

The Idiot's Guide to the New GC Rules (Version D)

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Introduction

I would start this guide by assuring everyone that whilst this is yet another version of the rules for every player to have to take on board, I feel it has been a worthwhile exercise as it made matters much simpler. It has changed rules to line up with those used by our AC colleagues and has produced a book that is just mainly laws and not a massive mix of laws, CA and WCF rulings, which I am sure confused most players. One thing it has **not done** is changed the way we actually play the game in any significant manner, except possibly the wrong ball law which is now considerably simpler and easier to use.

The introduction in the new rules book spends a little time on describing how the actual rules are now organised but does not really concentrate sufficiently on what really matters to most Federation players. That is how it affects the game and the reasons behind the change. Hopefully this guide will rectify that deficiency. Some rule numbers have been changed to deal with matters in a more logical order.

1. Deeming a Shot to be Played. (Rule 6)

This is something that is standard in AC but was not allowed until now in GC. Very often the requirement for deeming presents itself because your ball is in a good position to hinder your opponent and you don't want to move at all. With old rules you were faced with doing a very delicate shot such as a tap on the top or a light brush on the side which could easily be a fault. Now you only have to make the decision to deem and the ball stays exactly where it is. It's doubtful that it will make any significant change to the game but it may remove the need for some time-consuming refereeing.

One situation that is not really connected with the above but will, I am sure be seen as similar, is taking a swing at a ball and missing completely. This has not been changed and you still have to move a ball for a shot to be played.

2. Ball Out of Court (Rule 2)

In very simple terms we now follow the AC practice exactly. A ball is out of court as soon as it touches the line. It won't change the game in any way but makes it far easier to judge when you don't have to estimate where the centre of the ball is located in relation to the line. Thus balls that have left the court are placed touching the inside of the line when they are to be played.

3. Faults Generally (Rule 11)

This is probably the second biggest change in the new rules. We are dispensing with the dreaded **Non Striking Fault**. The original intention of this rule was to persuade

players to keep well out of the way of moving balls and it highly penalised players who moved a ball in any way when there were not playing a shot. This was considered too heavy a penalty and any touching outside of a player's turn is now dealt with as interference, (Rule 9). Now we just put it back where it was or for a moving ball, it can be either where it finished or where the players thought it would have finished. The opponent chooses which. Naturally if the touching is done intentionally, it is a very different matter and dealt with as misbehaviour.

The old **Striking Fault** remains virtually as was but is now simply termed as a **Fault**. This only entails one significant change in the text and that is a redefinition of the **Striking Period** which defines when a fault can be committed. It now starts slightly earlier when the striker has taken his or her stance with the clear intention to make a stroke. It now does not wait until his or her mallet has made contact with the striker's ball as it did in the old rules. With this change in definition it does not matter whether it is the right or wrong ball that has been touched, a stroke has started before the swing commences and is considered to have been made when any ball is contacted. If it's the wrong ball then wrong ball rules come into play. So multi- swingers, any unintentional tap is still your turn finished. As stated in item 1, a ball has to be moved for a shot to be played.

4. **Offside Balls (Rule 8)**

Again, only minimal changes. A player may no longer be asked to replay a shot he or she has just made with an onside ball, simply because the partner ball was off side. As previously a player loses their power to request a ball to be replayed because it was offside when played, if that player has played his or her own onside ball.

The second change is that the penalty point is now changed to a penalty area which is a half circle of one yard radius around the old penalty point.

This means that you no longer have to take out that small marker on the old penalty point, the one you always forget to put back.

5. **Scoring Clips (Rule 4)**

In the old rules, the scoring clips for your game and any from a double banked game were defined as outside agencies so if you hit a clip whilst trying to jump a hoop, you could not score a point. This meant every clip had to be taken off before you tried the jump. Under the new rules all clips are part of the game and may be left in place when you jump. The effect of any contact between ball and clip is not taken into account. Clips are only part of game when attached to a hoop but are still treated as outside agencies when not attached to a hoop.

6. **The Wrong Ball Rule (Rule 10)**

I am sure this one has confused more players than any other one in the book but this time think the rules have really made a step forward.

Back in 2005 or thereabouts, there was a move to penalise everything that was not perfect in the sequence stakes and I am sure some games were decided on ability to keep in sequence rather than mallet skills. The pendulum has now swung fully the other way, with all penalties out of the window and it has been fully accepted that most croquet players find it difficult if not impossible to remember what happened two shots ago.

In simple terms we wait until the game is stopped because a player or referee, if present, has stopped the game because he or she believes that the game is out of sequence (OOS) or the player about to play, is going to hit an OOS ball. If the last shot is out of sequence with the previous ball, even if it got out of sequence by playing an opponent's ball, there is a simple non-penalising way of putting it right as described below. Alternatively, if a player has been stopped playing a shot that would start an OOS, the player just goes on to play the correct ball. The intention is now always to stop OOS.

Thus, there is never any need to go back any more than one shot, prior to the last shot, and everything that has happened previously is accepted. Even if some one with a photographic memory can remember all that went wrong previously, its all forgotten and accepted as you thought it was at the time.

There was one occasion with the old rules where the simple replace and replay gave a very unfair situation. If an OOS has been running for several shots, you can reach what has been termed as ***the gifted hoop situation***. This arises when the simple replace and replay is used. The correct ball to be played may be sitting right in front of a hoop and would give a certain hoop to the next player to play. It has possibly arisen because of the out of sequence play and the player concerned was planning to move the scoring ball with his next turn but cannot do so as play has been stopped. Under these circumstances, the player who would normally play second in a ***replace and replay*** procedure, may request a ***ball swap*** procedure be used instead. This procedure allows the last shot to stand as it was, including any points scored and the only action taken is to swap the position of the next ball to be played and its partner ball.

In the way the new rules are worded, the choice of replace and replay or ball swap is given to the ***non-offending side*** on the basis that the side that played the last shot before stoppage was the offender. In reality both sides may have played many shots in error and nobody will know who started the OOS.

There is one rather impossible situation met in wrong ball play and that is where a player plays a ball belonging to his or her opponents but the opponents then go on and play their own shot. Not very likely but still possible and it leaves a situation where it was impossible for the last player to have played in sequence. Providing the game has been stopped after the opponent plays, it's a case of picking up all balls and moving to a penalty area, technically known as ***penalty area continuation (See rule 18)***. As both sides have made errors, you toss up for who goes first and the loser of the toss choses which penalty area is to be used.

7. The Handicap Rule (Rule 19)

The only change in the handicap rule has been in the way additional shots are calculated in handicap doubles play from the individual players singles handicaps. In both the old and new systems, additional shots are allocated to specific players and not pairs as happens in AC. In the old system one took the lowest handicap amongst all players and compared his handicap with the lowest handicap on the opposing side, halved the difference and rounded up to give the additional shot allowance to the weaker player. The remaining two players were also compared and the allowance calculated in the same manner. In the new system, the way we pair players for allowance calculation is changed. Now the player with the lowest handicap is paired with highest handicap on the opposing side and the remaining two players also compared.

As will be seen from the examples tabled below, the two systems can produce significantly different allowances, especially if the two pairs have a high and a low handicap playing together. In practice the new system is far more generous to the weaker players with the number of additional shots it allocates. However, the difference between the additional shots allocated to each side by either system remains equal or just one different.

To date I have not seen any good technical reason for making the change. Alternatively, I have not seen any good technical reason for not making the change and I would suggest that the fact that it is the system that has been used for some time by both Australia and New Zealand is the driving force behind this change. We should remember that these new rules are WCF and not CA rules.

I personally find it rather hard to predict what the outcome will be from giving the weaker players more additional shots to play with as it will depend largely on how the weaker player arrived at their present handicap. Is it high because their mallet ability is low or is it high because they have not learnt how to use additional shots efficiently?

Type	Player 1	H C	Player 2	HC	System	Allowance
HC Overlap	A	4	B	6	OLD	C+1,D+1
	C	5	D	8	NEW	B+1,D+2
No HC Overlap	A	2	B	3	OLD	C+2,D+2
	C	5	D	7	NEW	C+1,D+3
Both large with small HC	A	-4	B	6	OLD	C+1,D+1
	C	-3	D	8	NEW	B+5,D+6
One top player	A	-4	B	5	OLD	C+5,D+2
	C	6	D	9	NEW	B+1,D+6 or B-0,D+7

A slight complication here; only one side can round up if both players have additional shots and this leads to a choice by the players concerned in the last example.

It has been suggested that the SECF continue with the old rules, but the AGM agreed to use the new version for all games.

8. Playing Hoops in the Wrong Order (Rule 7)

It is not unknown for players to go off course and score the hoops in the wrong order especially when we introduce a 19 point game in an event. On the assumption that the mistake is noticed before the game is finished, the old rules required that the hoops scored in the wrong order do not count and play goes back to what should have been the next correct hoop in order. It was always a problem as to how you got back to that position from where you found yourself when the mistake was discovered. The new rules make this easy and fair. A penalty area start has been designed to help with a wrong ball problem and will also be used in this case to restart the game. As an incorrect hoop was run both sides were really at fault and tossing for who restarts first is a fair way.

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