

# Golf Croquet Rules Questions and Answers

*Here are some questions which Victorian 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](mailto:gcreferees@croquetvic.asn.au).*

## Question 1

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

### Answer 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 2

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

### Answer 2.

No. The previous striker may claim an extra turn any time before the next shot has been played. That is what the 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 3

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 3.

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 4

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 4.

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. Things get interesting if a wrong ball is played with a double

tap in one the first four turns. Since Rule 11 does not apply in this situation, it is not clear what should happen.

### **Question 5**

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

### **Answer 5.**

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 6**

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?

### **Answer 6.**

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

### **Question 7**

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 7.**

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. Would that be a non-striking fault? If the player of black picked up the red ball without asking permission, to replace it after the slight movement, would that be a fault? A careful reading of Rule 12(a) suggests that neither of those would be faults.

### **Question 8**

Why would moving the red ball not be a non-striking fault in the situation described in Question 7, and why would picking up the red ball without asking permission not be a non-striking fault?

### **Answer 8.**

Rule 12(a) says that it is a non-striking fault to move "a stationary ball, with any part of the body, clothes or mallet either directly or by hitting a hoop or the peg". It does not say anything about moving a stationary ball indirectly using an outside agency (which is what the blue ball is in the situation above). In case you were thinking that deliberately pushing an opponent's ball far from the hoop with your ball would, therefore, be a good tactic, don't try

it. At best, your opponent's ball would simply be replaced, since it would be a misplaced ball. At worst, the referee might think it a reason for applying Rule 14.

If the owner of black picked the red ball up to replace it without asking permission, that would not be a non-striking because he would be replacing a misplaced ball, which is allowed under Rule 12(a)(2).

### **Question 9**

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 9.**

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 10**

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 10.**

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.

### **Question 11**

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 11.**

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 the 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.

**Question 12**

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 12.**

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 A (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 13**

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 13.**

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 14**

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 14.**

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 15**

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 15.**

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 16**

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 16.**

If you place one of your scoring clips on a hoop which you did not score, then you would be giving incorrect information. If your opponent acted on that information then, according to Rule 8(c), he would have the choice of a replay of the ball he played immediately after receiving that incorrect information provided he had not played that same ball again. It does not matter whether or not you thought the information was correct.

However, if you run a hoop out of order, then Rule 1(f) would probably apply. So, even if you gave incorrect information by putting your clip on that hoop, and your opponent acted on that information, he would probably not be able to have his replay because all four balls would have to be played from a penalty point after a toss. I said "probably" because an unlikely example could be constructed where your opponent had not contested the hoop run out of order at all by the time he played the shot that he wants to replay.

**Question 17**

Should a referee remove any scoring clips on a hoop, if called to watch a jump shot.

**Answer 17.**

Yes. WCF Refereeing Regulation R2(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. However, 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.

### **Question 18**

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 18.**

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 19**

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 19.**

Yes.

### **Question 20**

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 20.**

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 21**

The striker touched a ball with his foot as he was leaving his stance after playing a stroke. Is that a striking or non-striking fault?

### **Answer 21.**

That depends on whether the fault is ruled to have occurred before or after the striking period has ended. The commentary to Rule 13(a) gives guidelines. If a ball is hampering the striker and he touches the hampering ball with his foot as he leaves his stance, that would be a striking fault and no hoop could be scored by the stroke. If the ball touched by the foot was not hampering the stroke, then it would be a non-striking fault. The offender’s side would miss its next turn, but if a hoop was run in the stroke, the hoop would count.

**Question 22**

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 come to rest before touching it. Was the opponent correct?

**Answer 22.**

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 23**

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 23.**

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. That is, unless there was another ball moved by the previous stroke still moving and still on the court when the next striker played, in which case it would be the striker who committed a striking fault.

**Question 24**

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 24.**

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.