

CORNWALL CROQUET CLUB

Additional Coaching Notes

(Adapted from a variety of sources)

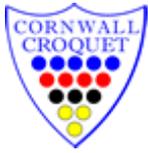


The Purpose of this document.

This is a collection of notes from various sources about how to improve your game.

The intention is not for the reader to read from cover to cover in the order presented but rather to select topics from the contents page to read in any order desired.

Since the sources are various it will be that the same things are repeated – this serves as reinforcement and also gets the point across that many sources agree on the importance of some things. Also, sometimes, the same thing explained in a different way makes it easier to comprehend for different people.



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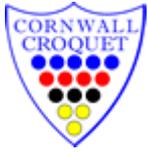
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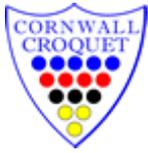
Chapter 8 – Getting the 4th ball into play



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Additional Coaching Notes – Chapter 1

(Adapted from a variety of sources)

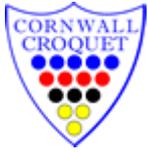
1.0. If You Do Nothing Else ... 😊 😊 😊 😊

- ✓ Watch the Game
and
when your turn comes be ready and walk onto the lawn with a plan.
- ✓ Use all the balls if you possibly can.
- ✓ Don't leave a ball behind unless you must.
- ✓ Load the next hoop +1 *before* approaching your next hoop.
- ✓ Remember a Break is *better* than a Hoop.

Recommended reading: -

Some collected articles by John Riches on the Oxford Croquet Website

(<http://www.oxfordcroquet.com/coach/riches/collected/index.asp>)



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1.1. The Three Ts – Tactics, Technique and Temperament. The Three Cs – Concentration, Control, Consistency

The ability to exercise *concentration* is part of temperament, and *control* is part of technique. The scope of your achievable tactics will grow as you build your repertoire of techniques. If you achieve a balance of the 3 Ts you will also attain *consistency*.

1.2. Go on the lawn with a plan, and plan for success

Think of this as a top priority. The lack of a plan so often results in poor shot selection, missed opportunities, and failure to build a better position than you started with.

A player with no plan makes up the play shot-by-shot, for example, on making a roquet he does not immediately put the striker's ball in contact for the croquet shot, and when he eventually does he changes the position from a take-off to a straight drive and back again; he pauses and looks round for ages after every hoop, addresses the ball then shows indecision by looking around again at the other balls. The opponent will be gaining confidence from the display of indecision.

Lack of planning is often displayed by roqueting or running a hoop with a shot much harder than is needed, putting the ball into a position that makes the next shot difficult rather than easy and then having to stop to think what to do with the croquet shot. Planning for success does not mean playing with a reckless disregard for what might be given away if things go wrong; of course you need to keep that in mind. But it must not stand in the way of constructive play, which should be directed towards gaining the advantages of a tidy 4-ball break.

1.3. Go for the 4-ball break

If you want to improve and to get to be as good as you can, then you must go for break-play rather than the 2-ball Aunt Emma tactics. The 4-ball break configuration is by far the easiest, much less likely to break down than a 2-ball or 3-ball ball break.

Avoid making a shot that commits you to the 3-ball break by taking a croquet shot that leaves the other ball behind, instead of advancing it into a useful position. Here "useful" does not necessarily mean that it will be immediately in position as a pivot or a pioneer; perhaps it will only be of full use after a number of further shots. The purpose in not leaving the ball behind is to secure one of the steps in the process of building the position of the balls so that, after a few more shots and hoops, a 4-ball break is achieved.

The decision to leave a ball behind can often result in a rapid degeneration from a 3-ball break to a 2-ball break, followed by a no-ball break, and (even worse) possibly wasting valuable bisques on the way.



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Additional Coaching Notes – Chapter 1 cont'n.

Why it is that the 4-ball break is not only easier but also less likely to go wrong?

Firstly, why is it easier? It is mainly because there is more tolerance for inaccuracies in ball positions and furthermore, you have *two croquet shots instead of one* to achieve a desired position. In the 3-ball break the croquet shot after each hoop must place a ball as a pioneer *and* get the striker's ball into position to rush the third ball to the next hoop. That means placing two balls with sufficient accuracy in the one shot. In the 4-ball break the placing of the pioneer is still required, but the striker's ball only needs to get near enough to the 4th ball (the pivot) to be able to roquet it, and can then get to the 3rd ball waiting as the pioneer for the next hoop, either by a take-off or from some other croquet shot. **Only one ball has to be placed accurately in each shot, so it's easier.**

Secondly, why is it less likely to go wrong? If you have chosen to forgo a 4-ball break and leave partner ball on a boundary so that you can run away to it if things get untidy, then you will *always* be attempting to make the hoop off an opponent's ball. You will never be in a position to try running a hoop from a challenging position safe in the knowledge that if you fail you will be with your partner ball and therefore not handing your opponent a trivial hit-in, so you will most likely run away to your partner ball. It follows that, if you play a prudent 3-ball break, there will be more occasions when you must choose to discontinue the break.

When things start to go wrong in a break, to have the 4th ball *available* to use is an advantage.

1.4. How to use bisques to construct a position

Coaching sessions have covered the set of shots needed to establish a 4-ball break from Hoop 1, using 2 or 3 bisques. This involves shooting at a ball near a boundary, using a bisque (or a half) if you miss, and immediately putting the roqueted ball as pioneer at Hoop 1. You then visit and position the other balls, using a further bisque on the way so that you arrive back at the Hoop 1 pioneer with a continuation shot to roquet it and make Hoop 1.

Remember you can use second and subsequent bisques at any time, wherever is best in order to build the position, for example, you can do the same thing to start a break from *any* hoop later in the game.

Be flexible as to how you arrive at the desired position, for example, you might find that the first ball you hit is already a good pioneer for Hoop 2, so think about leaving it there and getting the other balls in place in a different order.

Remember, one bisque entitles you to hit your striker's ball **SEVEN** times, making 3 roquets, 3 croquets and the final continuation shot.



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Additional Coaching Notes – Chapter 1 cont'n.

Thus the **worst thing** is to use bisques **only** to correct mistakes, such as blobbed hoops – you will have wasted most of the seven shots that one bisque allows. Therefore use them mainly to construct *or tidy up* a break.

However, since you would expect to use one or two bisques to construct a 4-ball break, to use one to continue a break, rather than hand the innings to your opponent, is certainly worthwhile (e.g. if you have a 4-ball break set up and you blob a hoop).

It also makes good sense to use a bisque to make a good leave against a strong opponent, e.g. having gone round to penult or rover, to get a safe leave (such as opponent wired at your rearward ball's hoop).

1.5. How to build the break

Your opponent may break down and hand you a break, but you should not be relying on your opponent's mistakes. Instead you should be exploiting small opportunities in order to build your own breaks. Building a break out of nothing much is one of the most satisfying aspects of the game. It is of course vastly easier to build a break when you have bisques, but you need to be able to do it without the support of bisques, otherwise your game will come to a halt every time you run out.

So how do you build a break? This looks rather daunting, especially when the bisques have gone. Visualising a sequence of shots that goes from a hit-in to a 4-ball break position is a challenge, but it is really not that difficult to see how to do this if you think of the process as being composed of an appropriate selection of set pieces.

This will often include the problem of incorporating a ball on a boundary (and especially in a corner) and promoting it into the required position over one or more shots.

Sometimes you will need to visit a ball several times, probably by rushing a ball to it and exchanging it for the rushed ball, improving the position on each visit until all balls are in the game.

At other times you will be able to get a ball fully into the game in one shot, usually from a position on one of the yard-lines. This might be a shot of some difficulty, but the one difficult shot may be all that is needed to secure a 4-ball position.

Of particular note are the opportunities that arise when the ball that you want to bring into play is in or near a corner. It is well worth practising these as part of your repertoire of set pieces; discussed in more detail below. What we would like to do is to take off to a corner ball, roquet it, and use the croquet shot to place it as the pioneer at the next hoop but one, getting the striker's ball to the pioneer that is already waiting at the next hoop. This may be needed right at the start of a break, or during the break.



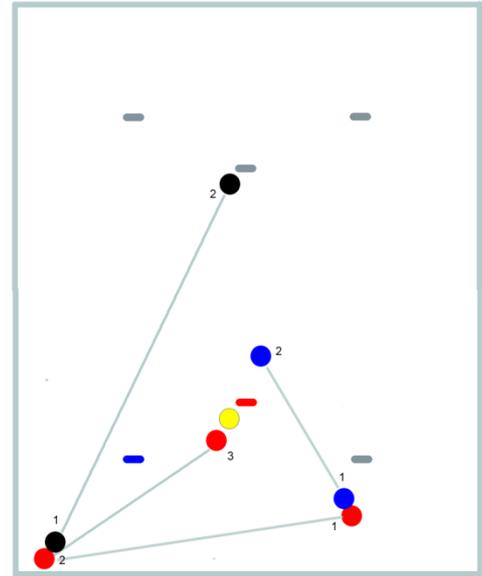
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Additional Coaching Notes – Chapter 1 cont'n.

They are described in more detail elsewhere in the clubs coaching notes, but here's one to get the idea.

You (red and yellow) have advanced red a few hoops in a 3-ball break and now having made Hoop 4 and roqueted blue at a point just beyond the hoop, you want to bring into play black, which is in (or close to) corner 1. Yellow is in place as the pioneer for hoop 5. Do a good thick take off to corner 1 from the left side of blue so that it moves north towards the middle of the lawn, and roquet black. The croquet shot needs to be a half roll, split to put black to hoop 6, getting to yellow with red.

Once you've made hoop 5 you can easily carry blue and yellow forward into a classic 4-ball break from these positions.



1.6. Pursue realistic ambitions, and build your technique

Be clear about what you should attempt in a serious game (i.e. one that you want to win).

In a serious game it is pointless to try things that you know are very difficult for you and therefore likely to go wrong. It is quite common to see a player attempt a shot that is well beyond his technical capability and not get the desired result. However, you will often see the same player decline a shot that is easily within his capability, even though there was much to be gained.

So, in a game you should *not* be trying to play beyond what is within your technical scope, but you should be fully applying what you *are* capable of.

You must practice to improve your technical skill – this is the time to work on the shots you find difficult, where you can concentrate on particular aspects in a selective manner. Don't be afraid of coached games either, as it is impossible to see and difficult to analyse your own strokes.



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Additional Coaching Notes – Chapter 1 cont'n.

1.7. How to arrange for the next shot to be easy

Whatever kind of shot you are playing, bear in mind that running a hoop, or making a roquet, is *only one* of its objectives. You should also be playing so as to make the next shot as easy as possible. This is why, in a hoop approach shot, you need to decide where you want to place the croqueted ball so that it is in a useful position beyond the hoop for whatever you need to do next.

What is it that makes a shot easy? Well, a short shot is always easier than a long shot, so, you will want to arrange for shots to be short, and therefore you need to hit at the right strength, not too hard (a very common failing), and not too soft. Then it is also the case that a straight shot is more likely to succeed than one that requires a split, because in the straight shot you don't have to judge angles. So, you will want to arrange for shots to be straight.

This is why, for example, after making Hoop 5, you would want to look at the position of the Hoop 6 pioneer, and then probably rush the reception ball over towards Hoop 3 so that the croquet shot placing the pioneer at 1-back will be a nearly straight shot getting striker's ball to the Hoop 6 pioneer.

Similarly, as already mentioned, when approaching hoop 2, for example, you may wish to place the reception ball to the right of hoop 2 since you will normally wish to be playing to the right after running the hoop.

1.8. Hit in and get to two balls close to each other

If your opponent leaves your balls separated and his joined up, you need to get to the joined up balls by some means. You might do this by hitting in to your partner ball, using a bisque if necessary, then do a take off (thick perhaps, to promote your partner ball to somewhere useful) to get near the two balls that are together. Now what you need to do is choose one to hit and then in the croquet shot promote the croqueted ball to a more useful position whilst, *at the same time and more importantly*, getting into a good position to rush the other ball to your next hoop.

Once you have hit one of the two balls it will sometimes be best just to take off to get the rush position on the other ball. Do not roquet the first ball so hard that it goes yards away from the second, so that instead of an easy short take-off you have a difficult much longer take off. Never the less, you should also be looking to see if there is the prospect of promoting the first of the two balls, not just taking off from it (by using a gentle stop shot for instance).

This opportunity (of getting to two balls) is also one of the ways you will be able to get a break going once you have run out of bisques, having hit in without a bisque.



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Additional Coaching Notes – Chapter 1 cont'n.

1.9. How to get a break going without bisques

It is not uncommon to see a player who has run out of bisques hit-in to partner ball, take off to opponent's joined up balls, roquet one of them and in the croquet shot send it to be pioneer at their next hoop, and then join up with their partner ball, having done nothing with the opponent's other ball and maybe not be in a good rush position either. This is an invitation to the opponent to move the ball that was placed as a pioneer (and maybe hit in).

What else could have been done? It is often not easy but ...

First, as the game was well underway, and, he was for two different hoops, he could have put his opponent's balls as pioneers at these two hoops before joining up carefully, leaving a rush to somewhere useful such as one of these hoops.

Second, he could possibly have got a break going (or at least made his next hoop) by getting a rush on the close-by ball (after the hit-in).

Another use for this little set piece on two balls is to compensate for a poor pioneer. If you have failed to place a good pioneer then remember that having two balls together is as good as a pioneer if you get to one ball, take off and with the continuation shot rush the other to your hoop. During a break that is still untidy, or if a shot placing a pioneer goes wrong, there can be an opportunity for you to put two balls together and use them in this way.

1.10. Place pioneers at your hoop(s), and not at opponent's

It should be obvious that you will normally wish to place pioneers at your next two hoops.

Remember that your opponent's black placed at black's hoop and blue at blue's (must be different hoops!) is a good leave because a ball at its own hoop is not a pioneer for itself, and may make things awkward for your opponent. Of course, if you are for that hoop, your opponent's ball is a pioneer for you.

The other side of this coin is to look for opportunities where you have been left a pioneer at your hoop. If you still have a bisque this may be a give-away as a start to a break.

Don't be afraid to check clip positions before beginning your turn, especially in bad light or when the clips are small. Also it is so very easy to make a silly mistake, such as approaching the wrong hoop or running in the wrong direction, so a good habit to adopt is to check before you play. Remember that both players are required by the Laws to ensure that all clips are correctly placed (law 31e) and must call attention if otherwise (subject to Law 23).



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1.11. Always look at the bigger picture

The classic example of this is when you have approached a hoop and failed to get into running position, but could make it using a bisque. You have not yet played the continuation shot. The mistake is not to look first at the other balls, because very often you could use the continuation shot to go to the furthest ball, improve its position, likewise improve the other ball before coming back to the hoop where the ball you originally approached with is waiting as a pioneer.

However, there are many other examples where a look at the bigger picture would yield opportunities. One that often arises is when you have made a hoop or two in a break, but then it goes wrong on something that should have been easy. Your opponent then doesn't hit in, and you quickly come back on the lawn with your recent disappointment still at the front of your mind, determined to continue playing the same ball. This focus on the ball you have just played causes you to neglect taking a look at the full position, and perhaps, missing out on a better opportunity by playing the other ball.

1.12. Take opportunities, but not always the obvious ones

It is common to see players declining the opportunity to approach a hoop in a croquet shot that is rather speculative, *even though* a safe exit would still be available in the continuation shot if the ball doesn't get into running position. These speculative approaches might be some form of stop shot from a boundary, croqueting opponent's ball to be pioneer at the next hoop but one, a safe distance away, or perhaps a lengthy take off. These marginal opportunities can make the crucial difference between getting a break going and languishing in defensive leaves (that rarely lead anywhere and might give opportunities to your opponent).

Taking opportunities does not always mean going for the hit in, or running the hoop. It may be better to do something else.

For example, in a game where all bisques have gone, you have pegged out your opponent's black and are for Rover with yellow. Opponent gets a 3-ball break going, but blobs 4-back leaving yellow just beyond the hoop and blue almost touching the outside of the right wire, with red at Penult. He cannot run the hoop, and he cannot hit either of your balls. *What are your options?* Yellow can see a little of blue but could well miss. A shot at red might hit but is doubtful, and even if it hits, the roll to Rover is unlikely to succeed, so you would probably have to go and lay up a rush in a wired position somewhere on a boundary (please don't leave them joined up at Rover for your opponent to shoot at!). Although the wired leave is a good tactic, none of these shots is particularly easy (at our level of play. However, there is one quite easy shot that could well yield an advantageous result, and which doesn't even require you to hit anything, and that is simply to hit yellow fairly gently over to the right of red, hoping to get position for a rush to Rover to be executed after your opponent's next shot. You will still be wired from blue, so he has no shot to hit in with. If you get the rush position you should win from there, and if you don't get the rush position you will still keep the innings.



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Additional Coaching Notes – Chapter 1 cont'n.

1.13. Picking up the 4th ball

The general idea is always the same: -

- The 4th ball is in, or near, a corner which is *adjacent* to your next hoop.
- You must have the pioneer for your next hoop in place
- You roquet and take croquet from the reception ball from your last hoop, hopefully leaving it in a useable position (maybe making it into a pivot ball) and approaching the 4th ball with your own.
- You roquet the 4th ball and take croquet sending the 4th ball as pioneer for the next hoop +1 one and your striker's ball to the pioneer waiting at your next hoop.

You now have the 4-ball break established.

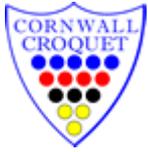
An example has already been given in section 1.5 above where black was retrieved from corner 1 before running hoop 5.

When dealing with the centre hoops (5 & 6) the 'adjacent' corner for hoop 5 will be either 1 or 4 and for hoop 6 the 'adjacent' corner will be 2 or 3.

These shots and their relative difficulty are described in detail in Chapter 8.

1.14. Some Random Tips from our website

- Give 10% more care to each of your shots.
- Use your bisques to build breaks.
- When making a break, don't leave balls behind unless you have to.
- If you find yourself missing roquets, concentrate on following through.
- If you have a half bisque as well as full bisques, use the half bisque to begin setting up a break.
- If you "top" the ball, you are probably lifting your head.
- Don't attempt to run hoops too hard – "stroking" through will give better results.
- Watch better players and imitate them.
- It is almost always poor play to try to peel your partner ball, except through Rover in the end game.
- If you are going to set a "tice" at the start, make it 'enticing'.
- If you are left with a long split roll to your hoop with your partner ball, consider laying-up instead.



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Additional Coaching Notes – Chapter 1 cont'n.

1.15. Selected comments from a recent graduate from the 'B'League

- ❖ I had 40 games on my card last season, as opposed to 10 or less previously.
- ❖ I addressed the problem of my inability to hit roquets. I had never been able to hold the mallet with both hands on top but someone put me on the right track by suggesting that I bring the top hand down rather than the bottom hand up, and that I do it an inch at a time until I felt comfortable.
- ❖ I had improved my hoop running by hitting the ball gently and 'stroking' it through, and I discovered that standing closer to the ball and using the same technique for short roquets was very effective.
- ❖ There is definitely something to be said for watching the best players. I learned a lot from being a spectator. I finally twigged that it is not written in tablets of stone that the pivot ball should always be in the centre of the lawn and that I don't *need* to do long split shots if I can perfect my rushes and stop shots.
- ❖ I have stopped selling myself short, and now believe that I am good enough to get my handicap into single figures. I think I used to convince myself I was going to miss before I even went on to the lawn.
- ❖ Play in some high handicap tournaments if you can. The atmosphere is good and you will have fun even if you don't win. *Never* refuse to take part in a competition because you think you are not good enough. You might be soundly beaten, but in my experience the better players are only too willing to give help and encouragement, especially if asked. You will never get better if you keep playing the same people again and again in friendly games.



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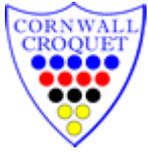
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1.16. Technique - some reminders

1.16.1 *Remember that if you have a 'bad' technical habit, initially you should not expect to do as well with a better but unpractised technique as you were doing with a poorer but much practised one!*

1.16.2 Roquets

- 1.16.2a. Hips and shoulders should be square to line of swing. Most people find the easiest way to achieve this is to **stalk**.
- 1.16.2b. Mallet head should be aligned along line of swing.
- 1.16.2c. Left foot should point along the line of swing, right not so critical (right handed grip, vice versa if left handed)
- 1.16.2d. Practise swings may be helpful (behind and/or over the ball)
- 1.16.2e. If the line of swing or mallet head alignment is not correct then don't "shuffle" but re-stalk and take stance afresh, altering grip for head alignment if necessary.
- 1.16.2f. Slow, long, backswing before forward stroke – DO NOT PUSH – if anything use a slight **PULL** forward and keep both head & shoulders still.
- 1.16.2g. Try to keep looking at the point where the mallet contacts the ball until your follow-through is complete *This means you will end up looking down at the spot on the court where your ball was before you hit it, but you should be able to remember seeing the mallet hit the ball 😊*
- 1.16.2h. Natural follow-through on line of aim, try to extend the lower part of the swing horizontally (don't lift the mallet too soon and don't walk forwards before the follow-through is complete).
- 1.16.2i. The hands are for guiding only – the weight of the mallet does **ALL** the work (more backswing, more power). Keep grip tension the same throughout the whole of the stroke (firm but not fierce).
- 1.16.2j. Most players eventually come to realise that they do better with hands closer together (maybe even interlocked) rather than apart. With separated hands there is a tendency to push with lower hand and one shoulder is lower, making it more difficult to execute a straight stroke).
- 1.16.2k. Stance not excessively bent (more upright) – knees *not* locked.
- 1.16.2l. To practise a controlled swing, as an exercise, try using only the top hand (this requires a little practice).



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Additional Coaching Notes – Chapter 1 cont'n.

1.16.3 Hoop Shots

- 1.16.3a. Stand a little further forward than for a roquet - the ball is then hit with a slight downward stroke. This helps the ball gain top-spin which will help to carry it through the hoop. Note that for shots more than about 3ft from the hoop enough top spin will be gained by ground friction alone, so hitting flatter may be similarly effective.
- 1.16.3b. Follow through forwards along the ground, extending the arms, using a sweeping action. The stroke should be as hard as necessary to get the ball to where you want it to end up. Remember angled hoops may need to be hit a little harder and little farther up the ball (more top-spin).
- 1.16.3c. **From directly in front (straight hoop)** - Stalk the ball, maybe squatting lower to get a better view if it's a long shot, line up exact centre of ball and exact centre of hoop and mallet face perfectly square to line of aim. You may wish to imagine a line along which the ball is to travel, or even aim at a target beyond the hoop, but remember to keep your eye on the back of the ball (you should be able to remember seeing the mallet hit the ball)
- 1.16.3d. **From the side (angled hoop)** - Stalk the ball, maybe squatting lower to get a better view. Maybe view from the non-playing side also - if you can see at least a fraction more than half of the ball it may go through!

To go through, the side of the ball nearest the hoop needs to miss the inner side of the near leg of the hoop, to avoid being deflected away from hoop. Some players like to line up this way.

Alternatively line up the centre of the ball to go just inside the far leg of the hoop (it will bounce off the far leg and go through).



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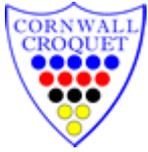
Additional Coaching Notes – Chapter 1 cont'n.

1.17. How to set up a 4-ball break using bisques (in more detail)

At the start of the game the player with bisques (and it might be that both players have them) needs to choose whether to get underway or to allow the opponent whatever opportunity he can seize. You need to come to a view, if you can, as to how well your opponent is playing. If you have reason to think that he is not playing well it is sometimes best just to let him play, hoping that he will use his bisques to less than their full potential. If this is what you have chosen, you then place your balls in corners 2 & 4 to make it difficult for your opponent.

However, you often don't have any information on which to base an opinion (say at the beginning of a match), and then it is a big risk to let him play, as he may do well, and this can be quite discouraging. In any case, with bisques available it is mostly best to get on the lawn first, *especially* if your opponent is nominally the better player.

Playing with bisques means that you can take on shots that you could not risk without having a bisque to use if you miss, and you can take the innings at any time (not just at the start) by using one bisque, either by trickling up to a ball if it is out in the lawn, or by a good strong shot if it is near a boundary, and you might even save using that first bisque by hitting in. You should then aim to set up a 4-ball break using a second bisque. If you have a half-bisque, use it first, followed by a full bisque.



CORNWALL CROQUET CLUB

Additional Coaching Notes – Chapter 1 cont'n.

The use of bisques to set up a 4-ball break

(at the beginning of the game as well as later)

Let's review the procedure to get a 4-ball break going at the start of the game. For simplicity let's suppose you have won the toss and have put your opponent in (so that your second turn will be the first with all balls available). You go on 4th turn with your second ball, and you shoot at a ball so that if you miss you land up near it, so that you can then take a bisque and easily hit it in the next shot.

Now what to do?

On the assumption that the balls are not fortuitously already in their desired places, the thing to do next is to croquet the ball you have just hit, sending it to be the pioneer at Hoop 1, getting striker's ball to a position from which it can roquet another ball. You then croquet that ball to one of the other two desirable vacant positions (these are, a pivot out in the lawn and a pioneer for Hoop 2), getting to the 4th ball and roqueting it. In the subsequent croquet shot with 4th ball you must get striker's ball back down to Hoop 1, placing the croqueted ball in the other desirable vacant position. You then have a 4-ball break position set up, and you take the second bisque to allow you to roquet the Hoop 1 pioneer, and away you go. If any ball is already well placed, it is still usually worth visiting it to adjust its position to be even better, and to get the benefit of shorter steps by using all the balls.

If you can get round to Rover on half of your bisques and do a good leave, you should be able to win, even if your opponent then uses some of his bisques to do the same. With the other half of your bisques you should be able to get the second ball round to Peg, doing the Rover Peel on the way, and you then win. Against a very good player you may as well go to Peg with the first ball, as he could easily Peel you through Rover if he wished to peg you out.



CORNWALL CROQUET CLUB

Additional Coaching Notes – Chapter 1 cont'n.

How to keep the 4-ball break going

Follow this procedure, selecting the correct shot (stop-shot, drive, and the various roll shots) as needed. Practise them if you have any doubt about what the ratios are for each shot.

- a) When you have run a hoop, roquet the reception ball. It will often be a gentle roquet that is needed, and other times a harder hit to rush it to a useful spot. Choose carefully which one is needed; don't hit hard when the result makes the next shot more difficult than if you had hit gently (e.g. needing a long take-off instead of an easy short one, for no significant advantage). Hitting too hard for no gain or an even poorer position is a very common failing.
- b) Send the roqueted ball to be the pioneer at the next-hoop-but-one, using an appropriate CROQUET shot to place it accurately, and getting the striker's ball near to the pivot ball that is awaiting somewhere, hopefully in a good spot out in the lawn where you placed it in anticipation. This croquet shot is of tremendous importance, particularly when the bisques have gone (see later).
- c) Unless there is a very good reason, do not do take-offs that leave a ball in a position that is not useful to you subsequently (such as on a boundary when you want it in the lawn). Use all the balls, and don't leave a ball behind unless it is unavoidable. The croquet shot that would put it somewhere useful is just as easy as the take-off. If you do have to leave a ball behind, you should have a clear idea as to when you are going to bring it back into play. Of course, if the croqueted ball is already in or near a useful position, an appropriate take-off is the right choice.



CORNWALL CROQUET CLUB

Additional Coaching Notes – Chapter 1 cont'n.

Use of bisques during the break

Each time you use a bisque you are entitled to take a total of SEVEN shots if you use all the balls; it is a terrible waste to use a bisque to take only one shot.

Let's examine the right and wrong things to do in this situation. The player had hoped to use the continuation shot to run the hoop, but had got into a poor position.

- *The worst* thing to do is to use the continuation shot to take position in front of the hoop, then take a bisque and run it. This is wrong because the taking of position often does not work (too hard or too soft a hit), and even if it does work, you have only got one shot out of your bisque.
- *Not quite as bad* is to play the continuation shot into a position that gets a short rush on the nearby ball, back to the hoop. This is slightly better because it utilises three of the available seven shots, and the position needed to get a rush is less precise than that needed to run the hoop, so it is more likely to succeed.
- *The best* thing to do, **by a long way**, is to look at the other two balls, which need to be in ideal pivot and pioneer positions up ahead, and probably need some re-positioning. Use the continuation shot to get near one of them (usually going to the more distant one first), then take the bisque to roquet it and position it with the croquet shot, getting to the other ball, roquet and position it, coming back to the ball you left at the hoop. (i.e. just like setting up the 4-ball break at the beginning of a game). Roquet, Croquet and run the hoop. All seven shots are used, and an easy break layout is restored.

In the unlikely event that both of the balls up ahead were already perfectly positioned then there is no need to adjust them, and then the second option above is appropriate. However, this is rare, and even if only one of them needs tweaking it is probably going to be easier to get to it by visiting both of them. In any event, the first option above is always the least beneficial. ***Tell yourself this and DON'T DO IT!***

Once you have a break set up it is easy to keep it going with bisques used judiciously in this way to keep it tidy, so you should always be assessing the tidiness of the layout, and using a bisque to tidy up when the need arises.

How can you tell when you need to use a bisque to tidy up?

If you get into a situation where you do not have an adequate pioneer for the next-hoop-but-one, it is time to use a bisque, probably visiting all the balls and recovering the tidy position, as already described. However, remember that two balls close together are as useful as a good pioneer, since you should be able to get to one, and use a croquet shot or a take-off to get a rush on the other one to your hoop. You should be able to carry on from that position successfully without using a bisque.



CORNWALL CROQUET CLUB

Additional Coaching Notes – Chapter 1 cont'n.

In general, do not wait until things have gone wrong; timely use of a bisque will give you a tidy 4-ball break position, whereas delaying until a mistake has been made often means you have used a bisque and still don't have a good position. If you apply this thinking, the bisques will be used to greatest effect, and not simply to mend mistakes (such as blobbed hoops).

When to give up and when not to

Of course, in spite of having a good layout for the 4-ball break, you will blob hoops.

Players often walk off the lawn at this point, especially if they are with partner ball at the blobbed hoop. In this case they are judging that opponent has a lengthy roquet to do and may not succeed or that even if he has bisques and is bound to have the opportunity to get in, he may not do much from that layout. *This is not sound reasoning*, because it fails to consider the full issue, which should include consideration of what can be gained by the use of a bisque or two. Bearing in mind that you would happily spend two bisques to set up a 4-ball break, it is sound to use one or two bisque(s) to keep a break going, provided balls are reasonably placed up ahead. Also, you are not then handing over the innings, which is an asset that is too often undervalued. If you have been unfortunate enough to land your ball on the upright, so that two bisques will be needed to continue, it may still be worth it, depending on (i) the forward position, and (ii) what you would be handing to your opponent if you give up. *Many players give up too easily in these situations.*

Another common situation is that you miss a roquet during the break, landing up a long way from the target ball. This is a much trickier decision, because you may well miss the roquet again, and find yourself "windscreen wiping", squandering many bisques. If you decide to continue, first look to see if there is another ball closer than the one you missed. That might be your best choice. Whatever you decide, it cannot be necessary to spend more than two bisques to get the break back. Look at the full situation. You could just trickle up to the ball you have just missed, and then you are sure to be able to get it with the second bisque.

However, you should recognise that you could use the two bisques to carry out the equivalent of the setting-up procedure that we have looked at earlier, and in this case if you have kept things tidy some of the balls will already be well placed, so examine the option and decide whether that might be better value.



CORNWALL CROQUET CLUB

Additional Coaching Notes – Chapter 1 cont'n.

What to do when the bisques have gone

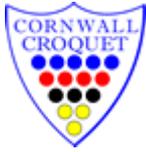
Once you have run out of bisques you will have to work much harder to build your break. You can no longer just grab the innings at any time (though your opponent can if he still has bisques), and you will now have to hit in to gain it. With no bisque to bail you out of a bad shot, success now depends much more on TACTICAL choices to select the right objectives, followed by correct SHOT SELECTION and deployment of the TECHNICAL skill to execute the shot successfully.

Consider the tactics first. If you hit in and can get to two balls that are near each other, use them productively – roquet one of them, probably gently, so as to have an easy take-off or croquet shot that gets you a rush on the second ball to your next hoop. Look for opportunities to bring all 4 balls into play, building the break as you go. Think about when it is appropriate to roquet gently, followed by a gentle croquet shot (perhaps just a take-off), and when it will be better to roquet harder so as to get the room needed to gain best advantage of the croquet shot.

It is now even more important **not** to leave balls behind with take-off shots. Even if you can only get the ball out two yards from the boundary, it will be much easier to get to it after the next hoop, and bring it further into the game.

Turning to the technical side, you will gain greatly if you can run hoops with control, getting in the right position to rush the reception ball (i) to a hoop, (ii) to a good position to play the next croquet shot straight instead of split, or (iii) to the boundary or to the vicinity of another ball so that the subsequent croquet shot adds to the objective of getting all the balls back into a 4-ball layout, probably taking several hoops to achieve it.

In order to run hoops with control you must be running them from in front and no more than about 15 inches away. In order to get such good hoop approaches you need good pioneers, and they in turn demand that your placement of pioneers is done with carefully aligned croquet shots. The croquet shot used to place the next but one pioneer must be done with great care, and you should line it up carefully (not quite as demanding as say a long peg-out, but needing to be aimed at a target position rather than just the general vicinity of a hoop). Ability to execute a good croquet shot is one of the most important technical requirements. It is the name of the game, after all.



CORNWALL CROQUET CLUB

Additional Coaching Notes – Chapter 1 cont'n.

1.18. Practice Routines

In the Mind – “The Inner Game”

If you want to play better croquet try spending say 10 minutes per day, just before you go to bed, imagining what it would be like to play better croquet.

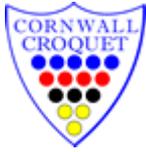
Imagine that you are on a croquet lawn, playing a game, and that every time you have to make a roquet you do, every rush goes exactly where you want it to go, every croquet stroke sends the balls to the right places, every hoop stroke works just as you would have wished.

Immerse yourself in the experience so that you can see what you would see, hear what you would hear and feel what you would feel just as though you are really there.

The more real you can make it the better. Feel the confidence growing.

Experience the joy of knowing that everything you want to do will work just as you want it to. If you want to, say to yourself "This is me. I am this good. This is how I play croquet."





CORNWALL CROQUET CLUB

Additional Coaching Notes – Chapter 1 cont'n.

On the Court Practice

Keep practising and playing, always with the same degree of confidence.

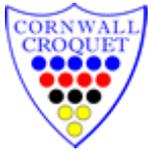
If you play a bad stroke, dismiss it - tell yourself that you are better than that.

If you are practising and you feel yourself becoming frustrated, stop. Spend some time recovering your confidence and then resume practising. This is a very important skill to acquire for playing competitive games, as you have to recover quickly from a bad stroke in order to approach the next one in the right frame of mind.

- ❖ Place two balls a yard apart on the west boundary roughly level with hoop 1. With a third ball (as striker's ball) take-off from one of the balls, getting a rush on the other one to hoop 1. Rush to the hoop, approach it and run it so as to obtain a rush back to the ball remaining on the west boundary. Rush back to the west boundary and repeat the exercise.
- ❖ Place a ball in each corner and then with another ball as striker's ball play round the corners via roquet and take-off from each of the balls in turn, leaving the balls in the corners (difficult).
- ❖ Place a ball on the yard line and line up the other three balls, say, three yards into the lawn. If you can hit the ball on the yard line with all three balls in succession then move the three striker's balls further away from the yard line by a yard. Otherwise repeat the exercise until you can roquet the ball on the yard line three times in succession. Continue moving back a yard each time you are successful. If you have two sets of balls you can aim for seven roquets in a row, and you can use bisques to mark off your starting points, removing them as you master each distance.
- ❖ To improve the accuracy of your rushing, place a ball a yard dead in front of a hoop. Then place a striker's ball a yard from that ball and try to rush the target ball (or cut rush it as you build up more confidence) through the hoop. As you improve you can try from further away or give yourself a bigger angle.
- ❖ Practise a three ball break, always keeping a ball at the peg (difficult).
- ❖ Set-up a four ball break but concentrate on making the striker's ball travel as short a distance as possible on each shot. This makes you concentrate on getting rushes.

References:

- 1.1 – 1.13 adapted from an article by Richard Griffiths (Cornwall & Jersey)
 - 1.15 adapted from an article by Sue Mackay (Dyffryn)
 - 1.17 adapted from an article by Richard Griffiths
 - 1.18 adapted from an article by Keith Aiton (Nottingham and Bowdon), David Magee (Cheltenham), Chris Williams (Dyffryn) and James Mackay (Dyffryn).
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CORNWALL CROQUET CLUB

Additional Coaching Notes - Chapter 2

(Adapted from OxfordCroquet.com)

2. Leaves and Ball Positions

2.1. It is a general aim at the end of a turn to have the opponents away from the edges of the lawn and each other. You join up remote or wired from them near the boundary. The rationale is that should they aim at you and miss, they come back on the lawn where you can easily pick them up. This is called 'guarding the boundary'. If you shoot at a ball in the middle of the lawn there is no great penalty as if you miss it you will make the boundary. You also discourage the opponent joining-up, as to do so in the middle of the lawn gives too much away.

2.2. At the end of a turn, where you have joined up with the partner ball, you should not always leave your balls *on* the boundary, but say at least a further yard out from the yard line. This allows you to turn around and roquet an enemy ball which has missed, and still have enough room to stop it well into the lawn. If you are on the boundary it limits the strength of croquet shot that you can play on the enemy and still get position on your partner ball.

2.3. If your opponent is *on* the boundary with a perfect rush to their hoop you have a virtually free shot at them. If they mess about with you they are likely to spoil their rush. Also they are unlikely to get your ball far off the boundary.

2.4. If you have the innings and you see two enemy balls together this means that you will have a perfect rush to anywhere on the lawn. You only have to take-off near to either of them and a short take-off then gives you the rush on the other ball.

2.5. Because of the above you should not generally join up if your opponent is joined up. You should adopt a **wide join**. The expectation of a wide join is that you place your balls close enough together so that you are likely to hit in. The distance separating your balls prevents your opponent from accurately taking-off from one ball to get a perfect rush on the other. On a fast lawn you can afford to join closer since the take-off will be more difficult, the ball rolling on. On a heavy lawn, where control is easy, you should be thinking of 8-10ft.

2.6. When choosing a position for a wide join you should not place your ball near a corner. If you do so you cannot safely shoot at the corner ball with the other, since if you miss your safe wide join will become two balls together.

2.7. If the opponent's balls are wide-joined you can arrange to take-off to a position where you can rush one of the balls closer to the other. You then have a shorter take-off and hence a better chance of obtaining a perfect rush. This is the answer when an opponent has adopted a wide join. You then have a shorter take-off and hence a better chance of obtaining a perfect rush. This is the answer when an opponent has adopted a wide join.

2.8. It is a desirable leave to place each of the enemy balls on your next hoops. You can then leave a rush to either hoop.



CORNWALL CROQUET CLUB

Additional Coaching Notes - Chapter 2 cont'n.

2.9. If you place an enemy ball as a pioneer on your hoop and are leaving yourself a rush to it, firstly avoid leaving a double. If possible, position the enemy as a three-ball break pioneer. If you place the enemy between the hoop and the boundary and plan to get a rush to the boundary, then you only have to get the direction of the rush correct and not worry about the strength. You can then stop shot your partner ball out and approach the pioneer along its rush line from the boundary.

2.10. At the end of a turn, if an enemy is for the same hoop as you, you should try to leave that enemy ball by its hoop as your pioneer. You should not of course leave it in a position where it can run the hoop. If you leave the other colour enemy ball there then it is a pioneer if the enemy hits in with the first ball. As it is the enemy has to move away from the hoop it wants and there is no easy pioneer.

2.11. Always consider which ball an opponent is likely to play and where they are likely to hit it. If you lay a rush to the boundary where their ball would travel if they took the obvious shot and missed, then you can readily pick them up and build a break. They often overlook this type of trap.

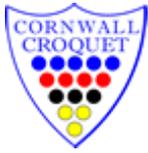
2.12. Suppose during a break you fail to get hoop position off your partner ball, and the enemy is not directly threatening you. As a general rule, do not finish your turn by adopting a perfect hoop running position. This limits your options; firstly you will probably be wired from your partner ball and *vice versa*, this forces you to play with the hoop ball and your opponent, knowing this, will take appropriate action. Secondly you cannot alter the direction of the rush once you have run the hoop and obviously the opponent will have moved their ball. You should leave a rush on your partner instead of taking hoop position - being careful not to leave a double target. This keeps your options of playing either ball open and of positioning your reception ball for a useful rush.

2.13. An occasion when you may take hoop position is when you are slightly threatened. The opponent stands a plausible chance of hitting in. You can then take hoop position as close to the hoop as possible (or even in the jaws) to deny them of any useful rush on that ball should they hit in and try to build a break. *Not recommended against good opponents.*

2.14. If you fail a hoop approach you must resist the temptation to just knock your ball to an arbitrary point on the boundary or in to a corner out of frustration. Ensure that you do not leave your ball near to your opponent's next hoop or forward of their break. For example if the opponent is for hoops three and four then near corners I and II would be much better than III or IV.

2.15. It is dangerous to knock your ball into a corner especially if you are playing an 'A' class player (say of handicap 2 or less). You should shoot to end up about 9" away from the corner spot. This prevents your opponent getting an easy corner cannon and hence moving two balls away from the boundary.

With acknowledgements to Dr Ian Plummer's Oxford Croquet website.
Please visit OxfordCroquet.com for lots of useful croquet information.
Probably the best croquet website of all.



CORNWALL CROQUET CLUB

Additional Coaching Notes - Chapter 3

(Adapted from OxfordCroquet.com)

3. Openings

An opening refers to the positioning of the four balls on the lawn at the start of the game. The intention is to place your balls in a position where if one should be hit by an opponent it is difficult for them to build a break. The position should still give you the upper hand should they miss.

It is important at the start of the game not to give your opponent an easy start. This can boost their confidence and make them play better. Consequently do not try heroics which will give away an easy break.

The opening may be the first time that you have the opportunity to gauge the speed of the lawn. When hitting your first ball you should attempt to get it to stop somewhere specific, say on the boundary line or some distance behind it (if there is space).

3.01. The Standard Opening

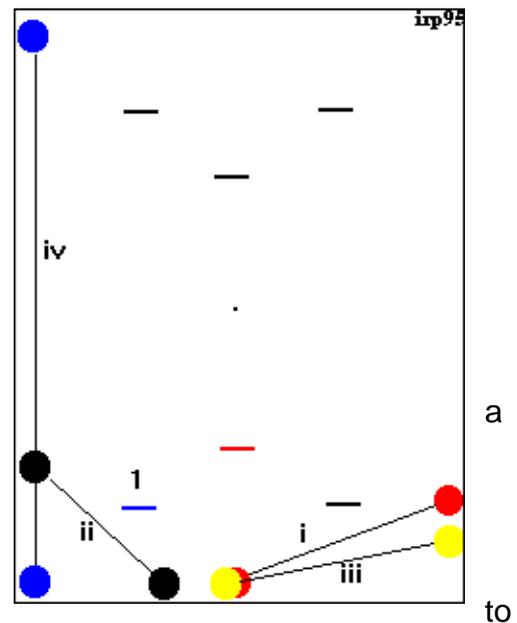
- (i) Ball to East boundary level with hoop 4
- (ii) Ball to West boundary between H1 and Rover
- (iii) Second ball near to first ball on East boundary
- (iv) Shoot from corner I through the ball on the West boundary to corner II.

The point behind each of these shots is now considered.

3.02. First Turn (R). The intention here is to obtain position remote from hoop 1 where, even if the opponent hits in they have a most difficult time getting first hoop. The shot is normally taken from the right hand end of A-baulk.

The position of the ball is not arbitrary. You want be close enough to fourth corner so that you can hit a ball there. If you are too far up (North of) the East boundary your opponent can shoot at you from corner III to corner IV. You must guard fourth corner.

Conversely if you place your ball too near to fourth corner it is awkward shooting at it in the third turn since a near miss means that you will leave a large two-ball target on the East boundary. The further North along East boundary that you are the further apart the balls will end up after a miss.





CORNWALL CROQUET CLUB

Additional Coaching Notes - Chapter 3 cont'n.

3.03. Second Turn (K). - Laying a Tice. You have an option to shoot at the first ball on East boundary, but this course is discussed below. The intention is to place a ball on the West boundary beyond hoop 1. This ensures that if it is hit it will move further away from the first hoop. The distance up the West boundary should be at a length where you reckon you could hit the ball say 50% of the time. If you are playing a strong player you would increase the distance.

The ball is called a Tice - an enticement for your opponent to shoot at it and give up the innings they would have gained after the fourth turn. The tice is 'laid' by shooting from A-baulk in front of hoop 1 to the West boundary. This guarantees the position of the tice. If you were to shoot along the boundary from corner I the length the ball would travel on an unknown lawn would be uncertain.

3.04. Third Turn (Y). An option is to shoot at the tice. If you doubt that your opponent can hit their tice, then you can shoot at your partner ball (R) on the East boundary. If you think that they will hit their tice then you should join up wide on the East boundary (3.6).

3.03. If you hit red in third turn you can lay up a rush, hidden behind hoop 4, to the opponent's tice. You also have the option of taking off to it, if you feel confident, and moving their ball further from the baulk, before returning to your partner ball leaving a rush.

3.06. If you are concerned that your opponent will hit their tice in fourth turn then you should make a wide join on the East boundary. You must remain close enough to your partner to be sure of hitting in and consequently remain a threat to the opponent.

3.07. Fourth Turn (U). Shoot at the tice. As your opponent is joined up you cannot afford to join up yourself (this would give them a rush to anywhere on the lawn).

Consequently you shoot from corner I through the tice to corner II. If you hit you take off to the opponents, get a rush to hoop 1 and build the break. If you miss the opponent has a lot of work to do to get a break going.

3.08. A suggested improvement to shooting through to corner II is to shoot at the tice from 9-12" outside of corner I so that if the ball fails to hit the tice it leaves the lawn level with hoop 2. The intention is to improve your chances of hitting your tice when you shoot back at it (in sixth turn) and therefore discourage your opponent, joined up by hoop 4, just using the fifth turn to set up a wired rush to hoop 1.

3.09. If your opponent has left a double on the East boundary then you have the option of shooting at them. The disadvantage, should you miss, is that they will be able to use your ball to get a perfect rush to hoop 1.

3.10. Fifth Turn (RY). The player joined up on the East boundary has two choices. The less aggressive is to roquet their partner ball and leave a rush to hoop 1 guarding corner IV. The opponents will normally then shoot back at their tice from around corner II as described previously.

3.11. The bolder scheme is to rush your partner up to the centre of the North boundary, take off and roquet the ball in corner II and use a thick take-off to approach the tice from the North. This is then rushed if possible to hoop 1 and the hoop attempted.



CORNWALL CROQUET CLUB

Additional Coaching Notes - Chapter 3 cont'n.

3.12. *We now consider some of the alternatives which can take place during the first four turns. It depends on how you rate your opponent's abilities as to which shots you choose.*

3.13. *Second Turn (K).* Shooting at the red ball on the East boundary. Should you miss it is likely that you will not be giving away much. You have the choice of shooting from the centre of the South boundary on A-baulk or from corner III. If the opponent is close to corner IV, shooting from corner III will not leave a double. If they are North of hoop 4 then either position will not leave a double.

3.14. If you hit red during the second turn there are a number of possibilities. The usual response is to stop the opponent's ball to the South-West of hoop 2 so that it is shadowed from the centre of the North boundary by hoop 2. You then take the position with K on the East boundary by hoop 4 as you would have done had you played the first turn.

3.13. There is more to be gained if you aim to place the opponent's ball midway between hoops 1 and 2 with a roll shot, trying to get hoop position on hoop 1 in the process. You have nothing to lose. If you fail to get a good hoop position you retreat back to the East boundary as before.

3.16. A more mischievous response is to stop shot the opponent's red to a tice distance from corner III by hoop 3, then shoot your black ball accurately off into corner I. The opponent then has to get both balls away from baulk in the third turn.

3.17. An alternative manoeuvre, best carried out against weaker players, is to roll both balls to the peg and cross peg them, leaving a double target from baulk. The opponent gains a three ball break if they hit but they cannot afford to hit firmly otherwise they will feed a ball to the other baulk ready for you in fourth turn. If they shoot gently then there will be an even larger target waiting for you come fourth turn. Obviously an 'A' class player stands a good chance of going around given just three balls.

3.18. Duffers Tice. An alternative position for a tice, named after Duff Matthews, is about level with hoop six a foot or so to the East of it. The principle behind this position is that the opponent cannot afford to shoot hard at the tice otherwise they will feed a ball to the opposite baulk line. They therefore have to shoot gently at it which will leave a double target come the fourth turn.

3.19. Third Turn. Shooting at the tice. The comments written about shooting at the tice in fourth turn apply again here. You should shoot through the tice from near corner I so that your ball travels to the boundary near hoop 2 or to corner II. This means that you threaten the opponents if they join up and discourage them from shooting at the tice from corner I in the fourth turn.

3.26. Shooting at East boundary balls if in second turn the opponent shot to East boundary. If the balls do not form a two ball target it is reasonable to shoot from corner III since, come fifth turn, you will have some space to get the balls out. If you shoot straight at the balls from A-baulk then you are likely to leave a very large target. If the balls already constitute a large target, which if you miss the opponent likely won't, then you may as well shoot from A-baulk at the balls and let the opponent fight to get the balls away from the boundaries.



CORNWALL CROQUET CLUB

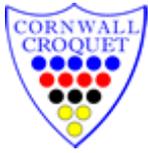
Additional Coaching Notes - Chapter 3 cont'n.

3.27. If you hit in third turn at this stage, you would get one ball off the boundary slightly North of hoop 4 whilst getting a rush on the other to hoop 1. If the hoop approach is certain the croqueted ball becomes your reception ball for the hoop. Otherwise you send it up to the boundary near hoop 2 and retreat to the first other ball and leave a rush straight to the ball by hoop 2. Note this rush can be on the opponent's ball as they are obliged to play with the remaining ball in hand in the fourth turn.

3.28. Other openings. There are no other openings as common as the standard opening. There is the standard opening layout but played with the lawn turned through 180 degrees hence 1st ball level with hoop 2 on the West boundary, tice between hoops three and six on the East boundary etc.. If the second player is confused by this and set a normal tice on the West boundary there is a free shot from corner I to II with two balls to hit.

3.29. If someone plays a silly first shot and you hit it, then you could do worse than play their ball to the middle of the lawn and retreat to the normal East boundary position.

With acknowledgements to Dr Ian Plummer's Oxford Croquet website.
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Probably the best croquet website of all.



CORNWALL CROQUET CLUB

Additional Coaching Notes - Chapter 4

(Adapted from OxfordCroquet.com)

4.0 Getting Balls into Play

It is always the aim during a break to pick up balls which are on the boundary and gradually to build up a four-ball break. Be prepared to be patient. You may find that your first attempt moves the ball 12" in from the yard line, then you have to return to it later to get it into play fully. This is normal and prudent.

4.1. Balls on boundaries. The general recipe is to get a rush to near a ball on the boundary, then play an accurate little stop shot (do not be ambitious at all) to get a perfect rush on that boundary ball to the appropriate point in your break. You have replaced the boundary ball with one which is now a few feet off the yard line. This can be subsequently collected by the same routine except you now have more space to play a useful stop shot and get the rush on the other ball to a strategic position.

4.2. If you have control of three balls then it is likely that you would consider collecting a boundary ball when you pass near it in your break. With fewer balls you must be prepared to play more aggressively - trying to get behind balls remote from your next hoop and setting up a successful rush to it.

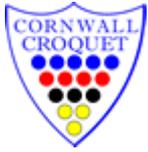
4.3. Obviously you must determine to rush your ball to the side of the boundary ball which will offer you the most advantage. Remember you must have enough room to play a little stop shot but not be too far away so that you cannot obtain that perfect rush.

4.4. By way of an example, suppose that you have a three-ball break at hoop 3 with a pioneer at hoop 4. The boundary ball is on the North boundary directly behind hoop 3. If after hoop 3 you arrange to rush your reception ball between the boundary ball and corner III, you can then play a stop shot to get a rush on the boundary ball to near the pioneer on hoop 4. The croqueted ball ends up between hoops 3 and 6.

4.5. Balls in corners. It is generally thought that knocking a ball into a corner is a very defensive shot. It is better however to aim to lie 9" or so outside the corner spot. The reason will become clear.

4.6. Obviously the same tactics can be used for a ball in a corner as can be used for a general boundary ball, whereby you swap a ball on the yard line for one some distance off it.

4.4. A ball in a corner offers an easy opportunity to obtain a cannon, since a ball rushed anywhere into the large corner area comes back on to the lawn in contact with the corner ball. The major advantage of a cannon is that both balls can be moved large distances, with accuracy, from the boundary.



CORNWALL CROQUET CLUB

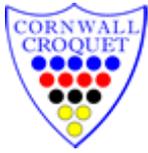
Additional Coaching Notes - Chapter 4 cont'n.

4.8. The procedure for replacing balls when they would come back on to the lawn on the same or overlapping spot as another ball is as follows. The ball to be replaced is put on the yard line in contact with the ball already there on either side of it at the striker's choice. If in a corner it can be placed on either yard line. If a ball goes off the lawn where there are two balls separated by less than a ball's width, you may replace the ball on the yard line on the outside of, but in contact with, either ball. If, once the balls are replaced, you are eligible to take croquet from one of the balls which is in contact with another, you place your ball in contact with the ball from you intend to take croquet and can then move the striker's ball and original ball anywhere around it. The only restriction is that the striker's ball may not be in contact with the original ball. See **Law 12**.

4.9. You may also do the above if you rush a ball into contact with another ball, where neither of which is a yard line ball. (**Law 16.d**)

4.10. Details of cannons will be given in **Chapter 5: Cannons**.

With acknowledgements to Dr Ian Plummer's Oxford Croquet website.
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CORNWALL CROQUET CLUB

Additional Coaching Notes - Chapter 5

(Adapted from SWAN & OxfordCroquet.com)

5.1 The Banana and Wafer Cannons – SWAN 14 (1995)

Introduction

A 3-ball cannon means at the least a good rush to his hoop, and often a good chance of a 3-ball break. A 4-ball cannon means an automatic 4-ball break.

The reason is embodied in Law 19(b) dealing with groups of three or four balls in mutual contact (cannons normally occur with at least one of the balls on a yard line, although mid-court groups are now allowed). In this situation all the balls, except the roqueted ball, become balls in hand and, with a 3-ball group, may be placed in any position in contact with the roqueted ball (but not in contact with one another).

The Banana Cannon Figure 1

More often than not it is better to employ the wafer cannon (below), or the modified simple cannon described towards the end of this section

Placing balls for the banana cannon.

In Figure 1 the ball marked S is the striker's ball, C is the ball from which he is taking croquet and the third ball is placed in contact with the croqueted ball so that the edge of the croqueted ball projects over the line joining the centres of the other two balls (the dashed line in the figure). The object of the stroke is to get a rush on the third ball and this is achieved by aiming straight at the third ball and giving a **gentle** tap. The centre ball should fall to one side, leaving a rush along the line R with the balls not more than a foot apart.

The important thing is the projection of the edge of ball C over the line of R. If it does not project then, one of the balls may roll back or sideways and spoil the rush. Even with this precaution the balls may sometimes roll off line on bad ground, and this is one (but by no means the only) reason for using the wafer cannon.

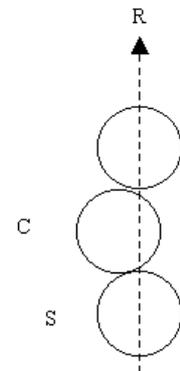


Fig 1 Banana Cannon



CORNWALL CROQUET CLUB

Additional Coaching Notes - Chapter 5 cont'n.

The Wafer Cannon Figure 2

The third ball is still placed on the rush line R, but now it is almost touching the striker's ball, the gap between the two being wafer thin, say one sixteenth of an inch (hence "wafer").

This gap can be varied to suit circumstances as you get more experienced, but if a rush is all that is required then the gap should be kept as small as possible without the balls touching. They must both be in contact with the croqueted ball C, and some care is required in placing the balls, especially on rough ground. Aim along the rush line R (maybe hitting into the croqueted ball a little) and treat it as a normal rush, but with extra power because the croqueted ball C will also be moved some yards and this takes some of the sting out of the rush. There are several advantages over the banana cannon. Firstly the whole thing is done in one shot, so there is no question of balls rolling back and spoiling the rush.

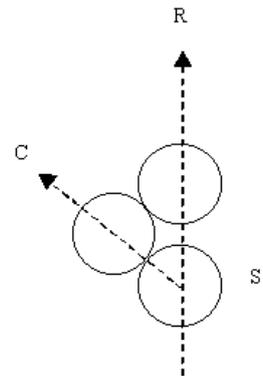


Fig 2 Wafer Cannon

Secondly the croqueted ball can be made to move a considerable distance: it can often be moved to a particularly advantageous position, but at the very least the wafer cannon gives an easy rush to the hoop and gets the croqueted ball into court.

What are the disadvantages? The main problem is to ensure that the croqueted ball does not go off the boundary. Look at Figure 3.

In the right hand part of the figure a wafer cannon is used to rush a ball to Hoop 3 and in the same shot to move the croqueted ball towards Hoop 4, thus getting a 3-ball break.

In the left hand part of Figure 3 an attempt is made to use a wafer cannon to rush a ball to Hoop 6. Inevitably the croqueted ball will be driven over the boundary, and the turn will end. When the balls are in or near a corner like this it will be found impossible to get a rush diagonally out into court without the croqueted ball going off.

Remember, in the wafer cannon the croqueted ball must not go over the boundary, but either of the other balls can because they have been involved in a rush, albeit in a rush performed in the same stroke as a croquet stroke.

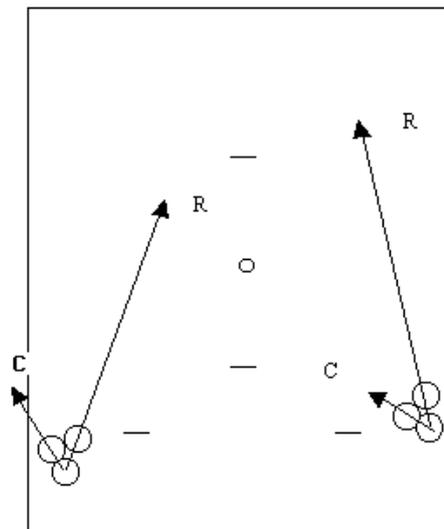


Fig 3 (Right) Right Way and (Left) Wrong Way to Use Wafer Cannon



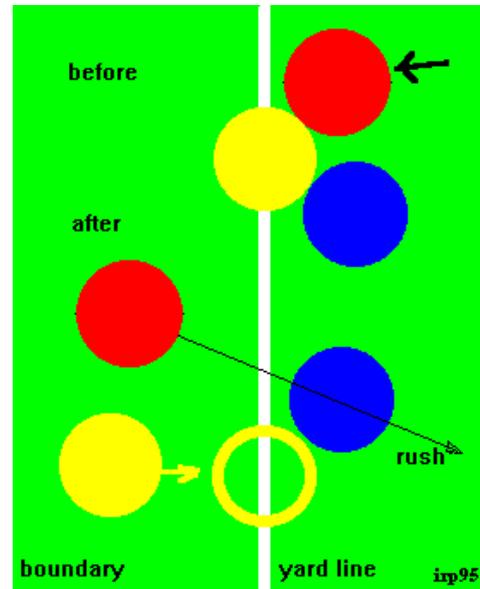
CORNWALL CROQUET CLUB

Additional Coaching Notes - Chapter 5 cont'n.

The **modified simple cannon** – as a more reliable alternative to the banana cannon (see figure opposite).

The essence of this is that a small roll shot (or stop shot) is played once the balls are in position. The roll shot however is towards the boundary which does not move the third ball and both the striker's ball and croqueted ball are moved to inside the yard line area.

The croqueted ball is then replaced on the yard line away from the original ball and the striker's ball now has a rush on the third ball into court.



Conclusion

You do not have to wait for a cannon to appear, you will find many opportunities for deliberately creating one. For example, when you take off to your opponent's balls joined up on the boundary within a foot or so of one another, if your take-off is a good one, and you land within a couple of feet of the balls, try to cut it behind the other ball so that it comes back on the yard line in contact, and you have your cannon.



CORNWALL CROQUET CLUB

Additional Coaching Notes - Chapter 5 cont'n.

5.2 Six Cannons for the Price of One – SWAN 15 (1996)

The wafer cannon, dealt with in a part 1 above, is the most important because it can be used anywhere on the yard-line and is the easiest to learn. The cannon dealt with here is the second easiest to learn. With minor modification it can be employed in six common situations so that the opportunities for its application are sufficiently frequent to make the time involved in perfecting it worthwhile.

Let's start in Corner 1 where you have three balls in contact and you are for Hoop 1. The object of the stroke is to croquet one ball to Hoop 2 and in the same stroke rush the other to Hoop 1, thus getting a 3-ball break.

First Corner Cannon (for Hoop 1)

The striker's ball (marked S in Figure 1) is placed in contact with the croqueted ball (marked C) so that the line joining the centres of S and C points slightly to the left (about 1-2 yards) of Hoop 2.

The ball to be rushed (marked R) is then placed in contact with ball C in such a way that the line joining the centres of R and C is at right angles to the line joining the centres of C and S.

The point of aim will depend on exactly how you intend to play the stroke, and it is here that you need to go on court and experiment until you find the method that suits you best. For guidance the point of aim will lie somewhere between Hoop 1 and Hoop 6.

With a full **stop shot** hard enough to send the croqueted ball to Hoop 2, you should try aiming at Hoop 1. If you find the rushed ball goes too far beyond Hoop 1, try aiming more towards Hoop 6. You may find that with a **stop shot** you need to aim at or near Hoop 1, but with a **drive** you need to aim near Hoop 6.

Having decided on the best method for YOU, practise it until you can produce a good 3-ball break situation every time. Of course the strength required to get the croqueted ball to Hoop 2 will vary with the speed of the lawn, but if you can get this ball right, the other ball will be right too, or nearly so.

The identical cannon can be used from Corner 3 and you are for Hoop 3, and further, by changing the ball arrangement from right-handed to left-handed, the same cannon can be used to make 1-back from Corner 2 or 3-back from Corner 4.

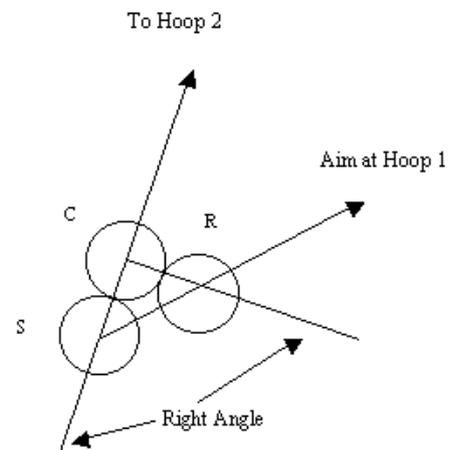


Fig 1 Hoop 1 from Corner 1 using Right Angle Method



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Additional Coaching Notes - Chapter 5 cont'n.

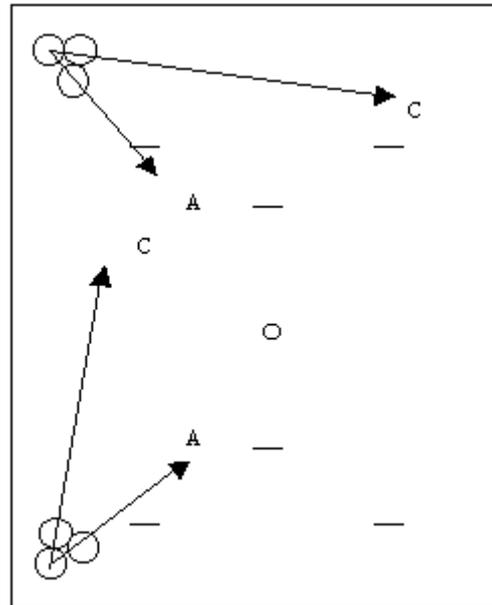
Second Corner Cannon (for Hoop 2)

By slight modification the same cannon can be made to give a reasonable chance of a break from Corner 2 when you are for Hoop 2, or from Corner 1 when you are for 2-back.

Look at the figure opposite. This shows the right-angle cannon already described, placed to make Hoop 1 from Corner 1, and the same cannon with the balls in Corner 2. The ball placement is identical for both cannons.

The line marked C represents the direction in which the croqueted ball is pointed (1-2 yards the side of the next hoop but one).

The line marked A is the recommended direction of aim (directly at Hoop 2 for the cannon from Corner 2).



The only difference between the two cannons is that from Corner 1 the stroke is a stop shot (or possibly drive), while from Corner 2 it is a part roll. Again you must go on to the court and experiment to find the best stroke for YOU. You should now aim always at Hoop 2 and adjust the amount of roll and the strength of the shot to send the croqueted ball to Hoop 3, and rush the other ball to Hoop 2.

Conclusion

Remember, for both variations of the cannon you should experiment with the amount of roll or stop and the direction of aim as described. It is experimenting with shots that can make practice more interesting.

Don't forget that you do not have to wait for a chance to cannon; you will find many opportunities for deliberately creating one.



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Additional Coaching Notes - Chapter 5 cont'n.

5.3 The Halfpenny Cannon – SWAN 16 (1997)

Hoop 4 from Corner 4 (and 4-back from Corner 3)

The remaining two corner hoops, viz. Hoop 4 from Corner 4, and 4-back from Corner 3, may both be made by the 'Halfpenny Cannon' described below. In the six corner cannons previously described, the croqueted ball was sent to the next-hoop-but-one and the rushed ball was sent to the next hoop. In the 'Halfpenny Cannon' the reverse is the case.

The Halfpenny Cannon

The placement of the balls to make Hoop 4 from Corner 4 is shown in Figure 1, in which the striker's ball is marked S, the croqueted ball C and the rushed ball R.

The balls are shown greatly enlarged relative to the size of the hoop and the dimensions of the corner of the court, in order to indicate the details of the placement.

The balls S and R are adjusted as though to rush R to a point about 1-2 yards to the right of Hoop 4, with the gap between S and R equal to 10mm (3/8 inch), i.e. equal to one half of the diameter of a new penny.

The size of the gap is important, and a penny should be used in practice to get this right - the gap looks quite small on the court, so if you can use something actually 10mm in size this would be better. (Of course, in a game the gap must be estimated by eye, as the laws do not allow the use of measuring aids) If the gap has been adjusted correctly, it will be found that the line between the centres of the balls S and C will point slightly into court, at a point about 3 yards up the west boundary.

The shot is played directly at ball R with a drive (flat mallet), hard enough to send ball R to just beyond and to the right of Hoop 4.

The croqueted ball C will then end up near the yard line behind Hoop 4.

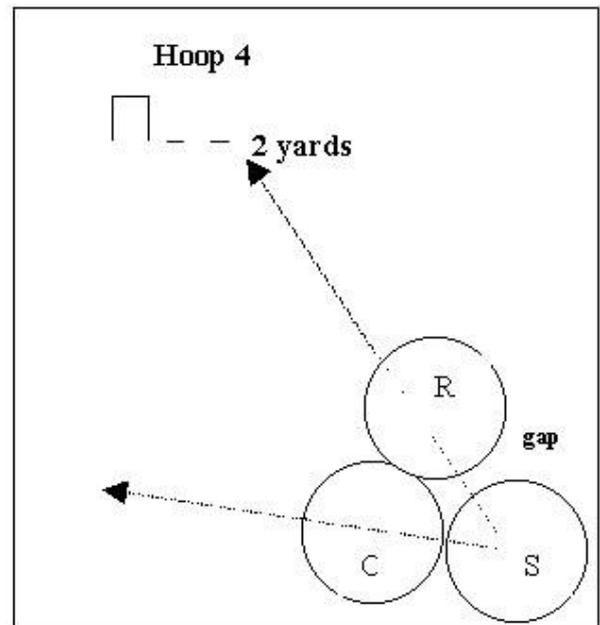
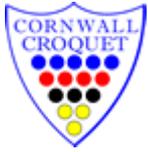


Figure 1



CORNWALL CROQUET CLUB

Additional Coaching Notes - Chapter 5 cont'n.

The striker's ball S is now in hand and takes croquet from ball R (See Figure 2) with a little stop shot that sends ball R to Hoop 5 and itself takes position in front of Hoop 4.

The striker then runs the hoop firmly to ball C and has a 3-ball break.

The difficult shot for the beginner is the stop shot hoop approach. It is difficult only because it is not normally practised. Thus if you want to use this cannon in earnest, you must practise not only the cannon itself, but the stop shot approach from various positions to the right of Hoop 4.

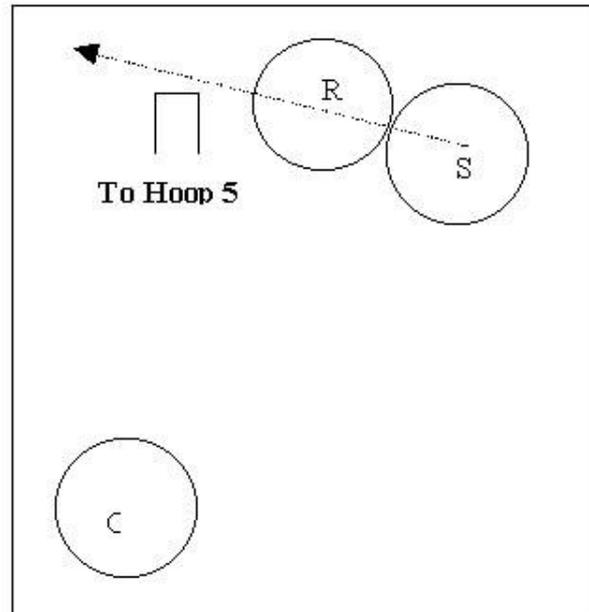
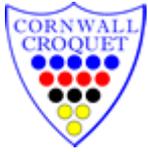


Figure 2

The application of the 'Halfpenny Cannon' to make 4-back from Corner 3 needs little further explanation. The rushed ball is now directed 1-2 yards to the LEFT of 4-back and, with the gap adjusted, the croqueted ball will point a little way down from Corner 2. After playing the cannon shot, 4-back is approached with a little stop shot sending ball R to penult, and the hoop is run firmly to ball C.

Practice makes perfect, and this applies particularly to the two cannons described here. It can be fun practising them, and you may find that the 'Halfpenny Cannon' is not as difficult as you first thought.

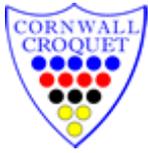
With thanks to Alan Parker for his articles in SWAN
and to Dr Ian Plummer at the Oxford Croquet website for the Modified Simple Cannon.



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Additional Coaching Notes - Chapter 5 cont'n.

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CORNWALL CROQUET CLUB

Additional Coaching Notes - Chapter 6

(Adapted from a variety of sources)

6. Common Errors in Association Croquet - What Happens Next?

Playing the wrong ball

In simple terms, if the error is discovered before the first stroke of the opponent's next turn, the error is rectified and the turn ends. In other words, if a player roquets blue with black and then plays blue in error during the croquet stroke, the balls are replaced in contact and the turn ends. In handicap play the offender may take a bisque if he wishes, after the balls have been replaced, and continue with the correct ball.

Taking croquet from a dead ball

If a player tries to take croquet from a dead ball and the error is discovered before the first stroke of the opponent's next turn, the error is rectified and the turn ends. If the opponent shouts "You have already roqueted blue" before the striker picks up his ball and puts it in contact with blue, then the turn ends at that point and the balls remain where they lie. If the striker has already picked up his ball then he must replace it where it came to rest after the "roquet" was made. In handicap play the offender may then take a bisque if he wishes and continue by playing the striker's ball from where it lies (all balls will become live).

Running the wrong hoop

If a player runs the wrong hoop, or runs a hoop in the wrong direction, then he is not entitled to a continuation stroke and so his turn will end, unless he roquets a live ball in the same stroke, in which case he may take croquet but he will not have scored a hoop point.

*NB, in the three errors above, the opponent must **not** forestall, but should point out the error clearly immediately it has occurred.*

The croqueted ball does not move

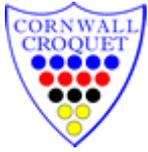
End of turn. The opponent has the choice as to whether the balls are replaced in contact or left where they came to rest after the fault was committed. In handicap play the offender may wait until after this decision has been taken before deciding whether or not he wishes to take a bisque.

Misplaced clips/balls

A player **should** forestall if he notices that a clip has been misplaced or that his opponent is about to play a ball that has been moved because of double banking.

A player pegs one ball out in a handicap game when his partner ball is not for the peg.

The ball is replaced where it came to rest after hitting the peg, and the turn ends. A spectator referee may intervene if he sees a ball about to be wrongly removed from the lawn.

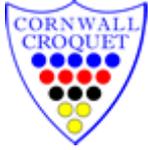


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Additional Coaching Notes - Chapter 6 cont'n.

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CORNWALL CROQUET CLUB

Additional Coaching Notes - Chapter 8

(Adapted from an article by Richard Griffiths)

Some Thoughts for You to Consider At the Start of the Season

By John Solomon (Ex-President of the Croquet Association)

I am delighted to have been asked to contribute some thoughts to SWAN and have been given a wide brief. During the winter months some stalwarts continued to play if their clubs still had a court or two open, but many have hung up their mallets and perhaps just merely reflected upon their successes or otherwise during the past season. Probably otherwise, I suspect, since we tend to recall the stupidities that lost us games we felt we should have won. If we know *why* we lost, we are at least halfway to not doing the same again. I suppose the reason we lose games is either that we played the wrong tactics or we played some bad shots. Tactics are very difficult to deal with in print - the combinations of ball and peg positions are legion and there are also more difficult factors such as the ability of each player, how many bisques are being given or received, the weather, what we had for breakfast, wouldn't a gin and tonic go down well, etc. etc. Technique is a different thing altogether. It is easier to demonstrate on the court but not impossible to describe in print.

I am addressing this particularly to longer bisquers who are struggling to acquire the ability to play many of the shots that have to be played - and played with confidence. I have always found it surprising that so many people, particularly if they are not so young, after two or three years of playing are still unable to rush a ball from one end of the court to the other. I have done a lot of coaching, in this country, South Africa and the U.S. and the first thing I ask my pupils is whether they can rush a ball from one end to the other. Only a few honest people will say they have a problem. The rest attempt to show me and more often than not don't get the object ball more than halfway. I then get them to hit a single ball to the other end and it is surprising how many cannot even do that. So we come down to the swing, and I am rude enough to tell them, though I hope very politely, that until they can rush to the other end of the court I am not going to waste my time, or theirs, on anything else.

Beginners usually have a problem getting power into their strokes because they don't **SWING**. They bring the mallet back to an angle of perhaps 45 degrees and try to force it forward using their wrists. This is bad technique and tiring. You have to get the mallet to do the work, and to do this you must bring the mallet back so it is at least horizontal. Then the weight of the mallet head will do the work for you. There is a bit more to it than that, because you have to get the right movement of the hands going forward, pulling the head after them, **not using the wrists** to give the forward movement but **just pushing the arms forward**, which will make the mallet head follow. You can do this with one hand, playing side stance, and even rush a ball like that to the other end. Earlier last year I was coaching in Florida and at one club had about 20 people lined up at the end of the court. As I went along the line I came to a lady wearing a skirt (or dress) down to her ankles, and fairly tight at that. Having established that she didn't want to play side-stance, I said "You'll either have to roll it up or take it off". She elected to do the former!

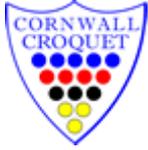


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Additional Coaching Notes - Chapter 8 cont'n.

Another matter I would suggest you consider is practice. I have always maintained that friendly games are virtually no practice at all. You will inevitably do some bad shots but in a game you can't play them again, so you don't find out what you did wrong. I would urge you not to play friendlies but to go on the court on your own and practise. When your split, your roll or rush, doesn't go right - play it again, and again, and again until you get it right 3 times running. One hour's practice is worth more than half a dozen friendlies. This of course would make croquet very anti-social if there were 6 to 8 people on the courts (you can easily get two or three people on each court) studiously ignoring each other. But I would urge you to agree with your opponent that you each practise for 30 minutes **before** you play your game.

An interesting form of practice, even for long bisquers, is to try a two-ball break. Give yourself a rush to the first hoop from the yard-line in front of it. You need to rush the ball to about a yard, or even four feet short of the hoop, and slightly to the side, that is, not dead in front. The reason for this is that you must approach with a stop-shot so as to send the croqueted ball 4 or 5 yards past the hoop, and it needs to be directly on the line of the 1st and 2nd hoops, which you can't do if you are dead in front to start with. Now you must run the hoop to get a rush to the second. If you run past the other ball just give up and start again, because the odds on getting position for the 2nd from so far are very long. If you get a reasonable rush (something remotely in the right direction) rush it down and approach the 2nd hoop. I would guess that anyone with a handicap in double figures will need many attempts to make the second hoop but it will give you good practice at rushing, cut-rushing, and approaching from every different angle and distance. And remember when approaching the 2nd to get the croqueted ball on the right side of the hoop so that you might get a rush to the third. It's difficult to but it's a challenge and different and it certainly won't do you any harm. And each time you get as far as the 3rd or the 4th or whatever it will be a challenge for you next time to get further.



CORNWALL CROQUET CLUB

Additional Coaching Notes - Chapter 8

(Adapted from an article by Richard Griffiths)

Some examples of set pieces for bringing the 4th Ball into play

It will often be useful to pick up a ball on a boundary (and especially in or near a corner) and promoting it into the required position over one or more shots. Sometimes you will need to visit a ball several times, probably by rushing a ball to it and exchanging it for the rushed ball, improving the position on each visit until all balls are in the game.

Other times you will be able to get a ball fully into the game in the one shot, usually from a position on one of the yard lines. This might be a shot of some difficulty, but the one difficult shot may be all that is needed to secure a 4-ball position.

Of particular note are the opportunities that arise when the ball that you want to bring into play is in or near a corner, and I'd like to look at these in some detail. It is well worth practising these as part of your repertoire of set pieces.

What we would like to do is to take off to a corner ball, roquet it, and use the croquet shot to place it as the pioneer at the next hoop but one, getting the striker's ball to the pioneer that is already waiting at the next hoop.

This may be needed right at the start of a break, or during the break.

It turns out that only 6 distinct layouts are needed to cover all 4 corner areas.

As to their relative difficulty, three are easy, two are a bit more difficult, and the other one is more difficult again.

The table below shows the more readily achievable opportunities to get a 4th ball out of a corner and immediately into the game in one shot.



CORNWALL CROQUET CLUB

Additional Coaching Notes - Chapter 8 cont'n.

	CORNER 1	CORNER 2	CORNER 3	CORNER 4
HOOP				
1	A			D
2		C		
3		D	A	
4				F
5	B			B
6			E	
1 back		A	D	
2 back	C			
3 back	D			A
4 back			F	
Penult		B	B	

How to use the table.

The top row indicates the position of the ball that you wish to bring into the game, and you will play the necessary croquet shot from that corner.

Suppose the ball is in Corner 2. Look at the letters in the column beneath that heading. In this case these are C, D, A and B. At each letter look over to the far left of that row where you will see a hoop number indicated in the first column. This is your next hoop, at which you must already have placed a pioneer. In this case you have four worthwhile opportunities to pick up the 4th ball when it is in Corner 2, and these are with shot C when your next hoop is Hoop 2, shot D when your next is Hoop 3, shot A when next hoop is 1 back, and shot B when next hoop is Penult. The lack of an entry in the table means there isn't a worthwhile opportunity for that combination of corner and hoop.

By way of illustration, shot B from Corner 1 when for Hoop 5 is described now – a shot of medium difficulty.

- You (red and yellow) have advanced red a few hoops in a 3-ball break and now having made Hoop 4 and roqueted Black at a point just beyond the hoop. (Note: Black is not shown in the diagrams)
- You want to bring into play Blue, which is in (or close to) Corner 1.
- Yellow is in place already as the Hoop 5 pioneer.
- Do a good thick take off to Corner 1 from the left side of Black so that it moves north towards the middle of the lawn and roquet Blue.
- The croquet shot needs to be a half roll, split to put Blue to Hoop 6, getting to Yellow with Red.
- Once you've made Hoop 5 you can easily carry Blue and Yellow forward into a classic 4-ball break from these positions.

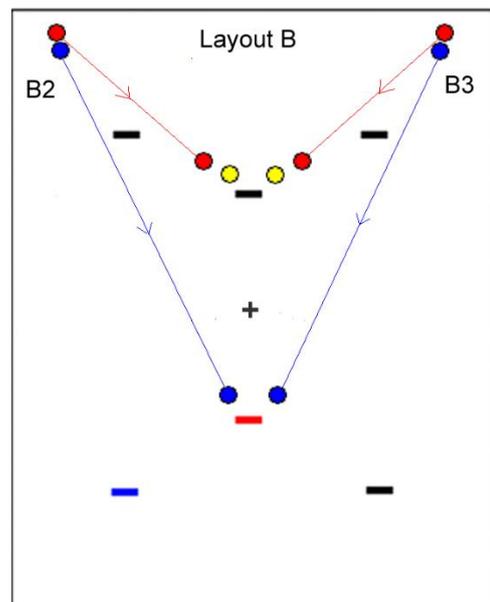
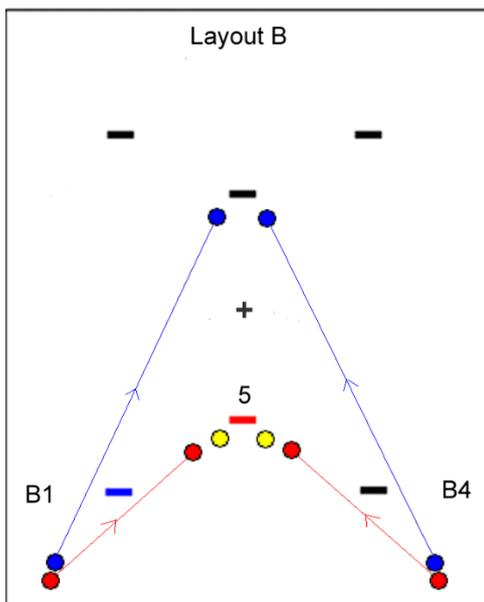
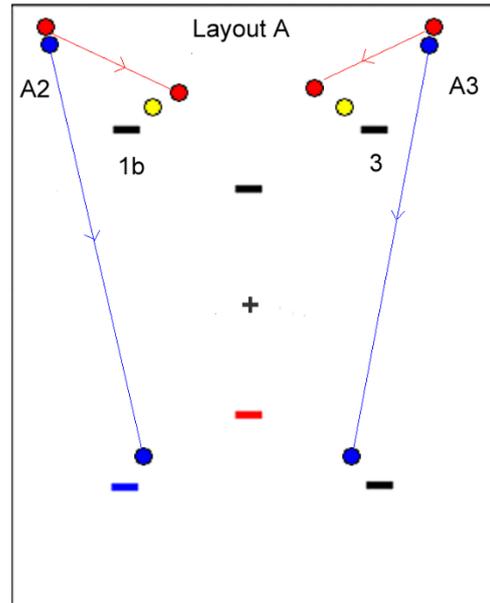
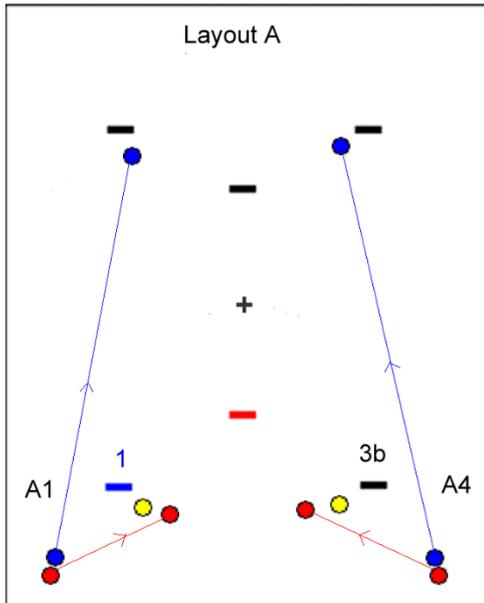
The diagrams below summarise the six distinct layouts A-F shown in the table.



CORNWALL CROQUET CLUB

Additional Coaching Notes - Chapter 8 cont'n.

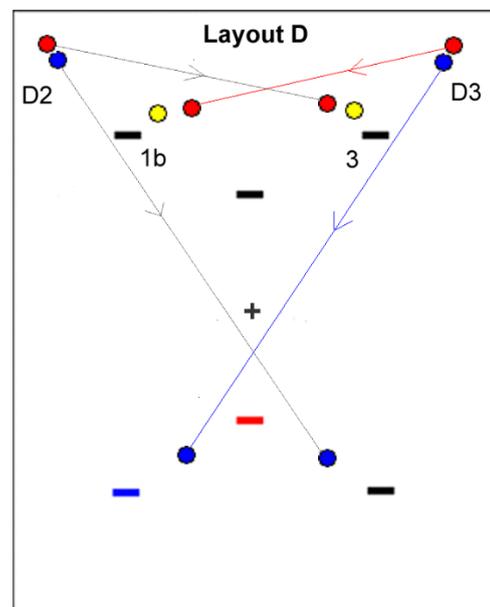
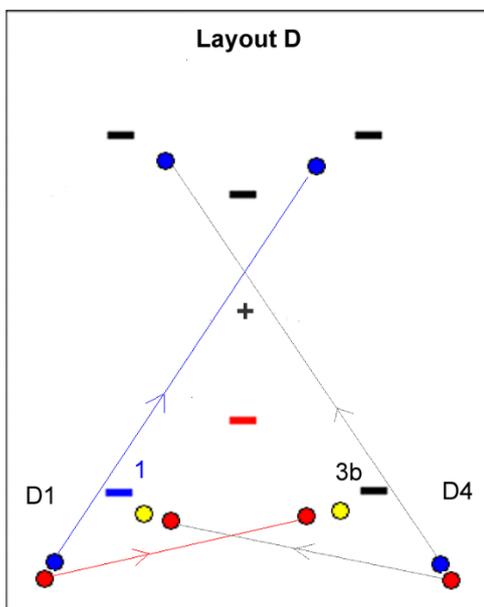
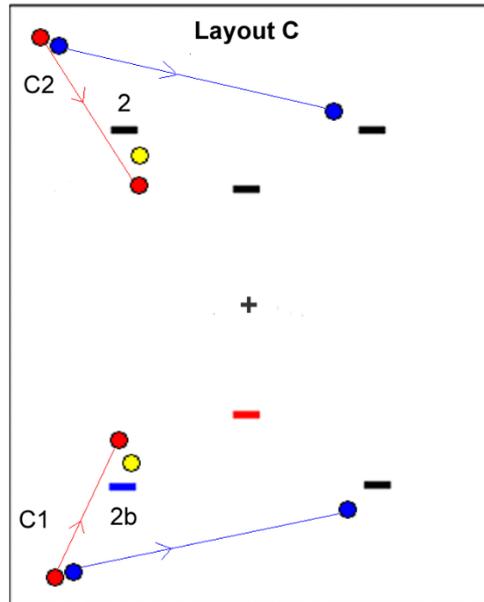
Key: A1 means Layout A played from Corner 1, and so on for the other shots.





CORNWALL CROQUET CLUB

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CORNWALL CROQUET CLUB

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Suppose the opportunity you are going for is shot A from Corner 2, when the next hoop is 1 back. You will have put a pioneer at 1 back straight after you made Hoop 5, getting to Hoop 6 and making that hoop off its pioneer. Once you have made Hoop 6 and roqueted the reception ball you need to use the croquet shot to get your striker's ball over to Corner 2, and roquet the ball waiting there. Then in the croquet shot (and this is the shot labelled A) you must send the croqueted ball to be the pioneer at 2 back, getting to the 1 back pioneer with your striker's ball. Don't worry too much about the position of the ball that you roqueted and croqueted immediately after Hoop 6 in order to get over to Corner 2, except to move it down the lawn in the direction of subsequent play. Whatever you do with it you should be able to get to it easily enough after you have made 1 back, and then you will have all the balls in play.

As you work through the table you will see that the general idea is always the same; you are playing a croquet shot from a corner, putting the croqueted ball to be the pioneer at the next hoop but one, and getting your striker's ball to your next hoop where a pioneer is waiting. The thing that varies is the layout of the shot (that is the destinations of the balls relative to the place you play the shot from). Each layout is labelled with a capital letter, but as you will see some of them are repeated in the table. This is because in several cases the same layout - or its mirror image - can be applied several times, as shown in the diagram. Look at shot A, for instance, and see how it applies identically in Corners 1 & 3, and its mirror image in Corners 2 & 4.

In three of the six layouts (A, B & D) you get full value for money with four applications, one in each corner (a layout and its mirror image, each applied twice). C and F each have two applications, and E just one. As to the easiness of these shots, I would place them in this order: A, C & F are easy, B & E are of medium difficulty, and D is more difficult.

As to how to incorporate them in your repertoire, I would suggest practising A, B & D first, as they each have four applications, and they cover the full range of difficulty. Once you have mastered these, add C & F, which are easy, and each has two applications. Finally add E, of medium difficulty and only one application.

If you can do these shots you will be able to build breaks. And bear in mind that with slight adaptations these shots can be used to get balls from other places, not just corners.

◀ end ▶