

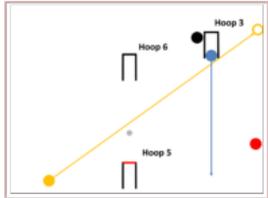
THE CONSEQUENCE OF SUCCESS

By Stephen Custance-Baker

The theme of this article concerns the value of trying for a difficult shot, whether a hoop-run, positioning or a clearance. The fact that it's a difficult shot implies that there is a high likelihood of failure, but players already take that into account when choosing to play the stroke.

The aspect that many players don't give any consideration to is the possible downside of succeeding. If a successful shot will hardly improve your chances of running the hoop or will leave you badly positioned for the next, it's probably not the best choice. This is when you should think about more beneficial options, i.e. the 'percentage' shot.

Here is a common example of this situation. Blue is in the jaws of Hoop 3 and Black has cleared Yellow and left itself in a hoop-running position, wired from Red, which is offside.

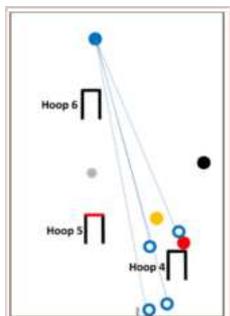


Yellow tries a long shot to clear Blue from the hoop. If it fails, Blue will run the hoop, leaving Yellow near the corner and Red playing from the west penalty area.

If it succeeds in clearing Blue from the hoop, Yellow will finish by the East boundary; Blue will either run the hoop or go to halfway; Red will return onside and Black will run the hoop.

But what is the alternative? Yellow could play to an onside position, trying to get on the line from Hoop 3 to Hoop 4. Although this means giving up Hoop 3, it will greatly improve the chance of challenging for Hoop 4.

In another example of a long clearance, Blue, to play, has been cleared close to the North boundary. Red is in a good position to run Hoop 4, Yellow is also close, but Black is much further.



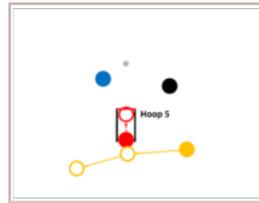
Most players will attempt the clearance of Red because it will probably run the hoop if it isn't cleared.

Consider first what will happen if Blue's shot succeeds in clearing Red, (which is a very low probability for most players).

Blue will ricochet to a random position, probably off the South or East boundary. Wherever Red goes, it will return to a hoop-running position, leaving both Red and Yellow in front of the hoop.

If the shot by Blue misses, then Blue will be in the corner, but what alternatives are there?

The illustration shows three other possible positions for Blue, apart from the clearance.



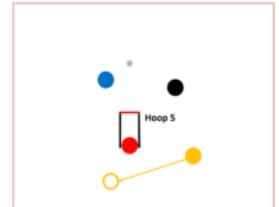
South boundary, in a good position for approaching Hoop 5.

Behind Hoop 4, in case Red fails to run through.

In front of Hoop 4, in a good position for approaching Hoop 5 and also in a position to attempt a jump at Hoop 4 if Red fails to run it.

These are all better than being in the corner.

There is sometimes a choice between peeling your partner or setting up a second ball. In this case, Red is likely to be cleared by Blue, but could be peeled by Yellow with a fine cut.



If the peel succeeds then Red and Yellow will have the hoop; Blue will play to Hoop 6, Red will probably be hampered and Black will play to Hoop 6. If Yellow fails to peel Red, it will finish in a poor position; Blue will clear Red to the South boundary and neither side will control the hoop.

Alternatively, play Yellow to a hoop-running position, wired from Black. If Blue clears Red, it will return; Black has a choice of shots, but cannot clear Yellow. The result is that Red and Yellow will still be very likely to get Hoop 5 and be in a much better shape to contest Hoop 6.

There are many situations where a difficult shot is possible and should be considered, but part of the decision should be an assessment of whether success in the shot will genuinely increase the chance of gaining the hoop. If the probable gain is, at best, marginal and failure will leave the ball in a much worse position, then think about an alternative shot that will give an advantage on the next hoop.