

CANBERRA CROQUET CLUB

A Plan for Practice

PREFACE

Practice can be conducted on your own but it must be systematic –perhaps not more than 3/4 hour at a time and not more than 10 minutes on the same shot. There is a tendency to mix enjoyment with practice by playing the shots you are good at; you should practice mostly the shots you know you fall down on.

Lastly, practice is best when you are in the right mood and have the resolve and killer instinct – the urge to get things right.

The following are recommendations for learners and existing players classified according to objective, and sub-divided according to the degree of difficulty.

A. For accuracy of line of aim

1. Play a few shots along the white boundary line. You can see any tendency to left or right and can adjust your stance, swing (from the shoulders), and footwork.
2. Aim (to hit full face) and shoot at a ball 4 yards, 7 yards, and 10 yards away.
3. Aim to run Hoop 1 from South boundary (yard line), and try the shot.
4. Aim to run (or at any rate hit) Hoop 5 from South boundary, and try the shot.
5. Practice rush shots. (See paragraphs H, I and L).

B. For judgement of distance

1. From the South boundary hit a ball to come to rest level with Hoop 1.
2. From the South boundary hit a ball to come to rest level with Hoop 5.
3. From the South boundary hit a ball to come to rest level with Hoop 2.
4. From the South boundary hit a ball to come to rest inside the North baulk yard line.
5. Where there is spare ground, mark out white lines one or two yards apart to make target areas.

C. For hoop running (combines A and B)

Judge the different effects of a plain hit or a top-spin shot when:

1. Running a hoop from 18 inches – square on.
2. Running a hoop from 1 yard – square on.
3. Running a hoop from 2 yards – square on.
4. Running a hoop from 1 yard – angled (up to 15 degrees).
5. Running a hoop from 3 yards – angled (up to 15 degrees).
6. Running a hoop from 1 yard – square on – to finish 2 yards the other side.

D. For apportionment of energy between balls : straight croquet stroke

1. Check that your drive shot (plain hit) sends the front ball nearly three times as far as the rear ball.
2. Hit upwards on your ball (grounding mallet) and see if you can get this ratio up to 10 times.
3. Hit downwards on your ball (with smooth follow through) to get the distances equal. You may get the rear ball overtaking the front ball – this is a pass roll.
4. Apply this to playing conditions (e.g. a straight croquet shot – with a little roll action – from Hoop 1 to get your front ball to Hoop 3 and your own ball to the Peg).

E. For apportionment of energy between balls : split croquet stroke

1. Using a plain hit, top spin, or perhaps a little "stop" action, take croquet from different positions along the South boundary to get, for example, the front ball to Hoop 5 and your own ball to Hoop 4 (assume that a ball awaits you at Hoop 4 to be roqueted).
2. Try this for longer distances and different angles – for instance, from Hoop 3 to Hoop 5 and Hoop 4 – and so on.
3. A fine "take-off" (in which the other ball must move or shake) is strictly a split shot with an angle of nearly 90 degrees. Try taking croquet from your partner's ball on the playing side of Hoop 1 (assume your own ball has run it) to take off to an enemy ball at Hoop 2 whilst nudging your partner's ball into position. This requires delicate control.

F. For hoop approach – split shot – keeping front ball under control

1. It helps to place bisque sticks in the ground to indicate your target position.
2. From the playing side of the hoop, take croquet (stop shot) to get your ball in position and the front ball beyond the hoop.
3. From the side of the hoop, take croquet (a little roll action) to get your ball in front of the hoop, and the other ball beyond the hoop.
4. From behind the hoop, take croquet (a fine take-off perhaps a roll), judging the distance so as to get position in front of the hoop.
5. Try these with increasing distances.

G. For making breaks : 4 ball

1. Start with Black (as a "pioneer" ball) at Hoop 2, and Blue (the "pivot") near the Peg, and give yourself an easy rush (Red on Yellow) to Hoop 1.
2. Hit Yellow with Red, taking croquet as in F2. Then run the hoop, and hit Yellow again. Take croquet as in D4. Then hit the pivot ball (Blue) which acts as a stepping stone, so that you now have a fine take-off to the pioneer ball (Black) at Hoop 2.
3. You now have the equivalent of your starting position, one hoop on, and in theory at least, it is easy to repeat the process and run all 12 hoops.
4. As you break down (and some do!), take a bisque to keep the break going – counting how many. Better still, reconstruct the old position, and try again until you get the shot right.

H. For making breaks : 3 ball

1. Start without the pivot ball, but with Black at Hoop 2 and a rush (Red on Yellow) to Hoop 1.
2. Rush Yellow to Hoop 1, and then take croquet, getting the front ball 2 or more yards beyond the hoop, and your own ball in position. Run the hoop under control, and then rush Yellow towards Hoop 2. With a split shot, send Yellow to Hoop 3, and Red near Black. You now have the equivalent of your starting position, one hoop on.

3. If after Hoop 1 you get an impossible rush to Hoop 2, you might be able to get a rush to Hoop 3, and then doing a fine take-off to Hoop 2. (Don't forget to count the bisques).

I. For making breaks : 2 ball

1. Practising the two ball break encourages precision and delicate control in your play, using the rush and stop shots.
2. Start at Hoop 4, because the journey via Hoops 4, 5, 6, and 1-back involves shorter distances.
3. Rush your partner ball to a position near Hoop 4. Take care with the hoop approach, as you must leave the forward ball ready for a rush towards Hoop 5. Then do a controlled hoop run to the precise position.
4. Rush towards the next hoop ... and so on.

J. For long shots

1. Take 4 balls to West boundary.
2. Aim with each in turn (from the yard line) to hit the Peg. (This is roughly equivalent to hitting a ball at twice the distance).
3. Then try again from East boundary, and so on.
4. To hit 1 in 8 is satisfactory; to hit 1 in 4 is good; to hit 2 or more out of 4 is very good indeed.

K. For distance with fine control

1. Take two balls to a corner. Do a fine take-off shot to get your ball within say 4 yards of another corner flag – without going off, and without sending the croqueted ball off.
2. Remember to try this exercise when the lawns are dry and newly cut, and when they are wet.
3. The supreme test is to attempt this shot from Corner 4 to Corner 2 (avoiding the furniture en route), and supposing there is a ball on the corner spot waiting to be roqueted.

L. For rush shots

1. Take 8 balls and, from the same spot, try to rush all 7 balls to within 3 feet of a target hoop.

Having practised many of these shots several times, you might like to try the following solo games which will help to bring a smooth flow and coordination to your play.

M. For aim and distance

1. Play one ball from 'A' Baulk right round the full course in playing sequence, to the Peg (13 points).
2. Count the number of strokes played, and keep a record. Less than 30 is good.

N. For aim and control

1. Start with Red on a corner spot and Yellow 18 inches away on a rush line to the Peg.
2. With a series of short controlled rushes, gradually work Yellow near to the centre, and peg out with a rush shot. 15 strokes is good.

O. For aim and control

1. Start with Yellow near Hoop 1, and Red in Corner 1.

2. Aim at Yellow, and strike hard enough to go (if you miss) a distance beyond Yellow equal to the distance apart at the start.
3. Whether you hit or miss, next aim with Yellow at Red (where it lies), and again go an equal distance beyond if you miss.
4. Control of distance and aim is fostered by this sequence.

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