

Level 2 Gateball Coaching - Draft April 2018

Gateball Australia has been included in the development of new coaching programs by the Australian Croquet Association. The new framework is compliant with requirements of the Australian Sports Commission

In recent years a level 1 program has been rolled out. Coaches for all 4 codes of mallet sports complete a common core including an online course and a core Foundation Coach program. To become a gateball coach players then have to complete a gateball endorsement.

The level 1 gateball endorsement is built around a skill card listing 10 very basic stroking, sparking and sliding skills. This is targeted at a basic or beginner level of play.

At Level 2 a coach knows how to extend players, can teach tactics and assist players to produce their own improvement programs. Arrangements for a level 2 coaching program are yet to be finalised by the ACA

This document outlines a suggested approach to a level 2 gateball endorsement program. It uses a **strategy and tactics** document developed by Keith McCleod a number of years ago. A draft **Level 2 skills card** identifies the skills that players need to enact these strategies and tactics.

To play well in an interclub competition a player may be called upon to carry out these series of skills. At the same time, the link to the strategy and tactics document provides the player with a rationale for the level 2 skills and, at the same time, should increase the players strategic understanding of the game.

Draft Level 2 Skills Card

For each of these skills aim to achieve ⅔. Creative solutions with the same outcome are acceptable.

1 Passing gate 1 and setting up near gate 2, setting up near gate 3 and setting up near line 3. Nominate the option you are attempting. Stroke a ball through gate 1 and with the continuation shot either position the ball 2m from gate 2 and up to 350mm from line 2 OR 350 mm from the line at gate 3 OR within 1 metre from the middle of line 3. Achieve 3 of these positions as a continuation shot after passing gate 1.

2 Passing gate 2, connecting with a ball near line 3 and sparking it to the front of gate 2 Place a ball about 1m from line 3 near the centre of the line. This ball should be in line with another ball 2m from gate 2 and up to 350mm from line 2. Stroke the second ball through gate 2, touch the first ball and spark it to a position in front of gate 2 where it can run the gate next turn.

3 Sparking across from gate 3 to an opposition ball at gate 2. Position two balls behind gate 3 about 800mm apart and perpendicular to line 4. Place an opposition ball 2m in front of gate 2, about 500mm from the line. Stroke the ball closest to line 3 to touch the other ball. Spark this ball to a position where it can touch the opposition ball near gate 2. Touch the opposition ball and spark it out near gate 1. Tap your ball to end up 2m in front of gate 2 and within 350 mm of line 2

4 Executing the holdback strategy. Place an opposition ball 2m in front of gate 2, about 500 mm from the line. Place one of your own balls 500mm behind gate 3 and 500 mm from line 4. Stroke this ball to a position behind gate 1 where one of your own team's balls can use it to slide off to attack the opposition ball at gate 2. With a third

ball, stroke it through gate 1, slide off the pioneer or pivot ball, touch the opposition ball and spark it out near corner 3. Tap your ball to end up 2m in front of gate 2 and within 350mm of line 2.

5 Setting up and possibly use a straightener for a gate touch. Set up three consecutive balls in an equilateral triangle with 800mm sides between gate 3 and line 4. The first two are yet to pass gate 3 while the final ball has already passed that gate. Set up a gate touch for the second ball to play. Execute the gate touch sending the sparked balls to the goal pole. Score the goal pole with the ball making the double touch. Assuming the last ball has already passed gate 3, put the remaining balls on the goal pole. Creative solutions with the same outcome are acceptable.

6. Building a ladder or chain from corner 4 to make gate 3. Choose five red or white balls. Position the first ball 1m from corner 4. The four other balls should be placed in the middle of each side. Play in the four balls from the middle of each side to build a ladder or chain for the ball from corner 4 so that it can pass gate 3. Use the ladder for the first ball to pass gate 3. Spark all balls touched to with 1m of the goal pole.

7 Getting onto the goal pole Place an outball at the middle of line 1. Place a second ball just to the right or left of the outball but in play. Play in the outball so that that the inball can slide to the goal pole and put both balls on the goal pole.

8 Scattering. Set up 3 balls in similar positions to skill 5. You can do this at gate 3 or 2. Your opposition is about to achieve a gate touch at the gate on the opposite side of the field. Scatter your balls as a defensive play. Each ball should be no more than 10cm from the line and at least 2m apart

8 Identify the position of following balls. Before each play in a game a player should be able to identify where the following red and white balls are located. 3/5 occasions need to be correct.

9 Identify alternative plays for a ball at 3 points in the beginning, middle and end stages of a game. Discuss advantages and disadvantages for each play

Strategies and Tactics

1. Opening Strategies

First Ball - Making Gate 1

The first ball through Gate 1 gives that team an advantage because Gate 2 can be loaded thus prevents the opponent team from setting up near Gate 2.

Tactic 1

Winning the toss and being the leading (Red) team can be an advantage. But remember that game statistics show that both the leading and following teams have an equal chance of winning.

Tactic 2

Players 1 and 3, and Players 2 and 4, being the Players most likely to be the first to make Gate 1, probably should be the team's best gate - makers. A strong player at 9 and 10 is worth considering.

First Ball - Continuation After Making Gate 1

After making Gate 1, the first ball should cover Gate 2.

Tactic 3

The first ball through Gate 1 should set up about 2 metre in front of Gate 2 and be positioned close to the second line boundary. This position should allow the ball to pass Gate 2 if directed by the captain.

Tactic 4

The first ball to make Gate 1 should be a strong shot that takes the ball near the second line boundary and thereby gives a good opportunity for a leave of less than 200mm from the second line boundary with minimal risk of becoming an out-ball.

First Ball Opponent Team - Making Gate 1

If the first ball through Gate 1 covers Gate 2, the first ball of the opponent team through Gate 1 can cover Gate 3.

Tactic 5

The first ball of the opponent team through Gate 1 can set up at Gate 3 and be positioned close to the fourth line boundary.

Tactic 6

The first ball of the opponent team to make Gate 1 should be a soft stroke that keeps the ball near Gate 1 and thereby gives a better opportunity for a leave within half metre of the fourth line boundary with minimal risk of becoming an out-ball.

Other Balls - After Making Gate 1

1.1.1 Team With Balls at Gate 2

If two balls are set up at Gate 2, the other balls of this team can be positioned to provide Touch opportunities when the balls pass Gate 2.

Tactic 7

If Gate 2 is covered with two balls, the other balls of this team after making Gate 1 can be positioned with the continuous stroke close to the middle of the third line boundary to provide for a Touch by balls passing Gate 2.

1.1.2 Team With Balls at Gate 3

If two or three balls are set up at Gate 3, the other balls of this team should be positioned elsewhere on the Court depending upon the state of play at the time. This is to defend against the possibility of the opponent team achieving an extra continuation stroke by a 'Gate and Touch' or a 'Touch and Gate'.

Tactic 8

If Gate 3 is covered with two or three balls, the other balls of this team after making Gate 1, should be positioned elsewhere on the Court and not clustered with the balls at Gate 3.

But always consider the numbers and position of the balls of the other team.

Gate 1 – First Attempt

Look for gaps in numbers and opportunities during the first attempt of players at Gate 1. For example, if balls passing Gate 1 are 1,5,7,9 and 2,4,6,8,10 this gives 2 an opportunity to spark 4 to opponent's balls!

Tactic 9

Look for gaps in numbers of balls attempting Gate 1.

2. Strategies When Gate 2 is Controlled

Fundamental to the game in the first 15 minutes is control of Gate 2.

When Team A has Gate 2 covered, a strategy for Team B to dislodge Team A's balls from in front of Gate 2 is essential in order for Team B to gain control of the game. While Gate 2 is covered by Team A's balls, Team A has the opportunity not only to make that Gate, but also to prevent access to the Gate by Team B. When Team A makes Gate 2 with 3 or 4 of its balls, it can move on to attack the balls of Team B at Gate 3 in the knowledge that it has a comfortable lead in the game.

The strategy of the captain of Team B should be focused on gaining control of Gate 2.

Tactic 10

The appropriate strategy for Team B when Gate 2 is covered by Team A's balls will depend upon the circumstances, but the captain of Team B should consider:

- > a strong stroke by a Team B player making Gate 1 that takes the ball near the second line boundary, followed by an aggressive continuation stroke to touch a Team A ball at Gate 2
- > an aggressive stroke to touch a Team A ball at Gate 2
- > a slide touch from Gate 3 to achieve a position near Gate 2
- > a gap in Team A ball numbers at Gate 2
- > use the Shanghai hold back technique: for example, Team A Ball 1 makes Gate 1, Team B Ball 2 is not played (hold back), other balls are played, Ball 10 is played and passes Gate 1 and is then positioned to enable Ball 2 to pass Gate 1 and get a slide touch to Gate 2.

3. General Playing Strategies

Gate and Touch and Touch and Gate

The Gate and Touch and Touch and Gate stroke, by giving the player two continuous strokes, is a very powerful stroke that gives a team an opportunity to take command of the game.

Tactic 11

When two or more balls of the same team are at a gate, try to set up for a 'Gate and Touch' or a 'Touch and Gate' stroke.

Watch Opponents Tactics

Watch opponent's playing tactics and identify situations where a potential Gate and Touch or Touch and Gate may arise.

Tactic 12

All team players should assist the captain and check for danger situations.

If the opponent is set up for a assured gate and touch or touch and gate, separate the balls of your team to minimise damage. Also look for ways to force your opponent to make decisions by placing balls to give your team an advantage in subsequent play.

Setting Up Behind a Gate

Setting up behind a gate is dangerous unless the front of the gate is guarded. If an opponent team's ball makes the gate, the ball behind the gate is available for a continuation stroke Touch.

Tactic 13

Avoid setting up behind a gate unless the front of the gate is guarded by a ball of your team. ***Keeping Close to the Boundaries***

By keeping your team's balls close to the Court boundaries, the risk of a Touch by an opponent team's ball is reduced. Out-balls should be stroked onto the inside line or just a few millimetres from it

Tactic 14

Set up close to the boundary line and try to keep your team's balls about 1 metre apart.

Keeping Balls Together

If all the team's balls are clustered together, the risk that one of these ball will be Touched by an opponent team's ball is high. Also, the balls are exposed if the opponent team gains an extra continuous stroke.

Tactic 15

Don't cluster balls. If three balls are together, set up the other two balls at a distance. However, if the team have absolute control of the game (all opponent balls are out-balls), then there is advantage in getting all balls together. This enables balls to be sparked to positions to ensure control is maintained.

Tactic 16

Don't cluster balls away from the boundary as this exposes them to a Touch by an aggressive stroke by the opponent team.

Look for Gaps in Numbers

Look for situations where an opponent's ball is an out-ball and your team's balls either side of the out-ball number are together. For example, if 4 is an out-ball, and 3 and 5 are together, then 3 can touch 5 and spark 5 to a position on the court without any danger from 4. This is a very powerful tactic to get control of a game.

Tactic 17

Keeping ball pairs together is a very powerful tactic. For example. Keep 2 and 4 together so that ball 2 can spark ball 4 to a favourable position. And don't forget that balls 1 and 9 and balls 2 and 10 are also pairs!

Constant Attack

Always attack the opponent even when your team has a clear lead and control of the game. Do not allow the opponent to regroup for an attack on your team. However, during the last 5 minutes or so of the game, it may be better to concentrate on making gates and the goal-pole. But remember that the game is often won or lost in those last minutes!

Tactic 18

Spark balls to opponent balls to ensure opponent balls are not in a position to get back into the game.

Chains

Use chains to allow your team's balls to reach balls. Care required with the numbers however!

Tactic 19

Use both your team's balls and opponent balls if appropriate for chains.

4. Out-balls

Playing In

For defence, an out-ball can be played in just a few millimetres inside the boundary.

Tactic 20

Consider playing in an out-ball just inside the boundary or on the court boundary in a defensive position but ready to attack if the opportunity arises.

Use Opponent Ball Rather than Spark It Out

Before sparking an opponents ball out of court to become an out-ball, check to see whether it can be used by your team before that number is required to play again. For example, if 6 touches 7, then 6 should spark 7 to become an out-ball because 7 is the next ball to play; however, if 6 touches 5, then there is potential to use 5 before sparking it to an out-ball because all other balls will play before 5 plays again.

Tactic 21

Before sparking an opponent ball to an out-ball, consider using it to assist your own team's play.

5. End of Game

Making the Goal-pole

If the time is close to the end, and your team has balls for the goal-pole, consider a tactic to peg these balls out to obtain the 2 points rather than a tactic to continue to try to make gates with the other balls.

Tactic 22

Near the end of the game, consider pegging balls on the goal-pole to obtain the extra points.

End Game – Goal-pole Opportunities

If two balls of your team with consecutive numbers have made Gate 3, try to keep these balls together when near the end of the game. On the final turn of these balls in the game, for example 2 and 4, the first ball to play, 2, touches 4 then sparks 4 to near the goal-pole then 2 is positioned near 4 in the continuation stroke. When 4 plays, it touches 2, sparks 2 onto the goal-pole and then touches the goal-pole itself thereby gaining an additional 4 point!

Tactic 23

With about 6 minutes to the end of the game, look for two balls with consecutive numbers which have passed Gate 3 and keep these balls together for the potential of 2 agaris in the final turn.

Playing Balls Out

If your team is in front on points and the game is close to the end, for lone balls, consider strokes that are aggressive and if not successful will place the ball outside the boundary. This can achieve two objectives: the first is to Touch a distant ball or to make a gate; if the aggressive move fails, then the second is that the ball will become an out-ball and will not be available for use by the opponent team in the final minutes of the game.

Tactic 24

Near the end of the game, consider aggressive strokes by lone balls.

Team Is Likely to Lose the Game

Near the end of the game, if your team is behind on points and likely to lose the game, consider using aggressive play to turn the game around. This usually involves attempts at touching distant opponent balls.

Tactic 25

Near the end of the game if your team is behind on points and likely to lose the game, consider using aggressive play to turn the game around.

The *Gateball: Strategies and Tactics* listed shows numbered tactics that can be matched with the Level 2 Skills Card. A grid could be developed to show how the skills link with the strategies. When assisting a player to achieve the level 2 skills, coaches would need to refer back to level 1 skills as it is the consistent accomplishment of a succession of these level one skills that allow the player to be successful with the level 2 skills.

When coaching a player to accomplish a level 2 Skill or increase their understanding of strategy, players will also be developing their captaincy skills. A first step towards captaincy is assist existing captains, these skills should also be encouraged as a part of level 2 training. This can involve:

- **Providing information to a captain** without impeding their decision making. My ball is ready for...etc etc. Point out pairings of opposition balls that are a threat, remind the captain that the next ball is at Start Stroking etc. Location of following balls can be stated.
- **Identifying options** for every play so the player is ready when the captain calls a specific option. Be careful your thinking is flexible. Sometimes players have it in mind that there is only one option. They then find it difficult to focus if another option is called by the captain and fail to make the shot.
- Being aware of **ball location and status** (in, out, not yet started) and, in particular, being aware of the location of the next red and white balls to play. Informing the captain.
- **Thinking through sparking opportunities.** If balls are likely to be touched and sparked during your turn, it is good practice to be being aware of possible positions they should be sparked to or whether or not they should be used for a bombard. Generally, opposition balls that are being sparked out will usually be scattered away from the gate they are due to pass and away from positions where they can be easily played in to set up slides, gate touches or any other advantageous position for the opposition. Sometimes opposition balls can be sparked to a position where they can be used by the players own team. they should be sparked to **Sparking out balls into disadvantageous positions** for the opposition or positioning for use by own team
- **Watch the ten seconds.** In a tightly refereed game, the count starts from the moment outballs are replaced near the line and/or when all balls have stopped. The referee then calls the next ball.
- Remind your captain they have **2 shots after a gate/touch.**
- **Lining up bombards** and helping with direction finding
- **Importance of tapping** on and keeping balls close to boundaries
- **Hero Shots,** positives and negatives

If you have any feedback on these level 2 materials, please email info@gateball.com.au