

GOLF CROQUET

Playing the Middle Section Specific Tactics for Hoops #5 & #6 By Cheryl Bromley

When competing in a game of Golf Croquet, I like to break each game into three sections: the Start, Middle, and Finish

I do this as a means of trying to stay focused throughout each section so that my intensity is consistent without easing up if I have a lead, as well as not getting overwhelmed if I am behind. As we all know, the momentum of the game can change on one shot or hoop. The game is never over until the winning wicket has been scored, so keeping or switching momentum back onto one's side is key.

Section I: The "Start"	Hoops 1-2-3-4
Section II: The "Middle"	Hoops 5-6-7-8
Section III: The "Finish"	Hoops 9-10-11-12 & 13

Today's focus will be on the Middle Section and most specifically the middle hoops 5 & 6 and the transition hoops prior to (#4) and following them (#7).

The Transition – Hoop #4 to #5. Since hoop #4 is a corner wicket, if your scoring ball happens to be in the jaws and it is possible for your partner ball to peel it through and move towards hoop #5, you will save your team having to take an extra shot. The scoring ball will now be able to take position at hoop #5 on its next shot rather than having to first score the hoop.

Location, Location, Location – if your opponent scored hoop #4 and you are the **first ball** to play to hoop #5, determining your shot placement for position will depend on where your opponent is and their ability to clear you away.

- a) If you think it would be a difficult or long shot for your opponent to clear you away, take a scoring position at hoop #5
- b) If your opponent shoots well and could potentially clear you, set up slightly back and just beyond the center of hoop #5. Your ball will now act as a clearing ball for any opponent ball that lands in a scoring position. (Refer to diagram A next page).
- c) One other consideration is whether your partner ball is in a position for you to rush it to a good position at hoop #5.

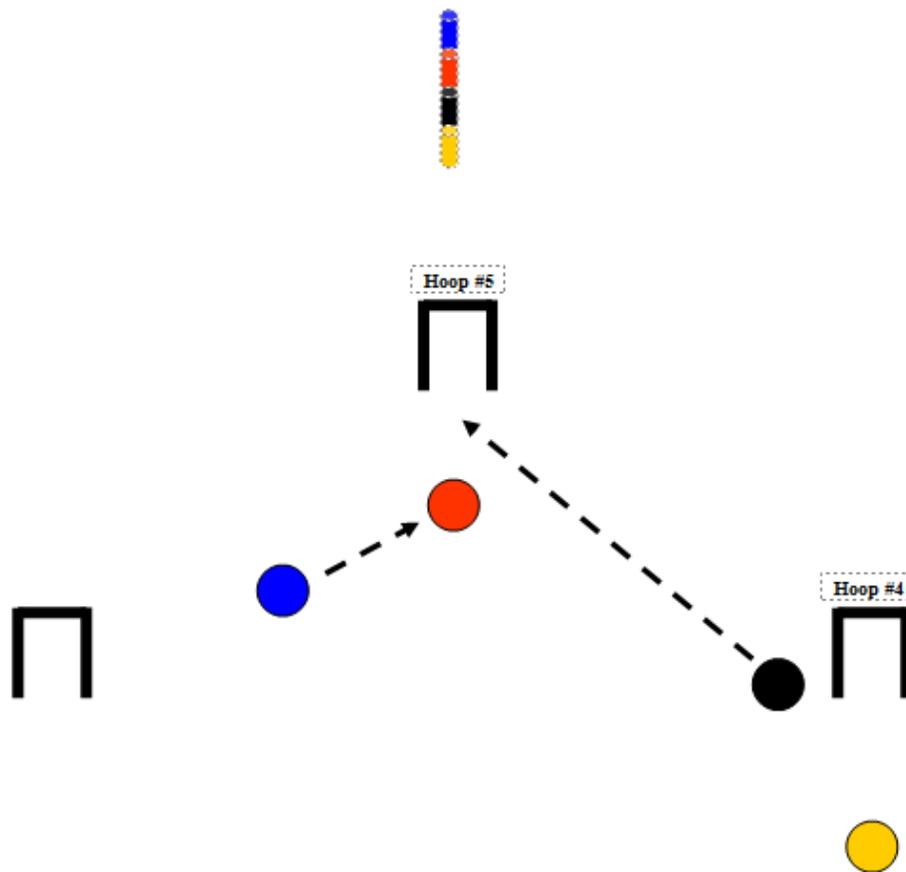
Clear, Block or Play Defense - If you are the **second ball** to play to hoop #5, there are a few options you can try.

- a) Clear or move the opponent ball that has position at hoop #5 to take away their scoring shot.
- b) Block the opponent ball that has position at hoop #5
- c) If the opponent ball is on a questionable angle to score, set up behind hoop #5 to be able to take them out if they go to jaws. The risk here is that they can now use the hoop to "wire" or protect their next shot from your ball.

- d) A risky option is to set up in a better scoring position than your opponent and force them to take the “bait” rather than trying to score the hoop. However, you could be sent well across the court if they clear you.

The Money Ball - the **third ball** to shoot is what I consider the “money ball.” Imagine the following scenarios:

- Your 1st ball (blue) is not in a good scoring position at hoop #5 – no worries – set up black to score hoop 5 and blue will now become a clearing ball to take care of any ball that might threaten to take out black. (Refer to diagram A below).
- Your 1st ball (blue) is in a good scoring position at hoop #5, your black ball option could be to set a block between any opponent ball that might want to clear blue away.
- Your 1st ball (blue) is in a good scoring position, but you can also set up black to score as well so that you “double load” the hoop for insurance.
- If you feel confident about scoring hoop #5 with blue, set up your black ball half-way to hoop #6



Think about the Transition from hoop #5 - #6. Keep in mind that all odd-numbered hoops are great opportunities to jaws the ball and therefore be able to score the hoop and be the first ball down to the next hoop. There is a good chance you could win two hoops in a row!

Take your time playing hoop #5 and try to create a situation where you can jaws your ball without getting cleared out. Also keep in mind when shooting the ball in the jaws at #5 on to #6 that the distance between these two hoops is the shortest hoop distance, be careful not to overhit and go past #6.

If your opponent is in the jaws at hoop #5 and you cannot clear them out, position yourself to block their path to hoop #6.

First Ball to Hoop #6 – try to get in the best possible scoring position if you are the first ball to hoop 6. The other balls most likely will be shooting from behind you and possible without much angle (along with navigating around the center peg), making it a difficult clearing shot.

- a) If your opponent has a good scoring position at hoop #6, find a way to clear them, block them, or shoot the hoop from where you are.
- b) Keep in mind the distance from the center peg to hoop #6 is 21 feet, so if you happen to be in the vicinity of the peg and have no other options, a 21 foot hoop shot isn't a terribly bad option.
- c) Another option is to go halfway to hoop #7 – be sure to set up on the scoring half-way side of hoop #7. Some players will opt to shoot their ball out of bounds at the halfway point to have a nice angle to hoop #7.
- d) If your scoring ball is in the jaws at hoop #6, look for a chance for your partner ball to peel you through, saving you a shot heading to #7.

Clearing Shots are Key at Hoop #7 – with hoop #7 located in a corner and your approach from the center of the court from hoop #6, clearing shots can be vitally important. If your opponent has set up in a scoring position at #7, take him out. Typically, the worst thing that will happen if you miss a clearing shot is that you will go into the corner quadrant. You are still within a 21 foot vicinity of this hoop.

Hoop #7 is another excellent and wise opportunity to go to jaws.

In Summary:

The Score after Hoop #4 – at this point you could be off to a great start leading 4-0 or 3-1, or tied at 2-2. If not, you may have your work cut out for you trailing 0-4 or 1-3.

Regardless of the score after this first section, focus on playing the middle section well. It could increase your lead, tie things up, or get momentum back in your favor.

Ideally, you are trying to score both hoop #5 and #6 keeping yourself in a good situation in the game as you head to one-back (#7).

At the end of hoop #6 the score could be 6-0 in your favor, 5-1, or 4-2. Your lead could also have dissipated making it 3-3, 2-4, or worse you could be down 1-5 or 0-6. Regardless of the score, remember that the game is never over until the winning hoop has been scored. As you head into the final section, each shot you take will be critical.

Every shot you take is important and has a purpose. There is a lot to think about when you are playing, but it all boils down to making each shot you take count. Every shot has value and each shot combined with another will hopefully string together a win!