

Synopsis of Nine-Wicket Croquet Tournament Rules

Introduction

Nine wicket croquet is often a less formal game than the more competitive six wicket version of the sport and in the backyard many different variations of 9-wicket are played. The following United States Croquet Association approved version is designed for high level competition and tournament play in USCA sanctioned events.

The Court and Equipment

The standard court is 100' by 50'. Grass should be short enough so that the average player can hit a ball the length of the court. There are nine wickets, two stakes, and four balls.

In USCA sanctioned play, standard 3.75-inch-wide steel wickets are typically used (the same wickets used for the 6-wicket games). 6-wicket balls (16oz) can be used for smooth fast lawns, but, for taller grass the balls are usually 3.55" 11oz smooth surface balls. CRQ 511 ProBalz brand are a popular brand for sanctioned play.

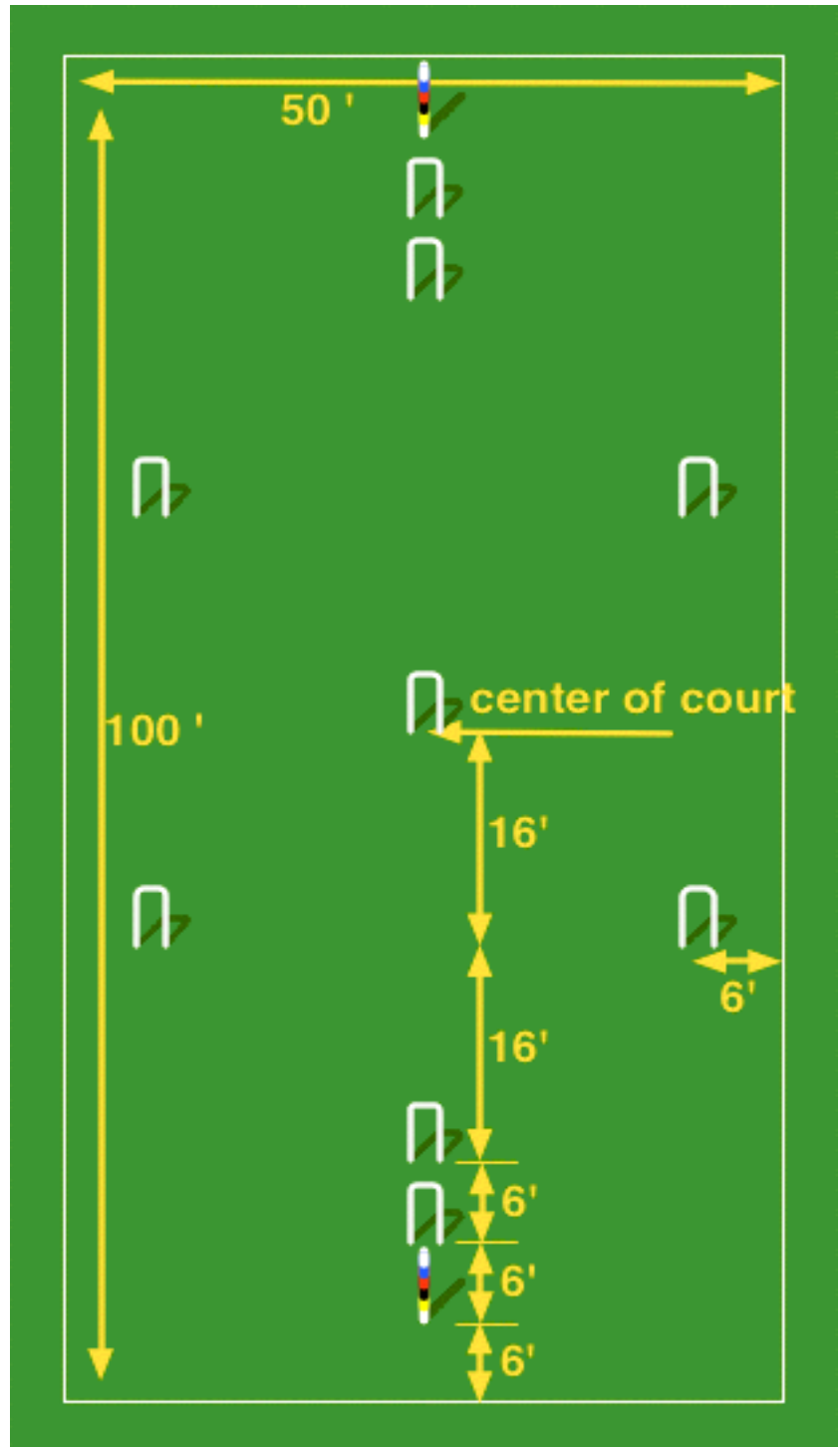
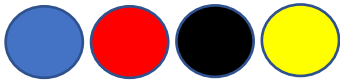


Figure 1: Court Setup



An Outline of the Game

Nine-Wicket Croquet is played between two sides — the blue and black balls versus the red and yellow balls. In singles, each player plays two balls; in doubles, each player plays the same ball throughout the game.

The object is to maneuver the balls through the course of wickets and into the finishing stake, as shown in Figure 2. The side which first does so with both its balls wins the game.

Play is made by striking a ball with a mallet. The player who is playing a turn is called the striker, and the ball in play for that turn is the striker ball.

Each turn is initially one stroke, but extra strokes can be earned when the striker ball hits another ball or scores a wicket. By making good use of these extra strokes, it is possible to score many points in one turn.

The striker ball may cause other balls to move and score points. However, the striker must never strike any ball other than the striker ball. The mallet must contact the ball crisply. Scooping, pushing, and hitting the ball more than once during the stroke are not allowed.

End of Game

The game ends when one side stakes out both balls or time runs out. If time runs out, both sides play one complete rotation and winner is decided by high score. 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. If the game is tied at the end of the first rotation a second will be used. If the game is still tied at the end of the second rotation, extra rotations continue until the tie is broken.

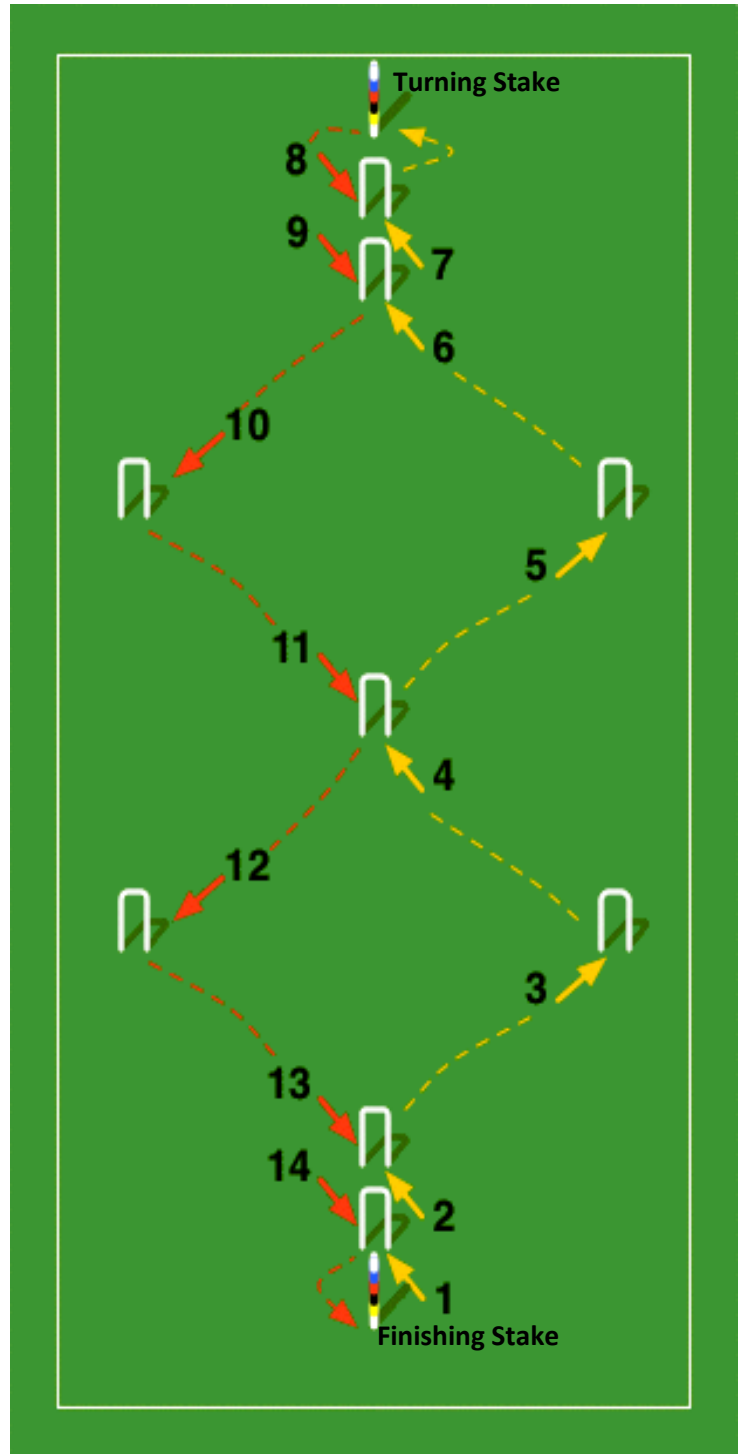


Figure 2: Course of Play

Starting a Game

The side that wins the coin toss chooses colors, blue plays first. Each ball is played into the game from a point halfway between the finishing stake and wicket #1. When the ball is placed on the starting mark it is considered "in the game". **Turns are played in the sequence blue, red, black, yellow, and so on throughout the game.**

Scoring a Wicket

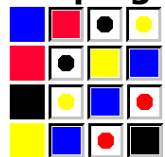
A ball scores a wicket point by passing through a wicket in the correct direction and sequence (see Figure 2). A ball has scored the wicket when it has fully passed the playing (front) side of the wicket.

Hitting other balls

If the striker ball hits another ball we say it has made a roquet, and the striker becomes entitled to take two extra shots. The first is a **croquet shot** (explained below) and the second is a **continuation shot**.

The striker ball is now dead on the croqueted ball and the striker ball cannot earn a roquet (extra shots) by hitting that ball again until after it scores its next wicket or stake point. Once the wicket is scored, the striker becomes 'alive' on all balls. If the striker ball roquets a dead ball, it is not a fault but no extra shots are earned and both balls stay where they end up. Deadness is tracked using a deadness board and carries over from turn to turn.

Keeping Track of Deadness



A deadness board is strongly recommended (required for tournament play) for keeping track of deadness. You can buy one, make your own, or keep track on paper. There are also small hand-held deadness boards and apps.

Croquet Shots: If you hit (roquet) a ball you are alive on you get two strokes. The first shot is called a **croquet shot** and the second is a **continuation shot**. The croquet shot can be played in 4 different ways:

1. from 9 inches or less, in any direction, away from the ball that was hit.
2. 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").
3. from a position in contact with the ball that was hit, with the striker ball not held.
4. from where the striker ball stopped after the roquet. If the striker picks up the striker ball, option #4 is no longer available and the striker must proceed with option #1, #2 or #3 for taking the croquet shot. If the striker ball went out of bounds, it may be played from 9 inches in from where it went out.

Continuation Shots: The second bonus shot after a roquet is called a continuation shot and is an ordinary shot played from where the striker ball came to rest after the croquet shot. Remember, you are "dead" on the ball that you just roqueted until you clear your next wicket.

Special relief of deadness.

A side may clear one of its balls of deadness when the opponent makes the first wicket after the turning stake (the 8th wicket).

Boundaries

Boundaries are marked with string, paint or chalk. Any ball that touches the boundary is out of play and is placed in 9 inches nearest the point where the ball crossed the boundary. Any ball less than 9 inches from the boundary is also placed in the full distance. Striker ball less than 9 inches will be played from its position if it has a continuation shot. If it does not have a continuation shot, it is placed in 9 inches.

The only exceptions to this are when the striker's ball crosses the boundary line as the result of a roquet (where it is then lifted and placed for a croquet shot) or a striker ball directly hits (not a cannon) any other ball out of bounds after it has roqueted a ball. Any such ball is marked in and the striker takes croquet from the roqueted ball.

No Score and Hit

The striker ball cannot both score the stake or hoop and make a roquet on the same stroke. Whichever happens first takes precedence.

Continuation Stroke After Wicket or Turning Stake

The striker earns an extra stroke (called a continuation stroke) for the striker ball by scoring a wicket, or the turning stake. Continuation shots are generally not cumulative, however, if the striker ball scores two wickets on one stroke and If the striker ball scores a wicket and the turning stake on the same stroke, two strokes are earned, in no case are three continuation shots earned.

Rover Balls and Scoring the Finishing Stake

A ball that has scored all the points except the finishing stake is called a rover ball. If the striker of a rover ball hits the striker ball or another rover ball into the finishing stake with the striker ball, that ball has scored the stake and that ball is removed from the game. In other words, any rover ball can stake itself out or stake out another rover ball by hitting it into the finishing stake. Play continues in the usual sequence, skipping over the missing ball(s). The game ends if both balls of a side have scored the finishing stake, or, as explained earlier, if the time runs out, the extra turns are played and the side with the largest score wins.

A rover ball may roquet each other ball no more than once per turn. A rover ball may go through any wicket in any direction to clear its deadness. The rover does not get an additional (bonus) shot after going through any wicket. Once a wicket is made, the rover is alive on all balls in its next turn and may hit them in any order.