MODULE L1M7

GAME PLAY

Association Croquet

Starting a Game

1. Check Equipment

Ensure that all equipment is correctly placed on the court, hoops are in correct sequence, peg in centre of court, clips on top of Hoop 1, flags and pegs in their corners.

Most clubs number each hoop, and often mark which way it is set in the hoop holes. As players gain experience, they should learn about hoop settings.

2. The Aim Of The Game

The first side to make 12 hoop points and 1 peg point with both balls (26 points in all) is the winner. The game is not finished until both balls of one team have been pegged out or time has been called.

3.   The Toss

A coin will be tossed to determine who has first choice. The choices available are one of:
- Option of the colour of the balls (Black/Blue or Red/Yellow)
- Option to play first (put the 1st and 3rd balls on the lawns) or play second

The second side then chooses one of the remaining options.

4.   Playing the Balls on to the Court

Sides play alternately however, the balls are not played in any set sequence. Each side chooses which of their two balls will be played at the start of each turn, with the exception of the 3rd and 4th turns of a game when the balls not yet played must be.

Each ball may be played on to the court from either the A Baulk or the B Baulk (on the yard line – with back to the court).

A strikers turn ends if:
- A fault or error is committed
- A roquet is not made or a hoop in order is not run
- A ball leaves the court (touches the outside line) in a croquet stroke

Openings

The term 'opening' describes the first few turns of the game and the tactics employed. *Standard Opening, Duffers Tice, Corner 2 Opening and Super-shot* are all recognised variations. The choice of opening tactics will depend on the knowledge and ability the player has, and what ability they assume their opponent might have.

Objective

The principle behind an opening is to

- Gain the *innings*. That is, to influence the positions of all the balls on the court, or to try and force the opponents into a particular line of play. An example of *having control of the innings* at the end of a turn might include a long roquet attempt for the opponent, and if they miss, a very short roquet for you at the start of your next turn.

- To get the balls into play without allowing an opponent to score points … or even an early break.

The Standard Opening

This is the most common, and most likely opening encountered by a new player (hence the name) and it is a suitable opening for most levels of play.

- The first player will, with rare exceptions, play from 'A' Baulk to the East Boundary – usually a little north of the Hoop 4 position. This takes the ball away from the Hoop 1 area and makes it more difficult for the second player to hit and then make Hoop 1.

Figure 1

- The second player realises this and plays the 2nd ball to the West Boundary as a 'tice' (enticing) position tempting third ball to shoot at it. The risk is that the 3rd ball player may hit but if the 'tice' is missed (Figure 1, 3a), then first player is separated from partner ball giving the 4th ball a chance to play into an attacking or *innings* position.

The tice position is usually on the East boundary between 2 and 8 yards north of the Hoop 1 position. There are many other options, but the ideal position for it is where the opponent is not sure whether to shoot at it or not. Ignoring the shooting prowess of the other player can be an intimidatory tactic in itself.

- If the 3rd player is not tempted by the 'tice' but joins up near the partner ball on the East boundary, then the opponent will shoot the 4th ball at the 'tice ball' (Figure 2)
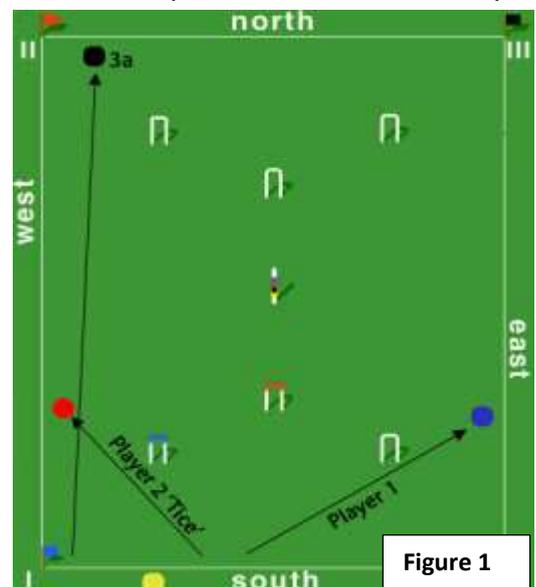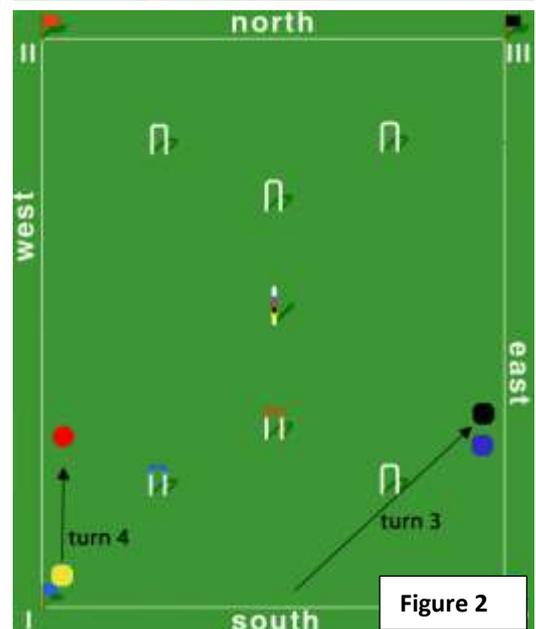

Figure 2

Practice

The subsequent outcomes of the 3rd, 4th and 5th turns of a Standard Opening:

- The 3rd turn player roquets the tice ball
- The 3rd turn player roquets partner ball on the East Boundary
- The 4th turn player hits the tice ball when the opponent balls are both on the East boundary, 1 yard apart.
- The 5th turn player when the 4th turn player has missed the tice and finished in corner 2

Attempt to achieve all of the following at the completion of the turn for each example:

- Your opponent has at least a 13 yard roquet on any other ball for the 1st stroke of their turn.
- Your balls are both within 4 yards of a boundary line, less than 1 yard apart, and are set up with a rush pointing at your next hoop in order or at the opponent ball that they are least likely to move.
- One of the opponent balls is in a pioneer position (either at your next hoop in order or next hoop but 1)
- Your opponent does not have a 'double target' to shoot at

…Regardless of having made any hoops in the turn or not.

Leaves

At the conclusion of a turn (if the game has not finished), it is optimal for the striker to have set a *leave*,
where the opponent balls are left in positions that will be in a useful position for the striker's next turn if the opponent fails to roquet. It is advantageous to leave a rush to the next hoop or to the ball which the opponent is least likely to move.
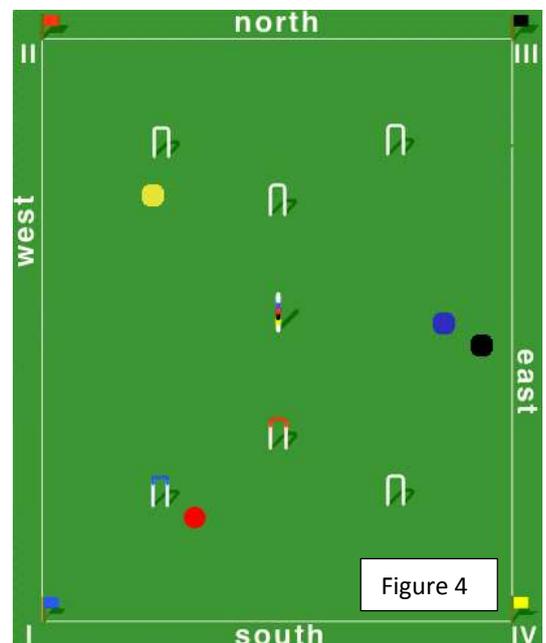
1) A leave consists of having the striker's balls together, and the opponent balls, preferably in field, in two other areas of the lawn.

   Blue is for hoop 1 (Figure 3) and has set a leave, anticipating a miss by Red or Yellow in their turn. Blue has a dolly rush on partner ball toward hoop 1, and Red and Yellow have a long roquet with a low chance of hitting. If Red or Yellow misses a roquet on any other ball in their turn, Blue will have a good opportunity to establish a break.
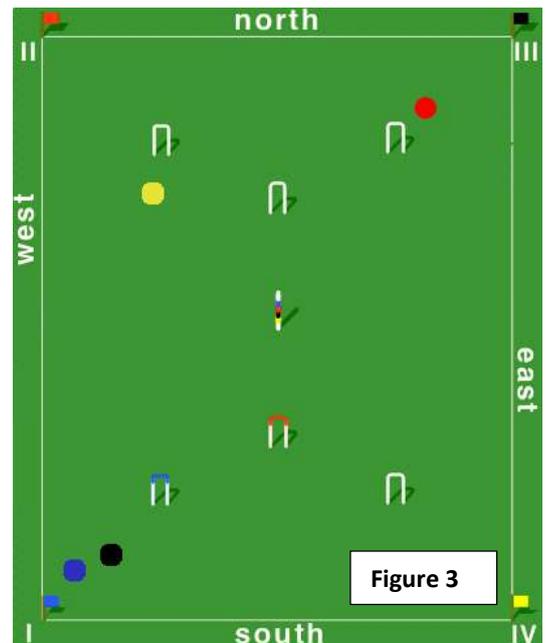
Figure 3

2) The next stage is to recognise that an opponent ball at each of their next hoops (and apart) with their own balls together (but not leaving a double) gives them an advantage.

   In Figure 4, Black is for hoop 1 and Blue is for hoop 2. The leave has the opposition in pioneer positions for both Blue and Black. If Red or Yellow misses any attempted roquet, Black or Blue will have a good opportunity to establish a break.

Figure 4

3) As skill and knowledge is developed, new players will begin to appreciate their options between setting a leave or attempting a difficult line of play to continue the current turn.

Lifts and Contacts

While new croquet players will benefit from playing games with bisques (See Handicap play), they are sometimes faced with the laws governing lifts and contacts during club play.

Advanced Association Croquet involves Lift hoops. When a player runs either the 1-Back hoop or the 4-back hoop, a lift is conceded to the opponent which can be claimed at the beginning of their next turn. The recipient of a lift may pick up a ball of their side and play the first stroke of their turn from either Baulk Line.

Lifts and Contacts are conceded when:

- A player runs the 1-Back hoop in order with either ball of their side.
- A player runs the 4-back hoop in order with either ball of their side.
- If a player runs both 1-back and 4-back in the same turn AND their partner ball has not yet made 1-Back, a Contact Lift is conceded to their opponent. The recipient of a Contact Lift may pick up either of their balls at the beginning of their turn (Ball in hand) and place it in contact with any other ball on the lawn for their first stroke of the turn, thus taking croquet without having to roquet a ball first.

Leaves for Lifts (Level 1)

When conceding a lift to the opponent, the striker's leave should:
1. Have the opponents balls apart and own balls together AND
2. Have all balls well away from either Baulk Line to ensure the opponent's roquet attempt is as long as possible.

The 'Old Standard Leave'

Figure 5 illustrates a useful lift leave that does not require too much precision to arrange. The opponent balls (Blue and Black are separated by at least 13 yards and the striker's balls are close together. All balls are at least 13 yards away from any Baulk line.

The shaded areas in Figure 5 illustrate the approximate locations of an Old Standard Leave. These general positions allow a player the luxury of being able to set a leave similar to this after running 3-back with a few good croquet strokes.

It is advantageous for the striker to use an opponent ball as a pioneer at 3-back during their turn, making it a bit easier to arrange the balls for the Lift Leave.

Figure 5: Old Standard Leave

Pegging Out

Having made all 24 hoops, both balls of the side must then hit the centre-peg. The first side to do so wins the game.
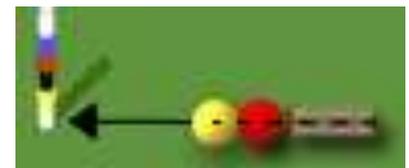
The Rover Ball

When a ball has run the Rover hoop, it is termed a Rover ball and may, in most cases, be pegged out. Once both balls of a side become Rover balls, the aim should be to peg out both balls in the turn.

Toby Garrison pegging out Red and Yellow to win a 2014 MacRobertson Shield match against the USA in Christchurch

The Action of Pegging Out

The most accurate method of pegging out is to use a *straight stop or drive croquet stroke* from close proximity to the peg, involving both balls of the side, thus avoiding any *pull* effect of a *split croquet stroke.* (See the *Croquet Strokes* module). The croqueted ball is first promoted forward to hit the peg and, if the striker's ball doesn't also hit in the same stroke, is then hit onto the peg in the continuation stroke.

Straight Drive croquet stroke

Setting up for the peg-out before running Rover.

Setting up before running Rover with the striker's ball

If the striker has not yet run Rover, but their partner ball is for the peg, the striker should endeavour to use an opponent ball as a pioneer ball at Rover, leaving partner ball in close proximity to the peg, ready for the peg-out.

If partner ball is used as a pioneer at the Rover hoop, the striker should endeavour to obtain a rush on partner ball back toward the peg after running the hoop.

A third, opponent ball on the non-playing side of Rover would be very advantageous in this circumstance. After running Rover, the striker can roquet and croquet the opponent ball first, then easily achieve a straight dolly rush on partner ball towards the peg.

*It is possible for only one ball to be pegged out. This may cause problems for the player who then has no partner ball to roquet in subsequent turns.

Of course, once you have pegged out both of your balls, thank your opponent for the game!

Practice

A) Approach Rover Hoop with partner ball, run hoop and rush partner ball towards the peg. Peg out both balls with the croquet and continuation strokes.

B) Approach Rover hoop with opponent's ball leaving partner ball near the peg.

C) Start games from Hoop 5 or 1-Back in order to ensure a game will be pegged out in the time available.
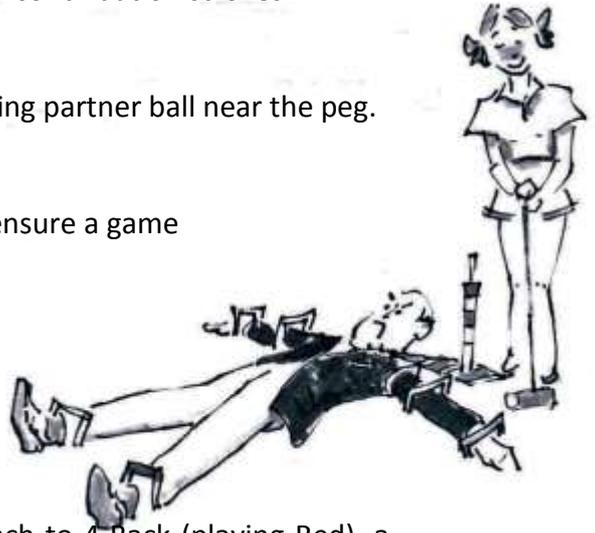
From an approach to 4-Back (playing Red), a penultimate pioneer, and partner ball in a pivot position, attempt the last three hoops then peg out Yellow and Red. Try to send an opponent ball to Rover as the Rover pioneer, leaving partner adjacent to the peg.

Peg Out Game

A fun team game. Divide a group into 2 teams. Teams play alternately.

When it is the team's turn to play, one team member attempts to peg out both balls with a croquet and continuation shot starting from any distance they choose. A member of the opposing team then attempts to peg out from any distance they choose, and so on.

The team that has successfully pegged out both balls from the greatest distance from the peg after each player has had a go, wins.