

SOUTHERN COUNTIES PETANQUE ASSOCIATION

UMPIRE'S NOTE 20 JUNE 2005, UPDATED AFTER CONSULTING THE NATIONAL UMPIRE

Introduction

Various little issues have come up, either in other competitions or in league matches, or from questions people have put to me, or simply from watching – and my advice on these is as follows:

Size of circle

One player I know of has consistently asked other teams to draw the circle bigger so that he can get his feet into it (on at least one occasion in response to being told that his boule was not played legally because one of his feet straddled the line). The relevant rule (Article 6 paragraph 3) says: "Any member of the team winning the toss chooses the starting point and traces a circle *large enough for any player to stand with both feet fully inside it*. However, *it may not measure less than 35cm or more than 50cm in diameter*". So it is quite reasonable and in accordance with the rules, in my view, for a player to ask that the circle be enlarged to accommodate his/her feet (provided they are together – you don't have to accommodate them standing with feet apart), unless the resulting diameter is more than 50cm.

Moving the circle

There has been some argument locally about whether and when a team may move the circle back from its otherwise correct position around the point where the jack finished on the previous end. Article 7 of the Rule Book provides the answer, which is a bit long and complicated, but the key paragraph says: "...the player [who is to throw the jack] may step back, in line with the previous end's line of play, until he or she is able to throw the jack any valid distance *up to the maximum distance allowed, and not beyond*. This may only be done *if the jack cannot be thrown in any other direction to the maximum distance*". Note that the distance the player can move the circle is limited to what is needed in order to be able to throw a jack to the maximum valid distance (i.e. taking account of the required distance of the jack from any boundary). The "valid distances" referred to are 6 – 10 m for adults and juniors, 5 – 9 m for cadets and 4 – 8 m for minors.

Note also that the circle may NOT be moved if the jack can be thrown to a maximum distance in another direction. This may pose some difficulties of interpretation on unmarked pistes in league matches and competitions. My ADVICE in these circumstances is to apply the rule pragmatically – i.e. to act as if the pistes ARE marked so as to avoid disrupting the remaining play by trying to throw a maximum length jack "diagonally" across the next game. In order to avoid the necessity to do that, allow players to move the circle back along the line of play sufficiently to allow a maximum length valid jack to be thrown.

One further thing that needs to be taken into account from the rules about this: WHETHER OR NOT the first team to try to throw the jack takes advantage of the conditions in which they can move the circle, if they subsequently fail with their three attempts to throw a valid jack, the *second* team *may then move the circle back* to allow the maximum length jack to be thrown. Whatever happens, after the second team has tried to throw the jack, even if it fails for its 3 turns, the circle may not be moved again. No team may move the circle *forward* in any circumstances, whether it has previously been moved by the other team or not.

Wetting your cloth

As far as I can see, there is nothing in the rules that stops anyone from wetting their cloth. There most definitely IS a rule, however, (Article 17) that prohibits the wetting of boules or jacks. Since I can't think of any other mentionable reason for wetting your cloth, and it would be extremely difficult to continue to use your cloth, once wetted, on your boules or jack without wetting them, my ADVICE (and the INSTRUCTION from the National Umpire!) is NOT to wet your cloth! While we're on the subject, the rules don't actually mention "cloth" at all, but they do REQUIRE a player about to play a boule to "...remove from it any trace of mud or any other substance" (Article 23 paragraph 4) and they also REQUIRE that "Any foreign bodies adhering to the boules or the jack must be removed before measuring a point" (Article 30).

Marking positions of boules and the jack

All sorts of things can interfere with where boules and jacks have been properly thrown to – as someone found recently, on a hot, dry Shedfield top terrain, even touching a boule ever so gently with the tip of a

measuring tape can result in it finishing at least 2 meters from where it was before being touched. If you want to be able to replace things where they rightfully should have been, for measuring, MY ADVICE is *mark their positions!* It's tedious, but it can be worth it! (Article 22). Better still, mark the boules and jack and call the umpire!

Showing someone else in your team the line you think they should play their boule

As far as I can see, the rules are silent about this. Article 16 paragraph 2 says: "The player must not use any object or draw a line on the ground to give aid in playing a boule or mark the point of landing". In my view, this refers to the player about the play the boule. I think that it could also be implied that no other member of that team may place an object or draw a line or mark the point of landing for a team-mate, but Article 17 paragraph 2 allows for the player's partner(s) to stand between the circle and the coche, and there is nothing to stop them SHOWING a team-mate where to play, as long as they don't make a mark or place an object on the terrain (for the duration of the shot) as a guide. So, MY ADVICE is, putting your foot in a particular place and saying "Point on this line", or "Pitch it here" is quite OK, as long as you move your foot away before the shot is played and don't leave a mark where you put your foot.

Intervention by spectators in decisions concerning measuring of points

According to Article 26, the only people who may get involved in a decision concerning measuring of points are the players of the two teams engaged in the match and the Umpire (if there is one) – by convention, where there is not an Umpire present, both teams may, by agreement (only), call on a "neutral" person to carry out the measure but, by doing so, they must give that person *de facto* recognition as an "Umpire" for the purposes of that decision. "Team", in this case, clearly has the meaning ascribed to it in Article 1 (i.e. a triple, a double or a single) and does NOT encompass any wider interpretation of "team", such as a league team or an inter-regional team. MY ADVICE is that any members of these wider interpretations of "team" – in fact ANYONE other than the two teams involved in the game and the Umpire – are, in fact, spectators, and if they attempt in any way to interfere with a decision about measuring points they could be held to be "causing an incident" on the terrain which carries the penalties identified in paragraph 2 of Article 38.

And finally...

...I have noticed one or two people who don't keep both feet on the ground until completing their throw, usually when shooting (see Article 7 paragraph 7). *Please don't do this*, for two reasons: firstly, in regional or national competitions the boule so thrown is likely to be called "dead" (see Article 24) and, secondly, you are FAR less likely to hit the boule you're aiming at if you don't stay balanced with both feet on the ground when you shoot.

If anyone has any queries about any of the rules, please contact me, either by email (preferred) at r.j.powell@dsl.pipex.com or by phone on 023 8077 9686. If I can't answer you, I know a man who can!

*Richard Powell
Updated 9 April 2006*