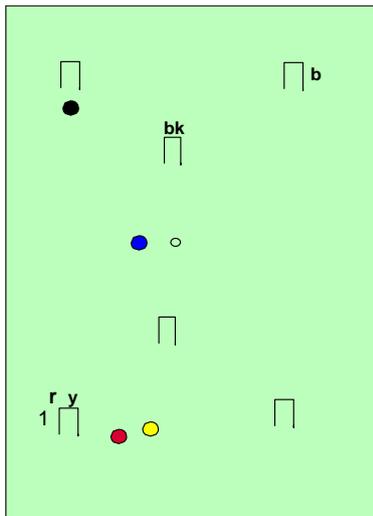


LESSON 4: REVISING THE FOUR-BALL BREAK

The four-ball break is the standard way to make several hoops in one turn. At higher levels of the game the main tactics consist of trying to set up a 4-ball break and then going round as many hoops as possible.

The position of the three other balls (beside the striker's ball) for the 4-ball break is as follows: there is one ball near the hoop you are trying to make – the 'pilot'; there is another ball at the following hoop – the 'pioneer'; and there is a ball somewhere in the middle of the lawn – the 'pivot'.

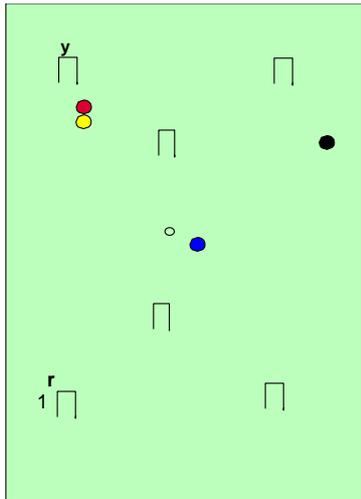


The diagram opposite shows the standard position for a 4-ball break. Yellow can rush red in front of the hoop, and yellow then makes hoop 1 off red – yellow plays a croquet shot which puts red on the other side of the hoop, runs the hoop, and then roquets red.

The 4-ball break position for yellow going to hoop 1.

The key factor in keeping a 4-ball break going is to have a good pioneer – i.e. sending a ball accurately to the hoop after the one you are going for. If this ball is close to the hoop, it does not take great skill to make that hoop. The position of the pivot – the ball in the middle – is less important. It is usually possible to do a roll which gets near this ball when sending the pioneer to the next-hoop-but one.

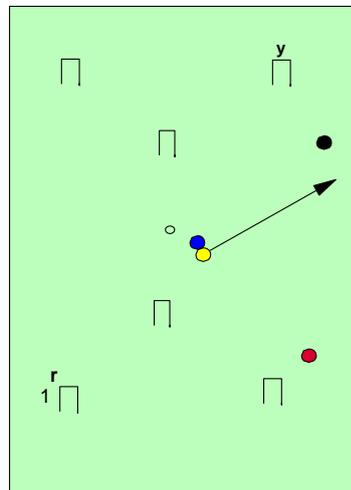
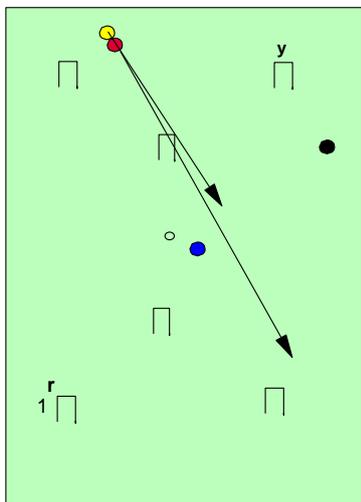
If the pioneer is not well placed, it will be necessary to get a rush on this ball to send it nearer the hoop.



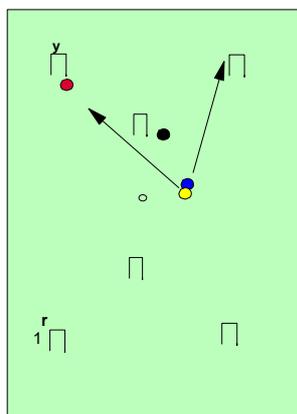
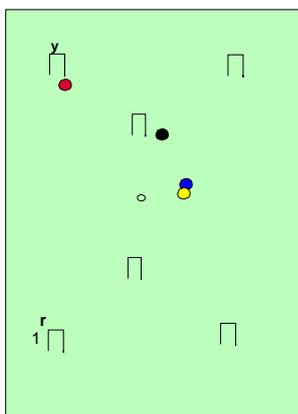
In this diagram, yellow is about to make hoop 2 off red, but black is a poor pioneer for hoop 3.

It will be necessary to improve the position of black before playing the hoop approach.

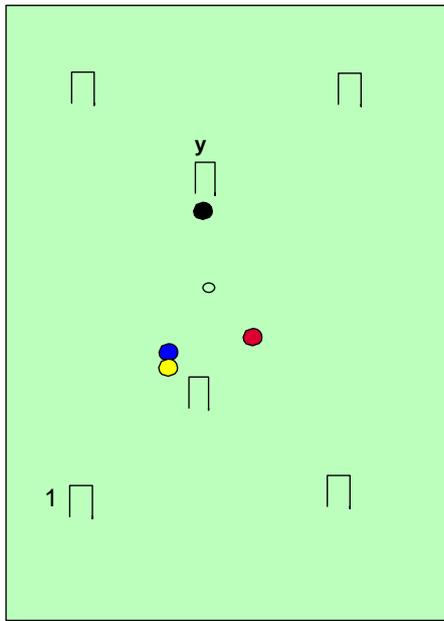
Another factor to watch here is that hoop 6 may get in the way of the shot that loads hoop 4 – so it is best to put the red ball to the right of hoop 2, and then rush it further across after making the hoop.



In the first diagram we load hoop 4 with a pioneer while going close to the pivot. Take care to avoid hoop 6 – it is better to have the pioneer a little way away from hoop 4 than risk hitting hoop 6 with either ball. In the next diagram we have roqueted blue. We now need to do an accurate take-off so we get a rush on black so that we can put it in front of the hoop.

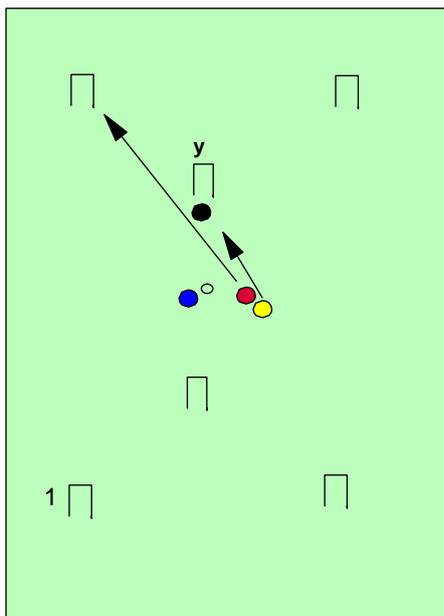


In this next example, the player of yellow has mishit the shot intended to make black the pioneer at hoop 3 and left black a long way away from the hoop. The best tactic here is to send the pivot as the pioneer at hoop 3. Red is well-placed at hoop 2, so yellow only has to get close enough to roquet it – there is no need for a rush on it. So we play a split roll which sends blue to hoop 3 as the pioneer while getting close to red.



Here is another problem situation. Yellow is going for hoop 6, and has a good pilot at this hoop. However, it is going to be difficult to play a shot which sends blue to 1-back and gets near the red ball – it would need a square shot with a great deal of 'stop' on it to avoid going well past red.

Here a simple alternative is to put red as the pioneer at 1-back. Yellow plays a roll which sends blue into the middle, and tries to get a rush on red a little way up the lawn (it doesn't matter much if you don't get the rush – it just makes the next shot easier).



Now we have a straightforward shot which sends red as the pioneer to 1-back while getting close to black at hoop 6, with blue as our pivot in the middle.

In order to keep a 4-ball break going, you need to think ahead. If one of the balls is misplaced, you need to think of ways of improving the position and still making the hoop. You also need to consider whether there will be hoops or the peg in the way of future shots, and place your balls to avoid this.

With some careful planning, it is possible to keep a 4-ball break going with relatively straightforward shots – avoiding long, accurate rolls and precision take-offs and angled hoops.