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Golf Croquet Coaching Pod on How the Rules Have Changed

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This pod is aimed at GC players with responsibility for league matches. This will therefore include all GC team captains, referees and coaches, but all GC team players will benefit.

The pod deals with the main differences between the World Croquet Federation Rules of Golf Croquet (4th Edition), March 2014, the 5th Edition of July 2018 and the 6th Edition of March 2022. This is not a referee's course and rules that have not changed, or are so complex that a referee would have to look them up, will not be covered.

All references in these notes are to the 6th Edition rules which have applied to all matches since 28th March 2022.

Sections

New terminology
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New Terminology

‘Annulled’: A stroke which is treated as though it never happened. All balls moved are replaced and the previous stroke now becomes the last stroke.

‘Deem’: Instead of playing a stroke the striker may 'deem' a ball to have been played. They must identify which ball has been deemed and they then become responsible for the position of that ball (R6.3.1c).

A ball that is legally off-side and in a good position can be ‘deemed’ but it is then illegally off-side. A more likely use is when your ball is in the hoop but your partner ball is off-side. You could ‘deem’ the ball in the hoop, rather than tapping it through.

‘Behaviour’ replaces the previous term 'Etiquette' but covers the same scope (R16).

‘Extra Stroke’ replaces the previous term 'extra turn' to describe an additional shot played in handicap play (R20).

Court Layout and Boundary

The boundary is now the inner edge of the line (R2.2.2) and a ball that overlaps that line has left the court. A ball replaced on the court should just touch a straight edge raised vertically from the boundary.

A ball remains an 'outside agency' until it is played onto the court. This means that it should be removed if it interferes with another player's swing or shot and then replaced afterwards (R6.6).

When a boundary ball is played, if it strikes another ball before going into the court then the balls are replaced and the turn is forfeited, as shown in Figure 1. (R6.7)

Figure 1 Playing a boundary ball



The penalty spots are now replaced by penalty areas.

These are (imaginary) semicircles with 1 yard radius centred on the two penalty spots (R17). The areas have been introduced to stop one player blocking another when two balls are to be played from the same penalty spot.

Penalty areas are used when an off-side ball is penalized and when a 'penalty area continuation' is required. This happens when:

1. Both sides play for a wrong hoop and run it, or a referee notices that both have played towards a wrong hoop.
2. After a ball has been played by the wrong side and then the other side has played any ball.
3. If two balls are played at the same time with the striker playing an invalid stroke.

Exercises (on court)

Set up the situation shown in Figure 1 and see the need for marginal shots to be watched.

Play through a 'wrong hoop' scenario and the Penalty Area Continuation.

Starting the Game

Instead of automatically playing first, the winner of the toss can elect to play second. (R5.1.1) This is irrelevant in singles but can be tactically advantageous in doubles.

Wrong Ball

The wrong ball rule (R10) has been greatly changed and, overall, simplified but will continue to be one of the worst understood rules. We will therefore spend quite a lot of time on examples on the board followed by actual cases on the lawn.

An important reason for changing this rule is to avoid the ‘gift’ hoop that could occur with the previous rules and created a moral dilemma. For example, Blue plays into position, Yellow plays into position, Black plays. The sequence error is noticed, Black is replaced and Blue plays and scores. Or, the sequence error is not noticed, Red plays then the sequence error is noticed, Red is replaced and Yellow plays and scores.

You need to develop confidence in dealing with all of the possible ‘wrong’ ball situations so we will visit this topic again near the end.

Something that has not changed but needs to be clearly understood is that the Striker is the owner of the next ball in sequence after the one that has just been played – EVEN IF THE ONE JUST PLAYED WAS A WRONG BALL.

One of the most significant changes covers forestalling. In the new rules:

Any player, referee or sequence umpire should forestall any wrong ball before it is struck (R10.2.1)

Any player, referee or sequence umpire should stop the play after any wrong ball has been struck. (R10.2.2).

Any does not include bystanders, unless all those present have been appointed to be sequence umpires. (The appointment of sequence umpires depends on the tournament regulations, the tournament manager and the Referee of the Tournament.)

When a wrong ball play has occurred, the sequence of actions should be:

Stop play until the correct action is decided.

Identify the players of the last two turns.

Identify the correct strikers in the last two turns.

Decide the category of the last stroke, which could be ‘Played by the Striker’, ‘Played by Striker’s partner’ or ‘Played by an opponent’.

All of the consequences are the same in singles and doubles. ‘Partner ball’ refers to the ball belonging to the striker’s side that is not the current striker’s ball. As you will see, the Partner Ball plays a bigger role in the decision-making than it did before. This is because it was the playing of the partner ball that could lead to a Gift Hoop.

If a wrong ball play does occur then there are five possible actions. We'll look at the actions first and then the situations in which they occur.

Annulled (R10.3.3)

All balls moved are replaced.

The previous ball is re-instated as last ball (irrelevant if it was correct).

Striker plays the correct ball.

Carry on play

All previous errors have been condoned.

Play continues with the next ball in sequence.

Replace and replay (R10.5.5)

Last stroke is annulled.

No points are scored.

All balls are replaced.

Striker plays the correct ball.

Ball swap (R10.5.6) (Note that this is a completely new action.)

Last stroke is valid.

All points scored are counted for the side owning any ball that ran a hoop.

All balls remain where they finished except that the positions of the last ball played and its partner are exchanged.

Play then continues with the ball following the one that should have been played.

Penalty Area Continuation (R10.4)

All four balls are to be played from a penalty area.

The sides toss and the winner will play first, with either ball. The loser decides which penalty area is to be used.

In all of the illustrations in this section, the mallet colour shows the owner of a ball, who is also the correct striker unless stated otherwise. The ball colour shows the ball that was actually played.

We will now go through a number of examples of wrong ball play, discussing each, and then try to resolve them into the simple rules shown on these decision trees.

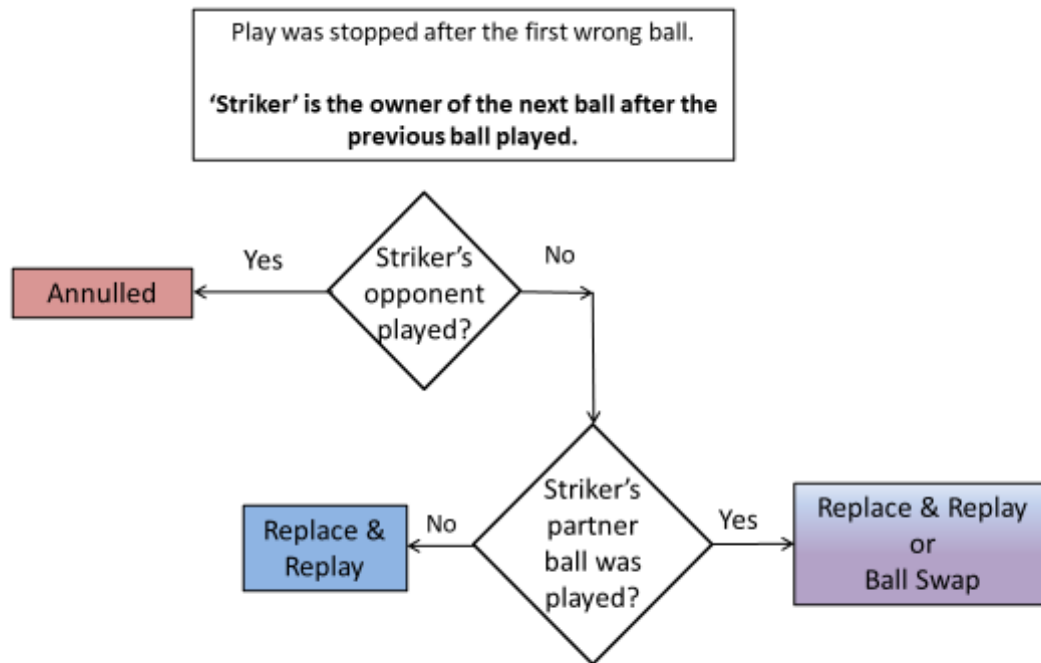


Figure 2 Decision Tree after one wrong ball

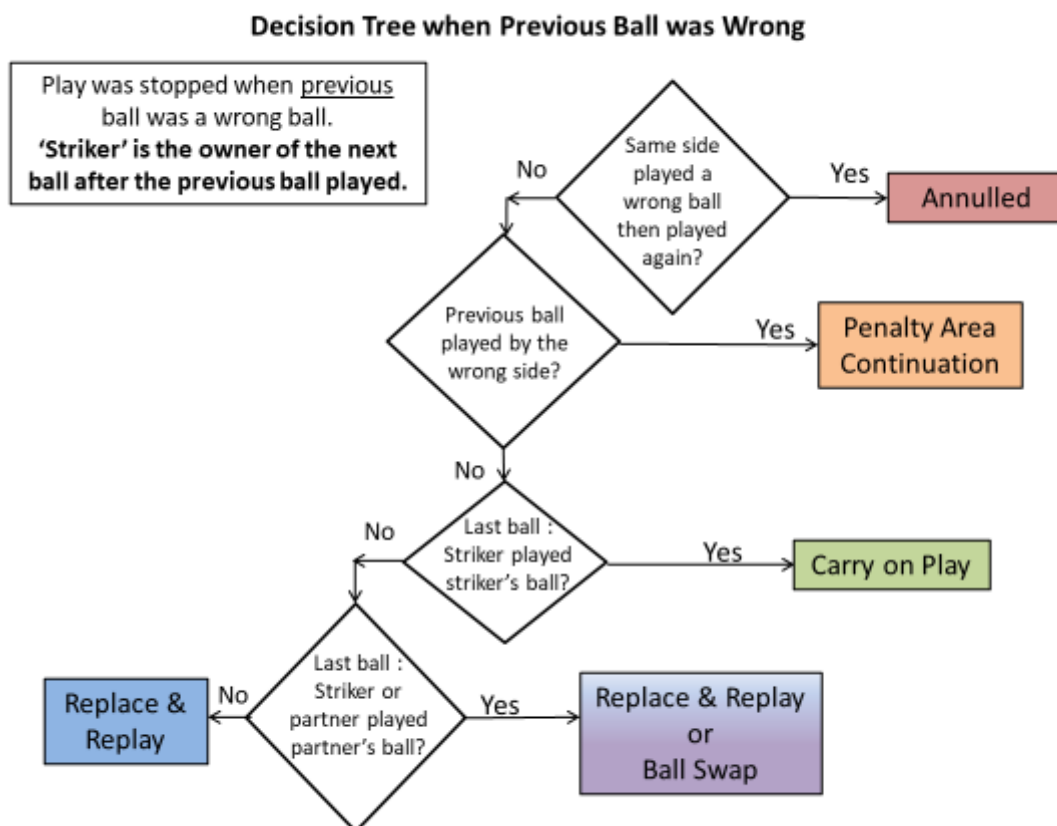


Figure 3 Decision Tree after previous ball was wrong

Played by Striker

- (1) Striker played their own ball after opponents had played a wrong ball (No error).

Striker Blue plays Black then Striker Yellow plays Yellow

Carry on Play : All points stand; play continues with Blue.

- (2) Striker played their own ball after partner had played a wrong ball.

Striker Red plays Black then Striker Yellow plays Yellow (R10.3.2)

The last stroke is Annulled (R10.3.3)

The previous stroke becomes the last stroke (R10.5.3)

Replace and Replay.

- (3) Striker played their partner ball (R10.5.2).

Striker Red plays Yellow

Opponents choose Replace & Replay or Ball Swap

- (4) Striker played an opponent's ball (R10.5.3).

Striker Yellow plays Blue

Replace & Replay

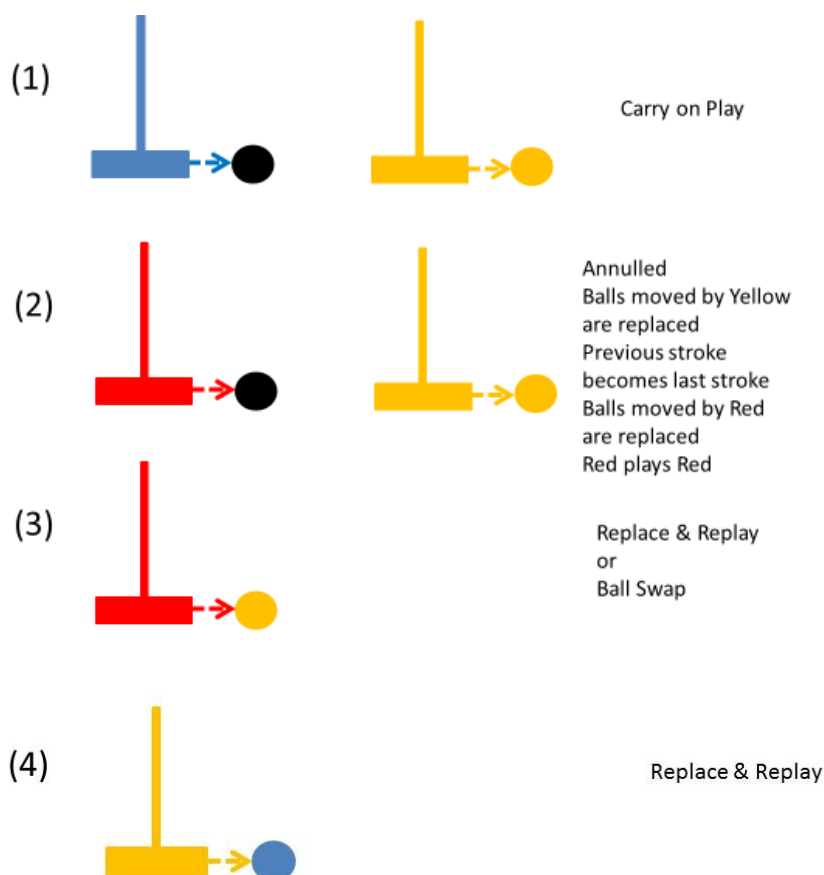


Figure 4 Wrong ball played by striker

Played by Striker's Partner

(5) Striker's partner plays their own ball (R10.5.2).

Striker is Black; Blue plays Blue

Opponents choose Replace & Replay or Ball Swap

(6) Striker's partner plays any ball other than their own (R10.5.3), (R10.5.4).

Striker is Blue but Black plays Blue, Red or Yellow

Replace & Replay

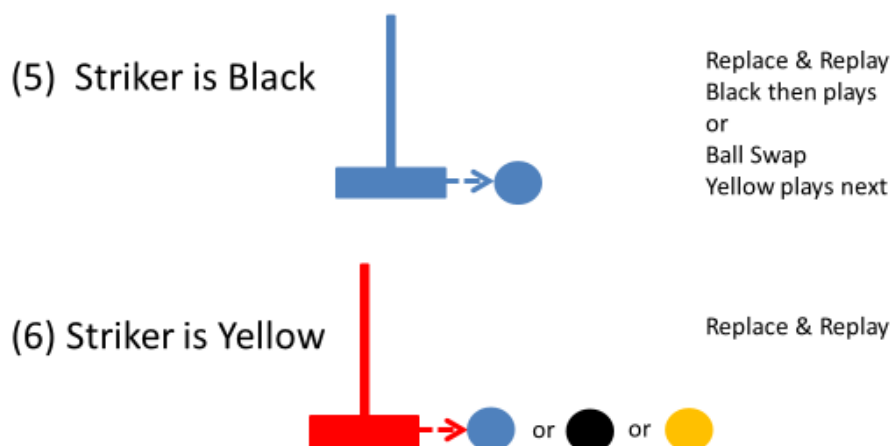


Figure 5 Stroke played by striker's partner

Why might the opponents sometimes choose Ball Swap?

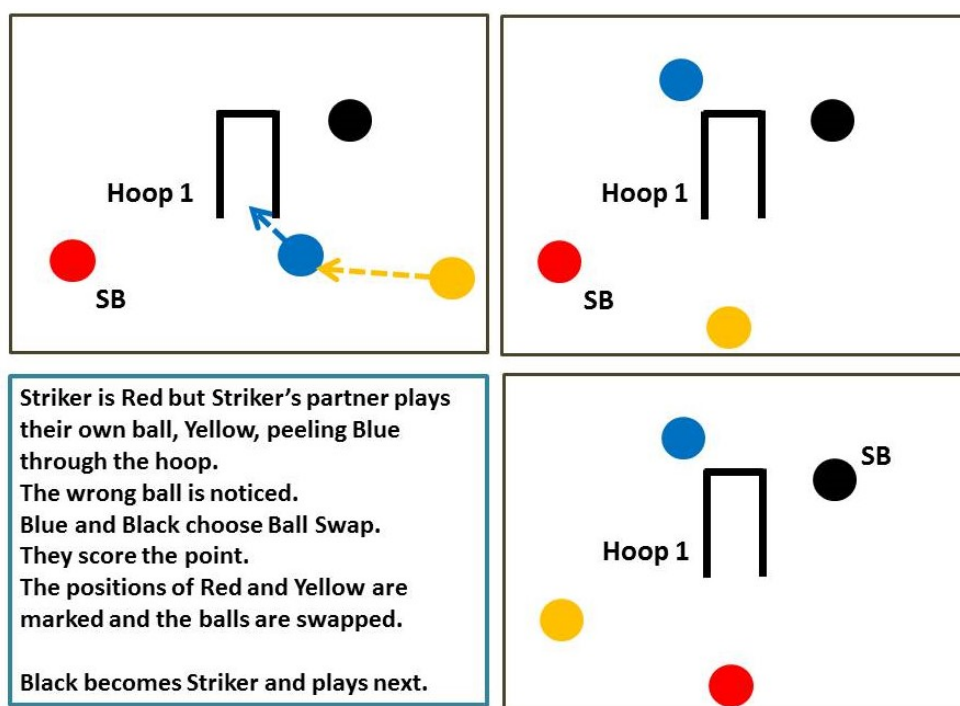


Figure 6 Ball swap (Example 1)

In this example the striker's partner has run the hoop.

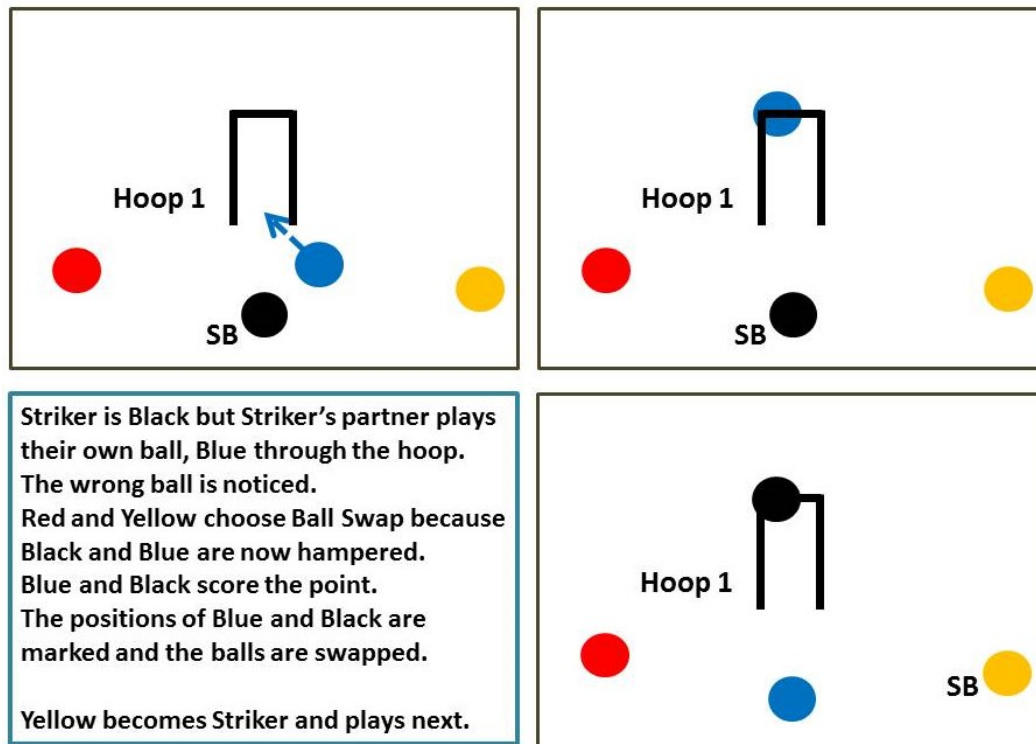


Figure 7 Ball swap (Example 2)

Usually Replace and Replay will be the chosen option but note that the striker is not allowed to use an extra stroke after a Ball Swap but can do after Replace and Replay.

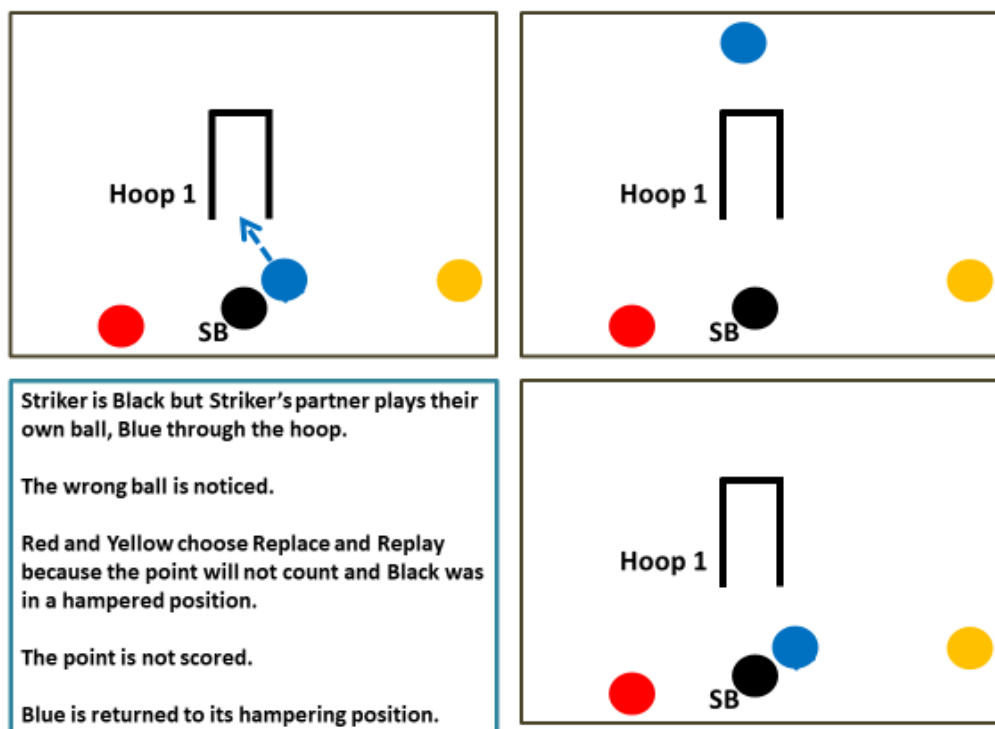


Figure 8 Replace and Replay

Played by Opponent

- (7) Opponent played a ball from the wrong side after Striker has played a ball of the wrong side (R10.4).

Striker Red plays Black; Black plays Yellow.

Penalty Area Continuation

- (8) Opponent plays (R10.3.3).

Striker Yellow plays Yellow; Red plays.

No points are scored from the Red shot.

Full Penalty with the replacement positions being those before Red played.

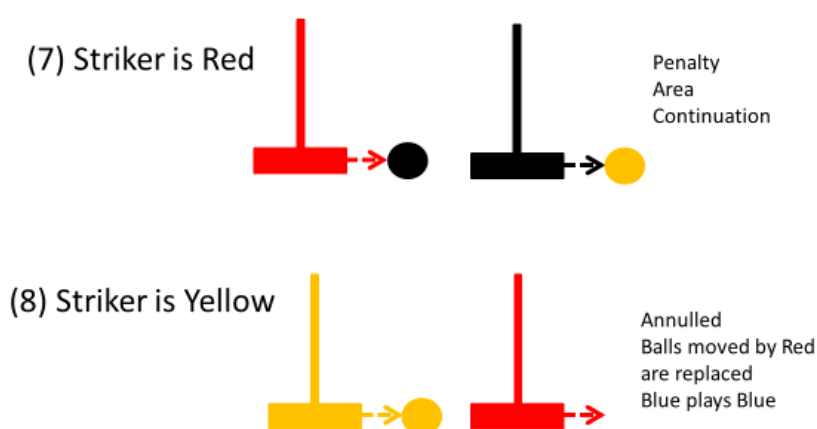


Figure 9 Stroke by opponent

Played by Striker's Partner Twice

- (9) Striker's partner plays striker's ball but this is not noticed. The new striker is Yellow, as Black has just been played, but Red plays Yellow.

The correct side has played a ball of its own side and therefore condoned the previous error but Striker's partner has played Striker's ball, Rule (10.5.5).

Replace and Replay.

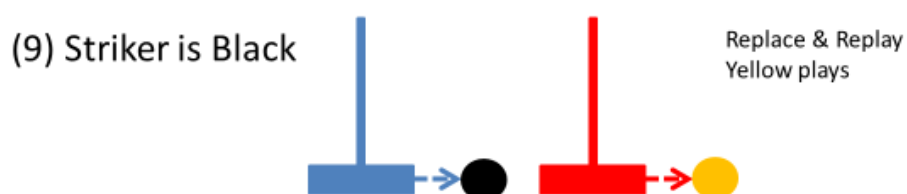


Figure 10 Striker's partner plays then new Striker's partner plays

Summary

General

Any player addresses a wrong ball (R10.2.1) Forestall

Any player notices a wrong ball has been played (R10.2.2) Stop the game

If the Striker's side plays one of their own balls after an opponent has played a wrong ball then they have condoned the error. There is no penalty for the opponent's wrong ball play; all points scored for it are valid and play carries on as if that opponent ball had been correctly played.

Single Wrong Ball

Striker plays partner's ball (R10.5.2)	Replace & Replay or Ball Swap
Striker's partner plays own ball (R10.5.2)	Replace & Replay or Ball Swap
Striker plays an opponent's ball (R10.5.3)	Replace & Replay
Striker's partner plays an opponent's ball (R10.5.3)	Replace & Replay
Striker's partner plays Striker's ball (10.5.4)	Replace & Replay
Opponent plays any ball (R10.3.3)	Annulled

Previous Ball was Wrong

Striker plays after partner has played a wrong ball (R10.3.3)

Annulled, balls returned to positions prior to last shot.

Previous stroke is re-instated as 'Last' stroke and the wrong ball is adjudicated.

Player plays ball of wrong side after opponent has played wrong ball of wrong side (R10.4)

Penalty Area Continuation

Striker's partner plays Striker's ball after opponents have played a wrong ball of their own side (R10.5.4).

Replace and replay

Striker plays Striker's ball after opponents have played a wrong ball of their own side, condoning the previous error.

Carry on Play

Striker or Striker's partner play Striker's partner ball after opponents have played a wrong ball of their own side, condoning the previous error. (R10.5.2)

Replace & Replay or Ball Swap

Exercise (indoors) in groups of 3 or 4

One person identifies a striker and the ball that they actually played in stroke 1.

A second person identifies a second player and the ball that they played in stroke 2.

These are written down and one or both should be a wrong ball.

Together, the group will identify the correct striker for the second ball, the type of wrong ball that has occurred and the remedy.

If they are unable to agree, then the case is passed to the next group.

Exercise (on court) in larger groups of about 10.

Repeat the paper exercise, particularly any cases that were difficult to understand.

Play through the series of strokes and agree, before each stroke, on the correct striker for the next ball, the type of wrong ball played and the outcome.

Extra Stroke Calculation in Doubles

In Doubles the calculation of Extra Strokes was changed (R20.3) and the steps are now:

1. Identify the player with the highest handicap.
 - a. If two players on opposite sides share the highest handicap then either can be chosen first as it makes no difference.
 - b. If two players on the same side share the highest handicap then one must be declared as the 'higher' of the two.
2. Calculate the difference between the handicaps of the highest handicapper and the lower handicapper of the opposite side and halve it.
3. Round up, if necessary, as there are no half-extra-strokes in GC. The highest handicapper receives this number of Extra Strokes.
4. Repeat this for the other two players and award the extra strokes to the higher handicapper of the two.
5. If two players on the same side have both benefitted from the rounding up then one of them must lose the extra stroke so gained.

Therefore the number of players with extra strokes may be 0, 1 or 2 but never 3 or 4 and when 2 players have extra strokes they may be on the same or on opposite sides.

A lower handicapper on a side will never have any extra strokes when the higher handicapper has none.

Exercise in groups of 3 or 4

A Blue 3 and Black 12 v Red 6 and Yellow 14	Answer : Black 3, Yellow 6
B Blue 5 and Black 5 v Red 10 and Yellow 11	Answer : Red 3, Yellow 3
C Blue 4 and Black 10 v Red 7 and Yellow 7, (Red is 'Low')	Answer : Black 2, Yellow 2
D Blue 8 and Black 9 v Red 8 and Yellow 12	Answer : Black 1, Yellow 2
E Blue 11 and Black 10 v Red 4 and Yellow 7	Answer : Blue 4, Black 1 or Blue 3, Black 2 (Black and Blue decide)
F Blue -2 and Black -1 v Red 6 and Yellow -2	Answer : Red 4, Black 1
G Blue 1 and Black -1 v Red 6 and Yellow 6, (Red is 'Low')	Answer : Yellow 4, Red 2 or Yellow 3, Red 3 (Red and Yellow decide)
H Blue 6 and Black -1 v Red 6 and Yellow 6, (Red is 'Low')	Answer : Yellow 4
I Blue 6 and Black 3 v Red 6 and Yellow 3	Answer : Red 2, Blue 2

Note that the point at which a player may play an extra stroke has not changed.

There is still a requirement to forewarn the opponent or forestall them promptly so that they have not started to prepare their next turn. The next player has the right to ask whether an extra stroke is going to be used and the striker must respond promptly.

Faults

This is not a review of all faults, just a summary and explanation of the main changes.

The previous rules included 'non-striking' faults, i.e. faults committed by players other than the striker or faults by the striker before the striking period started. These are no longer faults. Any accidental contact between a non-striker and a ball is corrected by placing any ball affected in the position it was or would have arrived at and no penalty is incurred.

The striking period used to be defined by the forward swing of the mallet; this has now changed and the striking period starts when the striker settles into position. It therefore includes the period of lining up, casting and striking but not the stalk. Accidental contact by the striker before this period is not a fault.

Specific faults that have changed are:

If a ball strikes a clip that is on a hoop it is no longer a fault. A clip on a hoop is not an Outside Agency (R4.1.1c). It is, however, sensible to remove them as it makes the ball more likely to go through and reduces the likelihood of damage to the clip.

Previously it was a fault if the striker rested the shaft of the mallet or a hand or arm on the ground or on any part of the legs or feet. These have been removed from the list of faults and are therefore allowed.

The consequences of a fault by the striker during the striking period are the same as those that previously applied to 'striking faults'.

The opponents decide whether the balls are to be left where they finished or are replaced. If they are replaced then no points are scored for either side. **If they are left where they finished then any points scored for the non-offending side are valid;** this is an important change in the rules.

Offside Balls

If a side directs that a ball is to go to a specified Penalty Area or decides not to do so they cannot then change that decision.

Wrong Ball (2)

More Wrong ball examples

Striker is Blue.

A Blue addresses any ball other than Blue - forestall. (R10.2.1)

B Any other player addresses any ball - forestall. (R10.2.1)

C Blue plays Black - Opponent chooses Replace and Replay or Ball Swap. (R10.5.2)

D Black plays Black - Opponent chooses Replace and Replay or Ball Swap. (R10.5.2)

E Blue plays Red (or Yellow) - Replace and Replay. (R10.5.3)

E Black plays Red (or Yellow) - Replace and Replay. (R10.5.3)

E Black plays Blue - Replace and Replay. (R10.5.4)

F Blue plays Red, then Red plays any ball. All points scored in both turns are cancelled - Penalty Area Continuation. (R10.4)

G Red plays - Annulled. (R10.3.3)

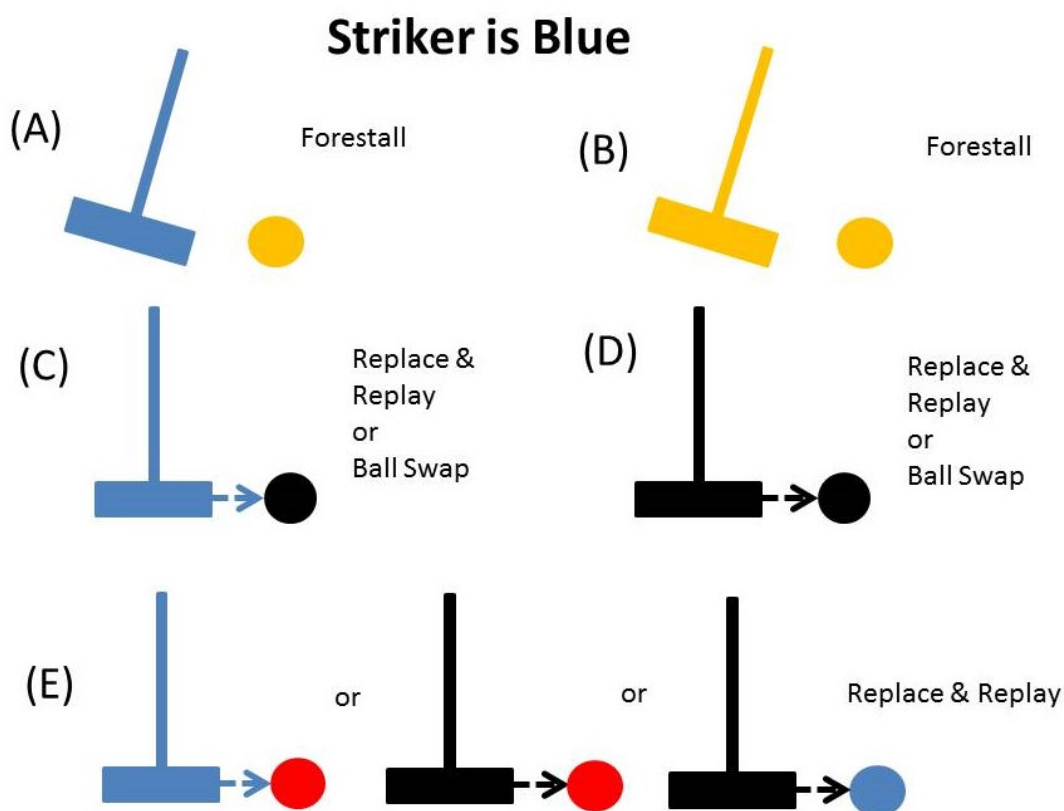


Figure 11 Wrong Ball examples A to E

Striker is Blue

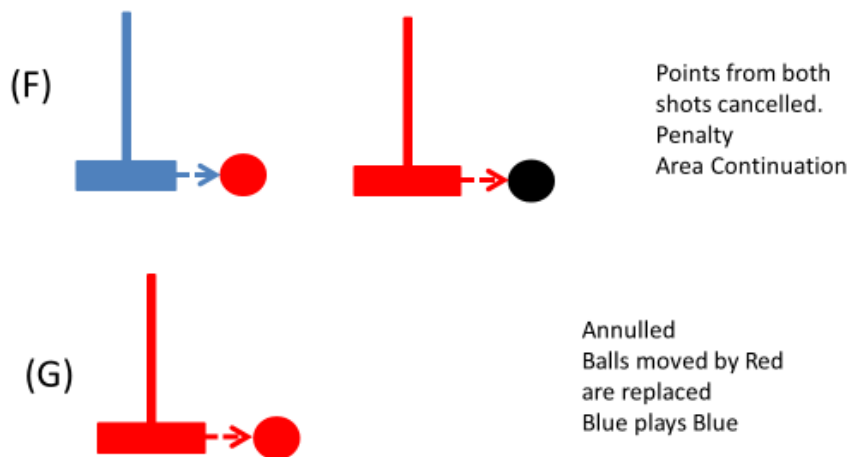


Figure 12 Wrong Ball examples F to G

Exercise in groups of 3 or 4 (on court)

One person identifies a striker and, as that striker, plays a ball.

A second person identifies the new striker and plays another ball.

One or both of these should be a wrong ball.

Together, the group will identify the error that has happened and the remedy.

If they are unable to agree, then the case is to be recorded and passed to another group.