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# RULES OF THE GAME OF CROSSE

When researching the history of the ancient game of crosse, one regularly gets confused.

The individual one target stick and ball game is one of the ball games developed in the Middle Ages. In ancient documents, these games had often no specific written name other than 'ball games' (jeux des boules). In documents as releases and ordinances, such ball games were subject of the judicial discussions. Unfortunately, it is exceptional to find additional information as to conclude what game was meant.

Roger Vaultier (1965) found a few times some minimal additional information about (a variant of) the crosse game, as did Robert Albouker (1992). See pages 28 and 29. From these medieval examples, we can learn that the individual crosse game was not only played in the ancient county of Hainaut but also in several other parts of France and Belgium. We learnt that the game was both a short and a long game and that the target of the game could have been a stake, a ring, a stone, a tree, a door or a line in the village or near the tavern.

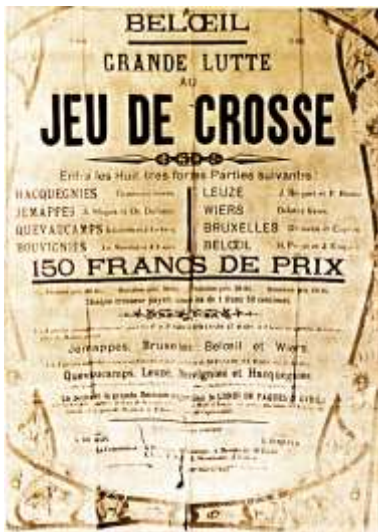
Rules for the early games of crosse have not been found; they probably did not exist. At that time and age, more than 80% of the population was illiterate. The few basic rules came down from father to son. Such rules were mainly local rules and depended on the terrain where people played the game, such as near little streams and ponds, trees, swamps, meadows, farmland, streets and even churchyards. Therefore, the rules would vary between the different regions or villages. Crosse players in the Middle Ages were mainly ordinary people and farmers who hardly travelled to other regions.

We do not know how the game developed after the end of the Middle Ages and at the beginning of the Renaissance. Only a few releases, decrees and ordinances contained some details of the crosse games and their rules.

Charles Deulin (1873) is the first in 600 years to describe how to play the game.

Emile Zola (1885) gives a detailed account of a crosse match between four miners applying the unwritten basic rules. We do not know if people in other parts of France or Walloon Belgium played the same variant of jeu de crosse.

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*Round the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, important 'invitation' tournaments were held in which the best crosseurs played for big prizes. Thousands of 'supporters' followed the parties of the renowned players. The players knew the rules; if written down, we did not find a copy. – By courtesy of André Auquier*

*The jeu de crosse club 'Les Amis du Pic & du Plat', founded in 1968 in Baudour, was the first in Belgium to develop written rules for the 'en plaine' game. The rules of this all-season society were considered to be the rules for all tournaments in the Belgian crosse region.*

By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the first crosse societies were founded in northern France and southern Belgium. Probably the societies started to organise interclub and perhaps even interregional championships. On the leaflet for the match in Beloeil (1901), we can read that the players should adhere strictly to the rules of the game. We suppose that everybody knew the few basic rules of the game. Situations occurring during a match uncovered by the basic rules were probably decided upon by the organising committee.

The oldest rules we found, are from 1928 and written for crosse au paillet or aux oiseaux.

It took until 1978 in France and 1980 in Belgium before the first 'official' rules for the 'en plaine' game were edited. In France, an association of eight crosse societies was founded in 1978: the 'Groupement des Associations Françaises de Crosse-Golf', today's 'Ligue regional de Crosse-Golf'. This coordinating organisation put down a series of rules to be applied at all interclub or interregional championships in France. Camille Algrain published the Belgian ones as applicable at 'Les Amis du Pic et du Plat'. Until today, when crosse players have their weekly round on the local fields, they still decide for themselves how to solve specific rule problems.

## Rules & Regulations

To make the rules of the long game of crosse more understandable, we define the specific terms used, and we repeat in short how the game is played.

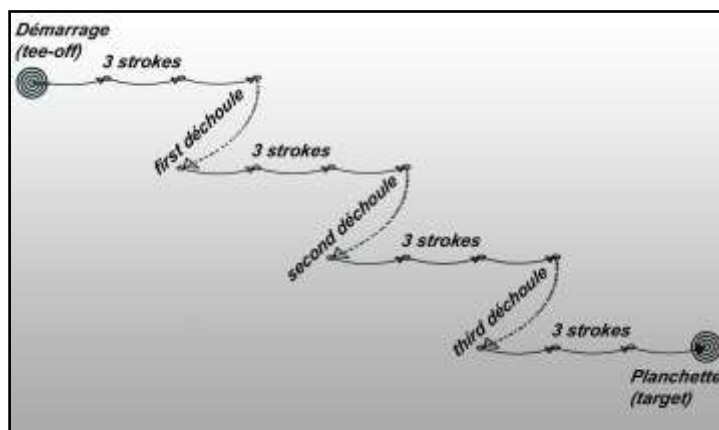


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## Definitions

Choulette	Ellipsoidal wooden ball. The <i>crosseurs</i> are allowed to put the <i>choulette</i> upright before making a stroke.
Chouleur	Member of the <i>équipe</i> that tries to reach the <i>planchette</i> of a <i>partie</i> within the <i>contract</i> .
Concours	Tournament (1) consists of several <i>équipes</i> and is played over several weekends to determine a final winning <i>équipe</i> . Tournament (2) where a <i>crosseur</i> participates on individual base. Each weekend different <i>équipes</i> are assigned by lot. The individual <i>crosseur</i> who has won the most <i>parties</i> as a member of the various <i>équipes</i> is the winner of the <i>concours</i> .
Contract	Agreement in a friendly <i>match</i> : the <i>routing</i> of the <i>partie</i> and the number of <i>déchoules</i> are defined; the <i>équipe</i> with the lowest number of proposed <i>déchoules</i> will start with the <i>démarrage</i> as <i>chouleurs</i> . Agreement in a <i>concours</i> : the <i>routing</i> of the <i>parties</i> is predetermined by the organising committee. The number of <i>déchoules</i> is defined; the <i>équipe</i> with the lowest number of proposed <i>déchoules</i> will start with the <i>démarrage</i> as <i>chouleurs</i> .
Crosse	Club
Crosseur	Crosse player
Déchoule	Reverse stroke made by the <i>déchouleur</i> away from the target or into difficult playing conditions to prevent the <i>chouleurs</i> from reaching the target within the <i>contract</i> .
Déchouleur	<i>Crosseur</i> who tries to prevent the <i>chouleur</i> from reaching the target within the <i>contract</i> .
Démarrage	Opening stroke of a <i>partie</i>
Equipe	Team of two <i>crosseurs</i>
Match	Friendly game between two <i>équipes</i> ; a <i>match</i> consists of several <i>parties</i> ; the <i>équipe</i> that has won the most <i>parties</i> is the winner.
Partie	A part of the <i>match</i> , played from the point of <i>démarrage</i> to the chosen <i>planchette</i> (from tee to hole).
Planchette	Final or intermediate target of a <i>partie</i>
Routing	Composition of a <i>partie</i> : the direct path to the final <i>planchette</i> with or without an in-between <i>planchette</i> .

In the game of crosse, two *équipes* play against each other. One *équipe*, the *chouleurs*, will try to reach the final *planchette* of a *partie* within the proposed number of strokes in the *contract*; the other *équipe*, the *déchouleurs*, will try to prevent this. Before each *partie*, a *contract* is made in which the *chouleurs* define the number of strokes they need to reach the chosen target. In this *contract*, it is decided which *équipe* will be the *chouleurs* or the *déchouleurs*. The *équipes* hit the *choulette* in turn, the *chouleurs* three consecutive times, mostly in the direction of the target, followed by the *déchouleurs* hitting the *choulette* only once, away from the target or into difficult playing conditions.



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## Rules & Regulations of 'Crosse en Plaine' (Field crosse), France

Decisions on the Rules & Regulations agreed upon by the members of the Ligue regionale de Crosse-Golf (previously Groupement des Associations Française de Crosse-Golf Avesnois), France, February 1978

### Preamble

The representatives of the Crosse Societies of Aulnoye, Bachant, Beaufort, Bossu, Feignies, Gognies-Chaussées, Maubeuge and Pont-sur-Sambre, assembled to formulate official rules and regulations, and agreed to implement the rules and regulations described below.

1. It is self-evident that the organising committee of a *concours* reserves the right to supplement the rules depending on the local course and the configuration of the course (for example, 'out of bounds', crossings, fixed obstacles, etc.).
2. An adaptation of the general rules or a general additional rule must be agreed upon by a majority of the members at a general meeting, consisting of at least three representatives (president, secretary and treasurer) of each society.

*The planchette, the official target in France, is adopted on various Belgian crosse fields. During play, the teammate rotates the planchette in the direction of the crosseur, who has to touch it.*



### Article I

- a) During a *concours* one must use *choulettes* sold by the organising committee or the local supplier.
- b) The societies will buy *choulettes* as far as possible from the same supplier. The sales price of the *choulettes* will be set at the general meeting.

### Article II

- a) The course of the *concours* will be decided upon by the local committee: arranging the numbered *planchettes*, determining the maximum allowed number of *déchoules* of each *partie*.
  - b) A general decision by the majority of votes from the presidents (or their representatives) of all societies participating in the general meeting (one vote per society) is needed to change the course of the *concours*.
  - c) The targets are wooden or metal *planchettes* or cylinders with the following dimensions: height 1.80 metres (maximal variation 10 centimetres), width or diameter 18 centimetres (maximal variation 1 centimetre).
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### Article III

a) The *contract* for the first *partie* must be made by heads or tails. The winning *équipe* will start the negotiations with an opening proposal for the number of *déchoules*, but if it prefers, the *équipe* may leave the opening proposal to its adversaries. Each *équipe* is allowed to reduce the proposed number of *déchoules*.

b) The maximum number of *déchoules* to propose is fixed at nine. The *équipe* that won the heads or tails may leave a nine *déchoules* proposition to the adversaries.

c) The *équipe* that lost the first heads or tails will start the opening proposal about the number of *déchoules* for the second *partie*. The *déchoules* propositions in the following *parties* shall be taken in turn.

d) The *équipe* that wins five *parties* is the winner of the *concours* or the *match*.

### Article IV

a) When a *concours* for whatever reason has to be adjourned (nightfall, adverse weather conditions, matters of dispute), the *concours* shall recommence on a later date with the existing score at the point where the *concours* was conceded.

b) If the adversaries do not agree about setting a new date, the organising committee will try to intervene or set a new date without further appeal.

### Article V

a) Usually, the *équipes* are invited to be in the clubhouse at 13.00 hours.

b) In case an *équipe* arrives after 14.00 hours, the other *équipe* must ask the organising committee for an official notification of the time of arrival of the adversaries and is allowed to claim the victory by default of them.

c) When a *crosseur* presents himself on his own:  
1) He may propose a partner of his choice, who has to be accepted by the adversaries.

2) In case of refusal, it will be decided by drawing lots who will be his partner: a *crosseur* proposed by the local committee, by the adversaries or by the *crosseur* himself.

3) If no possible partner is available, the *crosseur* shall play on his own.

4) If the partner of the single *crosseur* still arrives, he is allowed to discuss the tactics of the *partie* that is already in progress. He is only allowed to participate in the *concours* from the following *partie* onwards.



*The 'contrat' starts with heads or tails to decide which team may determine the routing of the first partie. In the next parties, the winners of the previous one choose which route to follow. In jeu de crosse there are no fixed rounds as in golf.*

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#### Article VI

- a) If a *choulette* has ended up under a hedge, the player may push aside branches to allow a swing. However, he is not allowed to clean the space round the *choulette*.
- b) If the *choulette* ends off the ground:
  - 1) The *crosseur* must drop the *choulette* for a penalty stroke when the *choulette* is in a position higher than 1.80 metres above the ground.
  - 2) When the *choulette* is in a position lower than 1.80 metres, the *choulette* must be played from that position.
- c) When the *choulette* ends up in the crown of a tree:
  - 1) The *choulette* must be dropped for a penalty stroke at that side of the tree from where the *choulette* entered the tree.
  - 2) When the *choulette* cannot be retrieved, a new *choulette* must be dropped for a penalty stroke on the side of the tree where the lost *choulette* had entered the tree.

#### Article VII

- a) When a *choulette* is 'dossé dans la terre' (hit into the ground), the *crosseur* must play it without touching or placing the *choulette* upright.
- b) When the *choulette* is dirty, it may be cleaned or replaced by a clean one; the new or cleaned *choulette* must be placed on exactly the same spot.
- c) It is not allowed to hit the *choulette* deliberately deeper in the ground or into the water.

#### Article VIII

- When a *choulette* gets broken, the stroke counts:
- 1) The *partie* continues with the biggest part of the broken *choulette*.
  - 2) When the parts are equal in size, the *partie* continues with the part that is furthest away from the place where the *choulette* was hit.

#### Article IX

A player is allowed to retrieve a *choulette* stuck below the water level (pool, lake or creek) and to put it into play again for a penalty stroke, 50 centimetres from the shore at the point where the *choulette* entered the hazard.

#### Article X

- When a stroke is invalid or a *choulette* is lost, the next stroke must be taken from the exact point where the previous stroke was made.
- a) Looking for a lost *choulette* is limited to five minutes. When the *choulette* is not found, the stroke does not count and must be played again.
  - b) When a stroke is invalid, it counts. The stroke must be replayed from the exact place where the previous stroke was made.

*When the choulette has ended up in a water hazard, the crosseur needs a lot of experience and watertight wellies to hit the floating choulette from the water into play again. If he does not succeed he has a penalty stroke. –*

*Photo Samuel Dhote*



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- c) A stroke is considered invalid when:
- 1) the whole of the *choulette* comes to a halt outside the limits of the course.
  - 2) the *choulette* lies within marked impediments and is considered by additional local rules as invalid (hollow tree, garden, under a bridge, equipment ...).
  - 3) the *choulette* has stopped in the ground or is stuck in a hedge at the border of the course.
  - d) At the foot of a wall, the stroke is considered playable when the *choulette* does not touch the wall; otherwise, the stroke is invalid.
- c) When the *choulette*, after touching the in-between *planchette*, rolls out of bounds, the stroke must be replayed. If the *choulette* touches the second *planchette* and then goes out of bounds, the *partie* is finished because it was already won when the *choulette* hit the *planchette*.

#### Article XI

##### Valid strokes and obstacles:

- a) Adversaries and spectators should keep distance of the *crosseur* whose turn it is so that he can concentrate on his swing without being disturbed by noise or movements.
- b) The *crosseur* is allowed to demand *crosseurs* and spectators to free the line of his stroke. His partner is allowed to stay where he wants and to give advice.
- c) The *crosseur* whose turn it is must place the *choulette* himself.
- d) When a spectator stops the *choulette*, the stroke is valid, and the following stroke has to be made at the point where the *choulette* was stopped.
- e) When the partner or the adversary stops the *choulette*, the stroke is invalid and must be replayed.
- f) When the *choulette* has hit the first (in between) *planchette*, the *partie* will continue from the point where the *choulette* stopped, whether this stop was caused by an obstacle (for example, a *crosse*) or a person.
- g) When a *choulette* ends up in a pocket or boot of a person, the next stroke has to be made from the spot where the person stood.
- h) When a *choulette* accidentally hits a moving object (motorcar, bike, cart ...), the *partie* will continue from the point where the *choulette* finally stopped. When the *choulette* finishes up the moving obstacle itself, the stroke is valid but has to be made again.



*This picture illustrates the problems one can have during a match, that is to say, the French crosseur. The player must drop the choulette for a penalty stroke when the choulette is in a position higher than 1.80 metres above the ground. When the choulette is in a place lower than 1.80 metres, he has to play it. Life for the Belgian crosseur is much easier; when the choulette ends up approximately 10 centimetres above the ground (in a hedge, bush or tree), a stroke is already invalid.*

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*Jeu de crosse hardly knows the term 'unplayable'. More often than not, players have to use all their skills to retrieve the choulette into a playable area.*

i) When the *choulette* is stopped by a fixed or temporary obstacle, not marked in the local rules as invalid (for instance, a wheelbarrow, motor car, agricultural equipment, café furniture, loose branches of a hedge that have not been cleared ...), if possible, the player can remove such items to make a full swing.

If this is not possible the *choulette* must be placed and hit from a distance of one *crosse* length from the obstacle.

j) Boundaries:

1) Each stroke must be made within the boundaries of the course. So it is not allowed to stay outside the field when hitting the *choulette*.

2) It is not permitted to push a wire fence aside nor standing with one leg at the other side of the wired fence to make a swing.

3) It is allowed to lean against a hedge when making a swing. It is not allowed to clean the area round the *choulette* (branches, grass, nettle, fascicle ...).

4) It is allowed to make various practise swings from under a wire or a bush before making the final swing.

k) It is allowed to hit the *choulette* with the hands below the grip of the shaft but not lower than 30 centimetres from the iron head. It is not allowed to push the *choulette* forward. A swing movement has to be made.

l) A stroke is valid even when the *choulette* was not hit (air shot).

#### Article XII

a) When there is snow on the course, the *équipes* will agree on clearing snow in front of the *choulette*.

b) When the *équipes* cannot agree, the local committee decides how the *partie* will be played.

c) In case of unforeseen playing conditions such as rabbit holes, the local committee decides how to handle such situations.

#### Article XIII

Situations occurring during play that are not foreseen in the 'Rules & Regulations', including the additional local rules, will be judged and decided upon by the local commission without appeal. In the forthcoming general assembly of the Associations de Crosse de l'Avesnois, a decision will be made concerning the inclusion of the above decision in the 'Rules & Regulations' for all associated societies.

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#### Article XIV

*Crosseurs* should respect the environment in and round the area where the *concours* is held.

Article XV The organising committees decline any responsibility:

- 1) For any accident that occurred to *crosseurs*, spectators or passers-by.
- 2) For accidents occurring to a *crosseur* by himself or by another person, being a *crosseur* or not.
- 3) For damage done to any property.
- 4) *Crosseurs* should be insured at the beginning of the season, individually or via their society.

#### Article XVI

New societies who become a member of the Ligue are obliged to apply these rules and regulations strictly. These new members may put forward suggestions for modification, abolishment or supplement to an article which will only be implemented after a majority vote at a general meeting (see Preamble above).

### Rules & Regulations of 'Crosse en Plaine' (Field crosse), Belgium

Les Amis du Pic et du Plat in Baudour, Belgique, May 1980

#### Article I

With regards to the *chouettes*: one is allowed to use any kind of *choulette*. When playing with French *crosseurs*, the choice of the *choulette* will be decided upon by mutual agreement.

*Belgian crosseurs have a choulette available for every situation that could occur on the crosse field. Hence, they carry a whole series of different chouettes in a string back with them.*

#### Article II

The start of a *partie* is decided by drawing lots or heads or tails. The *équipe* that must start the *contract* shall propose the number of *déchoules* for the *partie* that is well-known to each *crosseur*. The opposing *équipe* is allowed to underbid that proposition. The *équipe* with the lowest proposed number of *déchoules* will start the *partie* with the *démarrage*.





*Crosse is a winter game. In summer, on most crosse fields, it is impossible to hit the choulette out of the long grass, to say nothing about finding the choulette.*

### Article III

The course of the *parties* is fixed before the start of the *concours* and is known to all *crosseurs*.

### Article IV

When a *déchouleur* unintentionally hit the *planchette*, this stroke is considered as being the stroke of the *chouleur*, whose *équipe*, therefore, has won the *partie*.

### Article V

The *équipe* that lost the heads or tails for the first *partie* shall start the second *partie* by proposing the number of *déchoules*.

### Article VI

A stroke is invalid when the *choulette* surpasses the line that indicates the boundary of the course (these boundaries are clearly indicated and known to all *crosseurs*). The *choulette* has to be replaced at the point where it was hit initially.

The stroke is invalid when the *choulette* disappears completely under a vehicle, into a rabbit hole, under a stone or other obstacles.

A stroke is also invalid when the *choulette* ends up approximately 10 centimetres above the ground (in a hedge, bush or tree).

A stroke is also invalid when it touches the boundary line. In these cases, a *choulette* has to be placed at the point where it was hit previously.

### Article VII

The *crosseur* is not allowed to lean against or over a boundary line. During the swing movement, the *crosse* must not surpass the boundary line. The *crosseur* is not allowed to clean the area round the *choulette*. He only may put the *choulette* upright on the exact spot where it came to a halt.

### Article VIII

When the *choulette* ends up in a water hazard or any other hazard where the *crosseur* cannot hit the *choulette*, he is allowed for a penalty stroke to drop the *choulette* as near as possible to the spot where the *choulette* entered the hazard. It is the adversary who will drop the *choulette* for him from over his shoulder.

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#### Article IX

When the *choulette* is broken into several parts, the *partie* shall continue with the biggest part of the broken *choulette*. When the broken parts of the *choulette* are of equal size, the *partie* will continue with the part that is the furthest away from the tee. When the *choulette* is lost on the course, the next stroke shall be made from the spot where the initial stroke was made.

#### Article X

When a *crosseur*, a spectator or any obstacle stops a *choulette*, the stroke counts, and the following stroke must be made from the spot where the *choulette* came to a halt.

#### Article XI

It is not allowed to hit the *choulette* in the ground purposely. It is not allowed to push the *choulette* forward with the *crosse*. The *crosseur* always must make a swing movement.

#### Article XII

When the *choulette* hits the in-between *planchette* and consequently ricochets outside the course, the stroke does not count. The *choulette* must be replaced at the point where the initial stroke was made. If the above happens with the final *planchette* of the *partie*, the stroke counts and the *partie* is finished. The *équipe* that hits the *planchette* is then the winner.

#### Article XIII

A stroke made without hitting the *choulette* counts as a valid stroke (air shot).

#### Article XIV

When a *crosseur* is going to make his stroke, the partner and the adversaries shall not influence the *crosseur* or talk loudly.

#### Article XV

Situations that are not foreseen in the 'Rules & Regulations' will be judged and decided upon by the local commission without appeal.

*Hitting the choulette into the hazardous hedges is very rewarding for the déchouleurs. Often the chouleurs need all three strokes to retrieve the choulette, with the risk that the déchouleur easily déchoules the choulette into the hedge again.*

