**AC Lawncraft – excerpts from Oxford Croquet articles**

**Refereeing Lawncraft**

**SOME EXTRACTS FROM AN ARTICLE BY IAN PLUMMER ON OXFORD CROQUET SITE**

**http://www.oxfordcroquet.com/ref/lawncraft/index.asp**

The referee should always ask the player what the state of a game is. Seeing a ball six inches through a hoop with another ball just in front of it, it is automatic to assume that the hoop has just been run and the striker wishes to roquet the reception ball. What however if the balls are there by chance and the striker is playing a scatter shot having already roqueted the ball. Now you are looking for a hindered stroke and a double tap (excused on a roquet).

It is also prudent to ask a player what his intent is. If the player does something extremely novel it can distract the referee from doing his job. An example is where someone very close to a hoop deliberately attempts to bounce his ball off an upright to roquet an adjacent ball. If you are not expecting it you could be looking in the wrong place. I have also been surprised when someone used a diagonal sweep to run a hoop when his ball was almost in a hoop's jaws at a most acute angle. Not having seen or tried the stroke in that circumstance I could not properly judge whether the sound I heard was expected of the stroke or not ... I have since experimented.

Once you know the circumstances you have to adopt a position which allows you to observe the stroke. The position should not unduly hinder the striker and where possible you should not cast a shadow over the balls. You should also check for personal safety if you are standing in front or behind people with exaggerated strokes. Wherever possible you should get as close to the balls as possible.

You have to analyse which the likely fault will be, e.g. you need to be side-on to the balls and low down if you expect a beveled edge with the bottom of the mallet face, or standing beside the striker's shoulder if you expect a side beveled edge.

Sound is the best indication of crushes and double taps. Before refereeing a shot you should remove all of the clips from the hoop and check how firmly it is in the ground - gently try to flex it with thumb and forefinger. If it is not solid then you would expect a different sound.

**Wired Balls**

When called upon to make a wiring judgment you must make sure that

1. The opponent is responsible for the position of the ball on which the lift is being claimed, and
2. The claimant is about to start his turn.

A player is not allowed to call for a referee to see if he is *giving away*a lift to his opponent. He must make that judgment himself. Being responsible for a ball's position remains until the ball is moved, irrespective of the number of turns since the ball was placed there. You become responsible for a ball's position if you have moved it or deemed it. You can move a ball by indirect action e.g. by hitting a hoop against which it was resting. If you commit a fault involving the ball, including an air shot, you become responsible for its position.

The referee's judgment on whether a ball is wired is taken as a matter of fact and cannot be questioned or taken to the Referee of the Tournament. Only the referee's interpretation of the Laws can be questioned. Conceivably however his methods could be questioned.

**Testing for a Wired Ball**

If the balls are not blatantly wired by a hoop upright or peg you will need to do an optical test using test balls. These could be a pair of balls which are clearly wired - carefully marked so that they can be replaced.

You may need to place a wedge of coins beside each of the balls to make them touch. You can use a mallet laid on the ground as an aid to gauge a right angle.

Do not be afraid of putting coloured objects next to or behind the far ball to improve the contrast - seeing the edge of a green ball at 20 yards against a green background is not ideal.

If you are unsure the claimant is given the benefit of doubt. Note that another ball cannot cause a wiring - only pegs and hoops are considered. Also if ball A is wired on ball B the converse does not necessarily apply.

**Roquet of Ball in Hoop**

The referee should firstly check how loose the hoop is by gently flexing it with thumb and forefinger. Obviously if it is slack then it may move into a ball which could be 1/4" away from the hoop causing it to move. If it is stout - very rigidly set in the ground, then a hard strike on the hoop may cause a large plate of earth around the hoop to shake. This can cause the target ball to shake.

You need to look down on the ball, remove any clips which are in the way and try to avoid placing your shadow over the ball. You should also be prepared to jump if balls scatter towards your feet. You will note where the target ball lies in the jaws of the hoop. This is important if the hoop is the next hoop in order for the striker's ball.

If the ball is on or very close to the wire you can put down a marker coin which lies on the line between the point of contact of the target ball on the hoop upright and the ball's centre. This is the track down which the ball will move if it gets solely an impulse from the hoop. If the ball is truely roqueted it is highly unlikely that it will travel down this line.

If the ball is arriving from a distance you can follow it into the point of impact - you have time to re-focus your eyes. If the striker's ball is close to the hoop or traveling swiftly then you have to look at the target ball. Whilst watching the shot you **must** note whether the target ball has shaken as a consequence of the shot. It may have been nudged by the wire or shaken as a consequence of the plate of earth around the hoop shaking.

Having witnessed the event you tell the striker whether the ball was roqueted or not. You must not volunteer the fact about whether the ball has been shaken and hence the striker is now responsible for its position. You do however have to remain on hand to give this information if asked as it may lead to a wiring lift

 **Refereeing on the Lawn**

**SOME EXTRACTS FROM AN ARTICLE BY IAN BOND ON THE OXFORD CROQUET SITE**

<http://www.oxfordcroquet.com/ref/rlawn/index.asp>

### Marking the position of the balls

The purpose of marking the position of the balls is to ensure that they may be accurately replaced, should a fault be committed; but this must be done in a way that does not interfere with or assist the striker. The method used is essentially one of taking bearings on fixed points and recording them (by means of markers). There are two guiding principles which should be observed, when precision is important:

* The position of a ball is best defined by bearings which intersect at right angles;
* A bearing is better defined by the edges of ball/wire/peg than by their centres, and mixing the two (centre of ball, edge of wire) can lead to mistakes in replacement.

These two guiding principles may conflict, particularly when a ball is close to a hoop (a check measurement of the gap can be useful in such positions). The first should in practice generally take precedence - it is usually better to mark in a way which favours a good intersection of the bearing lines than one which accurately defines lines with a poor intersection.

The standard of accuracy required in marking depends on how critical the position of the ball happens to be: for example, the precise position of a target ball in a hampered shot is rarely vital and can safely be recorded by a single marker to one side of it. It is bad practice to delay the striker by indulging in unnecessarily precise marking.

Small markers are more accurate than large ones.

### Assessing the likely outcome of the stroke

It is important to form some view in advance, of the likely outcome of the striker's intended stroke - if it is successful - and the faults most likely to be committed (you may find it useful therefore to ask how the stroke will be played). This helps to prepare mentally for what to expect, in terms of sounds (mallet striking ball or hoop, ball hitting hoop, peg or other balls) and of the path of the striker's ball and others likely to be affected by the stroke. It also helps you decide where best to take up position to watch the stroke.

Differences between expectation and actuality may help in judging whether an irregularity has occurred. But it is important not to pre-judge the outcome of the stroke: the seemingly impossible does happen, and the unexpected is not necessarily the result of a fault.

### Positioning for best observation

This follows naturally from stage 2 and will rarely give problems. You may find it necessary to position yourself in a way the striker does not like - for example, close to the line of the shot - but do not be deterred: it is your duty 'to take up the most favourable position for adjudicating the fairness and effect of a questionable stroke'. You should however ensure that you do not obstruct the shot, that you will not be hit by the striker's mallet and that you will not interfere with the likely movement of the balls during the stroke. Wherever possible, ensure that your shadow does not fall across the striker's line of play.

In some situations, two referees may be needed to ensure that everything can be properly observed. If you think that that is necessary, do not hesitate to call another referee to assist you.

### Giving your decision

Three simple points to bear in mind:

* **Be decisive**

You will not always give a decision with which the striker agrees. In many situations, the verdict depends to some extent on individual judgment and the standard you set may not accord with the standard expected by the striker (though it should be tolerably close to other referees' standards); and you may simply get it wrong. But you must decide whether or not a fault has been committed - it is not a matter for you to debate with the striker. Hesitation in delivering your verdict may invite dissent and certainly weakens the striker's confidence in your competence.

Remember, though, that the striker may be more aware than you that a particular fault has been committed (perhaps you were unsighted - the fault may not have been the one you expected and so positioned yourself for) and must draw your attention to a fault he believes he has committed, even if you thought the stroke was clean: your presence does not relieve the striker of his obligation, as joint referee of the game, to 'immediately announce any error he believes or suspects he may have committed'. But the decision is still yours.

* **Be clear**

Give your decision in terms which cannot create doubt: 'yes' could mean almost anything, 'fair' can all too easily be mis-heard as 'fault'. The use of the terms 'clean/fault' (or 'hit/miss', if appropriate to the situation) helps to minimise the scope for confusion.

* **Be prompt**

The least important of the three - it is better to be correct than to be quick - but it is dangerous to consider your decision for too long: your memory of the stroke will fade quickly, the circumstances (a tricky rover hoop which will win the game if it is clean and lose it if it is not) will flash back into your mind. But don't rush unnecessarily: some strokes may have outcomes which thoroughly surprise you and you may need a moment to think through what must have happened. All the same, the quicker you can make up your mind, the easier your decision is likely to be.

Whether or not to volunteer explanations is a moot point. I incline to the view that it is better not to do so (unless asked, of course), unless it is obvious that the striker simply does not appreciate what might have gone wrong and so should be told, so that he does not through ignorance commit similar faults in future (this is most frequently a problem with high bisquers - particularly with crushes - and with hammer shots, where standards can differ markedly). But it is really a matter for personal taste.

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