

AC STROKES FOR GC PLAYERS

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Do you coach only GC? Here's how to explain some useful AC strokes to GC players.

THE CROQUET STROKE

The AC croquet stroke is unfamiliar to many GC players but occurs sufficiently often to be worth learning. When you need to play a ball that is touching another, either an opponent or your partner, there are several strokes available to you.

These include the straight shots; Roll, Drive, Stop and the angled shots; Fine take-off, Thick take-off, Split roll, Split stop shot, Sideways drag.

In AC, you can pick your ball up and place it where you want, as long as it's touching the ball you have just roqueted (hit, for GC players!), whereas in GC you have to accept what's offered when the balls are touching. You need to be able to recognise what strokes are possible and to practise them.

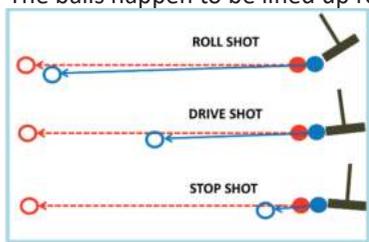
The two main influences on the result of a croquet stroke are:

- 1 The tilt of the mallet shaft forward or backward at the moment of impact.
- 2 The angle of your swing off the line through the centres of the balls.

It is well worth trying the alternatives to see the effect of these two influences on the direction and distance travelled by the balls.

STRAIGHT SHOTS

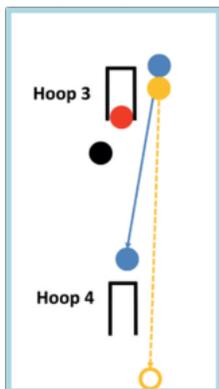
The balls happen to be lined up roughly in the direction you want both to go.



The more that the mallet shaft is tilted forwards in a 'roll' shot, the more that the balls will travel the same distance. As the shaft is

raised closer to the vertical, the more that the target ball will travel relative to the striker's ball. A vertical shaft will give the 'drive' shot in which the target ball will travel much further, perhaps 5 times or more, than the target ball. Finally, the shaft tilted backwards gives the stop shot, in which the striker's ball only travels a small fraction of the distance of the target ball.

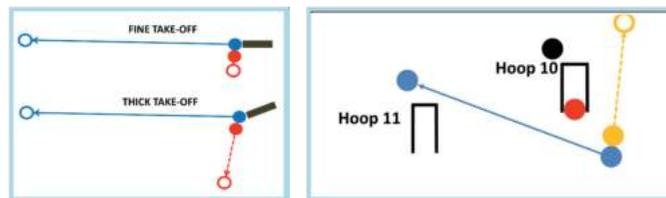
One example of a use for this shot is when an opponent has blocked your jump shot but left their ball in contact. Play a roll/drive shot to put them off the far boundary and yourself at the next hoop. Red must run 3 or be cleared by Black.



TAKE-OFF SHOTS

A take-off shot is intended to send the striker's ball much further than the target ball. These can be played with various different mallet tilts, but it is the mallet's angle of strike that is most influential.

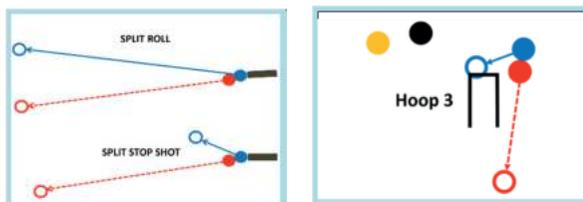
It's possible to play a stroke, when two balls are touching, that hardly moves the other ball at all. This stroke, the fine take-off, allows the striker to aim almost exactly in the direction that they want to go and is very useful when deliberately playing to an offside position at the next hoop. Alternatively, the balls may be so positioned that you need a thick take-off to get to the next hoop.



SPLIT SHOTS

With a split shot, the player is trying to send the balls in different directions, with the target ball travelling as far as, or further than, the striker's ball. If they are intended to travel about the same distance, then a split roll is used, in which the mallet is tilted forwards and played 'through' the ball, i.e. with plenty of follow-through. There must be a clear single contact, to avoid any suggestion of 'push'.

Although both are used, the Split Stop Shot is more often required. If played correctly, this enables a player to send the opponent away and themselves into a good position. It is played with the mallet striking the ball upwards, like a standard stop shot, but angled to one side.



SIDEWAYS DRAW

If the striker plays to one side of the centre line between the balls, the roughness of the ball's surface will cause a slight draw off the straight line. This is usually irrelevant but becomes very important when the balls are lined up pointing straight at, or close to, the hoop.

By playing hard to one side of the line, the striker can cause the target ball to miss the hoop completely, even it was lined up on the centre, or to run the hoop, even if it was lined up on an upright.

