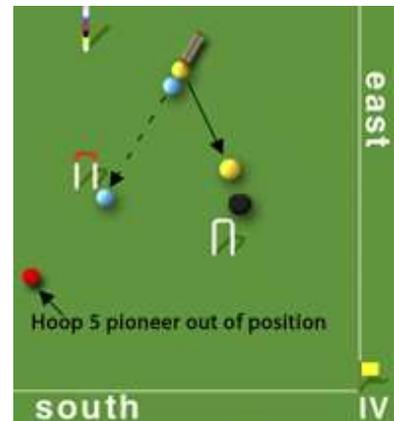
When the pioneer ball does not reach the desired position (within one yard of the next hoop but one) then damage control tactics may be needed. There are three ways of recovering.

Break recovery methods

1. Replacement

Example: Yellow is for hoop 4. Hoop 5 pioneer (Red) went too far in the previous croquet stroke.

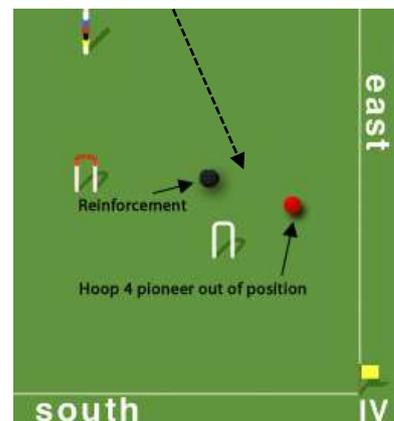
If the ball being sent as a pioneer does not get within range of the hoop, or goes too far, then it can be replaced by the pivot ball. The loose 'out of position' ball can be brought back into the break after hoop 4, and when going to the replacement pioneer at hoop 4.



2. Reinforcement

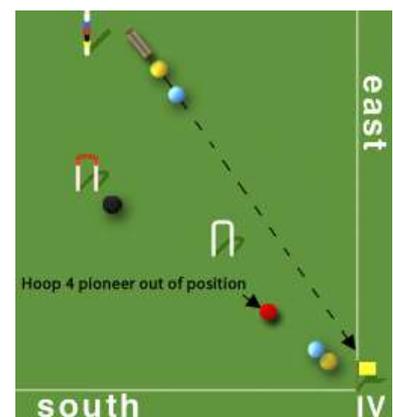
Example: Yellow has croqueted Red into a poor pioneer position at hoop 4 when going to the pivot ball on the way to hoop 3.

Two loose pioneers are better than one. Instead of taking off from the pivot ball to hoop 3, it may be possible to rush it to a spot from where the pivot ball could be sent to hoop 4 as well, while going to the ball waiting at hoop 3. (This would not be possible with just a take-off from the pivot ball in the middle of the lawn)



3. Out and Back

If the pioneer is badly out of position (but not in the central area of the court), the pivot ball may be *rushed out* beyond the wayward pioneer, then croqueted back infield with a stop shot and getting a dolly rush on the pioneer to the hoop. This is the common line of play for a *moving pivot break* discussed in the level 2 programme.



Practice

With the 4 balls set out in a standard pivot break position (Figure 1), play a break in pairs and play alternate shots. When the break starts to go wrong, discuss which method could best be used to re-establish the break. Players should decide the line of play and croquet shot they feel they should use. If it is clearly incorrect, other players could make suggestions but a coach should initially refrain unless they are unable to come up with a good answer.