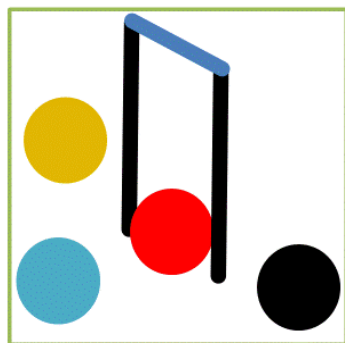




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Golf Croquet Coaching Pod on Two-in-One Strokes

Lead Coach – Stephen Custance-Baker

Target Players

This pod is aimed at experienced GC players with handicaps in the range -1 to 5. Although it would be useful to players with higher handicaps, many of the examples require the skills of a lower handicap player. This is an advanced pod and deals with situations where the shot or tactic to be used is optimal if it has two purposes.

What does it mean?

This pod covers a situation that occurs very often during a GC game. Your primary aim is clear but if you add a secondary aim without jeopardising the primary then you enhance your tactical situation.

George Burns once said that one sign of aging is that when you bend down to do up your laces you try to remember whether there's something else you should be doing while you're down there.

Using the principles discussed in this pod you will learn to ask yourself at each shot whether you can add a factor to your basic shot to improve your side's tactical position. After a while it becomes natural to do this.

Sections

Clearing plus

Hooping plus

Gaining position

Ricochet peels

Partner support

Clearing Plus

When you clear an opponent from a position where they could remove your partner from in front of the hoop, it is tempting simply to hit them as far away as possible. Sometimes that isn't very far, depending on the geometry, and you might lose position yourself. Also, against a very good player, distance is not necessarily sufficient.

It may be better to play the clearance so that the opponent is sent a shorter distance, but to a position from which it is impossible to clear your partner. This may be because a hoop (or the post) is hampering them, or in their way. (Note that using another ball as a block may allow them to do a jump or a 'bombard' clearance.)

However, there is no point in giving them an opportunity for promotion to the next hoop. With the scenario in Figure 1 it is important to get the Red ball against the post so that it cannot be played off Blue towards hoop 7. The two purposes are therefore: protect Black by hampering Red and place Blue where Red cannot exploit it.

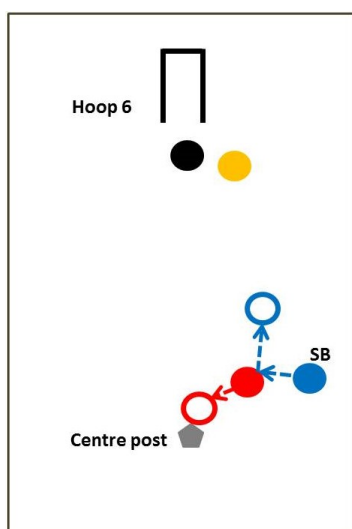


Figure 1 Using the post as a hamper

The exercise that goes with this is to play short range cut rushes with great precision.

It might also be possible to clear Red and promote Blue to hoop 7 but there is a danger that Red might hit the post and still be in easy range from Black. The primary purpose is to protect Black from being cleared and this must not be compromised.

If there is no furniture in a convenient position to use then try using your own ball as a protector. For this to be effective you must either send the target ball a long way away or put a significant space between your ball and its partner. If you leave the opponent too close and your balls near each other then the opponent can clear both.

This shot requires great precision in the point at which your ball strikes the target as well as the force applied.

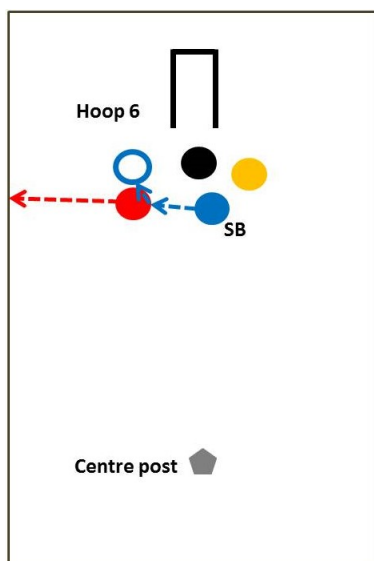


Figure 2 Clearing and leaving your own ball as a protector

In this case the exercise is to play slightly angled stop-shots so that your ball travels a precise distance to the side.

Clearing one opponent from in front of the hoop is useless if the second opponent can run the hoop. Try, without compromising the clearance, to send your ball into a position where it can interfere with the hoop run.

In Figure 3, Yellow and Red are both in position to run the hoop; Blue is behind the hoop and Black is to play. The clearance of Yellow is straightforward but, because of Blue's position, it achieves nothing if Red can run the hoop (or jump Blue). An angled stop shot on Yellow, if properly played, will leave Black so close to Red that it cannot be jumped or easily cleared by Yellow.

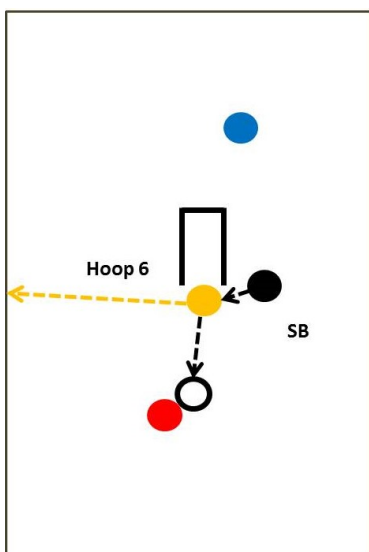
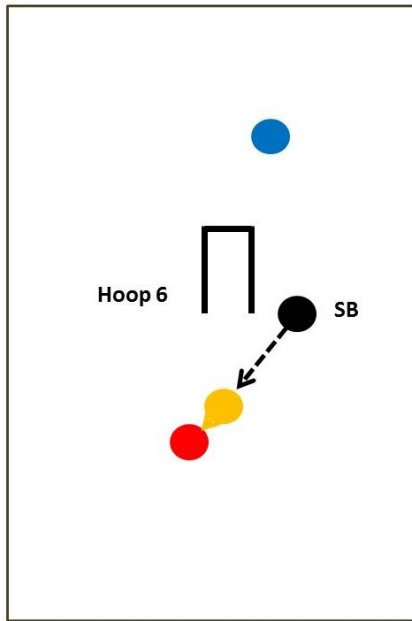


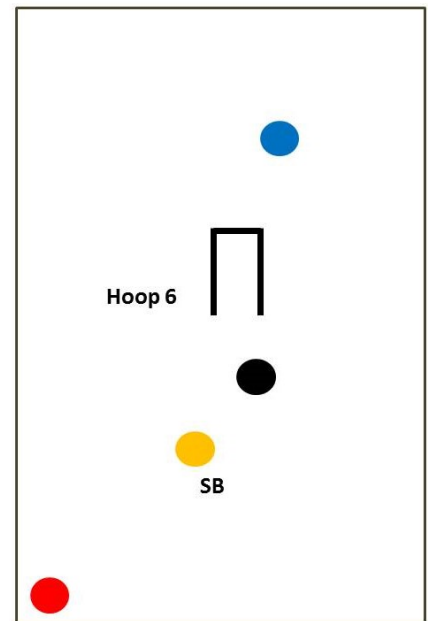
Figure 3 Clear and block opponent

This involves a more angled stop-shot than in the previous example and is more difficult.

When attempting to clear two opponent balls with a bombard, be careful not to hit one straight onto the other. This can have the 'Newton's Cradle' effect by which one ball remains in position though the other is sent a long way.



*Figure 4 Newton's Cradle,
before and after*



As shown in Figure 4, this can leave one of the opponent's balls almost exactly where it was.

Always strike the first ball so that it ricochets off the other at an angle, sending both an adequate distance.

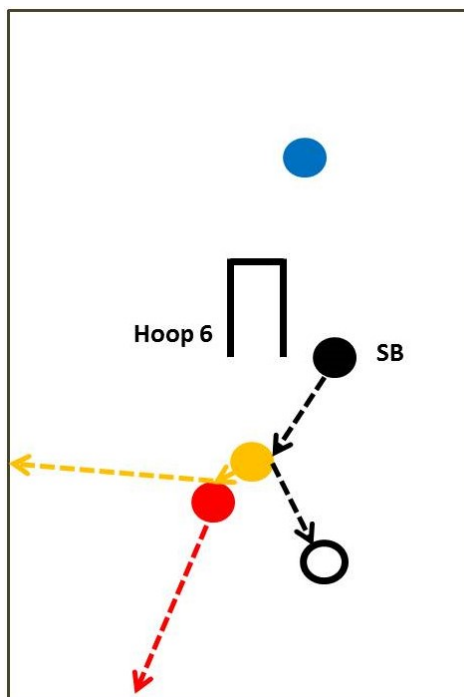


Figure 5 Angled shot for double clearance

This can leave your ball out of position, but it's worth it if both of the opponent's balls are properly cleared.

If there is no risk involved then try to combine a clearance with a hoop-run or jawsing, i.e. an in-off.

In this example, Black could try an angled jump shot but the chance of failure is high and even if Black gets into the jaws it will be jumped by Red. Red must therefore be cleared, which could be done with a straight stop-shot but Yellow would then clear Black and hide from Blue.

Instead, play the clearance as a ricochet so that Black either runs the hoop or lodges in the jaws. Yellow will be left with no option except to try to jar Black out of the hoop.

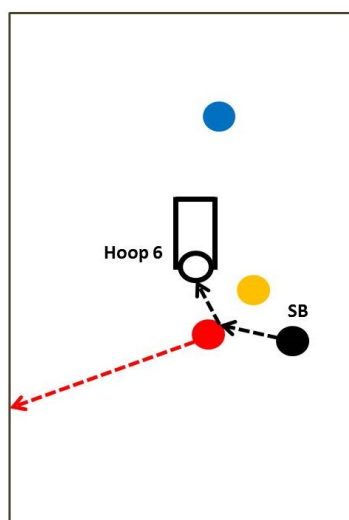


Figure 6 Clear and jaws

There is a danger in this shot; if Black stops in front of the far wire then Yellow will have an in-off. Therefore bias the ricochet towards the near wire and play it hard.

Practice this stroke to see how the jawsing is best achieved.

The alternative stroke is a straight clearance of Red but with a drive rather than a stop-shot. This will probably leave Black out of position but of little value to Yellow.

Hoooping Plus

It's usual when running a hoop to play the shot hard, partly to approach the next hoop and partly to gain from the forward spin.

However, if it is an even-numbered hoop then there is little to be gained by going a long way through and it may be better to play more gently to give three possible outcomes.

- 1 The hoop is run
- 2 The ball is jawed
- 3 The ball misses or glances off but remains close behind the hoop

It is this third possibility that justifies the gentle hoop run in some situations.

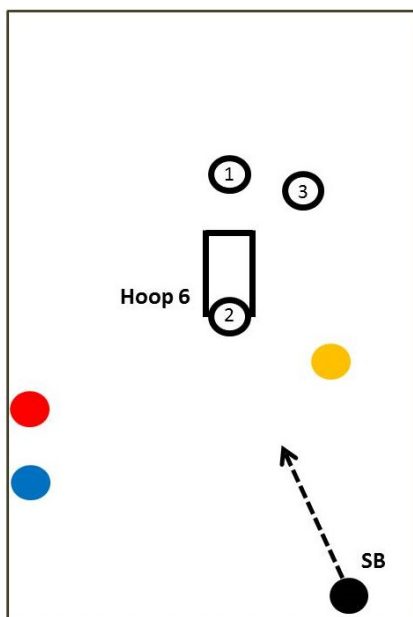
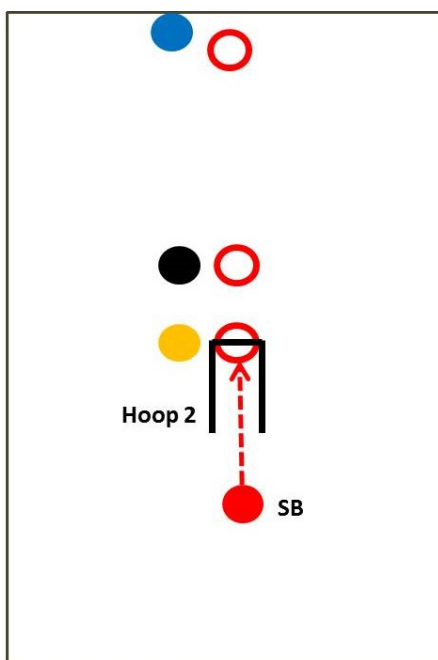


Figure 7 Gentle hoop run

If Black finishes in position 3 then Yellow cannot jaws the ball. If it does then Blue will hamper or block Red and Black will remove Yellow.

If Yellow sets up in front then Blue can clear it.

When running an odd-numbered hoop it is almost always worth playing the stroke hard. Not only is it more likely to go through if firmly struck but it will also finish much closer to the next hoop. Therefore an odd-numbered hoop run is best combined with a long approach.



The situation is different with even-numbered hoops. The position of the striker's ball relative to the next hoop is almost irrelevant, as long as it is clear of the jaws. It should therefore be played to a position where it can be promoted by its partner or will block an opponent.

Figure 8 Possible positions after hoop 2

The three positions shown in Figure 8 are where Red could be played to if each of the other three balls was positioned as shown.

This requires practising controlled hoop-running, a standard skill in AC but also very useful in GC.

If an opponent is hampered for their approach to the next hoop but would be cleared by a straight hoop run, then do a jump shot.

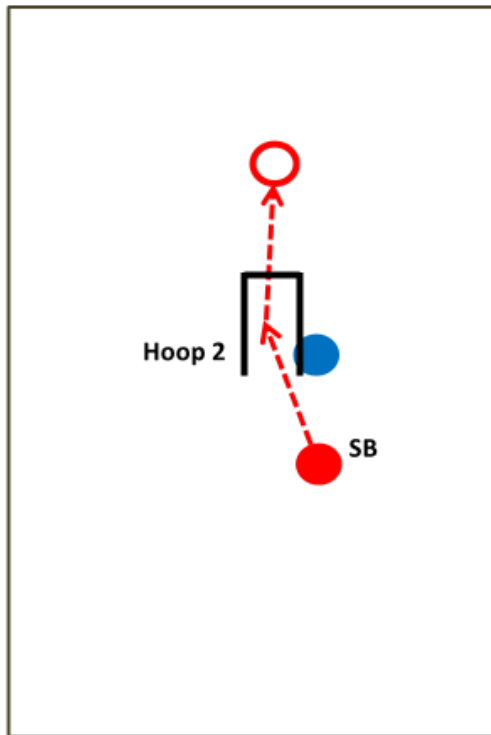


Figure 9 Jump shot to leave opponent hampered

The slight reduction in the probability of running the hoop is compensated by the major advantage of leaving the opponent hampered.

Gaining position

The central theme of this section is using ricochet shots to give yourself an advantage at the next hoop. Two examples are shown, which apply to three different scenarios, but the key is, as always, seeing the opportunity. The next section covers using ricochets for peeling.

In the first example, Black is clearing Yellow so that Blue can run hoop 1. This could be done easily with a stop-shot, but if Black uses a ricochet roll shot instead of a stop-shot then Yellow can still be cleared a very long way and Black can go down towards hoop 2.

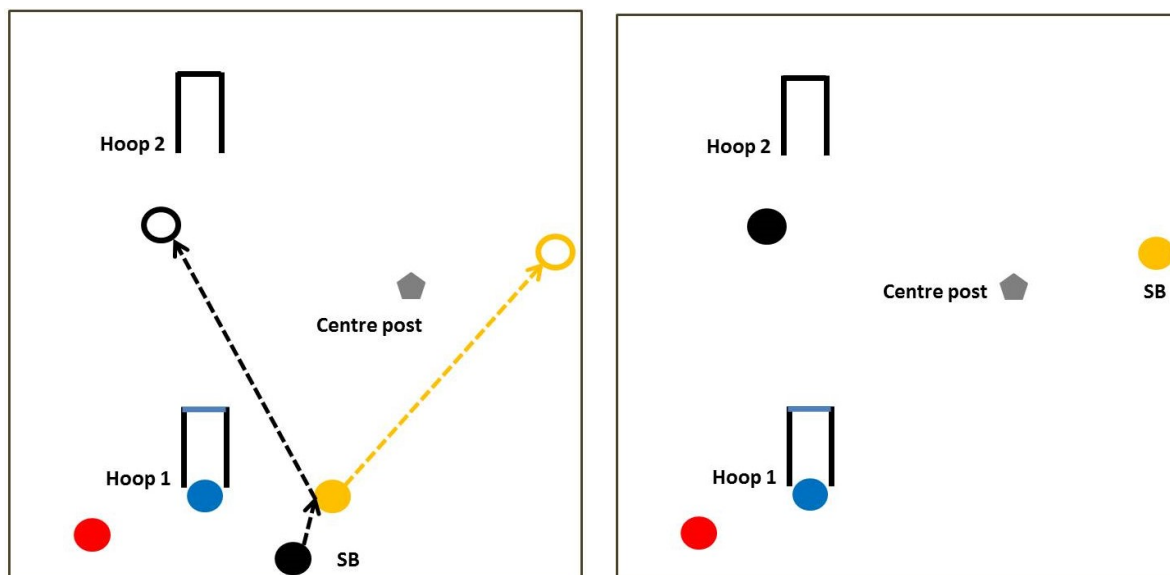


Figure 10 Clearing a ball and approaching the next hoop

In the second example, the opponent, Blue, is going to get hoop 1. Red could simply play to halfway, or promote Yellow to a clearing position behind the hoop. Combining these shots, by glancing off partner, not only forces the opponent to use Black to peel Blue but also gives Red a good half-way position on hoop 2.

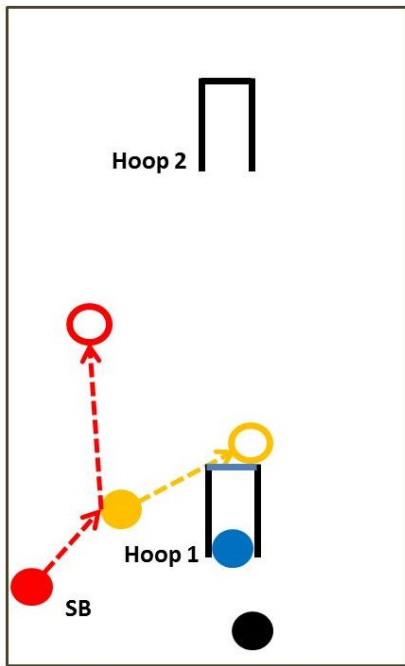


Figure 11 Glance off partner to force the peel

You should be sure in your own mind which is the primary aim of this stroke and concentrate on getting the right strength for it.

Ricochet peels

The ricochet peel, used only at even-numbered hoops, is a very strong combination of shots. If it can be set up without risking the hoop then it is a relatively easy shot to execute as the final position of the peeled ball doesn't matter. (This is why it is a ricochet, rather than a rush.)

Start setting this up by putting one ball in front of the hoop but on the side away from the next hoop, i.e. on the west side if the next hoop is 3. Then put the partner ball into the jaws if this can be done without compromising the hoop. If possible, the ball should be about half-way through the hoop. Any less and it is vulnerable to being removed; any more and the ricochet becomes difficult.

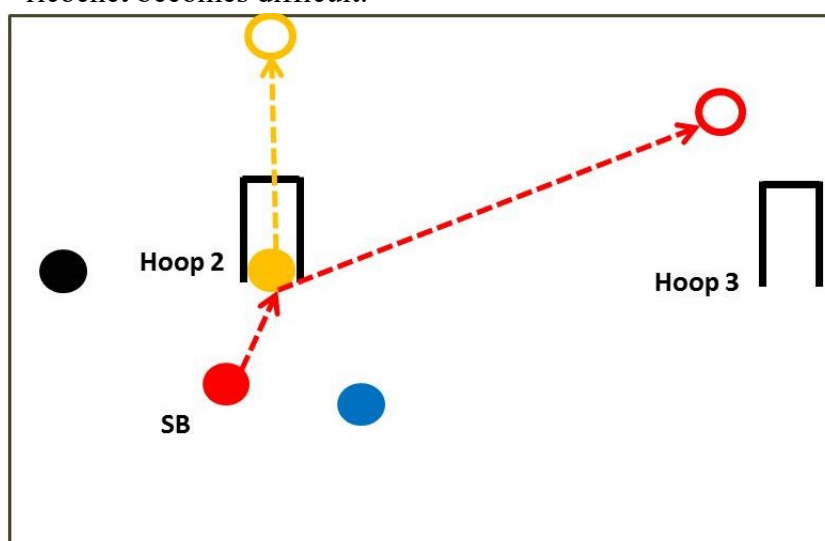


Figure 12 Ricochet peel at hoop 2

The exercise involves the placement of the first ball to optimise the angle, the nestling of the second ball to the right depth in the hoop and then the ricochet peel stroke, concentrating on getting the striker ball to a good position on the next hoop.

If this shot is being played at hoop 4 (or hoop 10) then the Red ball should be in a wide position, to give a fine cut, but if it is at hoop 6 then the Red should be almost straight in front, as shown in Figure 13.

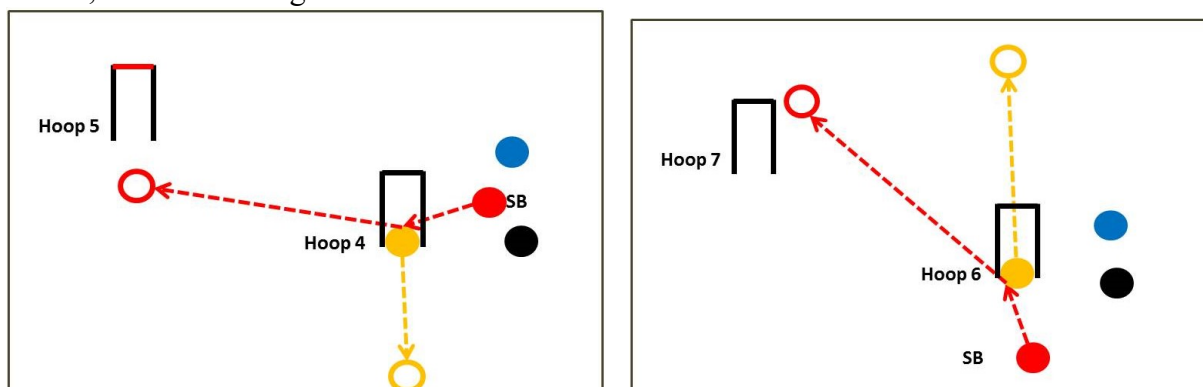


Figure 13 Different ball positions for the ricochet peel

Partner Support

In this section the main aim is to enhance partner's position, without necessarily moving it.

In the first example, Blue has attempted the hoop, missed and gone a long way down the lawn. Red is to play but neither Red nor Yellow have a possible hoop shot. Red could set up in front of the hoop, blocking Black but would then be cleared by it.

Instead, try to place your ball in front of the near upright. This will block Black and set up an in-off for your partner.

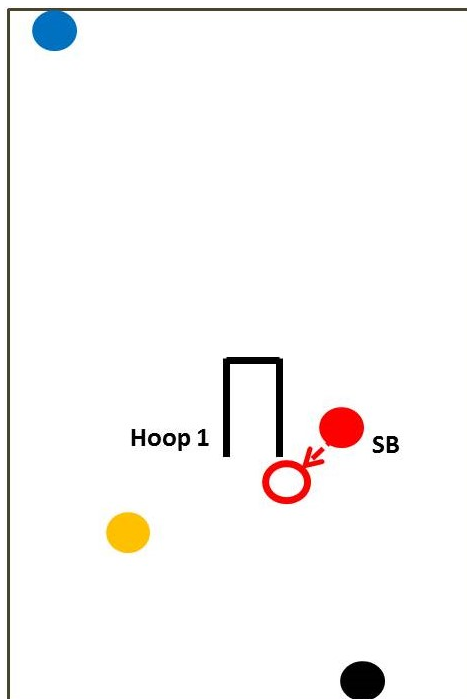
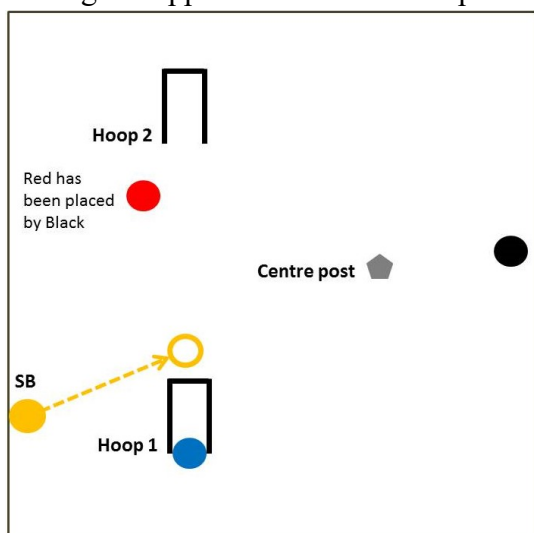


Figure 14 Set up a blocking in-off

This is not an easy shot, but if it is successful then Yellow, instead of being out of position, will have an easy hoop run.

If Black clears Yellow in order to avoid leaving the in-off then Black will be out of position and Yellow will return, giving you two in front of the hoop.

If your partner ball is in a good position at the next hoop and not offside then it may be worth forcing the opponent to run the hoop.



In this example, Red was put in its current position by Black. Yellow could possibly clear Blue but could not keep position as well so Blue would simply come back. Red would then also have to come back on-side. If Yellow fails to clear Blue then Blue could remain in the jaws, forcing Red to come back and allowing Black to return.

Instead, put Yellow directly behind hoop 1 so that Blue is forced to run it, leaving Red clear for a shot at hoop 2. Yellow simultaneously blocks Blue and protects Red's position.

Figure 15 Protecting an off-side ball

If your partner ball and an opponent are in contact or very close together, it may be possible to use the opponent's ball as a bombard to promote your partner to the next hoop, without it being off-side.

In the scenario shown in Figure 16 this shot has three purposes:

- 1 Send Yellow up to hoop 2.
- 2 Clear Blue as far as possible.
- 3 Put Red in a position to clear Black if it doesn't run the hoop in its next turn.

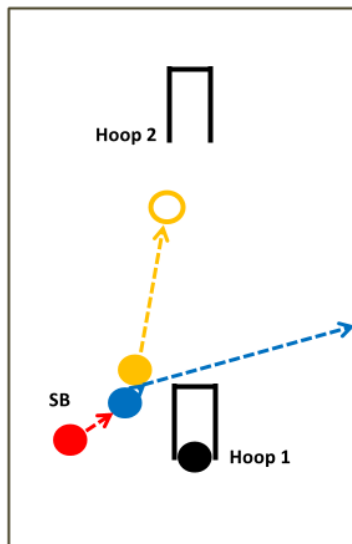


Figure 16 Bombard partner offside

Practice playing a hard stroke to direct one ball onto another in such a way as to send it in a particular direction.

This is unlikely to be accurate unless the two target balls are close together.

With a greater separation between Blue and Yellow, this shot becomes very difficult and it would probably be better to clear Blue across the lawn and send Red down to hoop 2. This might leave Yellow in a position to clear Black if it doesn't run the hoop.