



Official Nine-Wicket
Croquet Rulebook:
Backyard Croquet Rules

2018 EDITION

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2018 Midwest Croquet Association
Official Nine Wicket Rules.

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Nine Wicket Croquet

VARIATIONS

The rules that follow are the official base rules for nine-wicket croquet. **Backyard-croquet rules** are listed under Six Ball. The MCA Pro and Gold Divisions utilize the advanced options detailed under the Advanced Rules section.

NINE WICKET PLAYING RULES

1. The Court

The nine-wicket croquet court does not require a perfectly flat lawn, but short grass provides the best playing surface. The best height is 1.0 inches or less depending on the density of the grass. Ideally, less than one inch of the ball would rest below the grass level.

The official full-size court is 100 feet by 50 feet. The size can be modified to fit the available space or to mitigate slow lawn speeds (also see alternate court layout on page 15). It is important to utilize the six feet distances between the double wickets and stakes, but if space is an issue, try to at least maintain a four foot space. See **DIAGRAM 1** for all dimensions.

Use string, paint or chalk to mark boundary lines. For paint or chalk lines the actual boundary is the interior line where the paint or chalk meets the grass. You can also create boundaries by using flags or stakes at the four corners.

2. Wickets

Official MCA wickets are set to 3-3/4" width. For casual play, try to keep your wicket widths consistent.

3. Balls

Official MCA balls weigh 16 oz. and are 3-5/8" in diameter. The base colors are blue, red, black, and yellow. One side (with one or two players) plays with blue and black, and the other with red and yellow.

4. Mallets

Only the striking (end) face may be used to strike a ball. Players may not push a ball with their mallet during a shot.

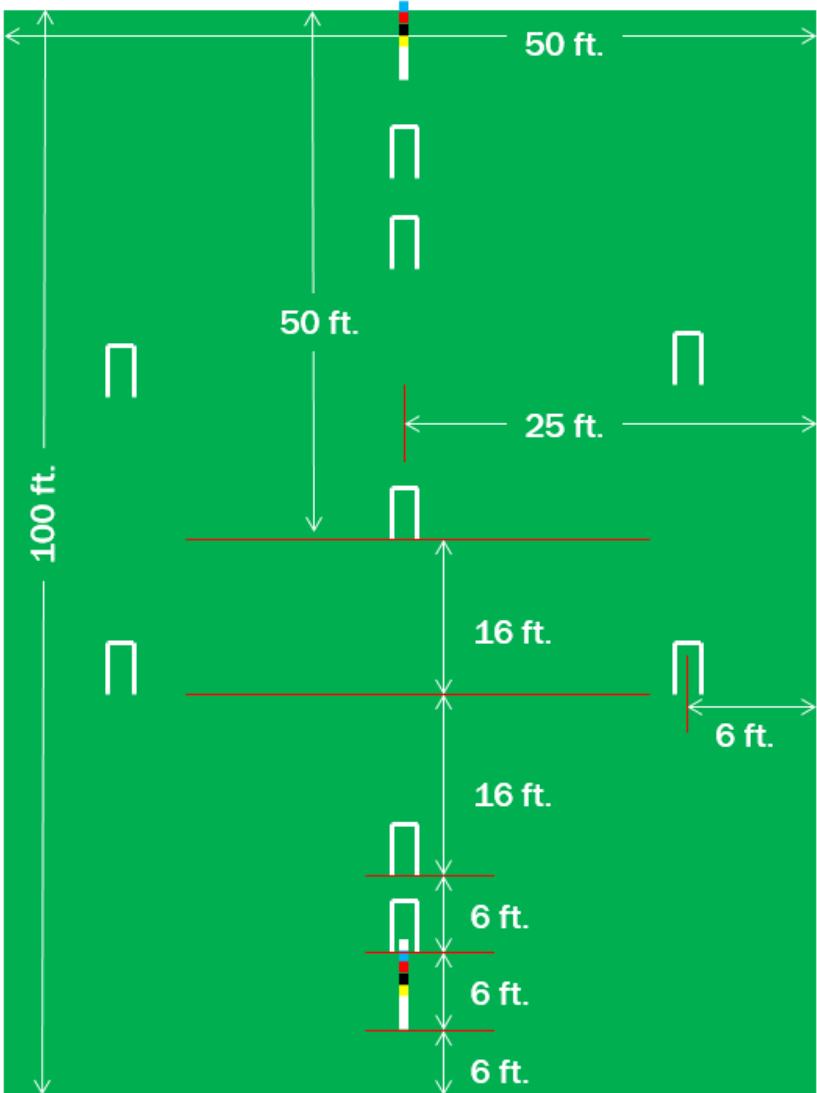


DIAGRAM 1: Nine wicket court dimensions

(See page 15 for alternate corner peg layout for smaller areas)

5. How to Play

The goal of croquet is to advance the balls through the wicket pattern by striking them with a mallet, scoring a point for each wicket and stake made in the proper direction and order. The winner is the first player or team to score the 14 wicket points and two stake points for each of its balls prior to time expiring. MCA singles games are played to 60 minutes and if time runs out before a player stakes out both balls, the player or team with the most points at the end of last turns wins the game (see Last Turns below for details on timed games). Doubles games are 70 minutes.

Only one player plays at a time. The player in play is referred to as the "striker." At the start of a turn, the striker is entitled to one shot. After the completion of that shot, the striker's turn ends unless a bonus shot is earned by scoring a wicket or stake or by hitting another ball (legal to be hit). The turn ends when the player has no more bonus shots to play or has finished the course by scoring the finishing stake. The striker may directly hit with the mallet only the ball he or she is playing in that turn.

6. Starting Play

6A. Starting Order

The sides should toss a coin. The side winning the coin toss has the choice of playing first and third with blue/black or second and fourth with red/yellow.

6B. Starting Position

All balls are played into the game three feet away from wicket #1. The front edge of the ball cannot be closer than three feet.

6C. Order of Play

The order of play throughout the game is blue, red, black, yellow. Play continues in this order until a ball is staked out. Once a ball is removed from the game, all other balls proceed in the same order, but skip any ball that has been removed from the game.

6D. Starting Deadness

The striker will not earn extra shots by hitting another ball until both the striker ball and the ball to be roqueted have cleared wicket #1. In addition:

- Balls not through wicket #1 are considered "out" of the game and are dead on balls "in" the game (through wicket #1) — and vice versa and contact from either scenario results in a dead ball fault (balls reset and end of turn).
- If an out-of-game ball hits another out-of-game ball it is not a dead ball fault. The turn simply ends with the balls remaining where they lie, unless the striker ball has earned a bonus stroke by scoring wicket #1. In which case, the turn continues from where the balls lie.
- A ball "not in the game" may have a ball(s) "in the game" marked and lifted for a shot — and vice versa.

7. Out of Turn Plays

If a player plays out of turn, there is no penalty. Any ball moved during the out-of-turn play is replaced to its position prior to the error and play recommences properly. If an out of turn play is initially condoned (not discovered) but then later discovered, only the last ball played out of turn is replaced and the correct ball then proceeds. Example: if red plays, then blue plays, then yellow plays, yellow is replaced, and then red plays correctly.

8. Shot

If the striker intentionally takes a swing at his/her ball and misses entirely, the miss counts as a shot and the turn ends, unless the striker had a second "bonus" shot. If the player strikes the ball during a practice swing, it does not count as a shot. The ball should be moved back to position and the shot played as normal.

If the striker's mallet accidentally hits another ball other than the striker ball at any point during the shot sequence, the shot is fault and the turn ends with all balls replaced to original position.

9. Scoring Wicket and Stake Points

Each ball can score wicket and stake points for its side only by going through a wicket or hitting a stake in the proper order and direction (**DIAGRAM 2**). Going through a wicket out of order or in the wrong direction is not counted as a point gained or lost. A ball caused to score its wicket or stake during another ball's turn earns the point for its side, but no bonus shot is earned as a result.

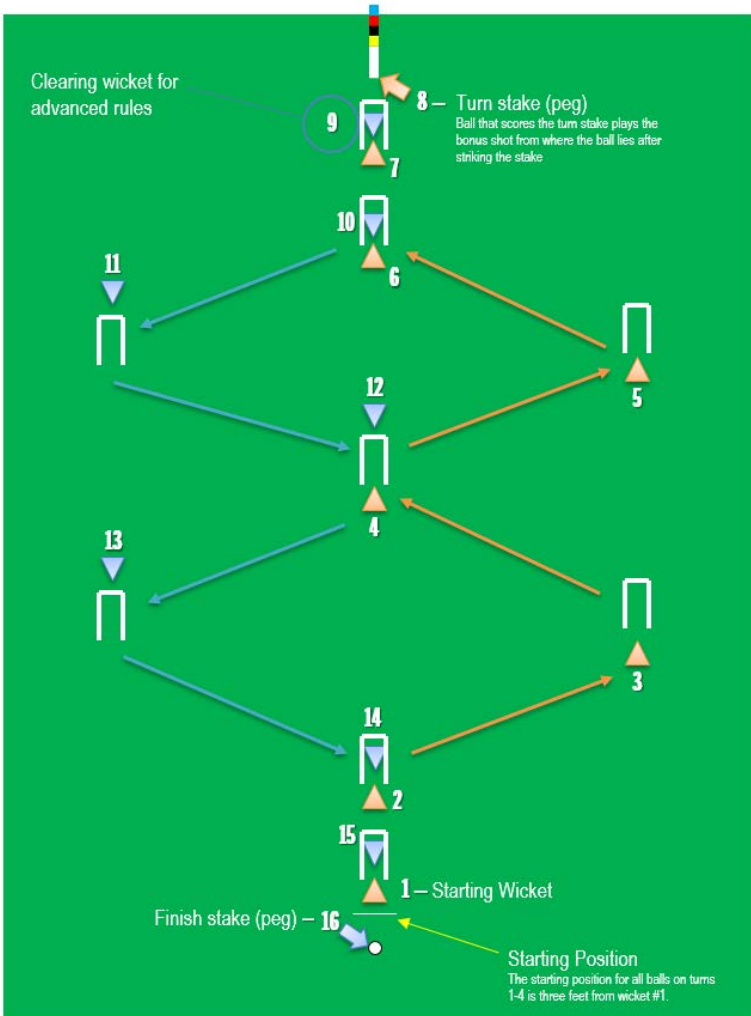


DIAGRAM 2: Order of wickets

A ball scores a wicket point only if it comes to rest clear of the playing side of the wicket. **(DIAGRAM 3)** If a ball passes through a wicket but rolls back, it has not scored the wicket.

A ball that is for the finishing stake that hits or is hit into the stake is awarded the point and removed from the game.

10. Bonus Shots

Bonus shots can be earned in the following scenarios:

Scoring a Wicket: The striker earns one bonus shot if the striker ball scores the current wicket that the striker is for according to the court pattern of wickets to be played.

Scoring the Turn Stake: One bonus shot is earned if the striker ball hits the turning stake in the case where the striker's ball is for the turning stake.

Roquet: The striker earns two bonus shots if the striker's ball hits another ball (a "roquet"). However, the maximum number of bonus shots earned by a striker is two; there is never a time when a striker is allowed three shots. (See the "Exceptions" section below for examples.) In addition, a striker may only earn roquet bonus strokes off of any of the other balls in the game once per scored wicket during a turn. For example, if blue earned two bonus shots off a roquet of red after wicket number two, blue would not be able to earn bonus strokes off of a second roquet of red until after running wicket three or the start of the next turn in a basic rules game. However, after the blue turn ends, blue would be able to utilize red again at the beginning of the next turn for blue. Under basic rules there is no penalty for hitting a "dead" ball.

If two bonus shots are scored by striking

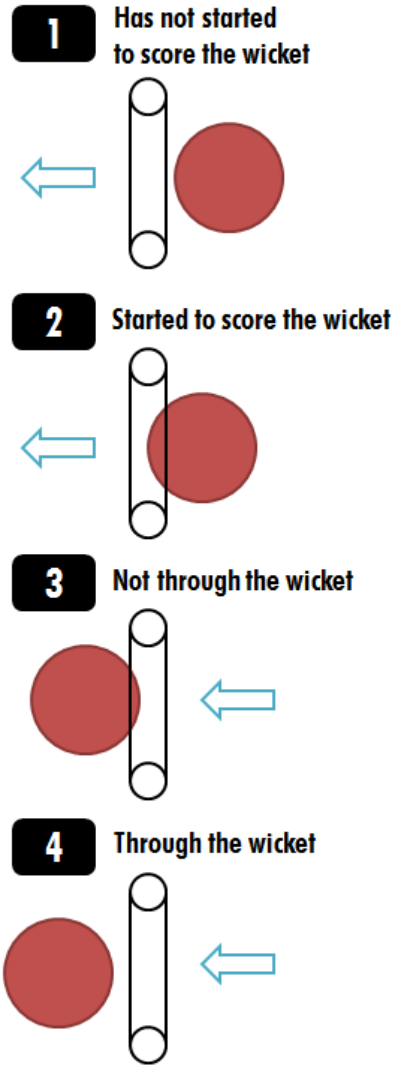


DIAGRAM 3: Top view of wicket attempt results

another ball, the first of these two shots may be taken in any of four ways:

- From a mallet-head distance or less away from the ball that was hit ("taking a mallet-head").
- From a position in contact with the ball that was hit, with the striker ball held steady by the striker's foot or hand (a "foot shot" or "hand shot").
- From a position in contact with the ball that was hit, with the striker ball not held by foot or hand (a "croquet shot").
- From where the striker ball stopped after the roquet.

The second bonus shot after a roquet is an ordinary shot played from where the striker ball came to rest, called a "continuation shot".

Bonus shots may not be accumulated. Upon earning a bonus shot by scoring a wicket, hitting the turning stake, or roqueting another ball, any bonus shot previously earned is forfeited. For example, if a ball roquets a ball and in that same stroke the striker ball hits another ball, the second ball hit is not a roquet and remains where it comes to rest (with no deadness incurred on that ball).

EXCEPTIONS: Two extra shots are earned when the striker ball scores two wickets in one shot. If the ball also hits the turning stake after scoring two wickets, two strokes are earned, not three. Conversely, if the striker ball scores the seventh wicket and hits the turning stake in the same shot, it earns two shots. After the striker ball roquets another ball, it does not earn any extra shots for hitting it again in the same turn before scoring the next wicket in order. However, there is no penalty for hitting the ball again unless you are playing advanced rules (see **A-01**).

11. Wicket and Roquet

When the striker ball scores a wicket and then in the same shot hits another ball, only the wicket counts and the striker has earned only the one extra shot for scoring the wicket. The striker may then roquet any ball to earn two extra shots. When the striker ball roquets another ball and then goes through a wicket, the wicket has not been scored but the striker earns two extra shots for the roquet.

12. The Boundaries

If the striker ball is shot and more than half of a ball (50%+) crosses the inside edge of a boundary, it is "Out Of Bounds" and should be brought inbounds and placed nine inches into the court. The ball should be placed 90 degrees inbounds and perpendicular to the line and not diagonally from the line, and the striker's turn ends. The exception is when the striker ball has just roqueted (contacted or hit) another ball that remains in bounds, the striker may choose to place it in contact with or up to a mallet-head from the ball that was roqueted. All balls are also immediately brought in a mallet length from the boundary when they are less than that distance from the boundary, except for the striker's ball when the striker has an extra shot.

If more than one ball crosses the boundary on the same spot, the striker may measure any ball inbounds first and then place the other(s) up to a mallet-head's length away from it on either side.

CROQUET SHOT: If during the croquet shot, the striker causes either the striker ball or the croquet ball to be out of bounds, the turn ends and balls out of bounds or in the margins should be marked in 9 inches.

13. Rover Balls

After a ball scores all of the wickets in proper order, its player may choose to keep it in the game as a "rover" to help advance that side's remaining ball(s) and to prevent the opposing side from advancing. During this ball's turn, it may hit any other ball only once per turn, gaining extra shots accordingly, but it does not earn any extra shots or wicket points for running a wicket. Any player may put a rover out of the game by causing it to hit the finishing stake. The rover's side earns the point for the stake, and the order of play continues without the staked-out ball.

14. Time Limit

Singles games are played to 60 minutes. Doubles games are 70 minutes. Each player (or side) receives three one-minute timeouts during the entire game. The Official Timekeeper should announce 10 minutes remaining, five minutes remaining and one minute remaining, taking care not to shout out during a player's backswing for an actual shot.

If neither player has staked out both balls to win the game prior to time being called, the ball in play is the "first last ball" and may finish its turn. (NOTE: If a ball has played its last stroke of the turn and is still rolling on the court when time expires, it will get another turn.) The remaining three balls also receive one final turn unless one of the players pegs out both balls prior to the end of the rotation to win the game.

If there is no peg out win after the completion of the full last round of turns, the player with the most wicket and stakes point is the winner. If the players are tied after the last turns round, then another full round with a turn for each ball is played. These rounds continue until a peg out or one player or side obtains at least a one-point advantage.

15. Shot Clock

A striker has 45 seconds to shoot once the prior shot or turn ends. The shot or turn ends once all balls have come to rest and if necessary have been placed on court in the case of a ball going out of bounds. The official timekeeper should give a 10 second warning to a striker at 35 seconds. If the striker fails to shoot prior to the 45-second expiration, the player will be charged one of their three available timeouts. If no timeouts are available, the player will be directed to immediately shoot. If the striker fails to comply, the shot will be forfeited and the striker's turn ends.

In games without an official timekeeper, concerns about excessive clock usage should be directed toward the tournament manager who will work to best resolve the situation based on available resources.

16. Double-Banked Interference

Utilizing two sets of balls (solids and stripes) and two deadness boards, two games may be “double-banked” on one court. The following scenarios apply to when the two games interfere with one another.

Stopping the Clock

Players are only allowed to ask for the official clock to be stopped in double-banked games with less than 10 minutes remaining in cases where interference causes one game to pause play. The clock should be restarted once play is available to resume. If a shot clock is active, it should be stopped at the same time of interference and restarted accordingly.

Balls That Collide

In situations where the balls from the two different games collide, the balls should be returned to original static positions (or for moving balls probable positions relative to either game shot). If a probable position cannot be agreed upon by both players in the game, the original shot position should be recreated, and the shot replayed. If there is disagreement between the two players, an official should be called. The opinion on probable or static ball location of a player or players in the other game may be considered by the official.

ADVANCED MCA 9W RULES

Games played under Advanced Rules include all advanced rules. They are not single options to add to the game. Nine wicket can be played under Basic, Advanced or Six Ball rules.

A-01. Carry-Over Deadness

Deadness occurs after a roquet is made and the striker is unable to score his/her wicket. The consequences are that the striker is not allowed to roquet the ball(s) again until scoring the wicket. Once the wicket is scored, the striker becomes 'alive' and is able to roquet the ball(s) again. If a striker roquets a ball he/she is dead on, all balls are replaced to their positions before the shot, and the turn is over. Deadness carries over from turn to turn.

In addition, in games played under Advanced Rules:

- A striker ball that first roquets a live ball, then contacts a dead ball or balls (post roquet balls), has not made a dead ball fault and all balls remain where they lie and the striker takes croquet off the first ball roqueted. If any balls contacted by the striker ball after the legal roquet go out of bounds or are in the boundary margin, they are marked in from where they crossed the boundary line. There is also no end of turn for a striker putting a post roquet ball out of bounds.
- If a ball in the game hits a ball not in the game, it is a dead ball fault and the balls reset to original positions and the turn ends.

A-02. Clearing Deadness

A side may clear one of its balls of deadness when the opponent makes the first wicket after the turning stake (the 9-point wicket) regardless of score at the end of the opponent's turn.

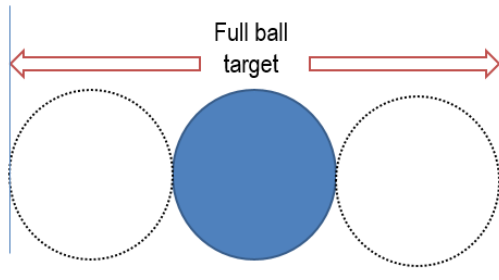
A-03. Blocked at a Wicket by a Dead Ball

If an opponent causes a ball to be blocked from scoring its wicket by a dead ball(s) for two consecutive turns, the blocked ball becomes alive on the blocking ball(s). The opponent must be responsible for the block, not the side claiming a block. A block must be confirmed by the blocking side in order to be counted as a block, in order to avoid disputes. In addition, the proposed wicket shot that is claimed to be blocked must be possible to make to count as a block.

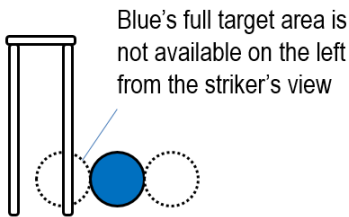
A-04. Wiring Rule and Lift

If an opponent is responsible for the location of the striker's ball at the start of the striker's turn, and the striker ball is blocked from a clear shot in any way by a wicket, stake or dead ball from a ball it is alive on, with no other open and live ball target available, the ball is deemed to be wired. A

clear shot means that the swing must not be hampered and the striker is entitled to the full target. The definition of a full target is there must be a full ball of clearance on either side of the target ball.



The swing is hampered if the full width of the striker's mallet head is not available for the striker to perform a standard swing without being impeded by a wicket, stake or dead ball.



LIFT: Prior to the stroke, the striker may lift the wired ball to any corner prior to the shot. If a lifted ball would be in contact with another ball when placed in the corner spot, then ball becomes ball in hand. As such, the striker ball would be entitled to the two bonus strokes available to a ball in hand. The striker may utilize any of the options listed in Rule 10. Bonus Shots, subsection "Roquet." The striker can also elect

to decline the lift and shoot from the current ball position. However, once the striker picks up the ball, they must play from a lift position.

CONCEDING THE WIRE: The opponent must acknowledge the wire prior to a lift occurring. If the opponent does not agree that the striker ball to be played is wired, a referee or the tournament manager should be called upon for a final ruling.

A-05. Advanced Rover Play

A rover may hit all balls once per turn; however, once the rover is dead on a ball(s), it must go through any wicket in any direction to clear its deadness on that ball(s). The rover does not get an additional (bonus) shot after going through this clearing wicket. A rover remains temporarily dead (last dead) on the last ball roqueted prior to clearing deadness. When the rover ball roquets another ball, on which it is alive, the last deadness is removed.

EVENT MANAGEMENT/OFFICIATING

Event Director

The event director is the organizer of the event and will manage all aspects of promotion and execution of the event. The event director should appoint representatives to act in the following roles or assume those duties: marketing, reporting/photography, amenities, equipment/court set up and tournament manager.

The event director may act as or assign the role tournament manager. The tournament manager's responsibilities include:

- Final authority on rules and regulations for the event, including the authority to render a final decision on matters not addressed by the rulebook
- Officiating, naming additional officials and managing the officials
- Arranging the format and schedule for the event in accordance with MCA tournament regulations and procedures
- Place players in appropriate playing divisions based on available information
- Equipment and court set-up. This responsibility may be assigned to an equipment/facilities manager.

An event director may act as or assign the role of event manager. The event manager's duties include all aspects of promotion, event signage, sponsorship, prizes, food, photography, video, media coverage and amenities for the event.

Officials

The role of an assigned official is to:

- As requested by the striker or opponent, observe, judge and announce the legality of any shot
- Utilize available facts to mediate and resolve disputes between players according to the official rules
- For any situation that appears to not be addressed in the rules, the official must make a fair judgment based on the most objective information available. The official should also report any such scenario to the Rules & Competition Committee in order that the rule book may be corrected or expanded if necessary.

Player's Roles and Rights

1. Either player may request an official to observe, judge and announce the legality of any shot.
2. If both players agree, any individual may be asked to watch a shot to determine the following:
 - If a ball contacts another ball

- If a ball for the turn stake contacts the turn stake
 - If a rover ball contacts the finishing stake.
3. A player may appeal an official interpretation of the rules to the lead official. The lead official will render a final decision in a timely manner to allow the event to proceed.
 4. A player may make an appeal to the Rules & Competition Committee relative to any official tournament or game scenario after an event. An appeal should be made within 15 days of the conclusion of the event.

Official Intervention

An official shall not intervene in a game unless requested by the players, except in the following scenarios:

- To correct improper clip placement
- To correct the misplacement of balls
- To make time announcements
- To correct the deadness board
- To forestall any out of turn play
- To forestall a striker mistakenly striking a ball in the other game in double-banked game scenarios
- To forestall an unearned continuation shot

If an official does not forestall an unearned continuation shot, play shall be stopped as soon as the error is discovered and affected balls shall be placed where they were when the unearned continuation shot was taken. The game should continue with all conditions reverted to the point before the unearned shot. If there is disagreement on resetting the game, an official should be called to render a judgement.

ALTERNATE CORNER PEG 9W COURT LAYOUT

The MCA utilizes an alternate format (**DIAGRAM 4**) on six-wicket courts that allows a traditional 105 x 84 foot six wicket court to be cut into two nine wicket courts. The layout and dimensions are below. The 84 foot length essentially plays similar to a traditional 92 foot nine wicket court. Wickets 7 and 15PW present a challenge with the short six foot boundary. If space allows, the corner peg layout can also be used at 100 foot length. Standard six wicket hoops are recommended for nine wicket on six wicket courts.

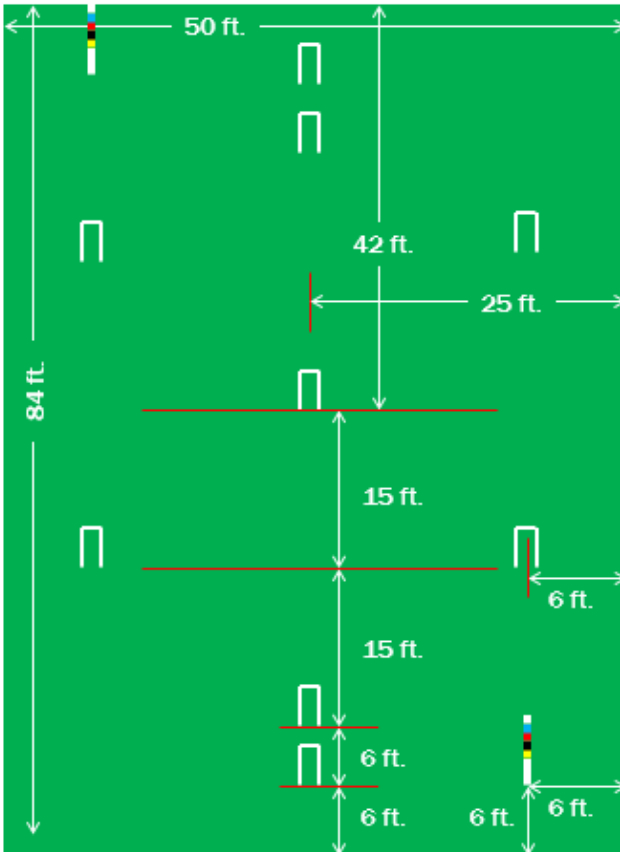


DIAGRAM 4: Corner peg alternate layout

SIX BALL CROQUET

(Backyard Croquet)

As most of the retailer sets in North America contain six balls, many croquet players like to play singles with only one ball per player, the winner being the player who advances his or her ball around the court first to stake out. This popular variation is played with the same rules as regular singles or doubles nine wicket croquet, but any number of players from two to six can play.

The colors may be drawn by lot to determine the order of play. Assuming the set being utilized has the standard set of colors, the playing order is:

- Blue
- Red
- Black
- Yellow
- Green
- Orange

This order is generally indicated on the stakes provided with each set. If your set has stakes that indicate another order, it can be used as long as all players are made aware that the stake colors represent the order of play.

The winner is the first ball to complete the entire pattern of wickets and stake out at the final peg for 16 total points.

SPECIAL SCENARIOS

What happens if the striker ball roquets a live ball and then goes through its next wicket?

The striker earns two extra shots from the roqueted ball, but the wicket has not yet been scored.

What happens when the striker ball goes through a wicket and then roquets a live ball on the same stroke?

The striker earns one bonus shot for the wicket, but the roquet does not count. The striker is still alive on the roqueted ball and may choose to roquet the ball on the next stroke to earn two bonus shots.

Does the striker ever earn three bonus shots?

No

If the striker has two bonus shots, but scores a wicket on the first bonus shot, how many shots does the striker have?

One, from the wicket score.

If the striker has two bonus shots, but roquets a live ball on the first bonus shot, how many shots does the striker have?

Two bonus shots, from the roquet.

If the opponent puts my ball through its next wicket, does the wicket score count for that ball?

Yes. This is called a peel.

What happens when someone plays out of turn? Is there a penalty?

A: No, but once the out-of-turn play is discovered, you must replace the ball that last played out of turn and have the correct ball play. See Rule 7 (Out of Turn Play) in the main section for an example.

Under Advanced Rules, what happens if the striker hits a ball that he/she is dead on?

All balls are replaced to original positions and the turn is over.

What happens if more than one ball crosses the boundary and goes out of bounds on the same spot?

The striker may measure any ball inbounds first and then place the other(s) up to a nine inches away from it on either side parallel to the boundary (but not in contact with the other ball).

MCA TOURNAMENT REGULATIONS

WITHDRAWAL POLICY

The MCA no longer accepts players into an event who are unable to compete until the conclusion of their respective division schedule. This includes scheduled playoff games. If, however, a player must withdraw from the event for any reason, any games played count and a player eliminated by the withdrawing player is still eliminated. If this creates a forfeit in any part of the playoff bracket, the forfeit winner will be awarded a win and points rounded down to the nearest whole number based on the average of games that individual player has played in the event prior to the forfeit. The forfeit loser will be given a loss and zero points.

LATE WITHDRAWALS: Any player that withdraws after the tournament entry deadline must still pay the entry fee. If the player does not submit the fee to the MCA, the fee will be added on to the player's next tournament entry or following season's membership invoice.

DIVISION PLACEMENT

Beginning players will start in the lowest available division. The MCA divisions starting with the most challenging are Pro, Gold, Silver and Bronze. For players with MCA experience, the MCA Ratings Index will be utilized for placement. For new players with USCA handicaps or Association grades, those can be converted to an MCA rating through the chart located on the MCA website:
www.midwestcroquet.com/9w-ranking-system

Tournament managers should consult with the MCA Rules & Competition Committee (R&CC) on placement for MCA Nine Wicket Series events

The following guidelines are in place for the R&CC on upward and downward divisional recommendations:

Parameters to Move Up

- a) Eight games played in division
- b) Above 500 rating played in a division
- c) Tournament win at a level

Primary Criteria for a Move Down Request

- a) Below 300 rating after eight games in division
- b) Winless season in division

APPEAL: A player may appeal any move recommendation or request through first petitioning the Rules & Competition Committee. If the player does not agree with the R&CC decision or recommendation, they may then appeal to the MCA Board. The MCA Board decision will be final.

CODE OF CONDUCT

- **A PLAYER MAY NOT ALTER THE COURT.** Debris may be removed, but anything attached to the court cannot be altered without the permission of the opponent or the referee or tournament manager.
- **HOOPS MAY NOT BE ADJUSTED, RESET OR POUNDED IN** by the striker without first asking permission. The striker must ask the opponent if it is okay to adjust, pound in or reset a wicket or stake. If the opponent refuses, the tournament manager or referee should be requested for a final decision. The referee's guidance is the equipment should be in proper position.
- **IT IS PREFERRED THAT THE OPPONENT STEP OFF THE COURT** when a striker is in play; however, this is not required. In general, it is common courtesy to step behind the striker so as to not be in the field of vision during the striker's shot. If the opponent is in the field of vision, the striker may request that he move out of the field of vision. In such case, the opponent must comply.

NOISE

Spectators are expected to cheer or offer applause after a shot is made.

Conversation or general crowd noise is acceptable during play. Common courtesy is to keep noise to a minimum during an actual shot. And, it is the striker's right to ask for quiet on a shot that is challenging. In such case, spectators must honor the player request.

Heckling a player during a shot is not permitted by a spectator or opponent.

Spectators or opponents may not make attempts to distract the striker in any way during a shot.

Abusive comments toward a player are not acceptable.

Spectators (or coaches) may not offer a player advice during a Pro, Gold or Silver Division game.

