

BOCCIA FOR RAMP PLAYERS



Cerebral Palsy
ALLIANCE

Formerly known as The Spastic Centre

a manual for BC3 Boccia players, who use a ramp, and their assistants



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Contents

Classification.....	2
Rules.....	3
Communication.....	4
Equipment.....	5
Balls.....	8
Court.....	9
Basic skills.....	11
Shot process.....	13
Competitions.....	15
Training drills.....	17
Coaching.....	19
Pairs.....	20

1. Classification



The BC3 Classification is for players with a very severe locomotor dysfunction in all four extremities of a cerebral or non-cerebral origin, who do not have the ability to grasp or throw the ball consistently onto a Boccia court. This is the classification for all players who use assistive devices to propel the ball. Each player is allowed to be assisted by a Sport Assistant, who will remain in the player's box, and keep his/her back to the court and eyes averted from play.

In formal competition, BC3 ramp players only play other athletes in their own classification; they do not play against throwers. Boccia is non gender specific, males and females play against each other.

In formal competition, BC3 ramp players play Singles and Pairs, they do not play in Teams games.

A GOOD UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN PLAYER AND ASSISTANT IS IMPERATIVE

2. Rules

BC3 players and their assistants should have a good understanding of the rules, in particular the rules relating to assistive devices (ramps). Ref: CP-ISRA International Boccia Rules.

BASIC RULES FOR RAMP PLAYERS

- All equipment and the assistant must remain in the playing box whilst an end is being played.
- The ramp must not overhang the front throwing line.
- Ramps and equipment may overhang the playing box side line but must not be touching the floor or the line markings at the time of ball release.
- The player must be the last one to touch the ball before it enters the court. Assistants should ensure that their fingers or clothing etc does not interfere with the free run of the ball as it rolls down the ramp.
- The player must direct the assistant to break the horizontal plane of the ramp between each played ball. This means moving the ramp in a left/right or right/left direction. This must be visible to the referee.
- While an end is being played, the assistant must keep their back to the court and face averted from the court. At the completion of each end, and once the score has been agreed to by the players, the referee will announce when the ramp assistants can turn to face the court.
- During an end the assistant may be required to step outside the playing box, when requested to by the referee. This usually happens when the opponent player needs to align their ramp for a clear shot, but the assistant is blocking their view – in which case the sports assistant must move to the back of the playing box whilst keeping their back to the court and face averted. The assistant stays there until their player instructs them to return. Whilst returning, they must keep their back to the court and face averted.

TIP

When asked to move out of the playing box, the ramp assistant should move quickly and stand to the side (not sit). They must be ready to move back into the box as quickly as possible. Those few seconds saved here may be the difference between the player having time to play the last ball or not.

3. Communication in Competition



Non verbal player using a hand signal.

It is very important that the assistant understands all instructions given to them by the player. Communication must be one-way – from the player to the assistant. The assistant should neither speak, nod nor make any other bodily movements that can be deemed as communication with the player. The player should not ask the assistant for an opinion or guidance of any kind whatsoever, e.g. 'Is my chair or equipment in the playing box?' If they do, however, the assistant cannot respond.

Instructions may be given verbally or non-verbally. It is important when assisting a non-verbal player that the assistant understands all instructions given - by way of actions. Keep it simple and precise.

The assistant is there solely to carry out the instructions of the player. If the assistant does not understand the player's instructions, they are not allowed to query them. The assistant should not prepare for the next shot, nor move any equipment (including the player's chair) without being instructed to by the player. The assistant is basically 'part of the equipment'.

It is a violation for an assistant to move the player's chair, ramp or other equipment without being instructed by the player. This violation will incur a penalty.

A player and their assistant may hold a conversation between ends, but not during an end.

Note

It is essential to practise communication during training sessions.

TIP

For non-verbal athletes, a series of instructions should be worked out. These can be sign language, a nod, a shake of the head or eye movement.

4. Equipment



Purpose-built compact wheelchair



Leg straps help a player's stability

WHEELCHAIR

The wheelchair should be comfortable. The player is on court for long periods of time and should be relaxed and supported in a manner which enables them to best play the game.

The wheelchair should be compact. Remember that the chair, the ramp, the assistant, and any other equipment needs to be kept within the playing box area during a game.

The wheelchair should be modified to suit the player's style of play. Footplates should not hinder the ramp being as close to the player as is needed to enable the player to best release the ball.

Consideration should be given to the loosening or removal of shoulder straps and other restraints to enable the player to best line up the ramp by leaning forward and getting as low as possible to the ramp.

Leg straps and/or feet straps are sometimes a valuable means of controlling the player's legs, to stop them knocking the ramp.

Note: Some players are able to play in their existing wheelchair.

TIP

Brackets/holders attached to the sides of the chair are a valuable asset. These can be used to hold the ramp extensions, giving more room in the playing box to manoeuvre the chair and ramp.



Typical ramp with extensions

RAMP (ASSISTIVE DEVICE)

Ramps can be made of any material; timber being most common. It is essential that the ramp allows the free running of the ball to exit the ramp and continue to roll straight. Ramps should be contained to a size that, when laid on its side, fits into a playing box (2.5 m x 1 m). Ramps including any attachments, extensions and bases must be extended to the fullest position during the measurement.

Ramps should not contain any mechanical device that would aid propulsion, or speed up/ slow down the ball, such as brakes. Ramps should not have any devices that aid the orientation of the ramp, such as lasers, levels, sighting devices, scopes, etc.

The style of ramp should suit the player. Some players who are unable to lean forward in their chair are better suited to a ramp that has longer legs on the base.

The base of the ramp should be sturdy, compact and sit level on surfaces that may be slightly uneven (a tripod is an ideal base).

Remembering that the game is mainly played on angles at an elite level. The more compact the base, the easier it is to line up the ramp for the acute angles.

(See rules regarding the playing box)

TIPS

The ramp may need adjustments to suit the individual player. Bear in mind the rules relating to the size of the ramp.

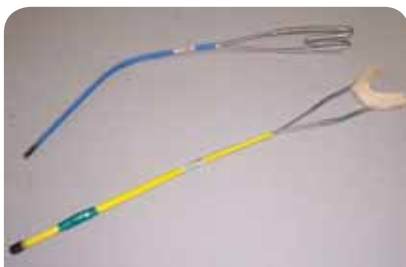
The ramp assistant should be familiar with the ramp and the extensions. They should be proficient at putting the extensions on quickly without moving the ramp.



Headpointer – length and angle can be adjusted.



Headpointer – length can be adjusted. Strap style may be cooler for some players.



Two styles of mouth pointer.



Hand-held pointer.

HEADPOINTERS, MOUTH POINTERS AND HAND HELD AIDS

A player must have direct physical contact with the ball immediately prior to its release onto the court.

Simultaneous release of the ball by the assistant and the player is not allowed and the ball will be retracted.

Players who are unable to release the ball with their hand can use an aid attached to the players head, held in the mouth or held by the hand.

The aid measured from the head or the mouth to the end of the device should not exceed 50 cm. If the aid is attached to the player's arm/hand it will be measured from the middle of the shoulder to the end of the device and should not exceed 50 cm.

There are various styles of headpointers. It is essential that they are comfortable and allow the player to release the ball from wherever is necessary, including when both extensions are used. Some headpointers are adjustable to make this easier.

TIPS

Some players may need the headrest removed from their chair to use a head-pointer. Keep in mind the player will need to reach up to release the ball when 2 extensions are used on the ramp.

The positioning of the head-pointer can be a signal to the ramp assistant as to what extensions are to be used. This saves time in competition games.

5. Balls



Ideally, balls should be stored in a case, separated to avoid squashing and the resultant 'flat' spots.

A set of Bocchia balls consists of 6 blue balls, 6 red balls and a white jack.

Bocchia balls must comply with the specifications set by the rules. They must be a certain size and weight but can vary greatly in firmness. Most ramp players use a medium/soft type.

Many Elite players use a combination of soft, medium/soft and hard. They use the soft balls when placing their first ball on the jack (which is harder to knock away) and use the harder balls for their knock-away shots.

Players should get to know their balls, as each ball has its own characteristics. The way the ball is placed on the ramp can determine whether the ball rolls straight and the distance it will travel.

TIPS

Number the balls. Some balls will consistently roll longer or shorter than others. By numbering them, the player will learn to identify the faster balls from the slower ones. The player will then need to adjust the ramp or position the ball accordingly to allow for the different speeds.

Ideally, the balls should be stored in a case where they are separated. This avoids the balls squashing together and forming flat spots.

Identify which ball is the best 1st ball. The easiest one to get on the jack.

Identify which ball is best for the knock-out ball. Sometimes the worst ball is good to use for this. (The faster the ball travels, the straighter it runs)

Work out the best order to play the balls and write it down. The sequence can then be taped to the front of the wheelchair for the ramp assistant to see during a game.

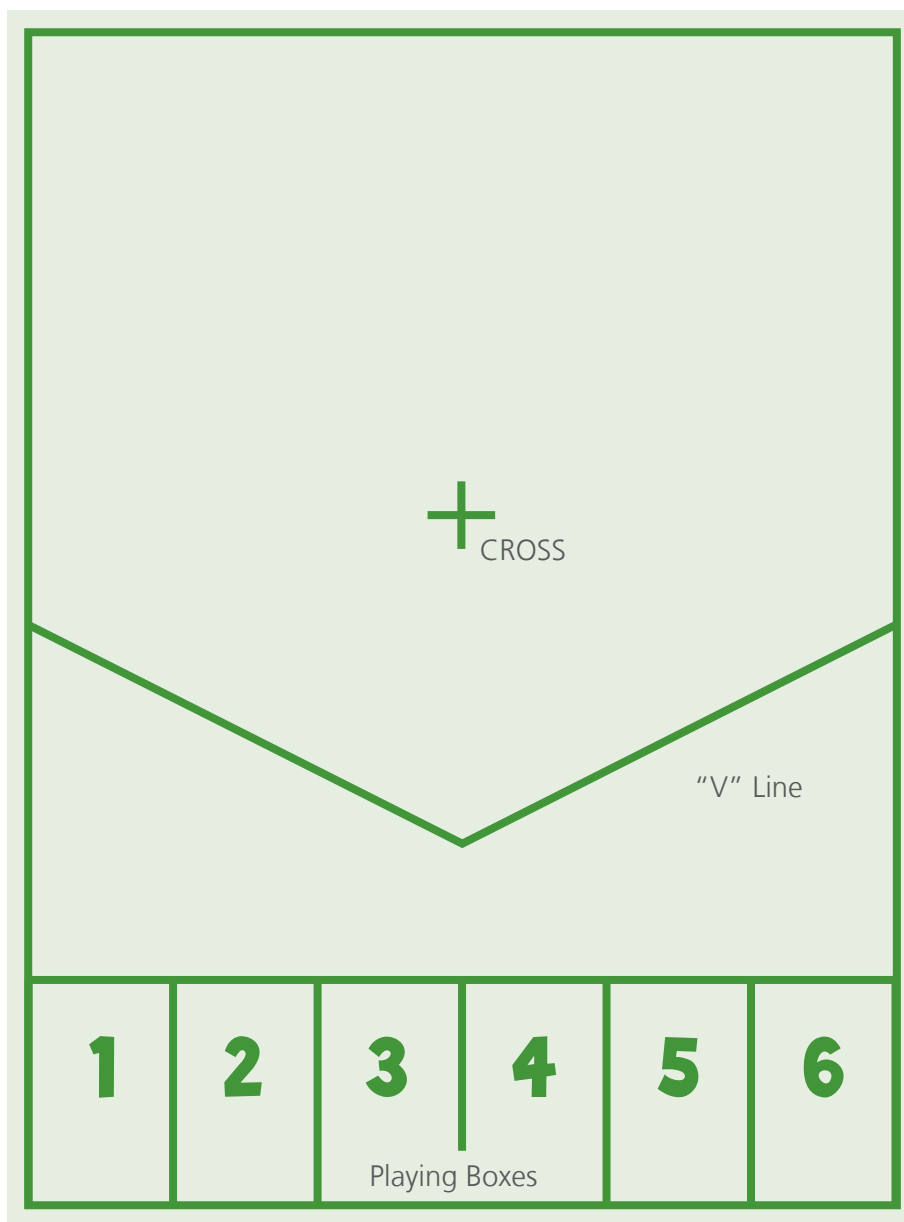
Mark arrows on the balls to show which way to position them on the ramp.

Have a tray/basket to hold the 6 balls when on court. This keeps them together and avoids the risk of them rolling into another playing box.

Put the balls in the tray/basket in the order they are to be played, with the numbers showing. This saves time and stops the ramp assistant fumbling around looking for the next ball.

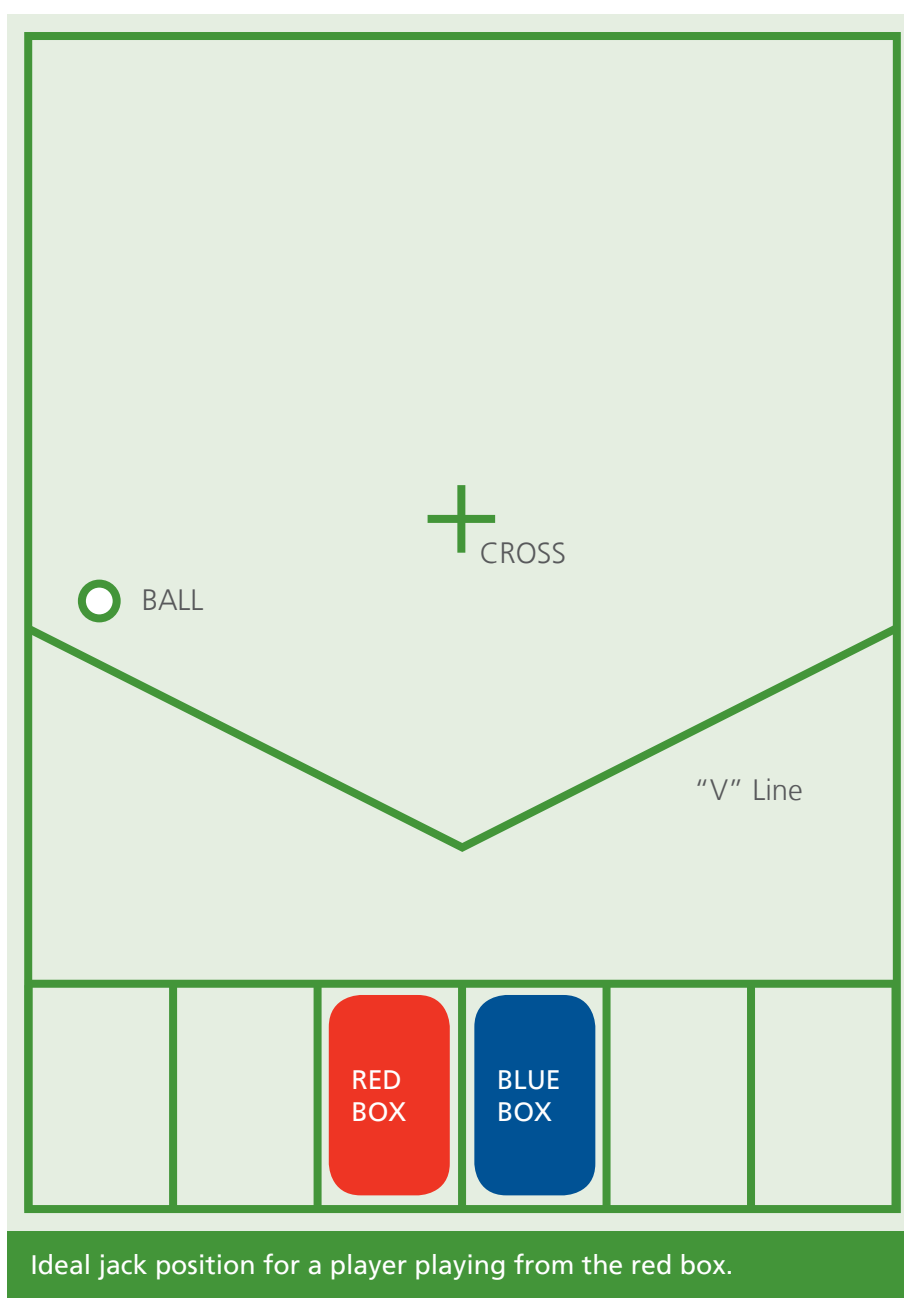
6. Court

COURT LAYOUT



Boccia is played on a hard flat indoor surface. The court measures 12.5 m x 6 m. The playing boxes at one end of the court measure 2.5 m x 1 m, leaving the playing surface 10 m x 6 m.

JACK BALL POSITION



7. Basic Skills



Player using ramp with two extensions to give the ball more momentum.

PLAYING THE JACK

When playing the jack, it is essential to get it over the V line into the valid playing area. If the jack fails to go over the V line or goes out of court, it is considered a fouled jack. That player loses the opportunity to play their jack and the opponent plays their jack for that end.

A player playing the jack to their side of the court is a good strategy to disadvantage their opponent.

1ST BALL ON

The best game strategy is to get the first ball in front and touching the jack – blocking the opponent. When you get your 1st ball right on the jack, it puts your opponent on the defensive straight away.

DRIVING

When an opponent's ball is blocking the jack, the player needs to knock it away. If the blocking ball is in front and touching the jack, a ramp player may need to use 2 extensions on the ramp to hit the blocking ball hard enough to move it away from the jack.

If the blocking ball is not directly in front of the jack, with less power a player should be able to knock the blocking ball away and hold shot with their ball.

It is suggested that the player only uses 2 balls to try to dislodge the blocking ball. If both balls fail, the player should consider using the rest of their balls to block, preventing their opponent from getting any more than 1 point on that end. The player would not do this if, for instance, it is the last end and they are behind on the scoreboard.

TIPS

Take care not to put the jack too close to the side line where their opponent can knock it out of court. In the event of this happening, the jack will be placed on the cross in the middle of the court – the end then continues.

BLOCKING

When blocking, the balls should be close to the balls being blocked. You should 'build a wall'.

Blocking should also be considered when the player is ahead on the scoreboard. They should defend their lead by blocking their opponent – stopping them from getting any more points.

KNOCKING UP

In the event of one of a player's own balls falling short and blocking the jack, they may consider knocking their own ball up closer to the jack. The amount of power they need is dependent on how far they need to push the ball up. Remembering, they need to hit the ball to be knocked up in the middle to push it straight back.

The further they need to knock the ball, the more difficult this shot becomes.

DRAWING

When a player is blocked, they should consider putting a ball at the side of the jack. Aim for a spot on the floor, rather than the jack.

PLAYING LONG

Playing the jack to the back of the court can be a game strategy if the opponent has difficulty playing their balls long. Before doing this, a player should have practised playing long in their training sessions. Remember, the further the balls travel – the less chance of them rolling straight.

GLANCING

When the jack is blocked by another ball or balls, a glancing or ricochet shot may be played. Aim to bounce off another ball to get in behind the blocking ball/balls.

THROWING OFF

In the event of a player having their ball/balls closer to the jack during an end - with their opponent having played all their balls - if there is a risk of knocking an opponent's ball closer to the jack, a player should consider playing their remaining balls away from the jack.

TIP

In throwing off, a player may want to practise playing their balls to the cross or to the other side of the court.

8. Shot Process



Player releasing the ball from a position down the ramp.

DECISION MAKING

Before making a shot, a player needs to decide which is the best option. Most times, it is straightforward - either put their ball on the jack or knock away their opponent's ball.

In knocking away the opponent's ball, a player needs to decide how much power they need. Ideally, they should use just enough power to knock the opponent's ball away and get their ball to stay near the jack.

In deciding whether to go for the jack or knock the opponent's ball away, the player should think about how many points they can get if the opponent's ball remains where it is.

Other options are: blocking, knocking up, knocking the jack out of court, drawing up the side of the jack or one of many other options. Every end played can have a different scenario.

TIPS

A player should remember balls in line with their sight look closer than balls to the side. If in doubt, ask the referee which ball is closer.

Another option is to 'Throw Off' (see previous page).

LINING UP A SHOT

The first and most important thing is for a player to line their chair up in the direction they want to play the ball.

If the chair is lined up, the ramp assistant will have a good idea as to the positioning of the ramp. Most players find it easier to line up the ramp with the bottom of the ramp raised off the floor.

In lining up for a shot - depending on the player's ability – it is best to get as low down to the ramp as possible. Think of lining up a rifle, a player needs to line up both the top of the ramp and the bottom of the ramp. (It's no good lining up the bottom of the ramp if the top of the ramp is not in line with their eyes).

Sometimes, when a player can't move the ramp over without the base of the ramp going over the sideline of the playing box, they may need to turn the ramp - which will take the top of the ramp away from their line of sight. They will then need to lean to the side to keep their sight in line with the top of the ramp.

It's best to line up the ramp before putting on the extensions.

LENGTH

There are a number of ways a player can vary the length that the ball will travel.

TO PLAY SHORT:

Option 1: Leave the bottom of the ramp on the floor (or just off the floor if the bottom of the ramp is over the playing box sideline) and release the ball from a position down the ramp to slow the momentum – the ball will travel a shorter distance. This is the preferred option.

Option 2: Bringing the bottom of the ramp up off the floor will slow the momentum – the higher the bottom of the ramp is off the floor, the shorter the distance the ball will travel.

TO PLAY LONG:

Using the extensions will speed up the momentum – the more extensions, the further the ball will travel.

TIPS

The ramp assistant should do their best to keep the top of the ramp in line with the player's eyes. The player can then concentrate on lining up the bottom of the ramp.

The balls tend to roll straighter if the bottom of the ramp is on the floor or just off the floor.

9. Competition

PREPARATION

Before a match, ensure all equipment is in good order and all adjustable handles, screws, etc, are tight, including the headpointer (if used).

Write a list of all the equipment needed for a match. Check the list before going into the Call Room. It is easy to forget something important, especially if you are rushed.

Example:

Ramp	Extensions
Balls	Head-pointer
Chair	Tray/basket

CALL ROOM

Most competitions have a Call Room. A Call Room is a designated room or area where players and their assistants gather before a competition match.

All players must register in the Call Room between 30 and 15 minutes before the scheduled start time of a game.

It is most important that the player and assistant check that they have the balls and all the equipment with them. Once in the Call Room, players and their assistants must not leave the Call Room.

The examination of all equipment and the coin toss can be conducted in the Call Room.

COIN TOSS

The Referee flips a coin and the winning player chooses whether to play red or blue.

Remember, **red** always plays the first jack.

WARM UP BALLS

Before the game commences, a player has 2 minutes to play their warm up balls. They may play up to 6 balls in that time. The jack is not used in the warm up time. Ramp assistants are permitted to turn to face the court during the warm up.

TIME

Competition games are timed. BC3 Ramp players are allowed 6 minutes per end to play their 6 balls in a singles game. In a pairs game, the players have 8 minutes to play 6 balls.

Time starts when the referee indicates to the time-keeper which colour is to play. The time stops when the ball played becomes stationary or goes out of court.

The time-keeper will announce when the remaining time is 1 minute, 30 seconds, 10 seconds and 'time' when the time is expired.

Playing of the jack ball is not timed. Penalty balls are not timed. Tie Break ends are timed.

TIPS

When positioning the ramp before the start of an end, ensure the front of the ramp is about 10 cm behind the front throwing line. Throughout the game, the ramp assistant should avoid moving the base of the ramp forward or back unless instructed to by the player.

PENALTIES

In a competition game, penalties are awarded for violation of the rules.

A penalty is the award of 2 extra balls to the opponent and will be played at the conclusion of the end. The most common reasons for a ramp player to be penalised are:

1. Ramp or equipment is touching the court marking or touching a part of the court which is outside the playing box when the ball is released.
2. Ramp is overhanging the front line.
3. Not breaking the plane of the ramp between shots.
4. Ramp assistant turns to face the court.
5. Communication from ramp assistant to player.

The following violations will result in a retraction of the played ball (not a penalty):

1. Ramp player is not the person that releases the ball.
2. Ramp assistant and player release the ball simultaneously.
3. Playing the ball prior to the referee indicating which colour is to play.
4. If a coloured ball is played before the jack.
5. If the ball stops in the ramp or if the ramp assistant stops the ball in the ramp.

TIE BREAK

If the scores are equal after all four ends have been played, a tie break end will be played. All players will remain in their original boxes. The referee will toss a coin to see which player plays first.

The jack of the player playing first is placed on the cross in the middle of the court by the referee. The end is then played as normal.

TIP

A player need only have one ball closer than their opponent's nearest ball to win. There are no points scored in a tie breaker. The player wins the end, therefore winning the game.

10. Training Drills

1. PLAYING THE JACK

Practise playing the jack to different areas of the court. Being able to play long, for instance, can be beneficial in some game situations. Playing the jack ball short to your side of the court is the preferred option (see: Playing the Jack in Basic Skills). Make sure you never foul the jack – fouling the jack is a big NO - NO!

2. 1ST BALL ON

This is the most important drill. Repeatedly play the jack and your 1st ball over and over again – red and blue. The more times you do it, the better you will get at it. It will pay off when it matters - in the competition games.

3. KNOWING YOUR BALLS

Repeatedly put all your balls down the ramp, playing them to different lengths and different areas of the court. Some balls consistently travel further than others. Having the balls numbered enables you to remember which balls travel further.

4. PLAYING TO THE OPPONENT'S JACK

Practise playing your balls to the opposite side of the court – where your opponent would usually play the jack. Red balls to the right side of the court and blue to the left side of the court.

5. KNOCK OUT SHOTS

Practise putting the extensions on and knocking blocking balls away. An ideal knock out shot should push the opponent's ball away and leave your ball near the jack, preferably, blocking your opponent.

6. KNOCK UP

Practise knocking a ball back to the jack – at different lengths. Learning how hard to hit a ball to move it a certain distance. It is very difficult to push a ball back a long distance in a straight line.

7. DRAWING

Practise playing the ball to a position alongside the jack. This will be beneficial during a game if the jack is blocked.



Example of Blocking

8. BLOCKING

Practise 'building a wall'. Play all your balls to a position just in front of the jack.

9. PLAYING A GAME AGAINST YOURSELF

By playing against yourself, you experience different scenarios of game situations. When you play a good shot, you then have to counteract it with your next shot.

10. TIME MANAGEMENT

Practise using a time clock when training - to ensure you can play all your six balls in the required time. Bear in mind that knockout shots, using 2 extensions, take longer. It is essential that the player can release the ball quickly, especially, when the time is running out and the pressure is on.

Taking a little extra time to make sure you are lined up correctly for your first ball to get on the jack is beneficial.

A good rapport between the player and their assistant will help speed up communication.

TIPS

The ramp assistant should be efficient in all aspects of using the ramp, especially, putting the extensions on and taking them off as quickly as possible.

Extensions should be placed in the playing box in such a way that they are easily accessible and the right way around.

Extensions may be attached to the wheelchair – giving more room in the playing box.

11. Coaching

When coaching a ramp player, a number of factors need to be taken into consideration.

First, take into account their age, their physical ability and their capacity to remember details.

Also, their level of motivation and what they want to achieve.

Work out the best way of using a ramp. The wheelchair may need some adjustments - straps and supports can help to keep the player in the best position to release the ball.

Different learning styles:

- Basic ball delivery skills.
- Simple training sets. (See training section of this manual)
- Fun games such as: using a small soccer net or circles marked on the court to play the ball into, up the ladder, the pyramid game, tic-tac-toe, etc.
- Introduction to simple rules.
- Strategy, tactical and competitive skills.

Help the player to set achievable goals. Some players may want to play for their country at an International level, while others may be happy to just play for fun at a recreational level. Some may prefer 1 to 1 coaching or playing in a group may be more suitable.

Making goals measurable, so athletes can be assessed, is vital to keep track of the athlete's progress.

Remind players that nutrition and physical fitness have a bearing on their ability on court.

12. Pairs



As well as playing singles, BC3 athletes can also play in Pairs games against other BC3 athletes.

A Pairs team consists of 3 players; 2 on court and a substitute. Substitutions can only be made between ends and only 1 substitution per match.

A Pairs team may play without a substitute in certain circumstances.

A 'time out' of 2 minutes is allowed – per team – per match.

When playing Pairs, each player has 3 balls only and 1 jack per Pairs team.

The team playing with the red balls occupy boxes 2 and 4, while the team playing with the blue balls occupy boxes 3 and 5.

TIP

A player may need to instruct their ramp assistant to move their chair forward or back so they can see their partner in order to communicate with them.

It is best to work out which player is best suited to play from the end boxes, boxes 2 and 5. It is more difficult to play across court from those boxes.

A match consists of 4 ends, except in the case of a tie break.

Each player plays the jack once (except in the case of the jack being fouled), starting from box 2 (red).

Pairs games have 8 minutes per end for each team.

A Pairs team is lead by a captain. The responsibilities of the captain are:

- To decide whether to play red or blue at the coin toss.
- Decide which player should play their ball during a match.
- Decide which player should play the penalty balls.
- To call a 'time out'.
- Consult with the referee regarding scores etc.

When training for Pairs games, the players need to work out communication between themselves. It is essential that the players understand each other regarding whose turn it is to play and which shot they should play.

Tactics can be very different for Pairs. Players need to consider their partner when choosing which shot to play.

For example:

In the event of one player being blocked from the jack, it may be possible for their partner to push the jack back to enable them to have a clear shot at it. They may also be able to knock away a blocking ball to clear the way for their partner.

When playing the jack, a player should make sure their partner can play to the jack in that position efficiently.

If there is time, a player may ask the referee for permission to go on to the court to check what shot their partner may have.

TIP

Where possible, one player should not play all their balls early in the end. They may have the only clear shot late in the end but have played all their balls.

APPENDIX

RESOURCES

CPISRA International Boccia Rules from the CPISRA Sports Manual, as per final review November 2009, 10th Edition.

WEBSITES

- CPISRA (Cerebral Palsy International Sports and Recreation Association) www.cpisra.org
- Boccia Australia www.boccia.com.au
- Boccia NSW www.bocciansw.org.au

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