

# CROQUET NOTES

Hints for Long-Bisquers

by W. LONGMAN

THE object of this article is to urge all long-bisquers to concentrate upon How to Hit the Ball.

I would particularly lay stress upon four essentials—(1) Freedom, (2) Stance, (3) Follow, (4) Eye on the Ball. The first three of these can roughly be summed up in one word—style; but style is so elusive and so varied that it would need a writer far more skilful than myself to attempt to deal with it; all I propose to do is to make a few observations under each of the four heads.

## (1) Freedom

One of the unfortunate facts about croquet is that in a game between two beginners freedom is the one thing that apparently does not pay.

Breakdowns naturally are of frequent occurrence, and the balls are, when breakdowns occur, generally in the central part of the court, and not near a boundary. The result is that the striker is confronted with a roquet of from two to ten yards in length, which expedience demands should be played dead slow, so as to keep the partner balls near each other in the event of a miss, thereby securing the innings next turn.

It is these dead slow shots that are the bane of most long-bisquers; that they are seldom hit is not surprising, as most players will, I think, agree with me in classifying them as being some of the most difficult strokes of the game—so difficult, in fact, that they should very rarely be attempted. The frequent missing of comparatively short roquets naturally discourages the long-bisquer, and prevents him from acquiring the necessary confidence. That, however, is not the real trouble, which lies rather in the fact that the continual playing of slow strokes cramps the style, prevents follow through and, in a word, kills freedom.

A freely-hit ball should travel the length of a court and cross the far boundary at a fair speed, and a stroke which would achieve such a result should be the model for all short roquets. To start with, this will not help to win games, because often the roquets will be missed, the partner balls widely separated, and the innings lost in consequence; but the beginner will be building on sure foundations and, with practice and patience, the due reward will come. As an ultimate result there will be no more hesitating pokes at short roquets, no unnecessary overbitting of long shots; each stroke will be firmly played with a rhythmic and natural swing of the arms, and the weight of the mallet will play its part automatically.

## (2) Stance

Stance is really an integral part of freedom, and freedom cannot be obtained unless the stance permits it. The usual slow shot of the beginner leads him, as a rule, to stand too near his own ball.

At the moment of impact with the ball the bottom of the mallet should be a little less than one inch off the ground, and the ball should be hit just before the swing of the pendulum begins to lift the mallet head away from the ground. With the feet placed in a given position, *i.e.*, when the stance has been taken up, there is only one spot which fulfils these conditions; the ball must be on that spot. In actual play the ball is the fixed object and the feet must be placed accordingly; but in order to learn the spot I suggest that the beginner should first take a stance and then adjust the ball till the correct position becomes familiar.

Given stance correct as to distance and given freedom of swing the ball will be hit correctly; but stance has a second function to fill, because the direction in which the ball travels is mainly controlled by it.

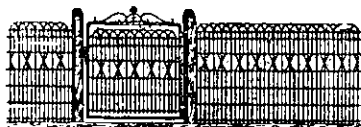
It is essential that the stance be true to the line of aim; *i.e.*, whether the upright or the Irish style of play is adopted, the shoulders must be square with the line of aim, and at the end of the stroke the mallet must point straight towards the object ball.

(This article will be concluded in the next issue.)

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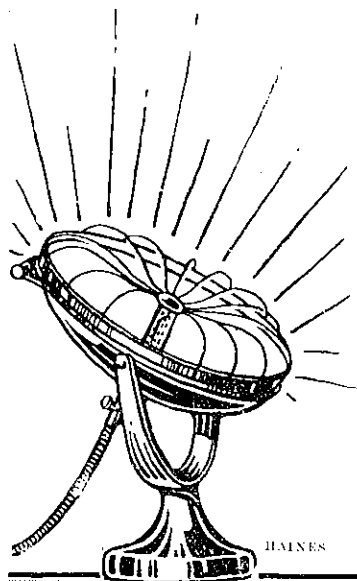
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