

A Guide to One-Ball

One-Ball is a variant of Association Croquet but instead of each player having two balls each has just one. The impact of this simple change is to make lengthy breaks quite rare, except by very good players. Indeed, One-Ball is not dissimilar to GC, in that most turns comprise a single shot, which is used to take position or to aim at another ball. However, the tactical decisions in One-Ball are interesting and most games last less than 30 minutes, so a whole mini-tournament can be played in three to four hours.

Association Croquet rules are used throughout, but of course there are only a few which players need to know well. Foremost of these are:

- The winner of the toss can elect either to start first or go second (and usually chooses second).
- Balls are played on to the lawn from the 'south baulk-line', which is half of the boundary, from corner one to mid-way towards corner four.
- At any time in the game, when you hit, or 'roquet', opponent's ball you pick up yours and place it next to the other, then you 'take croquet', which is striking your ball and simultaneously moving the other. Finally, you get a further, 'continuation' shot, with which you can do anything *except* roquet again.
- When you run a hoop you also get one extra shot, which can be used for a roquet.
- When in a croquet stroke either ball goes off the lawn then it is end of turn. Balls that go off the lawn are replaced on the yard line.
- Unlike GC, both players have to get their balls through every hoop; and the first to run twelve hoops and the peg-out is the winner.
- A more complicated rule that you need to be aware of is called 'wiring'. After croqueting opponent's ball you must not hide behind a hoop or the peg; you must leave you opponent a full ball to aim at. If you don't then he is entitled to lift his ball to either baulk (north or south).

There are, of course, many other laws, including those dealing with errors and faults. If in any doubt ask a referee.

Most One-Ball is handicapped, with one player being provided a number of 'bisques'. Each whole bisque can be used for a free turn at any time. A half bisque is used for a free turn with the proviso that you cannot then run a hoop.

As One-Ball has become increasingly popular among GC players, organisers have recently exercised their minds about how to come up with a fair way of handicapping them. The following is now in wide usage: Each player's One-Ball handicap will be the lowest of (a) their AC handicap, (b) 2.5 times their GC handicap and (c) 20. The higher handicapped player will get bisques equal to the difference in One-Ball handicaps, divided by three, then rounded to the nearest half. (e.g. a 10 plays a 5: $10 - 5 = 5 / 3 = 1.66$; therefore 1.5 bisques.)

This simple guide is no place to discuss tactics. Suffice it to say that most turns begin with a decision whether to be attacking or to make a defensive play. Additionally, the higher handicapped player's use of bisques, in attack or defence, will be key to his chance of winning. For example:

- You have a six-foot (2 m), angled hoop one, while opponent is for hoop two and a few yards (metres) to one side. Instead of trying your dodgy hoop and then probably having to take a bisque towards oppo, instead use your bisque to get tight in front of your hoop, then wait for the opponent to sit in front of his before running your hoop hard right down to near his; roquet his ball, croquet yours into position, run the hoop and roquet his again.
- You are for hoop three but not in a good running position, while opponent is in front of his next hoop, four. Aim at his ball softly enough such that if you miss then you can take a bisque and roquet his ball back to your hoop.
- You are not near your next hoop but the opponent is in front of his next. Take a half bisque to knock his away.