

SOUTHERN COUNTIES PETANQUE ASSOCIATION UMPIRE'S ADVICE NOTE

MEASURING

This note is in response to a request to provide some advice on measuring distances of boules from the coche.

Rules

The Rules have a few things to say about measuring which are reproduced at the end of this note. This is not the main point of this note, but you should be familiar with – and abide by – them anyway! The issues covered in the note generally apply both during an end and when the end has finished.

Etiquette

It is the responsibility of the side playing the most recent boule to carry out the measuring; they are, after all, claiming that they have gained the shot – (Article 26).

If you want to be able to replace any boule or the coche because it may get moved during the measure, **MARK ITS POSITION**, and preferably get the other team to acknowledge the mark – (Article 25).

If you move a boule or the coche during a measure, concede the measure to your opponent(s) – (Article 28). It is possible that your opponent(s) may agree to the moved object being replaced if it was marked, but the Rules specifically do NOT require them to do so, so you have no right to expect this. Under NO circumstances should you attempt to replace an object you have moved during a measure, unless your opponent(s) have been generous enough to agree *in advance* that you should do so.

ALWAYS accept with good grace if the other team want to measure after you have finished and declared what you think – the Rules specifically allow this – (Article 26). Out of politeness, its not a bad idea to offer this to the other side if the measure is close.

If you can't agree with the other team after you have both measured, call an Umpire, or a "neutral" if an umpire is not available – (Article 26). Once you have called in a neutral "arbitrator" DON'T crowd him or her or stand peering closely at what he/she is doing. Walk away from the measure and don't come back until the "arbitrator" has announced his/her decision (which you must accept without question). This is partly out of politeness and partly in acknowledgment that you and the other team have failed to agree the outcome, but in doing so have agreed to accept a neutral decision.

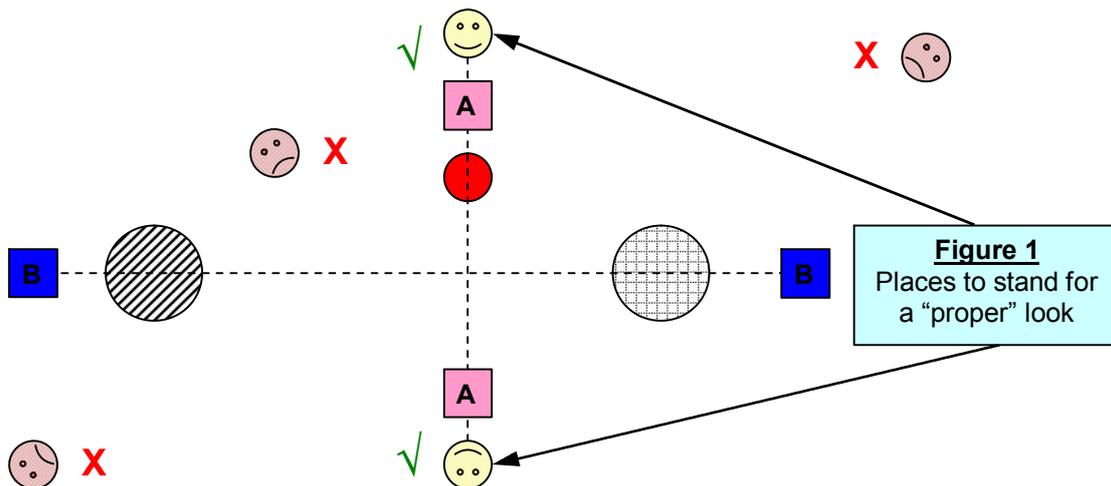
In all circumstances, if you cannot genuinely make a decision about which boule is closer by whatever method of measurement you use, declare the boules in contention to be equal, in your opinion.

Have a look first!

In fact, its ALWAYS worth having a "proper" look before you claim or concede a shot – things can look very different from close to the head than they do from the circle. A "proper" look involves standing in the right place (see Figure 1, next page), which is on an imaginary line through the coche (line A-A in Figure 1) and perpendicular to the imaginary line between the centres of the two boules in question (line B-B in Figure 1). It doesn't really matter on which "side" you stand, i.e. whether the coche is closer to you than the boules or further away, and the choice of where you stand may depend more on whether there are obstructions on one side or the other. I would always advise if possible that you try looking from both sides, particularly if it appears to be a close call on the first side. If you suffer from any sort of parallax distortion in your eyesight (as I do) you will always have a tendency to perceive that objects on one side of you are closer than those on the other side.

But DON'T try to get an approximate measure with your feet – Article 26 of the Rules expressly forbids it because a) it is highly inaccurate and b) there is quite a good chance of accidentally disturbing a boule or the coche while you are trampling around close to them.

If in ANY doubt when you've had a look, ALWAYS measure – there can be no objection to measuring, and it saves argument and embarrassment later if you sort it out at the time. If there is a difference of opinion at this stage between you and your opponent, call an Umpire or an agreed "neutral".



If you need to move a boule in order to measure

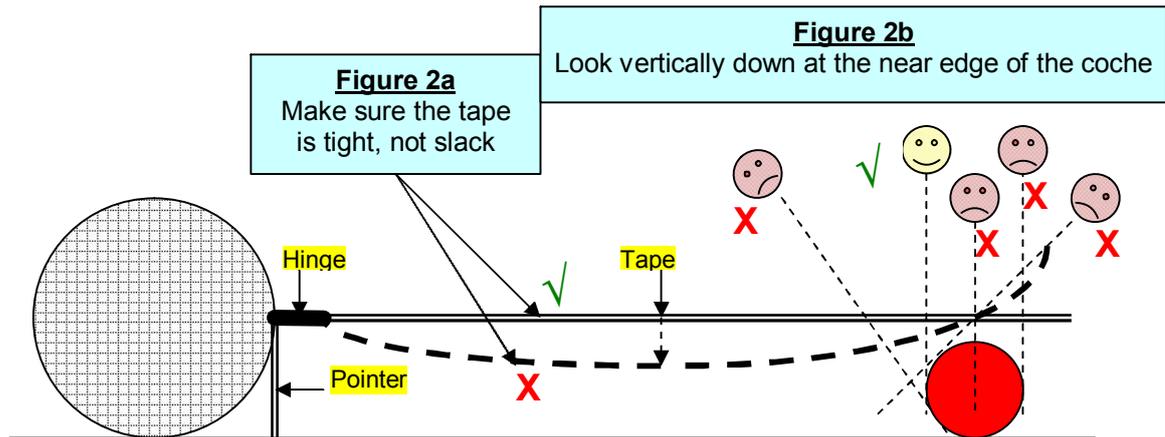
This happens quite often. DON'T try to measure over the top of the intermediate boule or alongside it, for two reasons: a) you are quite likely to disturb one of the boules or the coche if you do, because you have too many things to concentrate on; and b) parallax distortions will make any measure carried out this way EXTREMELY inaccurate and unreliable. Article 25 of the Rules tells you to use callipers if you can't move the intervening object, but very few people (even Umpires!) carry callipers around.

So its much preferable to move the intermediate boule, BUT in doing so you must bear in mind that it is virtually impossible to replace a boule exactly where it was before being moved, so it is highly preferable to agree with your opponents to leave the process to an Umpire (if available). If that is not an option, it is very important to agree every stage of the process with your opponents. Mark the boule that is to be moved as accurately as possible, and agree the mark. Mark any other boule(s) or the coche that might be moved accidentally during the measure and agree the marks. You should NOT try to push the boule downwards to make a little "cup" in the ground to help with its later replacement unless all boules have been played in that end, because the "cup" might prevent the moved-and-replaced boule from moving if any subsequent boule were to disturb it, or may stop any other boule that is moving from going where it would otherwise have gone. Carry out the measure as below, and agree the outcome. Replace the moved boule and agree its position.

Measuring with a tape

ALWAYS measure from boule (end of tape) to coche, not the other way round. Position yourself with your head over the coche, looking vertically down on it. If the light is mainly from one side (e.g. under floodlights), position yourself on the other side (if possible) in order not to cause shadows – and ask other people (politely!) to move if their shadow interferes with the measure. If you can't comfortably extend your arm far enough to reach the boule you are measuring, ask someone else to hold the end of the tape. At this stage, keep the tape cover and tape well clear of the coche and any other boules. CAREFULLY extend the tape until its end is touching the boule you are measuring. If you are using a proper pétanque tape, the "end" of the tape is the rectangular metal "hinge" NOT the piece of plastic with the pointed end that is attached to it. This is a device to indicate whether the tape is the right distance off the ground at this end. It is if the tip of the plastic pointer, hanging freely, is just touching the ground (see Figure 2, next page). Once the tape is properly positioned against the nearest point on the boule to the coche, try to secure the position of the hand holding the tape by resting it on the ground, otherwise there is a significantly greater risk of moving the boule when you turn your attention to the "business" end of the measure, at the coche (see Rules – Article 28 – for what happens if you do). Ensure that the tape is tight – if it sags, the distance shown on the tape will be too long (see Figure 2a). Hold the taught tape so that it passes directly over the coche and as close to the top of it as possible without touching or disturbing it – if the tape is too high above the coche, the distance shown is likely to be too long. Look vertically down to the edge of the coche nearest to the boule being measured – NOT above a guess as to where the centre of the coche is, because your guess will not be accurate, and NOT to the further edge of the coche a) because you are trying to find out which boule is closer to the closest point on the coche and b) because the coche may not be perfectly spherical, so its diameter from the near edge to the far edge may not be

the same in all directions. You MUST be looking vertically downwards – if your head is nearer the boule than the vertical position the perceived measure will be too short; further away and the measure will appear too long (see Figure 2b).



THEN read the tape!

Repeat for the other boule(s) in contention. If the measure is very close it is worth checking back on the first boule measured.

“Measuring” with a fold/slide pétanque rule or callipers

Using either an expanding rule or callipers is not actually “measuring”, since you don’t compare the numbers you read, you simply compare physical distances. Using either method requires even greater care than measuring with a tape, because you have to get the measuring instrument as close as possible to both the boule and the coche, but without touching them hard enough to move them.

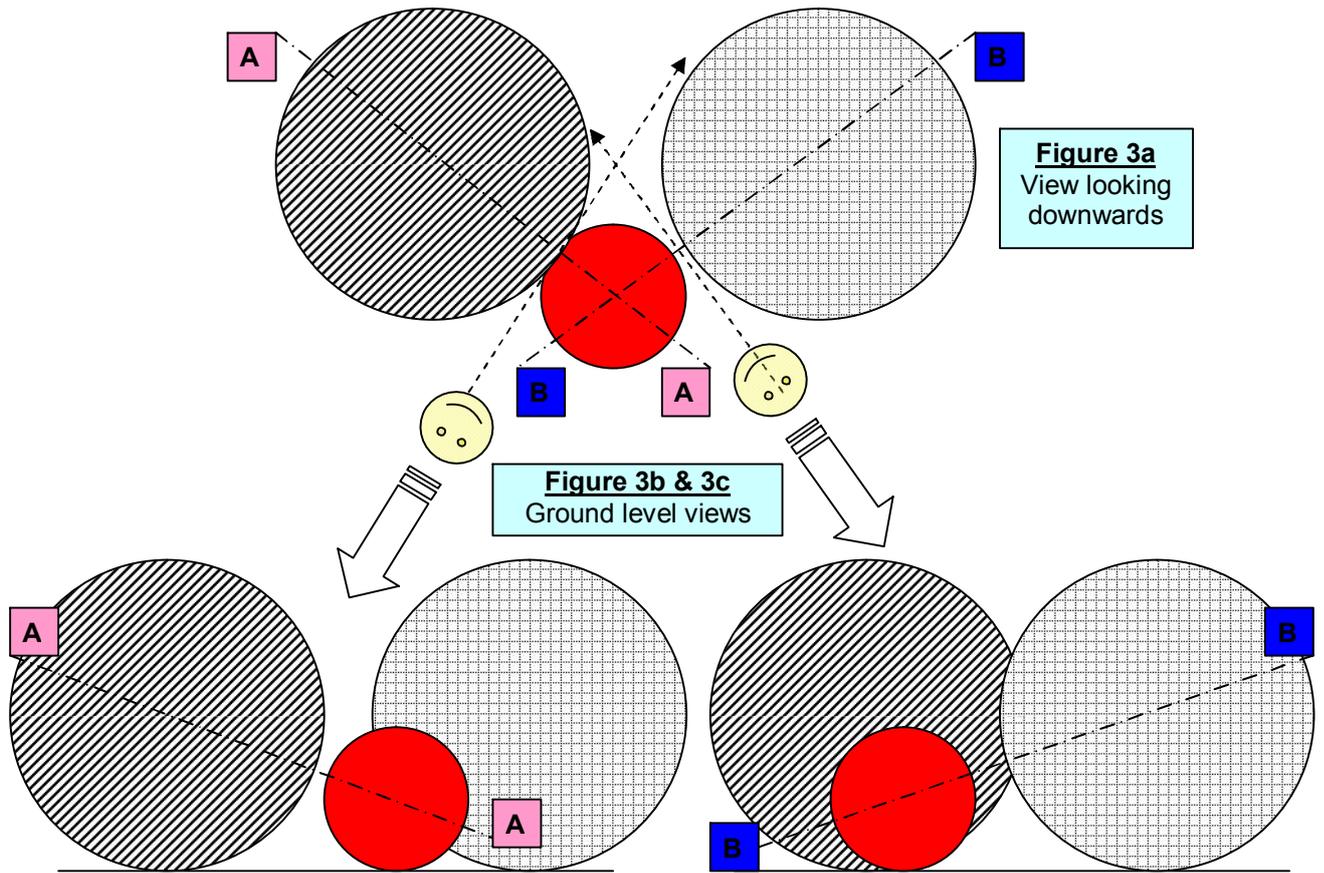
As with a tape, measure from boule to coche with an expanding rule (plastic end adjacent to the boule, sliding metal segment adjacent to the coche), not the other way. With either instrument, choose the boule that you think is closer to the coche and set the instrument to a distance significantly less than the distance to be measured. By successive approximation, extend the instrument until you can’t safely do so any more without moving boule or coche. It is better to take the instrument out of the measuring position while adjusting its distance, because you are much more vulnerable to moving boule or coche if you try to make the adjustment with the instrument in place.

When you are satisfied that you cannot reasonably extend the instrument any further, carefully see whether it will fit between the other/next boule to be measured and the coche. If it won’t, go back to the start and treat this boule as the first one, as above, unless it is already obvious that the second boule is the closer one.

If the instrument WILL fit into the gap between the second boule and the coche, check the amount of clearance at both ends of the instrument, and then check back on the clearances for the first boule. The boule that provides the *greater* clearances to the instrument *loses* the measure.

When it’s too close to measure

This can happen when two more boules are very close to the coche, so that there is no measuring instrument that can be introduced between the boule(s) and coche. The only method of measurement available in this case is by eye, and the only way to do this satisfactorily is to get your eye pretty much at ground level. Once again, you have to position your eye on a line perpendicular to the imaginary line between the centre of the boule and the centre of the coche (lines A-A and B-B in Figure 3, next page), and in line with the middle of the gap (if any) between the boule and the coche (see Figure 3). Earlier comments about any shadows caused by your positioning are even more important in this case, but even so it often happens that the light available is inadequate to assess the width of the gap between boule and coche. In these circumstances, try positioning a torch or a piece of white card or paper on the far side of the gap from your eye, to help to provide a contrasting background to the boule and coche on each side of the gap you are assessing. Repeat this for any other boule in contention. If necessary, check back on the first boule assessed.



Richard Powell
SCPA Regional Umpire

APPENDIX: WHAT THE RULES SAY ABOUT MEASURING

Article 25 – Temporary Moving of Boules

In order to measure a point, it is permitted to temporarily move the boules and obstacles situated between the jack and the boules to be measured, after having marked their positions. After measuring, the boules and the obstacles are put back in place. If the objects cannot be moved, the measuring is done with the aid of callipers.

Article 26 – Measuring of Points

The measuring of a point is done by the player who played last or by one of his or her teammates. The opponents still have the right to measure after one of these players. Whatever positions the boules may hold, and at whatever stage the end may be, the Umpire may be consulted and his or her decision is final.

Measuring must be done with appropriate equipment, which each team must possess. It is particularly forbidden to measure with one's feet. The players who do not observe these rules could be penalised as defined in Article 10 if, after a warning from the Umpire, they persist in their conduct.

Article 27 – Boules Picked up before the Agreement of Points

At the finish of an end, any boule picked up before the agreement of points is dead if its position was not marked. No claims can be accepted on this subject.

Article 28 – Moving the Boules or the Jack

The team whose player displaces the jack or one of the contested boules, while effecting a measurement, loses the point.

If, during a measurement, the Umpire disturbs or moves the jack or a boule and if, after re-measuring, the point remains with the boule which the Umpire had originally judged to be closer to the jack, the Umpire in all fairness declares it to be so. The same applies in a hypothetical case where, after a new measurement, the point no longer remains with the boule originally estimated to be holding.

Article 29 – Boules Equidistant from the Jack

If the two boules closest to the jack belong to opposing teams and are equidistant from it, the following 3 cases can apply:

- (a) If neither team have boules to play the end is declared void and the jack is thrown by the team winning the previous end.
- (b) If only one team has boules left to play, it plays them and scores as many points as it has boules closer to the jack than the nearest opponent's boule.
- (c) If both teams have boules to play, the team which played the last boule plays again, then the other team, and so on alternately until the point has been won by one of them. When only one team has boules left, they play them as described in the above paragraph.

If, after completion of the end, no boules remain within the boundary of the playing area, the end is void.

Article 30 – Foreign Bodies Adhering to the Boule or Jack

Any foreign bodies adhering to the boules or the jack must be removed before measuring a point.

Article 31 – Claims (part)

To be accepted, any claim must be made to the Umpire. Claims made after the result of the game has been established cannot be considered.