Bocce Coaching Guide
Planning a Bocce Training & Competition Season

Bocce Skills Assessment Card

Athlete’s Name ___________________________ Date ______________
Coach’s Name ___________________________ Date ______________

Instructions

- Use tool at the beginning of the training/competition season to establish a basis of the athlete’s starting skill level.
- Have the athlete perform the skill several times.
- If the athlete performs the skill correctly three out of five times, check the box next to the skill to indicate that the skill has been accomplished.
- Incorporate program assessment sessions into your program.
- Athletes may accomplish skills in any order. Athletes have accomplished this list when all possible items have been achieved.

Layout of the Bocce Court

☐ Recognizes the 10-foot foul line
☐ Recognizes the 30-foot halfway line
☐ Recognizes the 50-foot line
☐ Recognizes the back boards
☐ Recognizes the side boards

Equipment Selection

☐ Recognizes a bocce ball
☐ Recognizes the color differences of the bocce balls
☐ Recognizes the pallina
☐ Recognizes the tape measure
☐ Recognizes the flags used (especially for athletes with visual or hearing impairments)
☐ Can associate the connection between flag color and bocce ball

Scoring

☐ Understands the point scoring system used in the game of bocce
☐ Understands that winning score for both singles and two-player teams is 12 points
☐ Understands that winning score for four-player teams is 16 points
☐ Recognizes the scores on a score card
☐ Can follow the scoring on a score card
☐ Recognizes the places for the various signatures on a score card
☐ Recognizes the need to not sign a score card if the game is to be protested

Rules of the Game

☐ Shows an understanding of the game
☐ Understands that the game consists of playing to a certain number of points
☐ Knows what each of the lines on the court means
☐ Knows not to cross the foul line when delivering a ball
☐ Knows to play four balls when playing singles
☐ Knows to play two balls when playing doubles/pairs
☐ Knows to play one ball when in a team of four
☐ Knows to play only when indicated by the official
☐ Adheres to the rules of the bocce court and training area
☐ Follows official Special Olympics bocce rules

Special Olympics
Texas

www.SpecialOlympicsTexas.org
Sportsmanship/Etiquette
- Exhibits sportsmanship and etiquette at all times
- Demonstrates competitive effort while playing at all times
- Takes turns with other team members
- Selects and uses the same-color balls throughout the game
- Waits for official to indicate his/her turn to play
- Plays cooperatively and competitively, cheers on fellow teammates
- Maintains knowledge of own/own team’s score
- Listens to coaches’ instructions

Game Terminology
- Recognizes the terms “In” and “Out” team
- Recognizes the term “Foul”
- Recognizes the term “Pointing”
- Recognizes the term “Hitting”
- Recognizes the term “Banking”
- Recognizes the term “Rebounding”

Retrieving the Ball
- Collects ball from back of court
- Identifies own ball by the color
- Picks up ball and brings to waist level
- Supports the ball with non-rolling hand and moves to the starting position

Grip
- Places fingers and thumb evenly around the ball
- Uses thumb to hold ball in place
- Holds ball in front portion of hand

Stance
- Locates starting position back from the foul line
- Stands with feet shoulder-width apart
- Holds shoulders level and body square to target with weight evenly distributed
- Demonstrates proper foot placement: left foot forward if right-handed.
- Assumes correct stance with eyes focused on pallina or target ball
- Holds ball under control

Delivery
- Pushes the ball forward to approximately eye level followed by a downward swing
- Brings arm straight back and close to body
- Brings arm straight forward to release ball
- Delivers ball with a gentle slow release for a pointing shot
- Delivers ball with a strong fast release for a hitting shot
- Performs standing pointing delivery
- Performs running pointing delivery
- Performs standing hitting delivery
- Performs running hitting delivery

Release
- Assumes correct stance with front foot behind the foul line and shoulders square to the target
- Delivers ball over the foul line toward the pallina or target
- Maintains correct wrist posture once ball leaves hand
- Executes proper follow-through with arm swing: forward and upward
The Stance
In order to be able to roll or toss a bocce ball, an athlete must first understand what the feeling is like to stand correctly when delivering the ball. It is important that the athlete has a good, evenly balanced base to start from.

Athlete Readiness

- Athlete is able to stand with weight evenly distributed through both legs.
- Athlete has a good solid base to prepare to deliver the bocce ball.
- If playing with a one-step delivery, ensure the step is not too large or narrow.

Teaching the Event
Delivery from a Standing Position

Stance
- Spread feet slightly apart, the width of your shoulders.
- Ensure that you hold the shoulders level and the body square to target, with weight evenly distributed.
- Take one step forward before moving arms.
- The one step forward should be on the opposite leg to the arm with which you will roll, i.e. a right-handed athlete steps with the left foot forward.
- Ensure the step is not too large.
- Nor is it too narrow, slightly narrower than shoulder width.
- Bend knee slightly to encourage relaxation.
- Ensure your feet are pointing toward the target.
- And remember to always focus your eyes on the target.
Delivery and Release

- Push the ball forward to approximately eye level followed by a downward swing.
- Bring your arm straight back, close to your body.
- Keep your elbow straight and take your weight mainly on the back foot.
- As you smoothly bring your arm straight forward, transfer your weight to your front foot.
- As your arm passes close to your leg, your weight should be balanced between both feet.
- Release ball onto the court surface just in front of you.
- Continue moving hand forward and upward in a natural follow-through motion.
- Keep front foot behind the foul line and shoulders square to the target.

This stance is taken when delivering the ball in a tossing motion as well as a rolling motion.
Delivery from a Stepping Position

Stance

- Spread feet slightly apart, the width of the shoulders.
- Ensure that you hold your shoulders level and body square to target with weight evenly distributed.
- Take one step forward as delivery arm begins moving.
- The one step forward should be on the opposite leg to the arm with which you will roll, i.e. a right handed athlete steps with the left foot forward.
- Ensure the step is not too large.
- Nor is it too narrow, slightly narrower than shoulder width.
- Ensure your feet are pointing toward the target.
- And remember to always focus your eyes on the target.
Delivery and Release

- As you begin to take the first step, push the ball forward to approximately eye level followed by a downward swing.
- Bring your arm straight back, close to your body,
- Keep your elbow straight and take your weight mainly on the back foot,
- When the ball is at its peak on the backswing, the front foot should be firmly planted to give the maximum balance.
- As you smoothly bring your arm straight forward, transfer your weight to your front foot.
- As your arm passes close to your leg, your weight should be balanced between both feet.
- Release ball onto the court surface just in front of you.
- Continue moving hand forward and upward in a natural follow-through motion.
- Keep front foot behind the foul line and shoulders square to the target.

This stance is taken when delivering the ball in a tossing motion as well as a rolling motion.

Teaching Points

- To encourage proper foot placement, a mat with footprints may be used with the beginners. As the player becomes used to the proper position, remove the mat.
- Stand behind the athlete and help him/her to stand straight on to the target.
- Ensure player is facing directly at the target throughout the entire movement.
- Ensure athlete keeps the head as still as possible throughout delivery.
- Adjust player’s shoulders square to the target.
The Pointing Shot
This bocce shot is played more as a gentle smooth shot. It is generally rolled, as opposed to being thrown/tossed, and is used to either gain a point or increase the number of points already held. This is in contrast to trying to displace other balls through a forceful delivery.

Learn the difference between delivering a pointing shot from a standing position and that played with a running motion.

Athlete Readiness

- Athlete is able to use smooth arm action throughout delivery of the bocce ball.
- Athlete understands concept and strategy of playing a slower, more smoothly released shot.

Teaching the Event

Standing position

Stance

- The athlete spreads the feet slightly apart, the width of the shoulders.
- Take one step forward on the opposite leg to the arm with which the athlete rolls, i.e. a right-handed athlete steps with the left foot forward.
- Ensure the feet are pointing toward the target. And remind athletes that they should always focus their eyes on the target or target area.

Delivery

- Push the ball forward to approximately eye level followed by a downward swing.
- Have athlete bring his/her arm straight back, close to the body.
- Remind him/her to keep the elbow straight and take the weight mainly on the back foot.
- As he/she smoothly brings the arm straight forward, he/she should transfer the weight to the front foot.
- As the arm passes close to the leg, the weight should be balanced between both feet.
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Teaching Bocce Skills

Release
- Have athlete release the ball onto the court surface just in front of him/herself.
- Continue moving the hand forward and upward in a natural follow-through motion.
- Remind him/her to keep the front foot behind the foul line and shoulders square to the target at all times.

This shot can also be played with a tossing motion, although it is not as commonly used with this action.

Teaching Points
This shot is played with the same motion as the hitting shot except that it is played with less force.

Stand behind the athlete
- While the ball is waist high, put the athlete’s hands underneath the ball and push it up and out to eye level.
- With athlete’s right hand underneath the ball, take the athlete’s right hand, with the ball in it, and make a downward swing.
- At the same time, extend the athlete’s left arm outward for balance.
- The athlete is standing in the back swing position with the arm extended.
- With the right hand, the athlete supports the ball from underneath and starts a forward motion of the ball.
- Remind the athlete throughout the entire movement that this is a slow gentle release as opposed to a strong fast release.

Stand beside the athlete
- Have the athlete swing the ball forward and ensure the ball is being released in a smooth motion. If not, with your right hand, force the ball loose from the grip so that it goes forward.
- Remind the athlete that the speed of the follow-through should not be fast.

Stand behind the athlete
- After release of the ball, place right hand on the athlete’s right hand and wrist.
- Move his/her arm upward so that his/her arm is parallel to the ground.
- At the same time, with your leg, slide the athlete’s left leg forward so that it stops before the foul line. Adjust athlete’s shoulders square to the target.
The Hitting/Spocking Shot
The hitting or spocking shot is played more as a powerful shot. It is rolled/thrown with great force to displace the ball/s to either gain the point by displacing the opponent's ball/s or reduce the number of points the opponent is holding. This is in contrast to trying to get your ball closer through a slow gentle roll-up.

Learn the difference between a hitting shot played from a standing position and that played with a running motion.

Athlete Readiness

- Athlete is able to use smooth arm action throughout delivery of the bocce ball.
- Athlete understands concept and strategy of playing a faster released shot.

Teaching the Event

Standing position

Stance
- The athlete spreads feet slightly apart, the width of the shoulders.
- Take one step forward on the opposite leg to the arm with which he/she rolls, i.e. a right-handed athlete steps with left foot forward.
- Ensure your feet are pointing toward the target. And remember to always focus your eyes on the target

Delivery
- Push the ball forward to approximately eye level followed by a downward swing.
- Bring your arm straight back, close to your body.
- Keep your elbow straight and take your weight mainly on the back foot.
- As you smoothly bring your arm straight forward, transfer your weight to your front foot.
- As your arm passes close to your leg, your weight should be balanced between both feet.
Release

- Release ball onto the court surface just in front of you.
- Continue moving hand forward and upward in a natural follow-through motion.
- Keep front foot behind the foul line and shoulders square to the target.

This shot can also be played with a tossing motion.

Teaching Points

This shot is played with the same motion as the pointing shot except that it is played with more force.

Stand behind the player

- While the ball is waist high, put the player’s hands underneath the ball and push it up and out to eye level.
- With the player’s right hand underneath the ball, take the player’s right hand with the ball in it, and make a downward swing.
- At the same time, extend the player’s left arm outward for balance.
- Stand behind the player while he/she is standing in the back swing position with arm extended.
- With the right hand, support the ball from underneath and start forward motion of the ball.
Stand beside the player

- Have the player swing the ball forward, and ensure the ball is being released in a smooth motion. If not, with your right hand, force the ball loose from the grip so that it goes forward.

Stand behind the player

- After release of the ball, place right hand on the player’s right hand and wrist.
- Move his/her arm upward so that his/her arm is parallel to the ground.
- At the same time, with your leg, slide the player’s left leg forward so that it stops before the foul line. Adjust player’s shoulders square to the target.

Key Words

- Ball out and down
- Knee slightly bent
- Look at your target
- Shoulders slightly forward
- Begin back swing
- Step forward
- Quickly and smoothly bring arm forward
- Follow through toward target and upward

Coaching Tips

- Here the emphasis is to deliver the bocce ball with greater force than for a “Pointing” delivery. For the player to establish good speed through the final stage of delivery, he/she needs to start with the ball high in the back swing to gain force behind the ball.

- You may have to help the athlete not only with the initial forward swing, but with actually bringing the bocce ball forward following the completion at the top of the subsequent back swing.
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Bocce Specific Drills

Distance Rolling

Purpose
This drill will highlight whether an athlete requires further instruction on playing a long or short game. If an athlete can consistently roll the balls to an area that is closer to the halfway line than he/she does when rolling to an area at the far end of the court, this would indicate that he/she is a short end athlete. (Question: is the athlete instructed to aim for the halfway line or far end, or is he/she instructed to roll the ball as far as he/she can? It is unclear what instruction the athlete should be given for this drill.)

Steps
• Use one full set of bocce balls (eight balls) on a flat/even surface.
• Have athlete roll/toss the balls as instructed by coach/teacher.
• Dependent upon outcome, note the number of balls producing the desired outcome.
• Repeat the task coming back down the court from the opposite end.
• Total the outcome (i.e.12 out of 16, etc.).
• Redo assessment as agreed between athlete and coach/teacher.

Teaching Points
• The object of this drill is to improve the athlete’s ability to gauge distance.
• Athletes need to understand the significance of the speed of delivery, and coaches should place an emphasis on this factor in coaching.
• Feeling the amount of energy needed to get a ball to a certain area of the court needs to be repeated to get the same result.
• The further down the court a ball is rolled, the greater the push needed to get it there.
• A softer roll means a lesser distance traveled by the ball.

| Points of Emphasis: | • Distance is determined by speed of delivery
• Setting up is a factor that also determines success
• Athletes will learn from previous attempts and their body movements throughout
• To be successful at this game, athletes need to have consistency through judgments of many different distances, not just short or just long
• Athletes should always watch the movement of the bocce ball on the court and what it does and how it moves |
| When to Use: | • The drill itself should be used as a separate skill but then it is used in conjunction with other skills of the game
• Athletes can use this skills drill as part of a competition at training between fellow athletes |