

Shooting For Dummies

This article describes a single training session plan, which should ideally be done as a small group – 2 to 8 players. It takes about 1.5 hours to complete. Or it can be two 45 mins sessions as there is a natural break. It is a session that helps develop good shooting skills and habits.

Shooting is the Petanque skill of removing an opponents ball from the terrain by hitting it with your own ball. It is a skill that most NZ players still need to develop more. As an observer of the recent National Doubles 1 was disappointed to see how few players are shooting consistently well. If you want to succeed as a competitive Petanque player you must be able to consistently shoot with skill and confidence.

If you shoot in a game and get a carreau (replacing the opponents position on the terrain with your own) this usually transforms the end played. It is in effect giving your team one extra ball. If your team do it once per end, and the opponents can't, it is effectively 7 balls playing 6 balls and a significant advantage to you. Top international shooters seem to achieve about a 40% carreau rate, but this can vary according to the terrain. The carreau is the pinnacle shot in our sport.

The Session

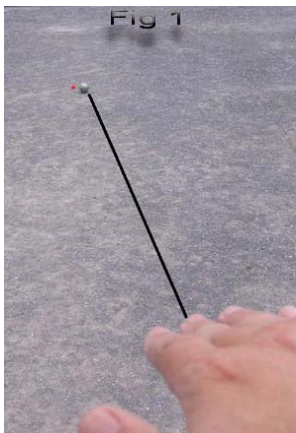
This session is not for newcomers to the sport, but for anyone who is familiar with the rules and objects of the game, so from beginners to senior players. It ideally requires about 4 or 5 terrains, but could be achieved on just one terrain.

The equipment needed is:

- car tyre(s)
- high hurdle (I adapt a portable garment hanger)
- carpet circles, about 30-40cm diameter
- boules for targets
- cochonnet
- grid mat, 1200x600mm canvas
- grid mat record sheets

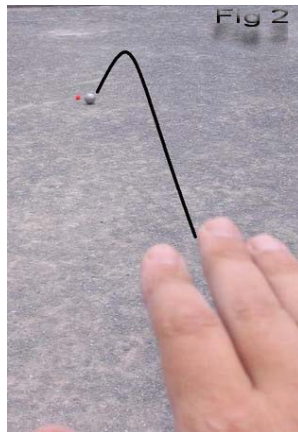
Purpose

The purpose of the session is to improve shooting skills. To achieve this in this session the players have to be aware of three concepts.



1. **Eliminate Shooting.** The word shooting sends our body and mind the wrong message. Shooting tells us hard, fast, straight, direct.

Fig 1. shows what a player often imagines when using the word shooting. This is the most frequent cause of one of the common faults – landing short of the target.



In fact a far better concept is the idea of putting your ball on the opponents. This should create an idea in your mind of being more relaxed, a looping arc to your shot, controlling it throughout the movement. So put your ball on the opponents, because shooting is for dummies.

Fig 2 shows the imaginary arc of a player putting her ball on the opponents.

2. **Visualize each throw.** Develop a very stable pre-shot routine. This should cover how you approach the circle, where in your hands you hold your balls, where you put your attention/concentration as you prepare. Consistently step into the throwing the circle - leading in and setup the line with your throwing-arm foot. And visualize your shot. Visualizing your shot should only be for a short time, but it must be clear and confident. Make it as clear and vibrant as possible. And not just visual – seeing your ball in the air - but develop a neuro-muscular feel for how that shot feels when played correctly. But don't let your visualization extend past the throwing movement and ball in the air – outcomes, or the impact of your thrown ball on the game situation are irrelevant. Don't throw until your mind is very clear of what shot you are throwing and you have visualized it clearly.
3. **Judge success by quality of the throw.** In training don't judge success just by whether you hit the ball/target or not. Judge by whether you executed the shot correctly, and whether the reality matched the vision you had for the shot. Did you play the shot with the right 'feel'? How well did you control the ball in the air?

These three principles should be explained and demonstrated to the players at the beginning of the session. You should look for clear understanding from the players of these points.

Warm Up

Players should spend 5 or 10 minutes easing and preparing their body for a shooting session. They should be physically warm first, then start with some pointing at shorter distances, move to shorter shooting, and a few 8 to 10 metre shots before finishing the warm up.

The warm up should take each player through the complete range of shots they play in a game.

Skill Points

If a trainer or coach is running the session, they should also identify a number of technique points for each player to improve on.

These points should be agreed on between the player and trainer/coach. Not just as a directive from the coach.

Skill points could be the **W.R.A.P** technique:-

W – WRIST bent before pull-back

R – RETURN the arm with a straight elbow, as far back as is comfortable

A – ACCELERATE through the forward swing. This is a very important concept – from the back point the ball moves slowly through the down arc, then accelerates faster through the upwards arc.

P – POINT your hand and fingers at the release

These skill points should be explained and demonstrated so they are very clear for each player.

Shooting Circuit

Figures 3 to 6 show five stations to be setup prior to the session. Fig 3 and fig 4 could be a single station. Coach or trainer should explain these stations and demonstrate.

Players spend about 5 to 7 minutes working on their own (or in pairs) with each exercise. For safety reasons players should be shown that balls can easily get dangerous bounces off the tyre rims and players throwing to the tyre should be made aware of this. Players should avoid standing near the tyres.

Players start at 6 metres and move to different distances once consistent throws are made. Players should remember to judge quality of throw, not to set performance targets or count successes such as getting 7 out of 10 into target.

Fig 3, Throw to tyre. Visualize ball to enter the back center of the tyre. Make sure this is a shooting shot, not pointing. If the arc is too flat you will hit the front of the tyre. Optimum arc is firmly into the back of the tyre.





Fig 4, Action - Throw to tyre with a 4 foot high barrier about 5 metres back from the tyre. The barrier is quite close to the player and the ball goes just over the bar. Again make sure it is a shooting shot, not too looping like pointing. Players learn that the ball always travels upwards when the ball is released. You can also use the barrier to see if a players eyes are staying in the same plane through the throw.

Fig 5. Action - Throw 5 balls to land on the circle, then the 6th ball is thrown at the adjoining target ball. The circles shown are 35cm (beginner) and 20cm (experienced). The ground circles ensure the player is putting their ball on the target, not shooting. And by asking them to put their 6th ball on the target ball, we're looking to see there is no change to setup and tension. Many players tense once they change to hitting a ball.

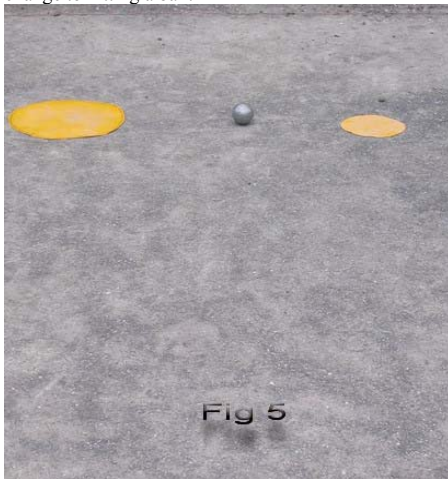


Fig 6. Shoot cochonnet. Object is to land your ball on the coch.



This circuit can be completed within 30 minutes. And this is the natural break for one 45 to 50 minute session. Warm down and review session if finishing here. Or continue on for full 1.5 hour session.

Shooting Gridmat

The shooting gridmat is a way of measuring progress as a shooter. It shows clearly if you are consistently putting your ball on the target. It adds a little more pressure to the training knowing it is a measuring exercise, and so is closer to the pressure of a game. I recommend it's done once a month, and if you do this it gives you great feedback.

Setup

The mat is best made from synthetic PVC canvas. A rectangle 1200x600mm marked into 200mm grids, as per setup on figure 7. A hole is cut for the target ball to sit in.

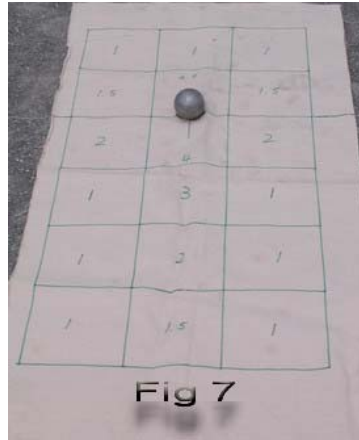
Throwing circles are at 6.5m, 7.5m, 8.5m and 9.5m from the target ball.

An accompanying scoresheet is used to record where each ball thrown by the player lands. This player/coach also replaces the shot target ball.

Action - The object for the player is to shoot the target ball on the full.

5 balls are thrown from each distance, giving 20 balls in total. All 5 balls are thrown at 6.5m then moving to 7.5m etc.

The recorder uses a coloured feltpen to put a solid dot on the scoresheet where each ball landed.



Analysis

This is vital to the benefit of the exercise.

Once each player is finished, each ball can be assigned a value from 0 to 5, these ratings being on the scoresheet. So the player gets a score out of a possible 100 giving them an overall rating that they can compare to others and their previous efforts. They also get a sub-score for each distance, showing them what distances they are more accurate at, and where they should put more training effort.

The player, preferably with a coach/trainer, can also look at the

overall pattern of the landing spots. Are they consistently to the right, too short, very erratic?

I have found a certain progress with players. Beginners show a wide scattering of shots. Intermediates start getting them all in line (in the central vertical row) but often too short or too long, and experienced shooters show a strong concentration all around and on the target ball, with very few erratic. An international standard shooter should score 80 or more consistently.

If players achieve the 80 or more score consistently, I recommend they then change to shoot one ball at each distance, making it much harder as they have to adjust for each shot. And the order of throwing is 7.5m, 9.5m, 6.5m, 8.5m.

Warm Down

After the analysis is done, players should complete a warm down where they relax their body, review the lessons from this session, and form a positive mental anticipation for their next Petanque play – be it a club day, tournament, another training session or social games.

Summary

This is an excellent training session for improving shooting skills for players of all levels. In particular it will help new or improving players to develop good habits.

This explanation of a single training session has also included some coaching instruction, so it is too word-y and complex to ideally use as reference through a session. It can be easily summarized on a 1 page training session plan and laminated.

I have a summary of this plan, and I also have the gridmat record sheet available. Please email me at michael@jvcentre.co.nz with training and grid sheet as the subject, and I'll send them to you.

For players keen to improve their game, this 1.5 hour training session should form part of your regular training.

And remember – Shooting is For Dummies, we want to put our ball on the Target!