

L4 FURTHER ON ASSOCIATION CROQUET, STROKES AND TACTICS

Tactics and game explained in more detail

- How to start the game
- The "standard" opening
- Basic ideas about how to leave the balls at the end of your turn
- Basic ideas about 3- and 4-ball breaks

The Toss

Before the game the players *toss*. The winner selects either the *choice of lead* (to play first or second) or the *choice of balls*. The loser then chooses from the other option.

The First Four Turns

The first four turns of the game consist of the four balls being played onto the lawn. Each ball may be played in from any point on either the A or B baulk lines. Once a ball is played onto the lawn it may immediately, in that stroke, score hoops, make roquets, etc.

The Standard Opening

It is extremely unusual for a player to try and run the first hoop as they play their ball in during the first four turns. If they did and failed and their ball stopped at the hoop it would present an easy target for their opposition to roquet. There are many different types of *openings* (much like Chess) but the one termed the *standard opening* is as follows:

- Turn 1: The first ball is played to the East Boundary a couple of metres out of Corner 4.
- Turn 2: The second player plays their first ball about 7–10 metres up the West Boundary and *lays a tice*.
- Turn 3: The first player has the option of being enticed and shooting at the tice. If the roquet is missed the player needs to ensure that the ball ends up in the second Corner. They will then have lost the advantage of going first. Instead they can elect to shoot at their first ball on the East Boundary.
- Turn 4: The second player tries to roquet their first ball and if fails then ends up in the second Corner. The player can also elect to shoot at the two balls on the East Boundary which may present themselves as a *double target*.

The Leave

It would be nice to think that when you walked off the court at the end of a turn you had left all four balls just where you wanted them. On the whole this doesn't happen! However, some points worth considering are:

Balls Together: It is best not to leave your opponent an easy roquet. If possible you should ensure that their balls are left apart (how far depends on their roqueting ability) and well into the lawn, and that yours are together (within your roqueting distance) and near a yard-line.

Double Targets: When leaving your balls together ensure that they do not present themselves as a double target to either of your opponents balls. Even a gap of 2–3 balls between them can still give a useful target to aim at.

Balls Near Hoops: Try not to leave either (or both) your balls near a hoop that your opponent is for. If they roquet then they should have any easy hoop to make. Conversely, try to leave their balls at hoop(s) your balls are for.

Rush: If you cannot leave your balls near a hoop that you are for then try to arrange leaving one with a rush to its hoop.

Loading the Next Hoop But One (3-Ball Break)

If during the course of a turn you have the opportunity to load the next hoop but one you should do it. The ball loaded at the hoop is termed a *pioneer*. It will help because after you make the hoop you are for, you can simply roquet and take-off to the ball at that hoop. If you can, in addition, get a rush after making the hoop to the new next but one hoop you can continue making hoops in this fashion. This is called a 3-ball break.

For example, suppose you are for Hoop 1. You load a pioneer at Hoop 2, and then go and make Hoop 1. If you can get a rush to Hoop 3, and take-off to the pioneer at Hoop 2 then you can roquet it and make the hoop. Then get a rush to Hoop 4, take-off to the pioneer at Hoop 2, etc.

You will note that the getting a rush is the difficult part. You may be able to accomplish both the load of a hoop and going to the pioneer using a split croquet stroke, but it may be a long and difficult shot.

The 4-Ball Break

Bringing the fourth ball into play simplifies a break greatly. The pioneer is used in the same way as for the 3-ball break. But, in addition, you place a *pivot* ball somewhere near the peg.

After making a hoop, you simply roquet a ball. Then on the croquet stroke you load the next but one hoop while going to the pivot ball with a $\frac{1}{2}$ roll, or similar. You roquet the pivot, and take-off to your pioneer. Having the pivot means you are playing straight line rolls and take-offs without trying difficult split shots, and all your shots are shorter.

Practice

- 2-ball break. Firstly, use only two balls. From in front of Hoop 1 play a croquet stroke to put the striker's ball in a position to run the Hoop and the croqueted ball in such a position that after you run the hoop you can rush it to hoop 2. Run the hoop and try to rush to Hoop 2. Continue on in this manner and see how many hoops you can make. Even top players have trouble making more than 5 hoops in this way!
- 3-ball break. Now use the setup described above under the 3-ball break section. And see how much easier you find it. Start off by putting a ball at Hoop 2, with your ball and another at Hoop 1.
- 4-ball break. Similarly, for the 4-ball break described above. Start off with Hoop 2 loaded with a pioneer and a pivot ball in place near the peg. Have the other two balls at Hoop 1.

The 4-ball break is the one to master, although you need to be able to play the 3-ball break as not all four balls may be easy to use in a game (one ball may be in a corner well away from you).

- Practice the standard opening. Try playing both first and second. See what happens if you shoot at the first ball with the second one and miss. See what happens if you shoot at, and miss, the tice with the third ball.

Basic Skills for Association Croquet Player: _____

		Date	Score	Observer	Comments
Skill 1	Roquet Shot				
Skill 2	The Drive				
Skill 3	Roquet, Croquet, Continuation				
Skill 4	Rush Shot				
Skill 5	Take off				
Skill 6	½ Roll				
Skill 7	Full Roll				
Skill 8	Split Roll				
Knowledge 1	Standard Opening				
Knowledge 2	3 Ball break				

These skills are a guideline to useful skills for playing Association. You are encouraged to return to it as you become more familiar with playing.

Skill 1: Roquet shot

Place a ball 2 meters from striker ball. Roquet to hit the ball ready to take a croquet shot.

Skill 2: The Drive (Croquet shot)

Place the striker ball touching the target ball and play a drive from the West boundary so the target ball reaches as far as Hoop 4 and the striker ball reaches as far as Hoop 1.

Skill 3: Roquet Croquet Continuation

Place a ball 1 – 2 metres in front of any Hoop. Place the striker ball 1-2 metres further out. Play a gentle roquet, then play a croquet shot (drive) so that the target ball is on the far side of the hoop and the striker ball is ready to run the hoop. Run the Hoop.

Skill 4: Rush Shot

Place 2 balls about half a metre apart in Corner 2 in a straight line to Hoop 1. Rush the target ball in front of Hoop 1; play a croquet shot sending the target ball to the nonplaying side of the hoop; run the hoop on the continuation shot.

Skill 5: Take off

From the South Boundary in front of Hoop 1 take off to that hoop, stopping your ball so that it is in a position to run the hoop.

Skill 6: ½ Roll

Place the striker ball touching the target ball and play a drive from the West boundary so the target ball reaches as far as Hoop 5 and the striker ball reaches as far as Hoop 1.

Skill 7: Full roll

Place the striker ball touching the target ball and play a drive from the West boundary so the striker ball and the target ball reach the same distance.

Skill 8: Split Roll

Place the striker ball touching the target ball near the Centre peg. Play a split shot so that the target ball goes to Hoop 4 and the striker ball goes to Hoop 5 (or Hoops 3 and 6).

Knowledge 1: Standard Opening

Demonstrate a standard opening using all 4 balls.

Knowledge 2: 3 Ball break

Demonstrate a 3 ball break, using bisques (extra turns) if needed.