

Some thoughts on peeling by Chris Dent

- This is intended to provide some food for thought on peeling, and some tips on performing triples. Expert Croquet Tactics by Keith Wylie remains the definitive guide to peeling (the SCA has a copy which is available for loan.) The Oxford Croquet website also contains much useful information, and there are a few handy hints on the CA website (e.g. Pete Trimmer's article.)
- The key to successful peeling is control. On its own, attempting triples in games and continuing no matter how far out of control they become does not develop the skills necessary to succeed with them regularly.
- If a triple is aborted then the outcome will often still be a winning position (e.g. Penult and Peg) – in the long run, adopting a policy of carrying on regardless might well result in no more triples but will certainly result in more defeats.
- Learning to construct tight lift leaves is a good precursor to completing peeling breaks – it teaches the necessary controlled break play, and indeed is actually more important in match situations.
- Jawsing Penult at 6 is fine – the subsequent rush-peel takes it towards Rover. Peeling Penult by 2 inches is bad news.
- Jawsing 4-back at 3 creates more fun. Options include:
 - rush peeling after 4, then rushing it to Penult after 5.
 - rush peeling after 5, then croqueting it to in front of Pen going to 6.
 - send the peelee to 1b as pioneer, and attempt the peel after 1b.
- Things become more interesting still if the 4b peel is delayed until before 6. Try sending the peelee to 2b as the pioneer after running 6, leaving the pivot near Penult, ready for a delayed double.
- If Penult is not peeled at 6, don't panic:
 - Death rolls (peeling Penult going to a pioneer at 2b or 3b) are not named thus without good reason. They are hard to bring off - the pull is often large, firmly struck peels are likely to bounce off, and it's common to end up with a poor rush on the 2b or 3b pioneer.
 - The delayed double (peeling Penult before 4b) is easier than one might expect, partly as the hoops made in the process are all close together. It's definitely worth practicing as it doesn't take long!
- Thinking about precise positioning of pioneers can make life much easier. For instance, I prefer to have my hoop 5 pioneer 3 or 4 feet N of the hoop as this allows significant margin for error in a long take-off to it from hoop 6.
- Also think carefully about where you want the escape ball on peels – in general, setting up to peel straight (as opposed to peeling on a split shot) makes the peel easier but the escape harder.
- It's worth practising double and single peels (the latter at hoop 5, going to 2b and 3b, and at Rover) on their own – they are useful exercises for building skills and will come up in their own right from time to time in match play situations.
- Above all, practice! Any number of situations can crop up in peeling, and you won't see them all in games. Peeling breaks can be broken down into smaller units in practice, and you can experiment to see what works – you'll develop your own personal preferences for positioning balls too.
- Triples are often put down in match situations because of nerves. Experience in practice situations will help alleviate this.