

## ASSOCIATION CROQUET - BRONZE TACTICS AND PLAY

### LESSON 2: ENDING YOUR TURN

Many players make desperate efforts to make a hoop when they would be better to try and set up for the next turn. For example, players try 20 yard rolls to a hoop with an opponent ball as the croquet ball, and almost always fail, and then have to hit away from the hoop.

One of the most important aspects of croquet is knowing where to put your balls at the end of your turn. A sound principle is to put your two balls together, and separate your opponent's balls. However, good play goes beyond this. The aim is to set up the balls so that the opponent only has difficult or risky shots, and when they miss you can start a break of several hoops.

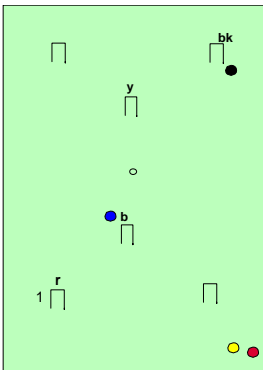
The aim of a leave is to make life difficult for the opponent and easy for yourself.

If you leave your balls near the boundary, this makes it dangerous for the opponent to shoot at them, as he will leave his ball near yours if he misses. If you leave your balls in the middle of the lawn, your opponent can shoot at them with little danger (provided he/she hits hard and goes well past them if they miss).

You try to avoid giving your opponent a double target – unless he is a long way away.

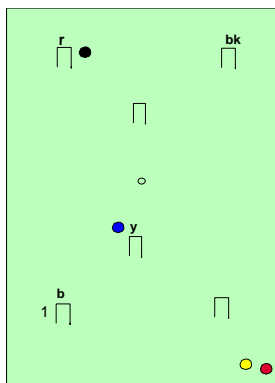
If you can put some obstacles in the road of your opponent's shots – hoops or the peg – this also adds to their problems.

Put your opponent balls near a hoop so they are useful to you. Do not put your opponent balls on the boundary, as this makes your shot more difficult – you increase your danger of going out when you go near them, and it is more difficult to get a rush on them.



Note: the small letters beside hoops indicate which hoop each colour ball is aiming for – b=blue, bk= black, r = red and y=yellow.

A good defensive leave is to leave your opponent balls beside (or behind) the hoops they are going for (not in front!). For example, if you are red and yellow, and your opponent is going for hoop 3 with black and hoop 5 with blue, it is better to put black beside hoop 3 and blue beside hoop 5. The opponent has to move the ball away from its hoop in order to make a roquet. If you leave the balls the other way round – black at 5 and blue at 3, then if blue makes a roquet it has a ball at its hoop (and vice versa).



Another option – more aggressive – is to put your opponent balls at the hoops your own balls are aiming for. In the diagram opposite, if the opponent plays black away from hoop 2, then R-Y plays yellow and scores hoop 5. If the opponent plays blue, then R\_Y plays red and makes hoop 2.

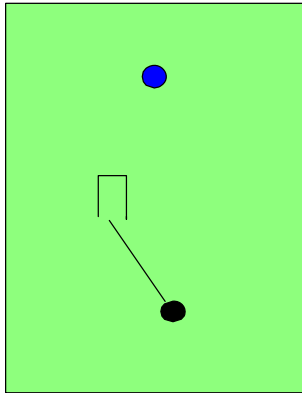
If the opponent aims at red-yellow, their ball will finish nearby if it misses, as R-Y is near the boundary. The extra ball will be useful!

## TRYING DIFFICULT HOOPS

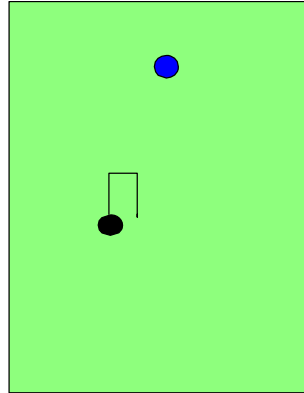
Moderate players often try to make hoops that a good player would not attempt. It is important to know when to have a go at a hoop, and when to retreat.

If your partner ball is near the hoop, and the opponent balls are far away (and separated), then it may be sensible to try for the hoop. The problem is that your ball may end up against the leg of the hoop, unable to make the hoop, and wired from the partner ball. Unless you have a 50% chance of making the hoop, it is better to set up and be sure of making the hoop next time.

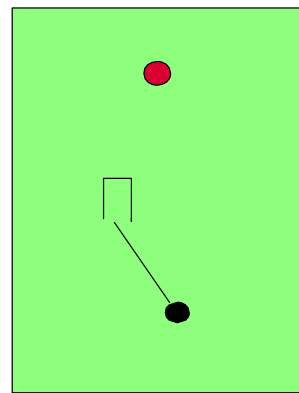
If the opponent ball is near the hoop, it is dangerous to try and make a difficult hoop – especially if your opponent ball is aiming for that same hoop. When you miss, you give an easy chance for your opponent to make the hoop.



Probably worth a try as your partner ball is nearby



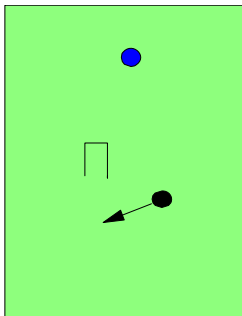
The problem if you miss - can't make the hoop and can't roquet anything



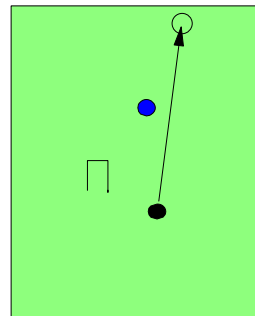
Too dangerous when your opponent ball is close and the shot is difficult

It is possible to make hoops from up to about 45 degree angle, but the greater the angle the more accurate you have to be; and the further away you are, the more accurate you must be. Between about 45 and 50 degrees it is only possible to make the hoop using a jump shot (very difficult!), and beyond that it is impossible.

If it is not wise to try the hoop, then you need to know what to do. If your partner ball is close, then you have two options – put the striker ball in front of the hoop, or set a rush on your partner ball to get that ball in front of the hoop for the croquet shot.

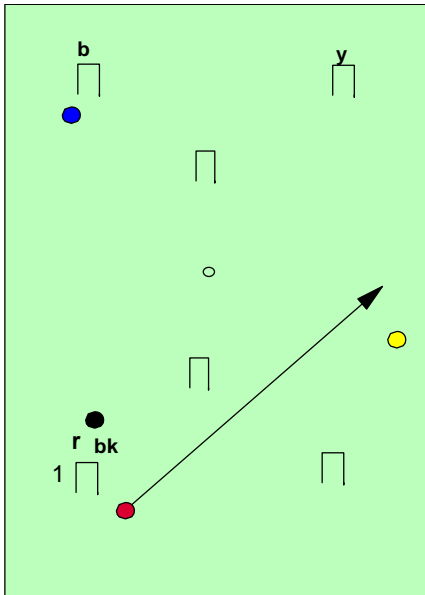


Tapping the ball behind the hoop – it is easy to make an error and be short or go too far. It is best to aim a reasonable distance away from the hoop.



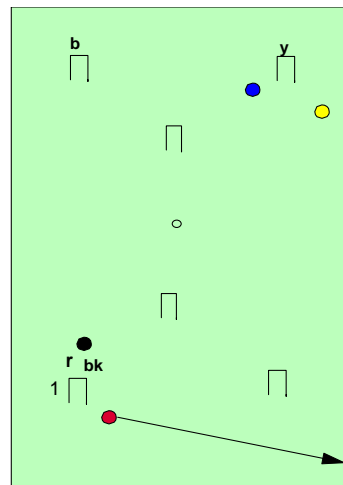
Putting the striker ball behind the partner ball is often a better strategy – you can usually make the hoop even if you are not very accurate.

If your opponent ball is near the hoop, then you must retreat and join up with your partner ball. It is rarely a good idea to try and wire your ball from the opponent by putting it behind the hoop. You have to be very accurate to do this.



Here it is too dangerous to try and make hoop one with red. The best try is to put the red ball north of yellow, so that in the next turn yellow can rush red up to hoop 3. However, if the opponent does not move black, the best option is to play red and make hoop 1 off black.

If your partner ball is close to the other opponent ball, then you have problems. Whatever you do, the opponent is likely to roquet and may start a break. You can only try to make this difficult for the opponent. Sometimes the best option is to retreat to a corner. When the opponent breaks down, you can then join up in the corner, which makes life hard for the opponent.

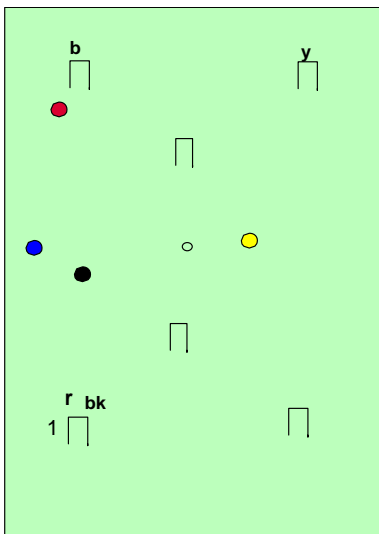


## STARTING YOUR TURN

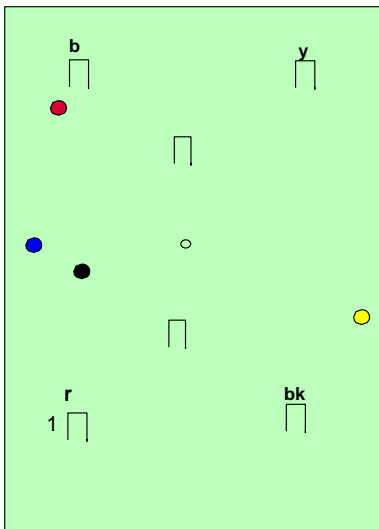
If at the start of your turn you can make a roquet and perhaps make a hoop or two, the series of shots is generally clear. It is not so easy when your turn starts and you have no easy roquet. But there are some sound principles to follow.

If all four balls are scattered over the lawn, then you go and join up with your partner ball. Make sure you hit your ball close enough to the partner ball to be sure of making a roquet next turn.

If your opponent's balls are together, and yours are apart (and a long way from the opponent), then you have to avoid making life easy for the opponent. Firstly, move a ball which is near a hoop that your opponent is aiming for. Secondly, avoid putting your balls close together, and avoid putting your ball close to the opponent's balls.



Here, there are only long roquets for red and yellow, while blue and black have an easy roquet when it is their turn. It is best to move red as it is at the hoop that blue is going for. If red aims at blue, it is likely to finish on the boundary near blue, so blue can roquet it, get behind black, and rush black to hoop 2. If red aims at black, it can finish near hoop 1 and give black a chance of making that hoop. So it is best for red to shoot hard at yellow, and go over the boundary somewhere north of hoop 4 if it misses. That makes it difficult for either opponent ball to start a break.



In this diagram, black is making for hoop 4, and yellow is on the boundary. You still need to move the red ball as it is near blue's hoop, but it is dangerous to shoot at yellow, because if you miss that will put your two balls together near black's hoop. What black will do is roquet blue, take off to yellow, roquet yellow, get behind red, and rush red to hoop 4 in order to make the hoop.

So here, the best option is for red to shoot at black and finish on the boundary behind hoop 1.