



Golf Croquet Coaching Pod on Making the Most of a Hoop

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Target Players

This pod is aimed at GC players with handicaps in the 2 to 9 range. Although it would be useful to players with higher handicaps, many of the examples require the skills of a lower handicap player. It covers an area of tactics that is often unrecognised. When there is a ball that is certain to score the hoop, what should the striker do to enhance his side's chance of getting the next hoop?

Sections

Partner is in the jaws

 Odd-numbered hoop

 Even-numbered hoop

Opponent is in the jaws

 Odd-numbered hoop

 Even-numbered hoop

Taunton Deane Croquet Club

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What does it mean?

This coaching pod covers two similar situations. In both cases there is a ball that is either in the jaws of a hoop or is so close that it is certain to make the hoop and cannot be cleared.

The difference between the cases is that the ball may be the striker's partner ball or an opponent's ball. Each of these is divided into two sections, one covering odd-numbered hoops and one covering even-numbered hoops. There is no distinction between singles and doubles.

This difference between odd- and even-numbered hoops is very important as the next hoop may be straight ahead (odd-numbered) or to one side (even-numbered) and the possibilities open to the ball in the hoop are very different.

Not all of the options shown will be possible, but it is very important to be aware of the alternatives and to look for them.

As with all tactical decisions, the key is to visualize what the other balls are going to do for their next shots as well as to plan your own. In my coaching I refer to 5-shot thinking; the 5 shots being your own, the other 3 balls and then your own next shot. If you can work out what the other shots are going to be then you can probably pick the best shot to play.

Therefore an essential part of this whole session is seeing the possibilities.

The first two sections cover the situation when it is your partner ball that is in the jaws of a hoop. You need to decide:

1. Whether you are able to peel your partner (i.e. hit them through the hoop).
2. Whether you should peel your partner.
3. What other actions are available to you. This may involve blocking, hampering or ricochet shots or setting up a rush.

Peeling is probably not useful for even-numbered hoops unless you can promote yourself in the same shot (the 'ricochet peel') but may be the best option for odd-numbered hoops.

Your decision should be based on:

1. The difficulty of the shot, and therefore the probability of success.
2. Which option will give the best chance of getting the next hoop?
3. What will the opponent do?

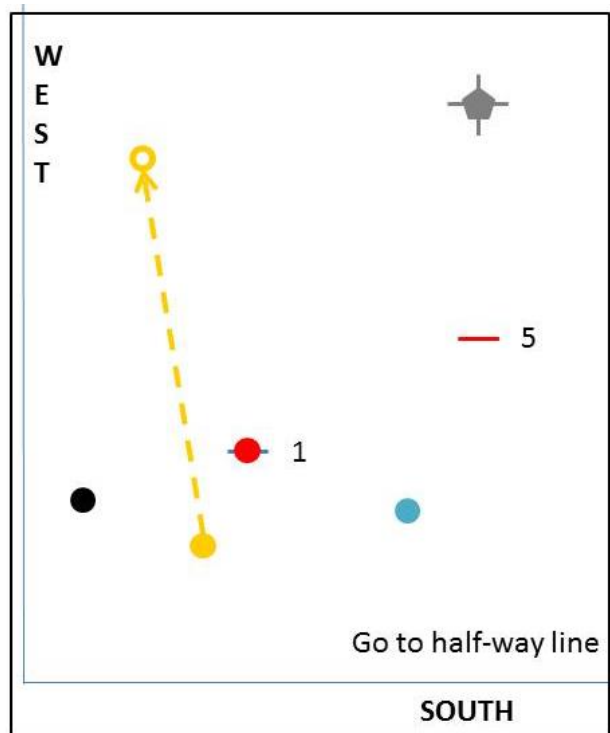
Partner is in an odd-numbered hoop

In these cases, Red is in the hoop and Yellow is to play. Neither of the opponent's balls is in a position to remove Red.

Go to the half-way line, being sure not to get in your partner's way, but blocking an opponent if possible. This is the easiest shot, if played with care, but gives least benefit.

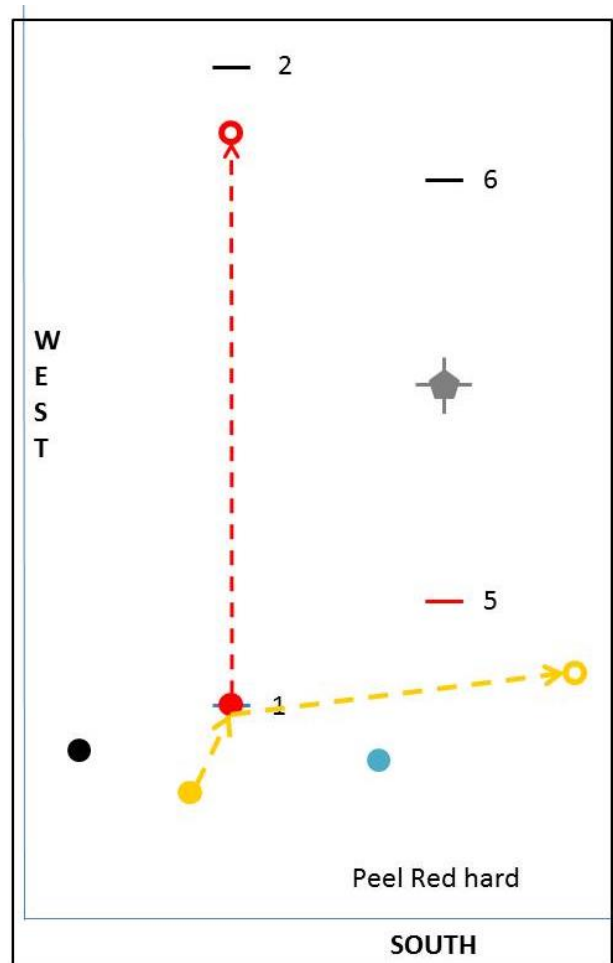
Demo 1 Go to the half-way line

Don't try to get within a few inches of the line. It will make almost no difference if you are 2 feet or 2 yards short of it but a big difference if you are 2 inches past it.



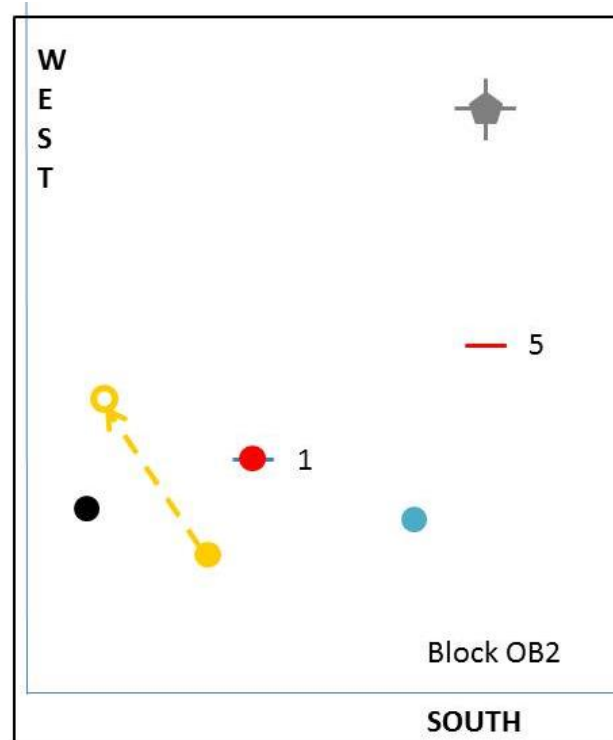
Peel your partner ball hard so that it goes as far up the lawn towards the next hoop as possible. This reduces the opponent's options for hampering, blocking and peeling.

Demo 2 Peel partner to next hoop



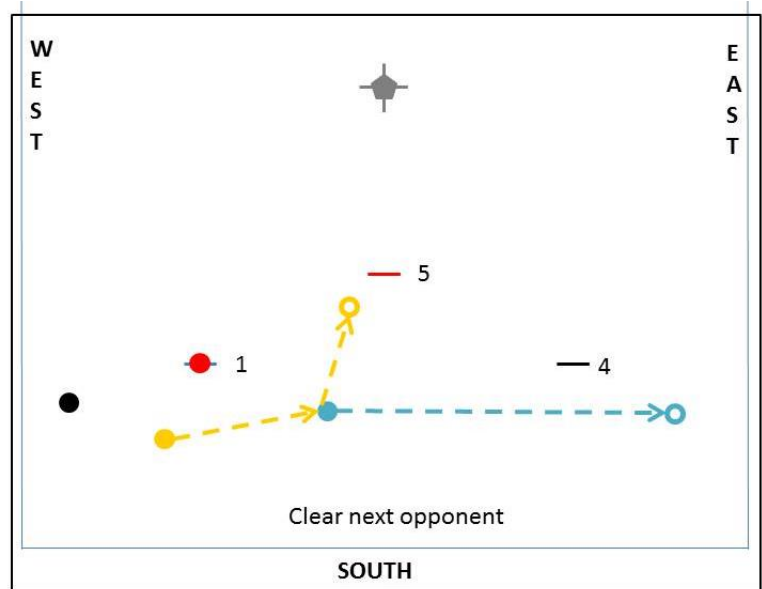
Place your ball in front of the opponent (Black) who will play after your partner ball so that it doesn't have a clean shot towards the next hoop. This is good as it means that both of your balls will be close to the next hoop before either of the opponents'. Note that there is no point in blocking the other opponent (Blue) as it will simply unblock itself.

Demo 3 Block opponent from going to the next hoop



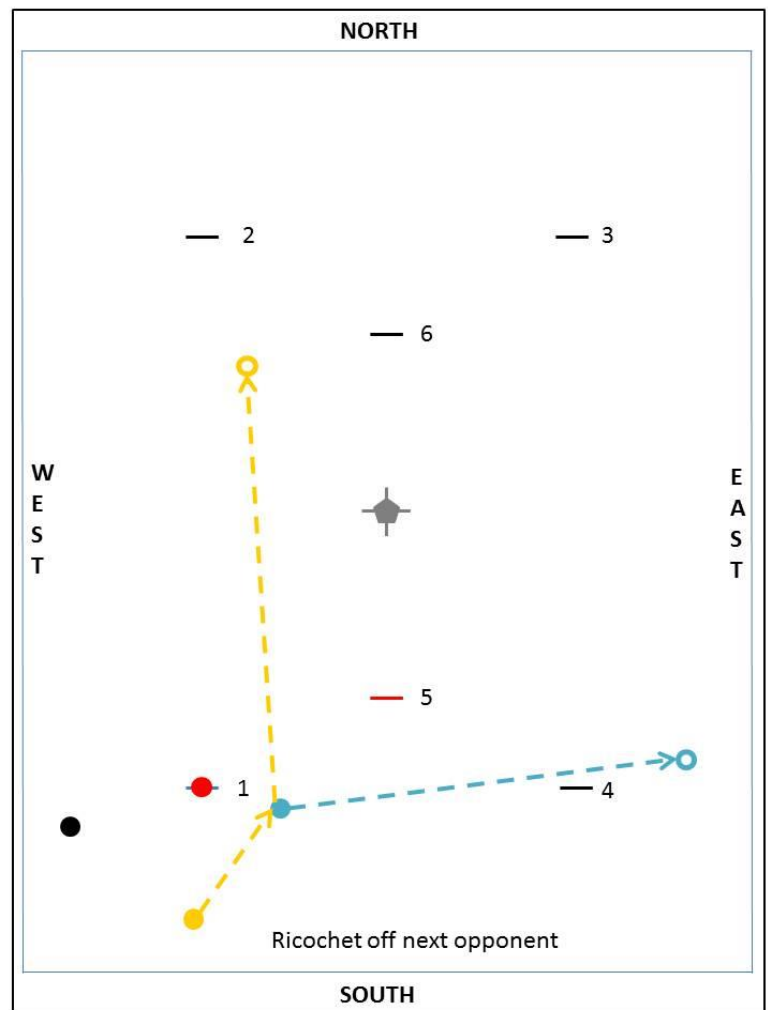
Clear next opponent to play
(Blue) so that it can't hamper,
block or peel your partner ball.

Demo 4 Clear next opponent



If the geometry allows, then it may be possible to run the striker ball up to the next hoop with a ricochet.

Demo 5 Clear and ricochet



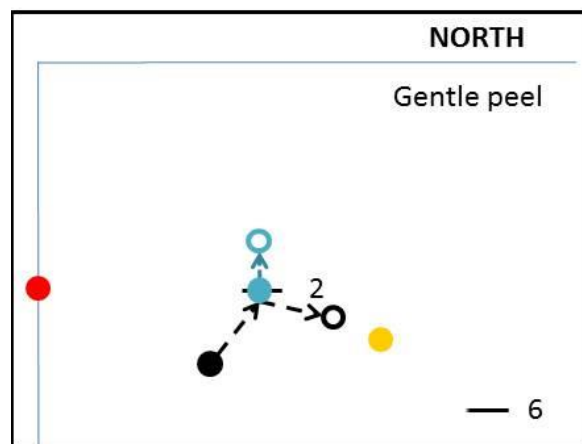
Partner is in an even-numbered hoop

In these examples Black is to play. Blue is in hoop 2 and will definitely score the hoop as Yellow is too far to the side to jump. What should Black do? Your main options are: to peel Blue gently, to peel Blue hard, to go to the half-way line or to set up a rush.

Comparing the four options:

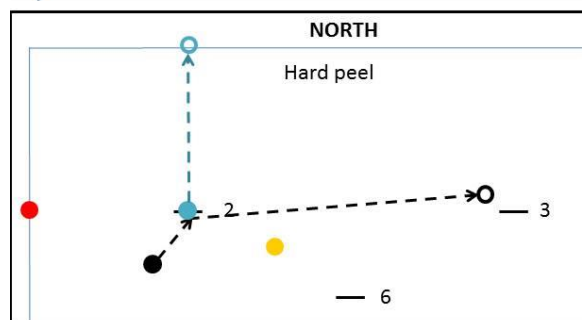
The gentle peel is easy and gets the hoop but contributes nothing towards the next hoop. The opponent will simply send Yellow to hoop 3.

Demo 6 Gentle peel



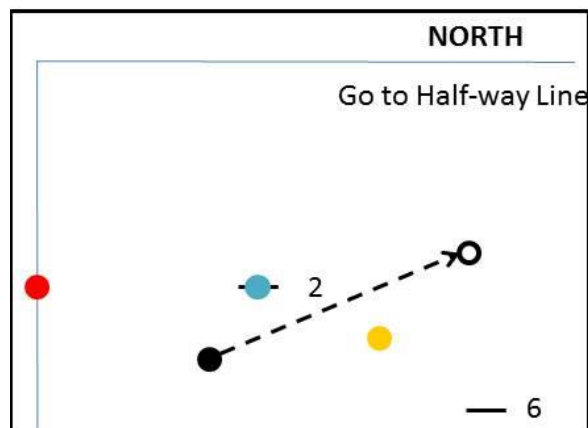
The hard peel (the 'ricochet peel') is more difficult but could, if played correctly, make the next hoop easy. The opponent will send Yellow to hoop 3 but Black will already be there.

Demo 7 Hard peel sending Striker ball to next hoop



Going to the half-way line is easy, with care, but doesn't help much on the next hoop as Yellow can do the same and Red will be first at the next hoop.

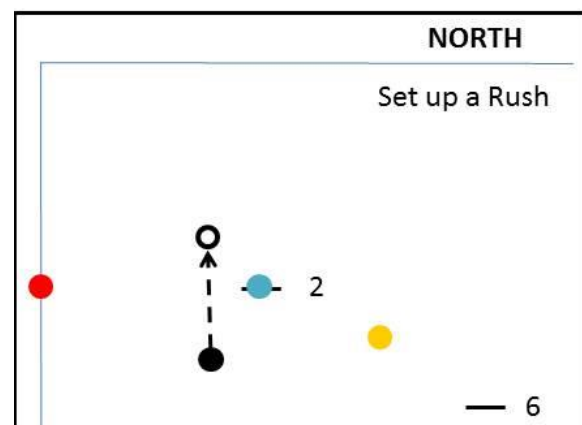
Demo 8 Go to half-way line



Setting up the rush can be quite easy and gives a good chance of getting Blue across to hoop 3. Red will be there first but, if the rush is good, then Blue will be able to clear it or even attempt the hoop.

Demo 9 Set up a rush promotion

When Blue runs the hoop it should be sent just far enough to give Black a straight rush to the next hoop.



Opponent's Ball in the Jaws

When it is the opponent that is about to score the hoop, your thinking should also be about the next hoop, not just for yourself and your partner ball, but to make it difficult for your opponent.

When the opponent in the hoop is not the next to play you need to decide:

1. Is there any way to stop them scoring the hoop? If a jump shot is not possible then the only way is to hamper their ball. They may commit a fault and will have difficulty optimizing their position after running the hoop.
2. If you can't save the hoop, then concentrate on playing to optimize your chance of getting the next hoop.

Peeling is probably not useful for even-numbered hoops, even if you can promote yourself in the same shot, but may be a good option for odd-numbered hoops.

Your decision should be based on :

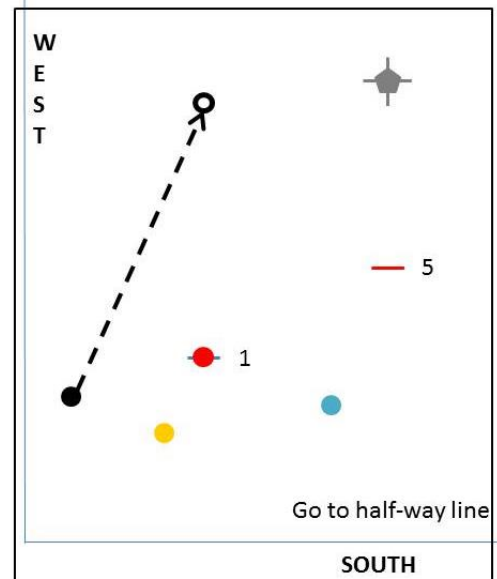
1. The difficulty of the shot, and therefore the probability of success.
2. Which option will give the best chance of getting the next hoop?
3. What will the opponent do?

Opponent is in an odd-numbered hoop

In these examples, Red is in the jaws and Black is to play. The options shown here require you to think about the other balls and what they will, or can, do.

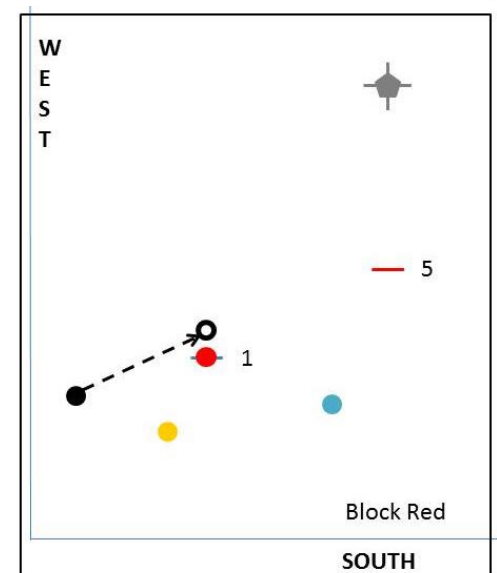
Demo 10 Go to halfway on the opponent's line

If you hit to the halfway line then try to get exactly on the opponent's direct line to the next hoop. This will stop them going to a straight hoop-running position.



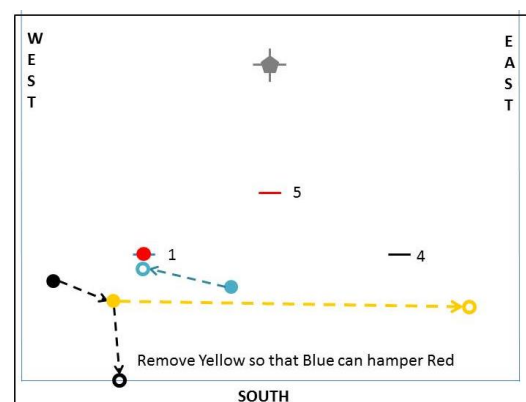
Put your ball just in front of the opponent in the jaws so that a hard hoop-run, or peel, will promote you towards the next hoop.

Demo 11 Block opponent



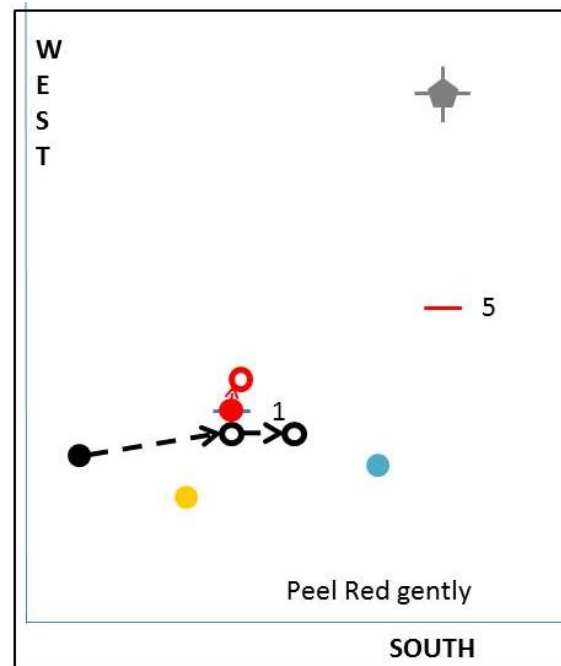
Clear the next opponent away from the area so that it can't peel its partner. This leaves your partner with the option of hampering the opponent in the hoop, or blocking.

Demo 12 Clear one opponent so that your partner can hamper the other



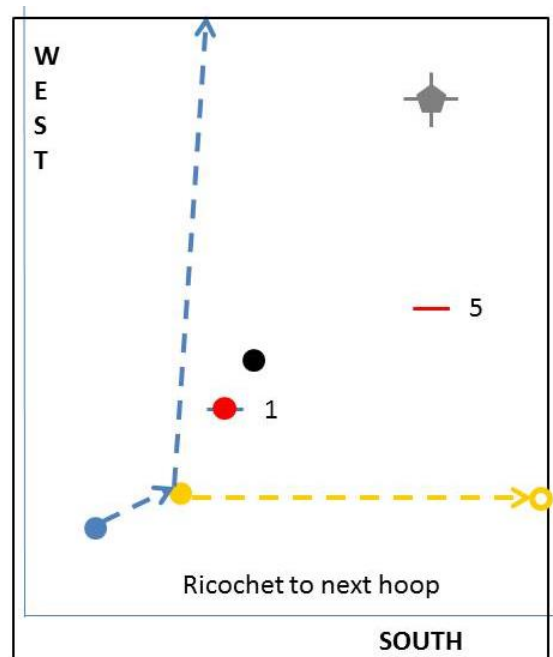
Deliberately peel the opponent. This must be played at a gentle pace so that your ball runs clear of the hoop, but the opponent is hampered in its next shot.

Demo 13 Peel the opponent to a hampered position



If the geometry is changed so that Black is behind the hoop and Blue is to play then a very strong tactic is for Blue to ricochet off Yellow and go to the next hoop. Red cannot afford to 'deem' because it will be removed by Black so it must run the hoop.

Demo 14 Ricochet if the geometry permits



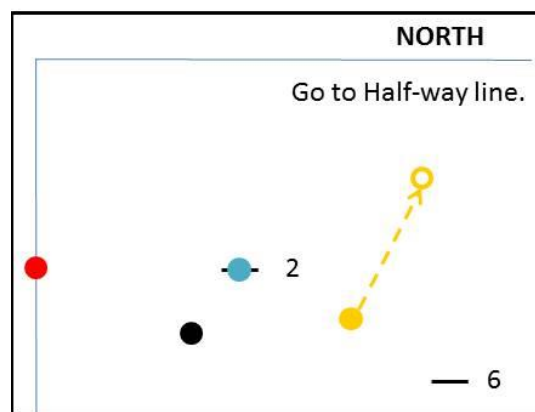
Opponent is in an even-numbered hoop

At an even-numbered hoop there is no benefit in peeling the opponent. That tactic applies to the odd-numbered hoops where the ball in the hoop can go straight up to the next hoop and peeling it could hamper this.

In these examples, Yellow is to play and the alternatives now are: go to the half-way line, nestle up to the opponent in the jaws (Blue) or block the other opponent (Black).

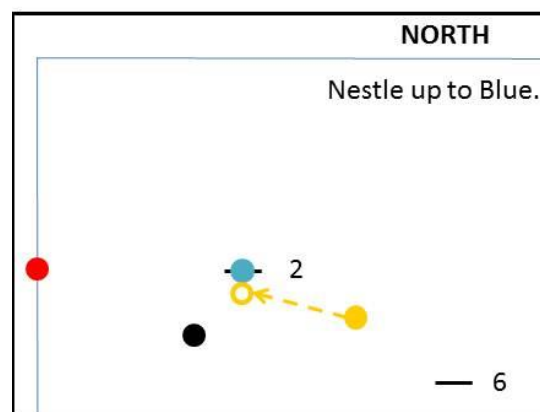
Going to the half-way line is easy, with care. This will help on the next hoop as partner (Red) will be there first, followed by (Black) and you may be close enough to clear Black.

Demo 15 Go to half-way line



Nestling up to the opponent is usually very difficult but, if successful, hampers their next shot and possibly causes a fault. In the case shown, the opponent, (Blue) would probably deem (i.e. not play a shot), to avoid a fault, and rely on Black to hit Yellow and peel Blue on the next turn.

Demo 16 Nestle up to opponent in the jaws



Blocking the other opponent gives them a difficult decision when Blue has run the hoop and Red has crossed to hoop 3. A perfect position for Yellow is to block Black from going to hoop 3 and also from running to half-way between hoops 3 and 4. It must be close enough to Black to make a jump shot impossible.

Demo 17 Block the other opponent

