

## Sparking Tips

### The Importance of Sparking in Gateball

The croquet stroke in a Croquet game is usually the most difficult stroke for beginners to master. It is also one of the most important and powerful strokes for a competent player. In Gateball, sparking is the equivalent of the croquet stroke. Sparking is also difficult, even for experienced Croquet players. Just as the croquet stroke requires practice, the sparking stroke also requires practice to achieve proficiency. For practice, a simple routine is to set up a gate and, using the ten balls, spark balls through the gate from one side to the other and back again.

### Sparking Technique

Because the spark must be completed within 10 seconds, new players attempting a spark can become flustered and confused. Here is a simple technique to smooth the process of sparking:

- After a touch, move to the touched ball while holding the mallet in the right hand
- Wait until all balls moved by the touch are stationary
- Lift the touched ball with the left hand
- Move briskly to your (stroker's) ball
- Place the left foot on the stroker's ball and with the left hand position the ball to be sparked against the left side of the stroker's ball
- Refine the alignment of the ball to be sparked, complete the spark.

This technique is for a right-handed person. For left-handed players, adjust accordingly.

### Sparking Direction

Position your shoulders parallel to the direction of the spark before you place your foot on the ball. Then point with your left arm (right arm for left-handed players) in the direction of the spark. This will help to line up the sparking direction.

Place your mallet/stick behind your ball and line up the mallet head in the sparking direction. You can then use the mallet head as a guide to direction when placing the ball to be sparked. These techniques are guaranteed to improve significantly the accuracy of sparking.

### Sparking the Opponents' Balls Out of the Court

Usually, your team captain will indicate where you are to spark an opponent's ball. However, if you have any doubts about your ability to spark long distances, always spark an opponent's ball to the nearest boundary. It is better to ensure that the opponent's ball is sparked out of court to become an out-ball than to try for a long spark, not make the distance and leave the opponent's ball in the court as an in-ball.

### Foot-on-Ball Techniques

Make sure that you place the instep of your shoe on the ball for a long spark. For a spark of less than one metre requiring a gentle stroke, try using the toe of your shoe.

For right handed players, put some weight on the left leg before sparking simply by slightly bending the left knee. The right leg and right knee if left handed. This ensures that the stroker's ball does not move from under the stroker's foot to cause a foul.

### Wear the Correct Shoes

To provide a better grip on balls when sparking, wear shoes with grooved soles. Do not wear smooth soled shoes! Light soled shoes give more control than heavy soled running shoes.