

CROQUET & OTHER MALLETT SPORTS

There is a wide range of games that come under the broad heading of 'croquet and other mallet sports'. This paper describes some of these, many of which are played at the Canberra Croquet Club.

Association Croquet

To start with, Association Croquet is the primary game played around the world. There are two main types of games listed in the laws, handicap and advanced. Handicap play involves the use of bisques to even up the sides, while advanced games involves 'lifts and contacts' and in Australia is overwhelmingly played by middle to low handicap players. However, a number of variations have evolved as a way of coaching and generally to make things interesting! For example:

- Alternate turn doubles; so that one player does not have to sit out for too long (especially in winter)
- Alternate stroke doubles; very useful in teaching tactics
- '4 ahead'; this is designed to even games out where there is a reasonable difference in the standard of the two players who still want to play advanced games. At the start of every turn, when the striker is 4 or more points behind the opponent, the striker is entitled to have one bisque in that turn.
- Full bisque games; instead of the normal handicap format where the higher handicap has bisques to the value of the difference between the player's handicaps, in a full bisque game, both players have the number of bisques equal to their handicap.
- Shortened games (eg 22- or 18-point) provide for starting at hoops other than No 1 and give higher handicap players a better opportunity to practice pegging out.
- '2 games and 3 players'; instead of playing one person versus two, this allows the players to play two separate games so that when one player finishes their turn, the other player takes over - it means that each player will often end up playing with all the balls at different times.

American Rules

Before leaving Association Croquet, it is worth mentioning that in North America, they play not only the 'international' association laws which we use, but also their own variation 'American Rules'.

Some of the main differences are sequential play (see below for golf croquet), and it is the end of turn if you rush another ball off the court. Importantly, you may only roquet each other ball once, you then become dead on that ball and deadness can only be cleared by running your next hoop in order. A 'Deadness' board is used shows which balls you are still alive on.

Golf Croquet

This is a simplified game but more interactive than association croquet. It involves two sides with Black and Blue balls playing against Red and Yellow. A side may be one or two people (i.e. singles or doubles).

Each side plays alternately in rotation: blue, red, black, yellow (as shown on the centre peg). A turn is just a single stroke, but it requires the same or even greater accuracy of hitting and tactical awareness. To start the game, toss a coin. The winner of the toss plays black and blue, and blue always starts.

The opening shots are played from within one yard of the 4th corner, and the players aim to run the hoops in order from 1 to 12. A deciding hoop is run if the scores are equal at this point, making thirteen in all. The side that first gets a ball through Hoop 1 scores that point and then all balls go for the next hoop in order (i.e. Hoop 2). All players must contest the same hoop.

Golf Croquet competitions are played at the Club, State, national and international level.

Aussie Croquet / Ricochet

These are both games often used for coaching beginners. They are like croquet but without the croquet stroke. As with golf croquet, they are simple games which can be comprehended very quickly.

Gateball

Gateball was developed in Japan after World War 2 by a person who had seen croquet being played in Hawaii. It is a team game, officially 5 a side although in Australia it is often played 2 a side (using all the balls).

It uses different size equipment to croquet - the balls and mallet heads are smaller and the hoops (gates) larger and the court is around half a normal croquet court! There are 10 numbered balls which are played consecutively therefore the tactics of placing the balls on the court is very important. Games last 30 minutes and players have 10 seconds to play their stroke! For those who have read *Alice in Wonderland*, this is the game where you put your foot on your ball and hit your opponent's ball into the bushes!! The concept of break making is similar to croquet but the important difference is the team aspect where for example one player's ball may be sacrificed from scoring by placing it in a position to threaten the opponents when approaching a gate.

There is a group in Canberra who play Gateball regularly and we conduct mixed tournaments with Gateballers and Croquet players. There are also tournaments at the state, national and international level.