

# **SHINTY COACHING MANUAL**

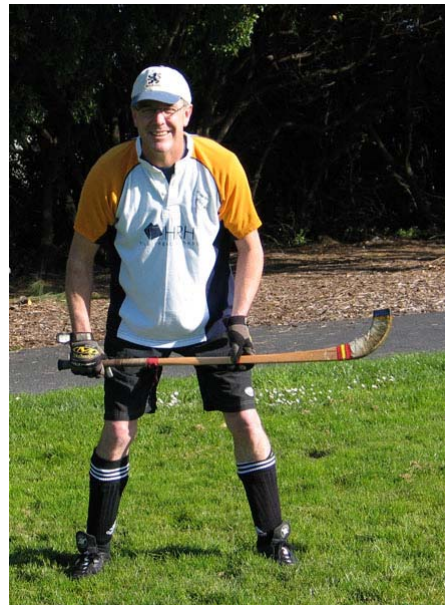
*Provided by the kind folks at*

*U.S. Camanachd*

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# THE READY POSITION

Here's how you start. Important points (1) feet about shoulder width apart - a stance where the feet are too far apart or too close together makes it difficult to move quickly and maintain balance; (2) two hands on the caman, one at the top and one half or two-thirds of the way down the stick; (3) back of the hand facing forward on the top hand, fingers forward on the bottom hand; (4) toe of the caman pointing upwards.



All other positions will derive, to some extent, from this one. Chose which hand to have as your top hand (the hand at the top of the caman) by what feels most comfortable in swinging in the various positions (hands apart, hands together, from both sides). Once chosen try not to move your top hand during the run of, but make adjustments with the bottom hand. This means that when you swing from the opposite side your grip will be what might be referred to as a cross-handed grip - that is OK, just get used to it!

# DRIBBLING THE BALL

Dribbling is how you move the ball while maintaining possession. It's important to keep your hands apart (as in the Ready Position) and not let the ball get too far away from you. Use both sides of the caman head to control the ball (note this difference between shinty and field hockey rules). It's important to keep an eye on the field and players while dribbling, don't get too caught up in looking at the ball!



As you get used to handling the caman there are situations in which one-handed dribbling might be appropriate, but be sure to maintain control of the caman at all times!

NOTE: Above you can see dribbling demonstrated with two variations of grip, showing right and left hand, respectively, as top hand. In the normal run of play it is better to keep your hands in the same orientation (right OR left as top hand), and slide the lower hand up and down the caman as play requires for different hitting and ball handling.

# GOAL-KEEPING

The goal-keeper (or just keeper) in Shinty has several unique challenges. He is guarding a goal that is 10 feet high and 12 feet wide, he must be proficient with his hitting and blocking, and having quick reactions is a good thing too. The keeper in Shinty has no way to create a dead ball except to put the ball out of bounds (which is legal) and either cede a corner (by putting it over the end line), or a shie (putting it over the touch or side line).



Some small compensation is the keeper is the only player allowed to use their hands, but only with an open handed block or slap. An example of this can be seen above on the left. For shots in the upper portion of the goal the keeper must use his caman to make the block. On the right you can see a perfectly placed shot dropping into the top corner and the keeper attempting (in vain, it turned out) to make the stick-block.

The keeper will often use his body or feet to make stops as well. Below is a diagram from the Camanachd Association Coaching Manual published ca. 1980 which will help clarify the use of hands and feet by keepers.





# HITTING THE BALL

There are several ways to hit the ball in shinty, the main differences being where one's hands are on the caman and how far and hard you want the ball to go.



Flipping or Picking up the ball: With the hands apart it is easy to hit or flip the ball over short distances. The advantage here is that there is little or no backswing, the impetus is provided more by flicking the wrists than by arm swing. The photo above shows the ball almost being picked up on the caman, but this type of hit can easily be used for ground shots as well.

We have seen a few players who have used the hands-apart position to hit the ball with power (think of a slap shot in ice/street/field hockey), but this is not the common approach for driving the ball with force. For that one should bring the hands together at the top of the caman in a grip approximating that used by baseball batters or golfers (but DO NOT intertwine your fingers!), see below.



FULL SWING: In this approach it is appropriate to use a backswing and follow-through (3 o'clock to 9 o'clock, or 9 to 3 varying with the side on which you are hitting), something like a golfer might do. During this swing there should be a weight shift onto the front foot. With either of these approaches to hitting it is extremely important to keep your eye on the ball - you should already know where you're going to hit it before beginning your swing!

NOTE: Remember, it is more important to make good contact with the "sweet spot" of the caman than to muscle-up and try to slam the ball - let the caman do the work for you. You will be surprised at how much pace you can put on the ball with an easy swing and good contact!

TIP: The trajectory of your hit will vary depending on what type of stick you are using (forward, midfield, defender, keeper) and where in your swing you make contact with the ball. For instance, if you make contact with a ball which is nearer the front foot in your stance you will tend to lift the ball, but if the ball is closer to your back foot you will tend to hit it on or close to the ground.

HITTING PRACTICE ROUTINE: A good way to practice hitting is to get a few balls (the peewee league safety balls are excellent for this exercise, or even tennis balls) and set up in front of a chain link fence, making sure the holes in the link are smaller than the balls you are hitting! Place yourself a stick length plus a few feet back from the fence and set your balls out in a row. Take nice easy swings and concentrate on making good contact - you will feel the difference between a good connection and a duff. Take it easy and don't overdo your swing. After a few repetitions the swing will begin to feel natural and you will make more consistently good contact. As you improve move the balls further apart so you are moving more between hits - this will help prepare you for hitting the ball on the move. And make sure to work on swinging from both sides - in shinty it is important for your off-hand swing to be as strong as your natural side!

## MISCELLANEOUS TIPS

There are a number of details, far too many to pass along here, that make the game of Shinty exciting and make the play great. Here are a few tips and ideas that might be of help.



Protecting the ball: Above you can see that the player in the hooped jersey is keeping his body between the ball and his opponent. It is perfectly legal to protect or shield the ball as long as you are attempting to play the ball and not



the player.



Keepy-uppy: It is possible to pick the ball up with the caman and move down the field while bouncing it on the stick. Of course this is a difficult thing to do and not always the best strategy in any case. However, there are times in a game where a run of "keepy-uppy" can be a great tool, and even better if the ball is popped up in the air and then hit with something approximating a baseball swing! Above you can see visiting player Ross MacPherson picking the ball up with his caman and heading downfield in keepy-uppy mode.

# STOPPING THE BALL

There are three main approaches to stopping the ball: with feet, body, or stick. Which method you use will depend on the game situation and placement of the ball. Whichever means you choose, it is important to remain focused on the ball's movement and to be aware of the players around you. In stopping the ball a player should be aiming to control the ball. Once control is established you can advance the ball via dribbling, a pass, or even take a shot. Being able to stop the ball is a vital skill and all three approaches should be practiced regularly!

TIP: Whichever method you use keep your feet moving while awaiting the ball, it allows you to react more quickly to sudden changes in the balls path.



Stopping with the feet: If the ball is on the ground (or even bouncing as shown above) a player can use their feet, keeping their heels (and knees) together. While it is technically within the rules to make a one-footed stop (ONLY if your foot is flat on the ground), relying on this method develops several bad habits. First of all the one-footed stop is less reliable (it's easy for the ball to skip over the foot), and secondly, the line between a legal one-footed stop and a kick is

VERY thin! Make the effort to use both feet with the heels together and you will be rewarded by the results.

TIP: Do not jump at the ball, but move into the ball's path think about getting the ball's way. Try not to leap when stopping the ball, but rather slide into position. This will help prevent kicking or jumping over the ball and also allow you to adjust to any last minute changes in the ball's path.



Stopping with the body/chest: A player may stop the ball with their torso. This can be an excellent way to control a sharply struck ball, especially if you can relax and absorb the impact so that the ball falls within your reach. Be sure to keep both hands on your caman as this will help maintain a concave arc across the front of your body as well as minimizing the chances of accidentally handing the ball. Additionally, by turning the torso to one side or another you can direct the ball to drop to a particular side.





Stopping the ball with the caman/stick: When the ball is outside the immediate area of your body using your caman is the best way to make a stop. Balls in the air can be stopped with the back (flat) of the caman (above left, this technique is often used by goal keepers), or with the side of the blade (above right, be sure to angle the sticks towards the ground or the ball with pop-up into the air!). In either case it is best to line up your body with the flight of the ball, as this gives you the best view of the ball's trajectory. A loose (but controlled) grip will help absorb the impact of the ball and keep it from bouncing out of your reach.

NOTE: While you would very often hope to control a ball taken down with the stick it is also possible to deflect the ball towards a teammate. Try to think where you are wanting to drop the ball, keeping it away from defenders, moving it towards a teammate, or putting it close enough to control yourself.

TIP: When stopping balls on the ground with the caman, it can be helpful to angle the stick so that the broad side of the blade/head is perpendicular to the ground this keeps the ball from simply rolling up and over the angled head.



# THE SHIE OR HIT-IN

When the ball crosses the sideline and leaves the field of play, the team who did not touch it last brings the ball back into play via a shie, also known as a hit-in. There are some very specific rules about shies, so it is important to learn this technique correctly.



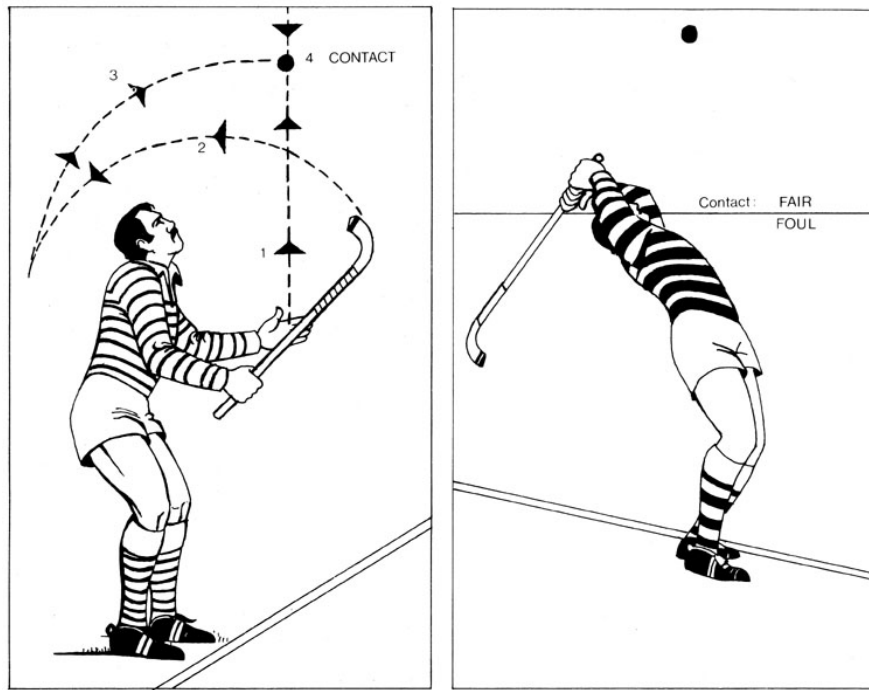
With feet about your about a shoulder's width apart the player making the shie stands perpendicular to the sideline with their feet on the touch line itself. Hold the camán in one hand in front of your body, and with the other hand toss the ball up in the air. The ball is tossed up so that if unimpeded it would land directly in front of the player or even on his head. As the ball is coming back down the player brings the camán directly over their head and strikes the ball with the flat back of the stick. It is extremely important to bring the stick directly over the head (think of a throw-in in soccer) because any deviation from this (hitting from the side or bringing the stick over the shoulder) will result in a foul and a change in possession.

Flex your knees a little while making the throw, and remember that you can make as many throws as you need so long as no attempt is made to swing at or hit the ball. This is important because often it can take a toss or two to gauge the wind

and the angle of the sun.

TIP: For beginners we recommend that you choke up significantly on the stick while getting comfortable with the shie. As you improve you can move your hands further down the stick and thereby gain more force on your hits. As you can see by the center and right hand photos above (taken on a recent trip to Scotland) as you get confident you can take a large backswing!

Below is a diagram from the Camanachd Association Coaching Manual published ca. 1980, it may help clarify the complete technique. Notice that contact with the ball must be made above head height.



# THE THROW-UP

The game is begin by a throw-up in the center circle. Two players (one from each team) stand facing each other (with the goals to their left and right) and crossing their camans, and referee throws the ball up between them.



The players are not allowed to swing at the ball until it begins its downward journey, and they are not allowed to jump or move their feet at all until the ball is hit or hits the ground. You can see by the above photos that the rule is stretched to its limits!