**Golf Croquet Rules Questions and Answers**

*Here are some questions which GC referees have sent to the Victorian Coordinator of Golf Croquet Referees (John van der Touw), and his responses. These are not official rulings: only the WCF can give those. If you have a golf croquet rules question you would like answered, send it in an email to* *gcreferees@croquetvic.asn.au**.*

**Golf Croquet Official Rulings**

From time to time the World Croquet Federation publishes Golf Croquet Official Rulings. These are usually clarifications on the Rules of golf croquet, but occasionally an official ruling changes a rule or introduces a new rule.

Here is a link to GC Official Rulings via the Croquet Australia website

<https://croquet-australia.com.au/2016-gc-official-rulings.pdf>

**Questions and answers**

I have grouped the questions according to the rule they relate to although there is one group called “Miscellaneous”.

**5. The Start**

**Question 5.1**

At the beginning of a game, is the ball in play the moment it is struck, or only once it is outside the starting area?

***Answer* 5.1**

The ball is in play the moment it is struck. That is the case even if a striking fault was committed, but not if it was a wrong ball, nor if a non-striking fault was committed before contact was made with the ball.

**Question 5.2**

What is an example of a non-striking fault committed in the first four turns of a game? What happens then?

***Answer* 5.2**

Court damage would be a non-striking fault if it occurred before contact was made with the ball, providing the damage was within the boundaries of the court, including the starting area (i.e. the one-yard corner 4 quadrant). There is another rather unlikely possibility. Touching another ball before the mallet made contact with the striker’s ball is also a non-striking fault provided the other ball is in play. A ball in the starting area would be in play if it was there as a result of a striking fault or a particularly poor shot in a previous turn.

If the striker commits a non-striking fault before the ball is played in in one of the first four turns, then the offending player would miss his turn. The ball would remain an outside agency, so it could be removed from the court. If any other balls were moved as a result of the non-striking fault, they would have to be put back where they were. The turn missed would be the one the striker attempted to play. The ball would be played from the starting area in a later turn.

**Question 5.3**

After blue has been played at the start of game, red commits a striking fault. Blue and Black choose to have the red ball replaced. Can black now clear red? They might want to do that, for example, so that black was not offside even if it was past halfway to hoop 2 and the hoop was run before black played again.

***Answer* 5.3**

Yes. The red ball has been played in regardless of whether it is left where it stopped, or replaced.

**Question 5.4**

After blue has been played at the start of game, red commits a striking fault. Blue and Black choose to have the red ball replaced. The owner of black puts his ball in contact with the red ball and plays it like a two-ball association croquet shot. Is that allowed?

***Answer* 5.4**

Yes, provided a non-striking fault is not committed while placing the black ball. The red ball would almost inevitably move slightly in the attempt to put the black ball in contact with it but that would not be a fault if only the black ball and not the player’s hand touched the red ball. If the red ball moved noticeably in the process, it would have to be put back.

**6. The Turn**

**Question 6.1**

A ball which has gone out of bounds is placed on the boundary where it went out. When it is the striker’s turn to play that ball, he casts his mallet over it and accidentally touches the ball with his mallet, moving it into the court. Does that count as a stroke? What if the accidental contact causes the ball to move immediately out of instead of into the court?

***Answer* 6.1**.

Accidental contact with the mallet is a stroke regardless of which direction the ball moves. Rule 6(a) says “The accidental touching of a ball with the mallet by the striker while preparing to play a stroke counts as a stroke (or a fault)”.

It has been argued by some that Rule 6(a) does not apply in the situation described by this question because the ball was an outside agency at the time contact was made with the mallet. However, the same argument would imply that the ball would have been an outside agency at the moment of contact even if the contact was deliberate. If that were the case, a ball could never be put back into play once it went out of bounds. Therefore, although the ball was an outside agency until just before contact was made with the mallet, at the moment of contact, whether accidental or deliberate, the ball ceased to be an outside agency, so a stroke has been played. Rule 6(g), which says that ball “remains an outside agency until it is next played” makes no mention of the player’s intention.

It has also been argued that the situation where the ball immediately went out of bounds is a special case. If a player deliberately played his boundary ball straight out of bounds (for whatever reason) that would be his turn. He would not get another go, and neither would the player who accidentally knocked his ball straight out of bounds while casting. Once again, intention does not matter.

As far as I am aware there is one exception. That is where the accidental touching of a ball with a mallet was done by a player in the very first turn of a game. Rule 5(e) says “A game starts when a player strikes or attempts to strike a ball with the intention of starting the game”. So the player could claim that he has not played a shot because the game had not started yet when he accidentally touched a ball with the mallet. Rule 5(e) is the only place in the GC Rules Book where the word “intention” appears.

**7. Scoring a Point**

**Question 7.1**

Has a ball which has passed through the next hoop in order scored that hoop even if it subsequently rolls back into the hoop?

***Answer* 7.1**

No, the hoop is not scored unless the position of the ball before it moved was agreed upon. This is covered in Rule 6(j) which also says that “the position of the ball is agreed if the next player has played or if the position of the ball has been ruled on by a referee or the players”. This is subject to Rule 9(e) which says that if an outside agency or weather moves a stationary ball, it is to be replaced before the next stroke. If one player claims the ball was moved by weather and the other player disagrees, a referee would have to make a ruling.

There may be some confusion over this because Rule 7(b) says that a ball “completes the running if it stops clear of the plane of the playing side”. In this instance “stops” should be taken to mean “finally comes to rest”. There is no five-second rule in golf croquet.

**8. Advice**

**Question 8.1**

Is the placing of a scoring clip on a wrong hoop considered giving incorrect information and could an opponent claim a replay if they acted on that information?

***Answer* 8.1**

It seems very unlikely in golf croquet that, after scoring a hoop, a player would put a scoring clip on a different hoop. It would be giving incorrect information to put a scoring clip on the current hoop in order to indicate that you had scored it if, in fact, you hadn’t. A time when you might put a scoring clip on a wrong hoop, is when you and your opponent have been contesting the wrong hoop and you run that hoop and mistakenly thinking that you have scored it. Rule 1(f) deals specifically with the situation where “one or more hoops have been competed for by both sides and run out of order”, so it would apply here and take precedence over Rule 8(c) which deals more generally with the case where “a player acts on incorrect information given by the opponent”.

**Question 8.2**

It has been suggested that players carry rules books with them during a game and if there is a dispute during, refer to them to try and resolve any issue. My understanding is that whilst rule books can be carried they should not be brought out during a game and only referred to after a game has finished.

***Answer* 8.2**

Players can refer to a rule book during a game if it is to clarify the rules that apply to a circumstance that has arisen. If a referee is available, the players should ask the referee rather than try to work things out for themselves. If necessary, the referee may refer to a rules book or ask another referee to help.

Official Ruling 8.1 says: “Players are not permitted to refer to printed, handwritten or other prepared material during a match, except for the purpose of clarifying the rules that apply to a circumstance that has arisen”.

**Question 8.3**

Is the placing of a scoring clip on a hoop considered giving advice to the opposition as the player is indicating which hoop should be played next?

***Answer* 8.3**

We need to distinguish between giving information and giving tactical advice. If you place a scoring clip on a hoop you are, effectively, stating who scored that hoop. That is giving information but would not be a contravention of Rule 8(d) which prohibits giving tactical advice to an opponent.

**Question 8.4**.

Blue knew that only one of his opponents had extra turns in a handicap doubles game but not which one. He asked Red who had the extra turns and she replied “Would you believe it’s Yellow?” Later, when Red said that she would take an extra turn, Blue objected saying that she had told him that Yellow had the extra turns, Red said “No I didn’t. I said ‘Would you believe it’s Yellow?’”. Blue said he had been misled and called the referee. Red claimed that she had not misled Blue, but that she had simply made a joke and Blue should have understood that since Yellow was a much better player than she was. If you were the referee, how would you handle the situation?

***Answer* 8.4**

I would rule that Blue had been misled even if I believed Red’s claim that she had not intended to mislead. It is not obvious how the situation should be rectified because it is not exactly covered by the rules. It would be reasonable to give Red a warning under Rule 14. Before deciding whether to take further action I would ask Blue in what way being misled had affected his play. Depending on his answer, I might rule that Red could not take an extra turn now (and therefore it would be Black’s turn to play), but Red could take her extra turn, or turns, later in the game. Official Ruling 15.1 allows a referee to decide an issue “in a manner which best meets the justice of the case” if the situation “does not appear to be adequately covered in the rules or their interpretation appears to be uncertain”.

This official ruling does *not* give a referee permission to ignore a rule simply because he thinks it is unfair. If a situation is adequately and unambiguously covered by the rules, those rules must be applied.

**Question 8.5**

Is it legal for a partner to stand immediately behind the striker and give line of sight advice such as "a bit to the left, no that's too much, back to the right, yep that's right" and then step away before the actual stroke is played?

***Answer* 8.5**

Yes. It would be OK for the partner to give detailed advice as you described while standing behind the partner or, indeed, while standing on the spot where he wants the striker to put the ball. Rule 8(a) says that players “may advise their partners and assist in the playing of a stroke by indicating the direction in which the mallet should be swung”. So, a player could even take hold of their partner’s mallet, line up the shot and then place the mallet on the ground pointing in the direction they want the shot to be played.

However, the person giving advice is not allowed to act as a marker while the stroke is played, so he would need to step away, if necessary, before the stroke was played.

If a player spends a long time giving detailed instructions to his partner, he could be given an official warning, under Rule 14, for time wasting.

**Question 8.6**

Is a player entitled to a replay if he is inadvertently deceived by the opponent in a situation such as the following? Yellow was the striker and called the referee to observe his jump shot attempt at hoop 7. The striker removed a yellow scoring clip from the hoop (having won hoop 2 earlier in the game) but his opponent did not see him do that. The jump shot attempt failed but the yellow ball finished behind the hoop. The referee stated that the shot was “clean” and the opponent said, “good shot”. The striker put the scoring clip he had removed earlier back on the hoop. The opponent, thinking that hoop 7 has been scored, played his blue ball towards hoop 8. Yellow then asked his opponent if he had thought that the yellow had scored the hoop. Is the opponent allowed to have a replay under Rule 8(c)?

***Answer* 8.6**

The owner of the blue ball is not entitled to a replay because he was not given incorrect information by his opponent. The owner of yellow was simply replacing a clip that should be replaced. Mind you, it seems likely that Yellow knew that his opponent was under a misapprehension and could have told him that the hoop had not been run, even though he wasn’t obliged to. A referee would have to rule that a replay was not allowed despite any thoughts he might have about sportsmanship.

**9. Interference**

**Question 9.1**

If a player indicates that he is going to attempt a jump shot, should the referee remove any scoring clips from the hoop without being asked to do so?

***Answer* 9.1**

An active referee may remove a scoring clip without being asked because WCF Refereeing Regulation R1(d) says that an “active referee who observes or suspects that an error or interference is about to occur must forestall subject to the conditions that apply to the adversary”. Regulation R1(a) defines what an “active” referee is.

The referee should not remove the clips before a player has given a clear indication that they intend to play a jump. Doing so could be considered to be giving tactical advice to a player.

If a referee failed to remove a scoring clip in such a situation, Rule 9(h) would still apply.

Rule 9(h) deals with the situation where a ball makes contact with a scoring clip that is attached to the hoop. Together with Official Ruling 9.1 it means that, if Rule 9(h) applies, the striker’s side cannot score the hoop point but the opponent’s side can.

**Question 9.2**

If the blue ball was in the jaws of the hoop and the red ball jumped the blue ball and went through the hoop leaving the blue ball still in the jaws of the hoop, does the red ball score the hoop?

In the same scenario if the red ball jumped the blue ball and went through the hoop but the blue ball also went through the hoop who would score the hoop then?

**Answer 9.2**

In the first case, the red ball would score the hoop. This is assuming that no fault was committed nor a wrong ball played and that Rule 9(h) doesn’t apply.

In the second case, the blue ball would score the hoop. This is assuming that no fault was committed nor a wrong ball played.

Rule 7(d) says that, if a stroke causes more than one ball to run the hoop, the ball nearest the hoop before the stroke scores the point. It doesn’t matter which ball actually went through the hoop first.

**Question 9.3**

In a double banked game, the pink ball is marked and lifted to enable the first colours to play. Can the second colours continue to play while the pink is up, or should they wait until it is replaced?

***Answer* 9.3**

As long as the correct position of the pink ball (i.e. where it was before it was picked up) is well out of the way, play could continue for the players of the second colours.

**Question 9.4**

When the red ball was cleared to the boundary the owner of that ball stopped it with his foot *after* it had crossed the boundary line. His opponent said that Red had committed a non-striking fault because he had not allowed the ball to come to rest before touching it. Was the opponent correct?

***Answer* 9.4**

No. According to Rule 6(g) a ball becomes an outside agency if more than half of it crosses the boundary. It is *not* a non-striking fault to touch an outside agency.

**Question 9.5**

If both red and yellow were boundary balls that were quite near each other, and it was red’s turn to play, could he promote the yellow ball (by striking his ball such that it moved the yellow ball)?

***Answer* 9.5**

The answer is “no”. The shot by red would be completely wasted because red would probably not finish anywhere useful, and the yellow ball, if it was moved by red’s shot, would simply have to be put back where it was.

The relevant rule is 6(g) which says:

A ball leaves the court and becomes an outside agency if more than half of it crosses the boundary. It remains an outside agency until it is next played. Unless it is directed to be moved as an offside ball it is played from the point where it crossed the boundary.

**Question 9.6**

Red was played into a position in front of the hoop but it fell into a sprinkler head hole. The blue ball was quite close to red. After black and yellow had played, blue wanted to clear the red ball – a task that would be unusually difficult because of the sprinkler head hole. Even with a good shot, the blue ball was likely to finish quite far away while barely moving the red ball. Did the owner of blue have the right to have the red ball moved out of the sprinkler head hole before playing his shot? Would it make any difference whether the owner of the red ball offered to allow his ball to be moved out of the hole?

***Answer* 9.6**

A sprinkler head holes can be treated as an example of an immoveable outside agency on the court. Thus, it can be treated, according to Official Ruling 9.2, as damage that cannot be repaired. The balls may be moved so as to give the striker no advantage. Obviously moving the balls will be to the striker’s advantage, but it must not be advantageous compared to what it would have been if there had been no immovable outside agency. A ball so moved but not affected by the stroke is to be replaced after the turn has ended. The striker does not need the opponent’s consent if the referee’s opinion is that the obstacle affects play. On the other hand, the players don’t have to call a referee if they agree that it affects play.

**10. Offside Balls**

**Question 10.1**

A ball that is past the half-way line when a hoop is scored is exempt from being offside if it reached its position as a result of contact with an opponent’s ball. Does the exemption still hold if more than one hoop is scored since it reached its position?

***Answer* 10.1**

Yes. A situation was described where the red ball reached its position near hoop 13 as a result of contact with the black ball while hoop 11 was being contested. When it was Red’s next turn to play, his ball was still in the same position, but both hoops 11 and 12 had been scored in the meantime. So, is the red ball exempt from being offside under Rule 11(b)(3)? The answer is yes because the exemptions in Rule 11(b) say nothing about how many hoops have been scored in the meantime.

**Question 10.2**

Red attempted to clear blue but missed and finished past half-way to the next hoop. Black then played towards halfway but went too far and the black ball hit the red ball. After yellow played, blue ran the hoop. Am I right in thinking that neither of the balls (red and black) is offside even though they are both past halfway?

***Answer* 10.2**

You are right. Both red and black reached their positions as a result of contact with an opponent’s ball. Rule 10(b) lists four exemptions from being offside for a ball past the half-way line. Reaching the position as a result contact with an opponent’s ball (regardless of who played the shot) is one of them. Reaching the position as a result of an opponent’s shot (regardless of whether there was contact with an opponent’s ball) is another.

**Question 10.3**

Rule 10(c) (1) allows the opponent to direct an offside ball to spots A and B, and give no direction if the opponent wants it left where it is. But then when the owner of the offside ball plays it, the opponent can now direct it to spot A or B as no direction was been given. Surely the rule should say "direct to A, B or leave where it is"

***Answer* 10.3**

Rule 10(c)(1) says that “the opponent of the owner of an offside ball is entitled to direct that the offside ball…”. It says that he is *entitled* to direct. It does not that he *must* direct. Therefore, he clearly has the option of not directing, i.e. of leaving the ball where it is. There is no need for the rule to spell that out.

If the opponent chooses to direct, then he must nominate the penalty spot. If he chooses not to direct, then he must make it clear that he has made that choice. If you are on the offending side and the opponent has said nothing, then you cannot assume that he has chosen to leave your ball where it is. Before playing, you should ask him what his decision is. He must then state his decision in a timely manner. Although you are not obliged to tell your opponent if your ball is offside, many players do. That’s partly because they think it is the sporting thing to do but also because it speeds up the game.

**Question 10.4**

Blue attempted to clear the red at hoop 6 but missed and finished on the eastern boundary. Red ran the hoop. Thinking that the blue ball was offside, its owner asked his opponent what he would like to do with the ball. The opponent said, “Over there”, pointing at penalty spot E, and blue took his ball there.

The referee pointed out that the ball was not offside because it was not past the half-way line. Since the rules did not require the ball to be moved, has blue committed a non-striking fault?

***Answer* 10.3**

It is not a non-striking ball to pick up a ball with permission from the opponent. Although the opponent only directed blue to the penalty point because of blue's question, he nevertheless did direct that ball, and therefore had effectively given blue permission. If blue had picked up the ball before asking the question, then he would have committed a non-striking fault. That would even be the case if the ball had been off-side and blue had picked up the ball before the ball before the opponent had said what to do with it.

**11. Playing a Wrong Ball**

**Question 11.1**

Black played his ball in doubles when it was blue’s turn to play. One person said that there was no penalty, but another said that the opponents could choose whether to leave the balls where they stopped or replace them, and that the opponent could then play next with either of their balls. Who was correct?

***Answer* 11.1**.

The person who said there was no penalty was closer to the mark. In this situation the remedy is to replace any balls moved by the shot and allow then the same side to play the shot with the correct ball, but that ball must be played by its owner. So, effectively there is no penalty. The side that played the wrong ball does not lose its turn, because the wrong ball was played by someone from the correct side, and that player owned the ball he played. Note that, in doubles, each player owns only one ball.

**Question 11.2**

This question relates specifically to doubles croquet. What happens if it is blue's turn but blue plays the black ball?

***Answer* 11.2**

In doubles each player owns only one ball. The player who owns the blue ball does not own the black ball in doubles. His partner owns that ball. If a player plays a ball that he does not own, then regardless of whether he is the striker (as he is in this case), the striker’s partner or anyone else, he has committed the sort of wrong ball play where the full penalty applies, i.e.

* no points are scored for any ball and
* the opponents may choose to have the balls replaced or left where they stopped and
* the opponents may choose to restart the sequence with either ball of their side

This is covered under Rule 11(b)(2), 11(c)(2) or 11(d) depending on who played the ball.

**Question 11.3**

Here are two wrong ball questions.

Case 1. Red played when it was blue’s turn to play but play was not stopped until black had played. All balls were played by their owner. Does Rule 11(f) apply and is it now yellow’s turn to play?

Case 2. Black played when it was red’s turn to play but play was not stopped until red had played next. Once again, all balls were played by their owner. Does Rule 11(f) apply and who plays next?

***Answer* 11.3**

Yes, Rule 11(f) applies in both cases. Rule 11(f) says that “Only the wrong ball play discovered immediately before play is stopped is dealt with”. *Immediately*, in this context means that a wrong ball play could only be dealt with if play was stopped *before a stroke or wrong ball was played*.

Case 1. Yes, it would be yellow’s turn to play. It’s too late to deal with the wrong ball play by red. Since the rules say that black should follow red, black did not play a wrong ball. Rule 11(g) applies, and “all of the play is condoned, and play is to continue in sequence”. Yellow is the next ball in sequence after black.

Case 2. The yellow ball should be played next by its owner. It’s too late to deal with the wrong ball play by black. The wrong ball play by red would be dealt with according to according to Rule 11(b)(1) or 11(c)(1), depending on whether it was singles or doubles. In either case, any balls moved by red’s play would have to be replaced before yellow played.

**12. Non-striking Faults**

**Question 12.1**

Suppose your ball is a boundary ball but you move it into the court in order to play it without a hampered backswing or uneven stance. In playing the shot, you damage the court with your mallet before the mallet reaches your ball. Have you committed a non-striking fault even if the damage would have been outside the court if your ball had been played from the boundary line?

***Answer* 12.1**

It is a non-striking fault. If you move your ball to avoid an obstruction, you are only moving your ball, you are not moving the court boundary with it.

**Question 12.2**

When the red ball was cleared to the boundary the owner of that ball used her mallet to mark the spot where the ball went out. The next striker played a shot before the ball had been put on the boundary and the striker’s ball hit the mallet on the boundary, making contact with a part of the mallet that was sticking into the court. Has a fault been committed and, if so, who committed it?

***Answer* 12.2**

The next striker is allowed to play their shot as soon as the previous turn has ended, and according to Rule 6(a), that has happened as soon as all balls moved in the previous turn have stopped moving or have left the court. So, although it does seem rather unfair, the player who put her mallet on the boundary has committed a non-striking fault.

**Question 12.3**

Red attempted a jump but put the blue ball through the hoop. Black then played towards the next hoop. The owner of red then noticed that she had caused court damage in playing the jump shot. Should the hoop point be cancelled? The referee ruled that it was too late to rule on the fault because the opponent had already played a shot. Was that the correct decision? Does it matter whether the fault would have been ruled as a striking or non-striking fault?

***Answer* 12.3**

The referee was correct. The hoop point counts and play simply continues. The actions after non-striking and striking faults are described in Rules 12(c) and 13(d) respectively. Both say that if the opponent has played a stroke after the fault occurred, then “there is no remedy, and play continues as if the fault had not been committed”. So, it does not matter which type of fault it was.

There is a commentary on Rule 12 (c)(5) which says what to do if a non-striking fault that was not noticed immediately caused a ball to run the hoop in order, but that does not apply because it would contradict the phrase “play continues as if the fault had not been committed” in Rule 12(c)(5).

**Question 12.4**

A striker drops a scoring clip trying to put it on the hoop and shakes a ball. The opponent said it was a non-striking fault. The striker said it was OK because the clip was an outside agency. Who was correct?

***Answer* 12.4**

The player who said that it was not a fault because a scoring clip is an outside agency is correct. The non-striking fault rule (Rule 12) says that “A non-striking fault is committed if … a player touches, moves or shakes a stationary ball, with any part of the body, clothes or mallet”. According to Rule 4(d), a scoring clip is an accessory, and according to Rule 9(d) an accessory is an outside agency. Thus, scoring clip is an outside agency and not part of a player’s clothes, body or mallet.

It is interesting to note that in association croquet a scoring clip can be considered, to be part of a player’s clothing under certain circumstances. However, that is not the case in golf croquet.

**Question 12.5**

Is it a fault if you hit the hoop with your mallet?

***Answer* 12.5**

It is not a fault to hit a hoop with your mallet unless, in the process, you cause a stationary ball to move or shake.

The relevant Rule is Rule 12(a) which says:

"A non-striking fault is committed if ... a player touches, moves or shakes a stationary ball, with any part of the body, clothes or mallet either directly or hitting a hoop or the peg ..."

If the striker hit the hoop with his mallet during the striking period, then Rule 13(a)(10) would apply instead of Rule 12(a) but, again, a stationary ball would need to have been moved for it to be a fault.

**13.** **Striking Faults**

**Question 13.1**

Is resting your chin on the mallet handle while playing a stroke a fault?

***Answer* 13.1**.

No. The first three clauses in Rule 13(a) deal with how you hold the mallet during a stroke. During a stroke, it is a fault if you do any of the following

* touch the head of the mallet with a hand,
* rest the shaft of the mallet or a hand or arm directly connected with the stroke against any part of the legs or feet
* rest the shaft of the mallet or a hand or arm on the ground or an outside agency

There is no mention of the chin in Rule 13.

**Question 13.2**

The blue ball was in the jaws of the hoop when the Red (the striker) played a jump shot where the red ball ran the hoop. In doing so, the red ball knocked the blue ball backwards and it hit the owner of red on the foot. Does the hoop stand?

***Answer* 13.2**

The hoop does not count because it was a striking fault – even though the fault occurred after the red ball had completed the running of the hoop and the fault involved a different ball. It is a striking fault because it was committed by the *striker* and occurred during the *striking period*. The striking period ends when the striker “leaves the stance under control”. Deciding when that happens can sometimes be difficult. The commentary to Rule 13(a) gives some guidelines. It mentions three cases where the striker is *not* under control, one of which is when the striker is “jumping to avoid a moving ball”. This clearly implies that it is a striking fault if the striker is hit by a moving ball while still in his stance or even if he has left his stance after being hit by the ball.

Contrast this situation with one where a moving ball hits a player other than the striker. In that case it would be a non-striking fault regardless of whether or not the striking period had ended when the contact between ball and player occurred. The hoop would count, unless the running of the hoop might have been affected by the fault, and the offending player’s side would miss its next turn.

**Question 13.3**

After hoop 12 was run by Black, the red and yellow balls were touching. The balls were quite near hoop 12, but if a line was drawn from the centre of the yellow ball through the centre of the red it would point roughly at hoop 13. The owner of yellow played what in association croquet would be called a pass roll. The result was very good for red and yellow because both balls finished quite near hoop 13, and the referee called it a clean shot even though the yellow ball stayed in contact with the mallet for quite a long time – probably long enough for it to have been called a push if it had been a single ball shot. Any comments?

***Answer* 13.3**

It is openly acknowledged that that the two-ball croquet shot played as a “roll” will usually involve prolonged contact between the mallet and striker’s ball. Although there are no official guidelines, the generally accepted practice in GC is that, if balls are touching and the shot wouldn’t be a fault in AC, then don’t call it a fault in GC. That doesn’t mean that a referee cannot call a fault for such a shot, but it means that the prolonged contact needs to be quite blatant.

If you are not familiar with pass rolls and are faced with this situation as a referee in GC, you could ask another referee to observe the shot with you.

**Question 13.4**

This question relates to the jump shot and also the reverse shot of swinging the club backwards between the legs when hampered by the hoop. Is it a fault to touch the body with the mallet handle during the follow through?

***Answer* 13.4**.

Obviously, a player is allowed to touch his mallet with his hands. I guess you are asking whether a player is allowed to touch any other part of his body with the mallet handle during a stroke.

It is not a fault if a player touches any part of his body or clothes with the mallet handle (or any other part of the mallet) during the follow through (or at any other time).

The reverse shot you described is usually call a “hammer” shot.

**Question 13.5**

Does the croquet ball always have to be hit with the full end face of the mallet or can you make a shot only using say half of the end face?

***Answer* 13.5**

I would not rule a shot as a “bevel edge” fault if the first point of contact of the ball with the mallet was clearly on the face of the mallet, even if it was close enough to the edge that the area of contact might have reached the edge (due to flattening of the ball by the face of the mallet).

Also, note that striking a ball with the edge of the mallet is not a fault unless the edge was used deliberately or the stroke was hampered (i.e. required “special care because of the proximity of a hoop or the peg or another ball”)

**The end of the striking period**

The rest of the questions in this “Striking Faults” section relate to the end of the striking period.

**Question 13.6**

The striker’s ball (yellow) ball was about 6 inches in front of the hoop with the red ball about a yard behind. The striker was not hampered by the presence of the red ball. She ran the hoop and appeared to be under control as she stepped back, but her foot touched the red ball. Is it a striking or non-striking fault? The commentary on Rule 13(a) says that, if it is ruled a non-striking fault, the hoop would stand. Doesn’t that contradict Rule 12(c)(3) which says that “No points may be scored by any ball by a non-striking fault”?

***Answer* 13.6**

It would be a striking fault if it occurred during the striking period, and a non-striking fault if it occurred after the striking period has ended. The end of the striking period is defined as when “the striker leaves the stance under control”. Unfortunately, that is open to interpretation. Some referees take “started leaving” to mean “leaves”. Others take it to mean “finished leaving”. The commentary on Rule 13(a) gives some guidelines, but some of those guidelines are rather confusing and some contradict Rule 13(a) itself. In this particular situation, I would rule it as a non-striking fault because the striker’s stance was not restricted because of the presence of the red, and that ball was far enough away from the striker as she played her shot. The fact the hoop would score if it was ruled as a non-striking does not contradict Rule 12(c)(3) ball because the running of the hoop by yellow was not affected in any way by the non-striking fault. The word “by” in the phrase “by a non-striking fault” in Rule 12(c)(3) is very important. In this situation “by” should be taken to mean “as a result of”. If it had been ruled as a striking fault, it would not matter whether the fault itself affected the running of the hoop. If the ball that ran the hoop was moved as a result of the *stroke* that was ruled as a striking fault, the hoop would not score.

**Question 13.7**

The striker’s ball (yellow) was about 6 inches in front of the hoop with the black ball close behind. The striker was hampered by the presence of the black ball but she ran the hoop and appeared to be under to be under control as she began to withdraw her mallet. As she continued her backswing, however, her mallet touched the black ball. Is this a striking fault (in which case the hoop does not score) or is it a non-striking fault (in which case the hoop does score)?

How should the commentary on Rule 13(a) be interpreted?

***Answer* 13.7**

The commentary on Rule 13(a) says that the striking period ends when the striker leaves the stance under control, and goes on to describe three cases where the striker is not under control. I interpret case (3) to mean that the striker is not under control disturbing a ball before or when leaving a stance restricted (or changed) because of the presence of that ball. Therefore, I would rule the situation you described as a striking fault. The wording of case (3) in the commentary is rather poor and open to several interpretations. Hopefully the meaning of “leaving the stance under control” will be clarified by the WCF.

**Question 13.8**

The striker’s ball (yellow) ball was about 6 inches in front of the hoop with the black ball close behind. The red ball is about a yard behind. The striker was hampered by the presence of the black ball but not by the red ball. She ran the hoop and appeared to be under control as she stepped back. Her foot touched the red ball (but not the black ball). Is it a striking or non-striking fault?

***Answer* 13.8**

Under the interpretation of case (3) of the commentary on Rule 13(a), which I gave in answer to an earlier question, this would be ruled as a non-striking fault because the ball disturbed was not hampering the striker. Another referee might have a different interpretation of case (3) and give a different ruling.

**Question 13.9**

This a question about whether something is striking or non-striking fault. The striker’s ball was in the jaws of the hoop. She was worried about doing a hoop crush, so she straddled the hoop, hit down on the ball (like a jump shot) and withdrew her mallet as quickly as possible after the stroke. In doing so, she stumbled forward and stepped on the ball that had just run the hoop. Is this a striking or non-striking fault and does the hoop count?

***Answer* 13.9**

It is a striking fault in this situation and the hoop does not count. In general, it is a striking fault if the fault occurred before the striker left their stance under control, and a non-striking fault otherwise. Although the striker had left her stance, she did not do so under control. The commentary on Rule 13(a) says that “the striker is not under control jumping to avoid a moving ball or playing in an off-balance position and falling out of the stance”.

**Question 13.10**

The striker strikes her blue ball, it hits the hoop and bounces onto the foot of another player foot. Is this a non-striking fault? If a hoop was run, would it score. Which turn is missed?

***Answer* 13.10**

Yes, it would be a non-striking fault even if the fault occurred during the striking period. The only player who can commit a striking fault is the player who was the striker at the time. The hoop would not score if the fault affected whether it ran the hoop, otherwise it would score. For example, if the ball completed the running of the hoop before hitting the other player, the hoop would count.

The turn to be missed would be the next turn that was to be played by the offending side. For example (since blue was the striker), the next turn would be missed by red if the offender was red or yellow. If the offender was the striker’s partner, he would miss his next turn because that would be the next turn for the side.

**14. Etiquette**

**Question 14.1**

In a golf croquet pennant match a player tapped her ball on top with her mallet to leave a difficult shot for her opponent. The opponent issued a warning under Rule 14, claiming that a deliberate fault had been committed. The question asked was “could you clarify?”.

***Answer* 14.1**.

There is a series of implied questions:

1. Was it a deliberate fault?
2. Can an etiquette warning be issued for a deliberate fault?
3. Can a player issue an etiquette warning against their opponent?

Tackling the last two questions first: Official Ruling 14.1 says that deliberately committing a striking or non-striking fault is an example of unacceptable behaviour under Rule 14(a), and Rule 14(c) says that, in the absence of a referee, a player can issue an etiquette warning against their opponent. Rule 14(c) also says what to do if the player given the warning does not agree that they behaved in an unacceptable manner.

The ACA recommends that “tapping a ball on top” should not be considered to be a deliberate fault and, therefore, a referee or player should not issue a warning under Rule 14 for it. There has been confusion about the matter because in 2015 the ACA issued a statement recommending the opposite, but it has since had a change of mind. In fact, it is now suggested by some that tapping a ball on top should not even be considered a fault, let alone a deliberate fault. It could be argued in some specific instances of tapping on top that Rule 13(a)(6) or 13(a)(11) has been breached, but since there is effectively no penalty for such an action, there seems to be little point in calling it a fault.

**Question 14.2**

A player has been moving in front of the striker too often and a warning is given. If that player responds with bad language can he be given an immediate second warning?

***Answer* 14.2**

Yes.

**Question 14.3**

What is the penalty for repeatedly behaving unacceptably? I assume that the first offence is simply a warning. What happens for subsequent offences?

***Answer* 14.3**

Unacceptable behaviour is dealt with under Rule 14 (Etiquette). Examples are given in Rule 14(a) and the three-step procedure for dealing with such situations is given in Rule 14(b). A warning may be given after the first offence but the penalties escalate greatly for repeat offences. A repeat offence is a further occurrence during the same match of any unacceptable behaviour (not necessarily the same behaviour) by the same side (not necessarily the same player). The second offence would result in the loss of a turn and the third offence in the loss of the match.

**Question 14.4**

What is the penalty for exceeding the one-minute time limit before playing a shot?

***Answer* 14.4**

Slow play is a form of unacceptable behaviour and is covered by Rule 14 (Etiquette), however it is often difficult to decide whether play is slow enough to warrant a penalty. There has never been a good clear definition of slow play.

The attempt at a clear definition in the 2013 edition of the rules was a dismal failure.

The introduction of the “one-minute rule” was widely criticized both in Australia and overseas. The following guidelines have been suggested.

* The rule is intended to prevent consistently slow play. A single instance of exceeding one minute should not necessarily result in a warning under Rule 14(b).
* On the other hand, the rule does not give players permission to wait for one minute before playing. A side could be given a warning under Rule 14(b) even if they did not exceed one minute on any occasion, but were consistently slow.
* It is not the intention that the time taken for each turn shall be routinely monitored, but it could be monitored if the referee thought it was justified, e.g. if there was an allegation of slow play.

I hope that is of some help, although it still leaves considerable uncertainty about what is meant by slow play.

**Question 14.5**

During a social game, a player was so frustrated by repeated poor shots that he hurled his mallet quite high above his head. The mallet landed about two metres behind him. Nothing happened other than the player picking up his mallet and continuing to play.

What would happen if that occurred during a competition with a referee, and are there any behaviours which would result in instant disqualification?

***Answer* 14.5**

In a competition, the referee could issue a warning for unacceptable behaviour. See Rule 14. Repeated unacceptable behaviour can result in loss of turn and loss of game, but the rules do not allow for instant disqualification. There could be some forms of behaviour would need to be dealt with outside the rules.

If a player not only acted in a dangerous way (like the mallet thrower) but it was feared that he would continue to be dangerous, then something would need to be done. It would then be up to the Tournament Manager or, perhaps, the police.

Regulation 2 at the back of the ACA version of the GC Rules lists the duties of the Tournament manager.

Regulation 2(q) says “If necessary, disqualify a player or ban a spectator”.

**15.** **Refereeing**

The “Refereeing” section was much larger in earlier editions of the GC Rules Book, but most of that information is now in a separate document called the WCF Refereeing Regulations which covers both golf croquet and association croquet.

**Question 15.1**

Is a player required to own up if he knows that he has committed a fault but no one else has noticed?

***Answer* 15.1**

There is a requirement for a player to say so if that player has committed a fault.

Rule 15(a) says “The players in all matches are responsible for the fair and correct application of these Rules. …The presence or absence of a referee does not change the obligation on a player to follow fair and correct play”.

Regulation R8(a) of the WCF Refereeing Regulations says, “The presence of a referee does not relieve a player in a game of the duty to draw attention to an irregularity that he thinks the referee may have overlooked”. That includes an irregularity committed by the player him or herself.

**Question 15.2**

In a recent game, a player asked a referee to watch his jump shot attempt. His ball hit the outside of the hoop and finished beyond it. The striker walked away without comment and the referee also said nothing. The opponent then ran the hoop and put a scoring clip on it. The referee then stated that the hoop had been scored by the jump shot. Should the player who did the jump shot have told the referee that his shot had missed? Could the player have been sanctioned for not telling the referee? If the striker did tell the referee, could he have been sanctioned for not accepting a referee’s decision.

***Answer* 15.2**

Rule 15(a) requires a player to follow fair and correct play. So, if the striker was sure that his shot had missed, he should have told the referee. If he thought it probably missed but wasn’t sure, it would be reasonable for him to leave it up to the referee to decide. Unless the referee had super powers that made him a very good mind reader, it would be unreasonable for him to sanction the player for not saying that he had missed.

Given that the rules say that “The presence or absence of a referee does not change the obligation on a player to follow fair and correct play” it would be reasonable for a player to state his opinion (either way) about the outcome of a shot. He should not be sanctioned provide he did it politely and did not labour the point. If the player was rude or stated his opinion repeatedly, he could be sanctioned under Rule 14(a)(6) for failing “to accept a decision of a referee on a matter of fact”.

**Question 15.3**

Could you clarify this one for me please? In Rule 15, which deals with refereeing in general, it says that “if there is a difference of opinion on a matter of fact, the opinion of the player with the best view is to be preferred, but if two views are equal, the striker’s opinion prevails”. I am somewhat confused with the wording “but if two views are equal”.

***Answer* 15.3**

A player’s “view” is not his “opinion” but where he was when he observed the incident in dispute. Where the rules say, “but if two views are equal”, they mean where both players viewed the event from positions which gave them equally good views of that event, even if the positions themselves were different.

Suppose that the players disagreed about what happened (e.g. if a hoop was run or a fault occurred) and they called the referee. If the referee witnessed the incident and thinks he can decide without consulting the players, he may do so. If he didn’t have a good enough view himself, he can ask the players, not only what they saw, but also where they were at the time. If the referee thinks that one of the players had a better view of what happened, he can rule according to that player’s opinion. If he has no reason to think that one player had a better view than the other, he should accept the striker’s opinion.

A disagreement about where a ball went out of bounds is a special case covered by Rule 6(g) which says, “in the absence of a referee the ball’s owner is to determine the spot where the ball is placed”.

**16. Handicaps**

**Question 16.1**

Is it too late to take an extra turn after your opponent has addressed their ball?

***Answer* 16.1**.

No. The previous striker may claim an extra turn any time before the next shot has been played. That is what a former Australian National Director of Golf Croquet Refereeing has said. If an extra turn could not be taken after an opponent had addressed his ball, an unscrupulous opponent could avoid giving away extra turns by always positioning himself ready to take his stance immediately. It would be good if the WCF issued an official ruling on this point because the “latest time” for a striker to claim an extra turn is not specifically stated in the rules.

**Question 16.2**

Could you please give us the correct way to work out the extra turns in doubles? For example, what should happen when player A on hcp 8 and B on hcp 10 play against C on hcp 6 and D on hcp of 7?

***Answer* 16.2**

Rule 16(c) says that the lower (smaller) handicap on each side is subtracted from the higher handicap on the other side, and the difference is halved. For your example the handicaps would be worked out as follows:

Eight is lower than 10, so player (hcp=8) has the lower handicap on one side. Therefore, he compared with D (hcp=7) who has the higher handicap on the other side. So player A can have one extra turn (half of the difference between 7 and 8 rounded up is 1).

Player C (hcp=6) has the lower handicap on the other side, so he is compared with B (hcp=10), who has the higher handicap on the first side. So player B can have two extra turns (half of the difference between 6 and 10 is 2).

In this example both players on one side got extra turns, but that will not always be the case.

According to Rule 16(c), if two players on the same side have the same handicap, they can decide for themselves who will be considered the lower handicapped player for the application of this rule. Specific events can override this as long as it is clearly stated in the event conditions. For example, the Metropolitan GC Shield competition uses the player indexes to break ties if the handicaps are the same for both players on the same side.

**Question 16.3**

In a handicap game, a player took an extra turn to put his ball into the jaws of the hoop. His opponent claimed that doing so constituted a striking fault. Was the opponent correct?

***Answer* 16.3**

No. Putting your ball in the jaws of the hoop in an extra turn, or even running the hoop in an extra turn is not a fault. Rule 16(d) does not say that a striker is not allowed to go for the hoop or try to put his ball in the jaws of the hoop in an extra turn. It simply says that no point may be scored for the striker’s side in an extra turn. If you completed running the hoop in an extra turn while attempting to put your ball in the jaws of the hoop, your ball would simply be on the wrong side of the hoop without having scored the hoop. Note that you can score a point for your opponents if you put one of their balls through the hoop in your extra turn.

**Question 16.4**

In a club handicap competition, one of my opponents stated that her handicap was seven. We played two games and I lost both. Afterwards it was found that her handicap was, in fact, six. My opponent said that we would void the games and replay them with the right handicap. Is that the correct procedure?

***Answer* 16.4**

No that is not the correct procedure unless that was stated in the playing conditions before the competition started. Playing under the wrong handicap is considered to be a serious offence, even if done accidentally. It is covered under Regulation 12.2 of the Australian Tournament Regulations which says “… Every player bears the final responsibility for ensuring that they play at their correct handicap. Players who play in a handicap event at a handicap higher than their handicap or in a class event that their handicap does not entitle them to enter must be disqualified. In knock-out events in which the player has not been defeated, their place is taken by their last opponent. …”.

Tournaments in Australia do not have to be played under the ACA Tournament Regulations but, if not, they should state clearly what regulations are replacing the standard ones. As an example, the Melbourne Metropolitan Golf Croquet Shield (an inter-club teams handicap competition) has the following playing condition:

“If a player uses a handicap higher than it should be … then the result of that game, be it singles or doubles, will not be counted and scored as 7/0 in favour of the opposition. The index of the offender decreases.”

Note that the penalty for playing under the wrong handicap applies whether or not the offending player actually uses any extra turns they were not entitled to.

**Question 16.5**

How are the number of extra turns calculated in the following situation?

Team A players have handicaps of 10 and 9, and team B players have handicaps of 5 and 4. When Rule 16(c) is applied and the lower handicap for team A is subtracted from the higher handicap of team B, the answer is negative four. The relevant table does not say what to do with negative differences. Does this mean the player with handicap 9 has 2 free shots, or none at all?

***Answer* 16.5**

The player with handicap 9 has 2 extra turns. This is calculated by taking half the *absolute* value of the difference and rounding up to a whole number if necessary. The player with the higher handicap of the two players being compared gets that number of extra turns.

**Question 16.6**

In a handicap doubles game one of our opponents received four extra turns and their partner none. After I had played my red ball in front of hoop 5, the opponent’s better player played his black ball to the side of red, said that he would take an extra turn and hit my ball away.

Should I have forestalled as soon as he said he would take the extra turn, or would telling him he had no extra turns be giving advice to an opponent. By playing his black ball twice in a row, has he committed a wrong ball play?

***Answer* 16.6**

The situation is not covered by the rules so, according to Official Ruling 15.1, the issue should be decided by the referee … in a manner which best meets the justice of the case.

If you were aware that he was not entitled to an extra turn, I believe you should have forestalled. If you did not forestall but agreed that that player had announced before playing his shot that he was going to take an extra turn, I believe the balls should have been replaced and the correct player (yellow in this case) should have played next.

I base my opinion on Rule 16(g) which covers the situation where a player takes an extra turn when he is not allowed to. The rule is intended for situations where (unlike in your case) the player had extra turns to take but tried to take one at the wrong time, namely in place of a turn missed because of a non-striking fault or the playing of a wrong ball. Nevertheless, I believe the situation is similar enough to use that rule as a guide. I do not believe that ruling it as a wrong ball play best meets the justice of the case.

Perhaps I am being too soft. A harsher referee might rule that Rule 16(g) is not relevant here and that the player deserves to be punished. After all, he would not have found himself in that situation if he had known the rules better.

**Question 16.7**

Time was called but because score was 6:6 they played for the next hoop. One of the players had an unused extra turn left. Question: can the extra turn still be used whilst playing for the next hoop?

***Answer* 16.7**

Yes. Rule 16(e) says that a striker may play an extra turn at any stage in the game (at the end of that striker’s turn). If the regulations under which the game is being played specify that play is to continue after time is called under certain circumstances, e.g. to break a tie, then that’s just part of the game.

**Miscellaneous**

**Question M.1**

Is it encouraged to continue play in GC pennant singles games for the full thirteen hoops if the score was very uneven at a lesser score, e.g. 7 – 3?

***Answer* M.1**

No. Although that is often done in social play, it is not encouraged in a tournament or pennant. Once a player has scored enough points to win the game, the game is over, so any hoops run after that would not count. By continuing you would, effectively, be playing a social game or a practice game. A tournament manager might prohibit it, for example, if he wants the court vacated as soon as possible so that another game can start, or if practicing between games is not allowed.

**Question M.2**

Are you allowed to take an umbrella with you on to the court?

***Answer* M.2**

There is no rule against taking an umbrella on to the court. You can be penalised for disturbing other players, so you would have to be extra careful if you were carrying a large object like an open umbrella. The umbrella would be treated as part of your personal property as far as Rule 12(a) was concerned. If a ball from your game hit your umbrella, even if you were not holding it, you would have committed a non-striking fault.

**Question M.3**

I am often confused by the court layout when visiting clubs for competition because those clubs have the red hoop set at the thirteenth hoop whereas my club sets the red hoop at the fifth hoop. I was told that some clubs use the Association Croquet positions while others use the Golf Croquet positions. Is there a standard position for the red hoop for a Golf Croquet court?

***Answer* M.3**

The answer is given in Rule 3(b)(2) which says, “The hoops may be left unpainted or coloured white and, in addition, the crown of the first hoop may be coloured blue and that of the 5th hoop and/or the final hoop may be coloured red”.

For AC, the final hoop is hoop 12 (which is also hoop 5). For GC, the final hoop is hoop 13 (which is also hoop 3 and 10).

So, what you were told is correct. The club can decide for itself whether to use a hoop with a red crown on the last hoop for golf croquet or the last hoop for association croquet. Furthermore, it is not compulsory to use coloured hoops at all, but almost all clubs do.

**Question M.4**

Is there a rule in golf croquet to deal with the situation where two balls (one from each side) are hampering each other and neither player is willing to allow the other to be the first to have a clear shot with their hampered ball? How many strokes should a referee allow to be played in such a situation before intervening?

***Answer* M.4**

There is no rule in golf croquet covering that situation, and the referee should not intervene regardless of how many strokes have been played since the situation arose. There is a procedure described in the WCF Refereeing Regulations for what is called an “impasse”, but that procedure only applies to association croquet, not golf croquet. There is no need to intervene in golf croquet because, even with two balls effectively doing nothing, it is not a stalemate situation since the other two balls can still compete for the hoop. The situation will usually resolve itself after the hoop has been scored. I have only once seen such a situation last for more than one hoop in golf croquet, and never more than two.

**Question M.5**

Our club is currently running its annual club competition and I believe they have incorrectly extrapolated the rule prohibiting practice during a competition. It has been deemed that, for the duration of a competition which is played over two months, no player may play a social game while waiting to play a competition game later the same day. This seems unfair as one player may have played several competition games in a day before meeting an opponent who only gets a five-minute warmup.

***Answer* M.5**

Neither the WCF Golf Croquet Rules nor the WCF Refereeing Regulations say anything about when practice is allowed, so it is not a refereeing matter. The Australian Tournament Regulations mention practice in Regulations 7.3.8, 7.14, 12.5 and 15.2.

Basically, the tournament regulations say that, apart from the five-minute warm-up before the start of the player’s first game of the day:

- During the event, courts being used for the event may only be used for practice at the discretion of the venue manager. (For an event at a single venue, the venue manager is the tournament manager).

- In all cases the tournament manager has discretion to vary the arrangements.

So, like it or not, it’s up to the tournament manager.

**Question M.6**

I have always taught players that a visual test from both sides (if necessary) of the hoop at approximately half height of ball is all that is necessary. Section B4 of the ACA Golf Croquet Refereeing Manual (2015) gives a list of reasons why the string test should not be used. I could not find any statement in the GC Rules or the Refereeing Regulations saying that the string test should not be used. What is the situation?

***Answer* M.6**

It is not against the rules or regulations for a referee to use a string test. A visual test is sufficient in nearly all cases and so the string test should be avoided, if possible, because of the slight risk of moving the hoop while performing the test. However, I will use a string test for a very close decision because it is more accurate.

I disagree with all of the reasons given in Refereeing Manual for not performing a string test except the one that says there is a danger of moving the hoop, which would invalidate the test.

However, if the string test is performed carefully and properly, the hoop will not move even if it is loose.

Before performing the string test, the referee should have already have performed a visual test so he knows what decision he would make if he did accidentally destroy the evidence while performing the string test.