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The Game of Net-Ball  
And How to Play It.

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# The Game of Net-Ball And How to Play It.

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*With Illustrations from photographs by M. Hankinson.*

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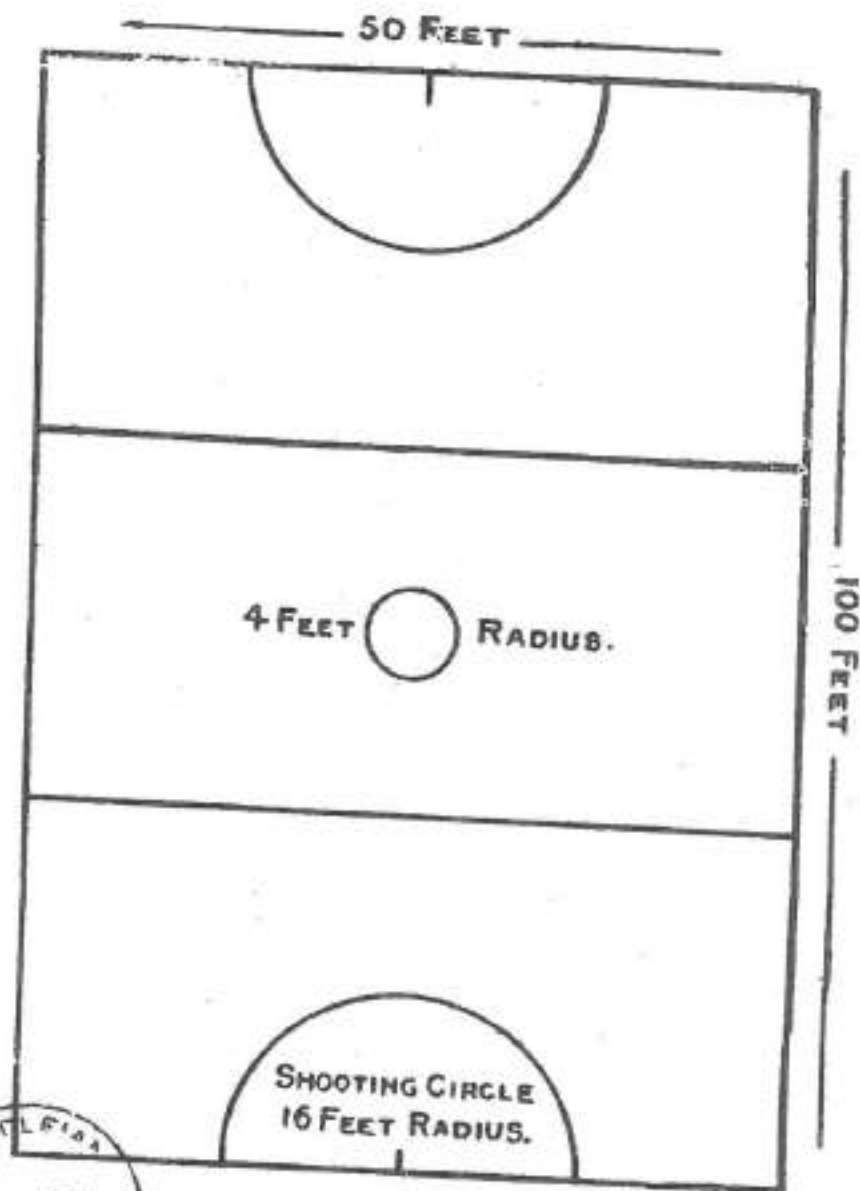


FIG. I. THE GROUND.

## THE GAME OF NET-BALL AND HOW TO PLAY IT.

### History of the Game.

The game of Net-Ball or Basket-Ball was invented in America in 1891, and was first introduced into England in 1895. The fact that the goal posts had baskets attached to them instead of nets, gave the game the name of Basket-Ball; though the baskets have long since disappeared, even in America, the name still clings to the game.

In America, as in England, the game is played by both men and women, but the rules for each differ considerably—even to the marking out of the ground. In the American women's rule the ground is divided into three equal courts, and the

players in the end courts must keep within the end courts, and the centre players to the middle court. Nine players constitute a team, and the game lasts for fifteen minutes each half. The ball may not be batted away or snatched from another player, nor may it be held more than three seconds.

In the men's rules there are no court lines, five players form a team, each man playing where he thinks best. Any player may shoot for goal; the ball may be batted or snatched from another player, and there is no time limit for holding the ball.

The game was started in England by an American gentleman teaching some of the students in Madame Osterberg's Physical Training College in 1895.

They taught it to the students who came after them, and they in turn to the next set, and so on year by year, each set altering and adding rules as it thought best. Naturally in a few years the first set hardly recognised the game as it had been taught to them, and it became imperative to form a Committee to issue rules and govern the laws of the game.

This was taken in hand by the Ling Association of Gymnastic Teachers, consisting then chiefly of members from Madame Osterberg's College, and rules were drawn up and published in 1901. Since then, as is definitely shown by the sale of rules year by year, the game is becoming more and more popular. Starting with an edition of 250 copies in 1901, the Ling Association has had to increase the number to 1,000, 1,500, 2,000, and last year to 2,500. Copies may be obtained for 3d. post free, from the Secretary of the Ling Association, Miss Hankinson, 67 Shaftesbury Road, Crouch Hill, London, N.

### General Details.

The game is played with an ordinary full-sized Association football, and the players throw the ball from one to another, passing swiftly and keeping places as strictly as in hockey. Indeed Net-Ball has been found an excellent preparation for hockey, as passing (and therefore team play) is compulsory, no player being allowed to hold the ball more than three seconds.

Teams may number either five, seven or nine a side: for the first two, a piece of ground 100 feet long by 50 feet wide is sufficient, for the latter, 150 feet long by 75 feet wide; but the seven-a-side with the shorter ground is the game usually played.

A level surface is certainly preferable, but a slight slope is no impediment to a good game. Asphalt makes on the whole the most satisfactory ground, the only drawback being its hard surface should a player happen to fall. It is always tolerably dry even in winter, whereas grass courts degenerate into mud courts, and for many weeks are impracticable. Gravel or sand is not advisable owing to grits which may stick to and fall from the ball while it is in the air.

Players should wear a gymnastic costume, and no hat or hat-pins; nor are spikes or nails allowed on the shoes.

**Dress.** Rubber shoes, or at least shoes *without heels* are best, as the danger of sprains and strains to the ankle from quick turning in high heels is then eliminated. Each team should be distinguished by means of coloured badges passing from the right shoulder across the body back and front.

The outfit for the game is small and inexpensive, and can be ordered through the Secretary of the Ling Association.

**Outfit.** A complete set, comprising a pair of goal posts, rings, sleeve nets, and leather ball, can be obtained for £2 7s. 6d. For outdoor use the goals are fixed in sockets sunk in the ground, and can be easily removed if the ground is required for other purposes. If required for indoor as well as outdoor use, portable stands are supplied instead of posts and sockets, and the cost for a complete set is then £2 12s. 6d. or £3 15s.

The ground is usually 100 feet by 50 feet, but whatever its size, is divided into three equal courts by two transverse lines. A shooting circle is marked in each of the end courts (as in Fig. 1) 16 feet radius round the goal post, which is fixed in the centre of the goal line; and a smaller circle with a radius of 4 feet is drawn in the middle of the centre court to mark the spot where the Umpire bounces the ball at the beginning of the game and after a goal has been scored.



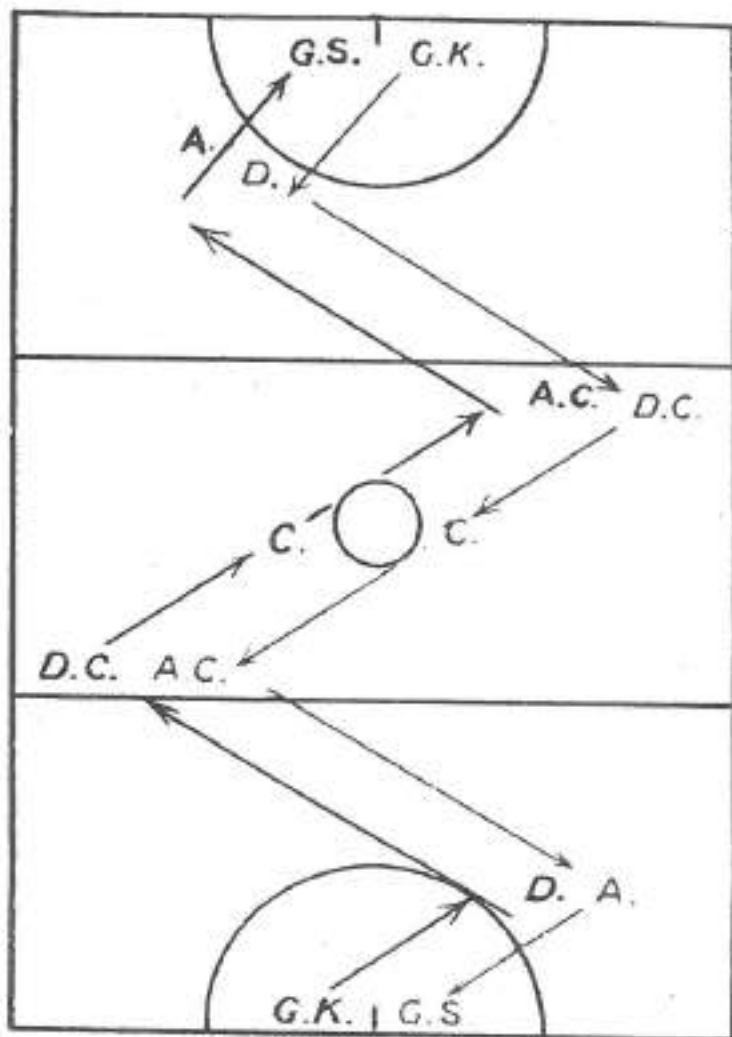


FIG. II.

Showing positions in field at beginning of play, and general direction in which each side should aim in throwing the ball.

## Hints to Players.

### Positions of the Field.

- G. S. Goal Shooter.
- A. Attack.
- A. C. Attacking Centre.
- C. Centre.
- D. C. Defending Centre.
- D. Defence.
- G. K. Goal Keeper.

For a clearer understanding, suppose one team to have Red bands, the other Blue.

Red Goal Shooter stands close under the Net through which she hopes to shoot her goals, and beside and closely marking her, stands Blue Goal Keeper. Further out, near the edge of the shooting circle, is Red Attack marked by Blue Defence. In the Centre court *close to the side line* is Red Attacking Centre with Blue Defending Centre; on the edge of the Centre circle, each with her back to one side line and squarely facing the opposite one (as in the bully off in hockey), are the two Centre players Red *v.* Blue. Working towards Blue goal is Red Defending Centre, coupled with Blue Attacking Centre; on

the edge of the Blue circle is Blue Attack with Red Defence, and lastly under the Blue goal is Blue Goal Shooter with Red Goal Keeper.

Each player from the beginning of the game is standing beside and marking her opponent; and every movement, which the one makes to obtain the ball the other must be ready to follow up and intercept.

The game is started by the Umpire bouncing the ball in the centre circle between the two Centre players

**The Start.** Red and Blue. They must stand facing each other with their backs to the side lines and with feet and hands outside the circle until the ball has bounced, after which the one who secures it first may pass to one of her centre "wings" or "side line" players. Very often after the bounce a Centre fails to hold the ball, in which case she may bat it with her open hand (clenched fists are not allowed) along the ground in a forward outward direction to her Attacking Centre; but this method is slower and less sure. All players wherever possible should catch the ball and

pass cleanly; a rolling game is slow, uninteresting and induces scrambling.

Supposing then, Red centre to have secured the ball from the Umpires bounce, she passes successfully to Red Attacking Centre on her right side line, and she in turn sends in swiftly to Red Attack. But Red Attack when she receives the ball is outside her circle and therefore cannot shoot herself, and has to pass to her Goal Shooter. Blue Goal Keeper comprehends this in an instant, and even while the ball is on its way to Red Goal Shooter, Blue Goal Keeper leaps forward catching the ball neatly just in front of the Red Goal Shooter.

Then follow the clearing-out tactics of the Blues. Goal Keeper intends to pass out to her Defence, but seeing she is too well marked by Red attack, she passes instead straight to her Defending Centre who has crept up on the Goal Keeper's left, close to the circle. Blue Defending Centre throws diagonally forward knowing her Centre is waiting for this chance, and together with the Attacking Centre they are in a moment besieging the Red's Goal. And so the game continues with varying

success to both sides, a goal being scored as soon as the ball has dropped down through the ring on the goal post, providing the Goal Shooter or Attack when aiming had both her feet inside the shooting circle.

If a player sends the ball over the side line or goal line into "touch," a player of the opposing side must immediately throw it in from the point where it crossed the line (Rule 14, The Throw In.) She may throw in in any direction—to her Goal Shooter if she chooses—but she must stand still when throwing with both her feet behind the line, and no other player may stand within three yards of her. She must also be quick in throwing in, for once she has taken her stand at the line she must throw within three seconds, else the privilege is forfeited and given to her opponent.

Each player on the field naturally has her particular work to perform according to where she is placed. Broadly speaking, the Centre Court players have to convey the ball from the centre of the field where the game is started to the Attacking Court. Attacking players receive the ball from



FIG. III.  
Throw 2.—The Side Throw.



their Centre Court comrades and shoot goals. Defenders try to prevent attackers receiving the ball, and pass out to their Centre players.

All players should try to learn a variety of throws. This makes the game far more skilful, as the underhand up-

**Throws.** ward throw is not difficult to intercept. Varied ways of throwing develop quickness, resource and good judgment. The five best throws are as follows:—

1. The low throw, which is used in passing to short players. This should be always about the level of the knee, and should either be sent from a distance with some force, and with a straight arm, or should be a short, quick, low, wrist shot. This throw gives short players an equal chance with longer-armed, taller opponents.

2. The side throw—also with straight arm. This throw is used to send the ball round an opponent's body when she is expecting to intercept an overhead throw. (Fig. III.)

3. Overhead throw, with both arms held well back over the head—the ball



FIG. IV.  
Throw 3.—The Over-head Throw.

being started *behind* the head and thrown high, thus outwitting short players. (Fig. IV.)

4. Hand balls from the shoulder—the best method of shooting for goal. They are useful also for high passes, and hard for short opponen-s to intercept. (Fig. V.)

5. Throwing the ball round the back of the body from right to left. This is a good throw for short passes and is hard to intercept because neat and unexpected.

### Positions of the Field in Detail.

The physical requirements for all players are good heart, lungs and endurance; and

“Centre.” for Centre Court players pace must be added. “Centre” herself has the most arduous place for mind and body. She has to use her side line players (Attacking and Defending Centres) with great discrimination to get the ball down to her Attack or Goal Shooter, and having done this to hover on the edge of the circle to intercept any clearing balls from her opponents Defence. She should be skilful in dodging her opponent by throwing behind as well as in front of her,

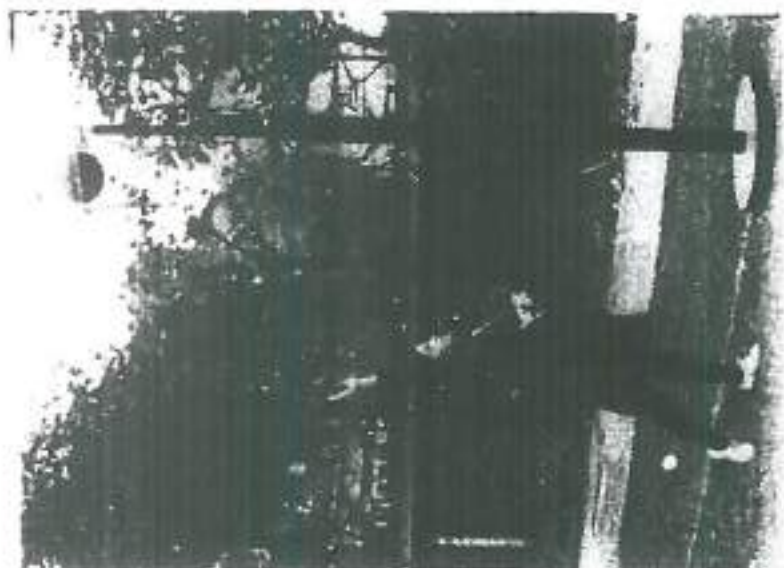


FIG. V. Position II.



Position I.  
Throw 4.—Hand Ball from Shoulder—Shooting for Goal.

(Throw 5 is especially useful for her,) skilful in long passes as well as short, skilful in pulling up suddenly when on the run so that her opponent overshoots and leaves her free. Her good temper should be as unlimited as her pace; for her Goal Shooter cannot *always* receive her passes or put the ball unerringly through the net whenever it reaches her, and Centre must be ready to smile and fight again whatever her reverses.

"Attacking and Defending Centres" require the same alertness of mind and body as Centre. Their special responsibility is the side line, to prevent the ball passing over it and so going out of play. A common fault among "side line" players is to forget this responsibility and to drift towards the centre, where for a few seconds they revel in short passing one with another; but the moment comes inevitably when the Centre, worried and harassed by such congestion, passes to where her side line player *ought to be*;—result, the ball rolls into touch and her opponent obtains a Throw In (see Rule 14.)

Running with the ball is another frequent offence made by the Centre Court players. Rule 10 reads "A player is not allowed to carry the ball, but must play it within three seconds from the spot where she receives it; walking or running with the ball is not allowed." Centre players generally receive the ball while they are *on the run*: before the other foot touches the ground they have to grasp which of their team is unmarked and to pass correctly to her. Frequent practice is the only road to excellence in such alertness of mind and body, but it is wonderful in how short a time some players arrive at it. When the ball goes into touch from the side lines, either Attacking or Defending Centre, or Attack or Defence, takes the Throw In, according to where the ball goes out.

"Attack" has not nearly so much running to do as the Centre players, therefore endurance is not so essential for her. Instead, she requires sound judgment and a good eye; for she receives the ball very often just inside the circle, and if her Goal Shooter is marked, she must herself take a long shot for goal.



An Attack who acquires this skill in netting goals from a distance is reckoned one of the deadliest foes to meet; she has no favourite shooting spot, and her opponents tremble whenever the ball falls into her hands. Should she fail in her long shot, she must run close in ready to help Goal Shooter if need should arise. Attack generally takes the Free Throw for goal (given for fouling, off-side, etc.) For this, all players must stand outside the circle or behind the goal line (and usually Goal Shooter and Goal Keeper are the two behind the goal line). Attack, with one foot on the circle and the other on or behind it, throws *for goal*. Should she fail, Goal Shooter leaps forward and has a shot unless Goal Keeper prevents her.

"Goal Shooter's" duties lie fairly close round the goal post. She needs a calm, cool judgment and unerring eye; for there is nothing more disconcerting to a team than to have the ball brought several times successfully to the very mouth of the goal, and the Goal Shooter fail to score. There

is no special throw to insure a successful shot. Some players, while the elbow is bent, balance the ball on the finger tips of that hand (Throw 4, Fig. V. positions 1 and 2), then quickly stretching the elbow, loose the ball which rises into the air well above the goal ring. Other players prefer this method with two hands. Others again, with elbows extended and hands well below the waist line, grasp the ball and make a forward upward sweep with the arms, keeping the elbows straight. The first is prettiest, and the first two as a rule more successful than the last, as there is less danger of the ball being intercepted when thrown from head level than waist level. Goal Shooter and Attack must work well together; if there is the slightest suspicion of bad temper, jealousy, or selfishness, it will undoubtedly show itself between these two. Attack must bear in mind that Goal Shooter being the surest, and looked upon as the final scorer, will be very closely marked, and in spite of varied passing in, she may often fail to secure the ball, in which case Attack must shoot, and Goal Shooter take the best position she can to obtain the ball



and shoot again should Attack fail to score.

"Goal Keeper" has to shadow Goal Shooter, and should perhaps above all other players be possessed of untiring spring. A jump at the right second will send her hands twelve inches or more above her opponent's and secure the ball when a goal seems imminent. A quick working brain is essential for her; a careless pass out is not only temporising, but the ball is sure to come back immediately, and often disastrously. Attack and Goal Shooter are not likely to fail twice in succession, and Goal Keeper must be careful never to give them this chance. A tacit understanding and quick pass to Defence, or should Attack be very vigilant, to Defending Centre, will generally clear the circle. As a rule it is safer to pass out to the side lines from the circle, for the tendency certainly is with beginners to crowd to the centre. Thus Goal Keeper and Defence can help to keep the field wide and open by passing up the side lines instead of straight forward to the Centre players.

The remarks made for Goal Keeper apply also to Defence, except that Defence is coupled with Attack, and "Defence" consequently has a wider range than Goal Keeper. She must be ready to pass to her Defending Centre, her Centre, or Attacking Centre, whichever she considers is least marked. If her three Centre players are having a hard fight, she can help by hanging close to them and feeding them by short passes forward; but this is dangerous, and should only be done occasionally as Attack is then unmarked, and free to take advantage of any mistake made by Defence's Centre line. At the same time if such tactics draw Attack away from her circle, Defence is giving her side good service by weakening her opponents' shooting sphere, shooting being permissible only within the circle.



FIG. VI. A Foul

## Hints on Coaching.

For the first game at least it is not advisable to try and teach too many rules. Let the players be given their places and each told in a *general* way what she has to do, then blow the whistle, bounce the ball in the centre, and let them get the spirit of the game—catching quickly and getting rid of the ball as soon as it is received. Having accomplished this, introduce the broadest rules leading to good form; in other words introduce order by limiting the player's sphere of play.

The "Off Side" rule is designed to meet this difficulty. As has been explained, the ground is divided into three equal courts, and each player is restricted to certain parts of the ground (see Rule 12.) That is to say an Attack or Defence standing by Red Goal, may come out of her circle and play *up to the limit of the Centre Court*, though in good teams one rarely sees them beyond the middle of the Centre Court. Centre Court players may enter all the three courts, but *must not go into either circle*. If they have one foot over the circle line "Off side"

must be whistled for, and a Free Throw for goal awarded to the opponents.

When a "Free Throw" is awarded, it is usually the Attack who takes it, because she is surer of netting goals from a distance; and also if she should fail, the Goal Shooter is ready

**A Free Throw.**  
(Rule 15.)

close under the post, to have another try. (see Fig. vii.) The Attack may select any spot on the circle she likes, and no other player may stand within three yards of her while she takes her shot. The Goal Shooter and Goal Keeper stand behind the goal line, and the other circle players (in whose half of the ground the Free Throw takes place) and Centre Court players distribute themselves round the circle being careful to keep both feet outside the line. Observe both *Goal Shooter* and *Goal Keeper* stand behind the base line; many teams select their Goal Shooter to take the Free Throw, leaving Goal Keeper alone and unmarked below the post; naturally, if the shot misses, Goal Keeper has it all her own way and can clear at once to her Centre or Side Line.

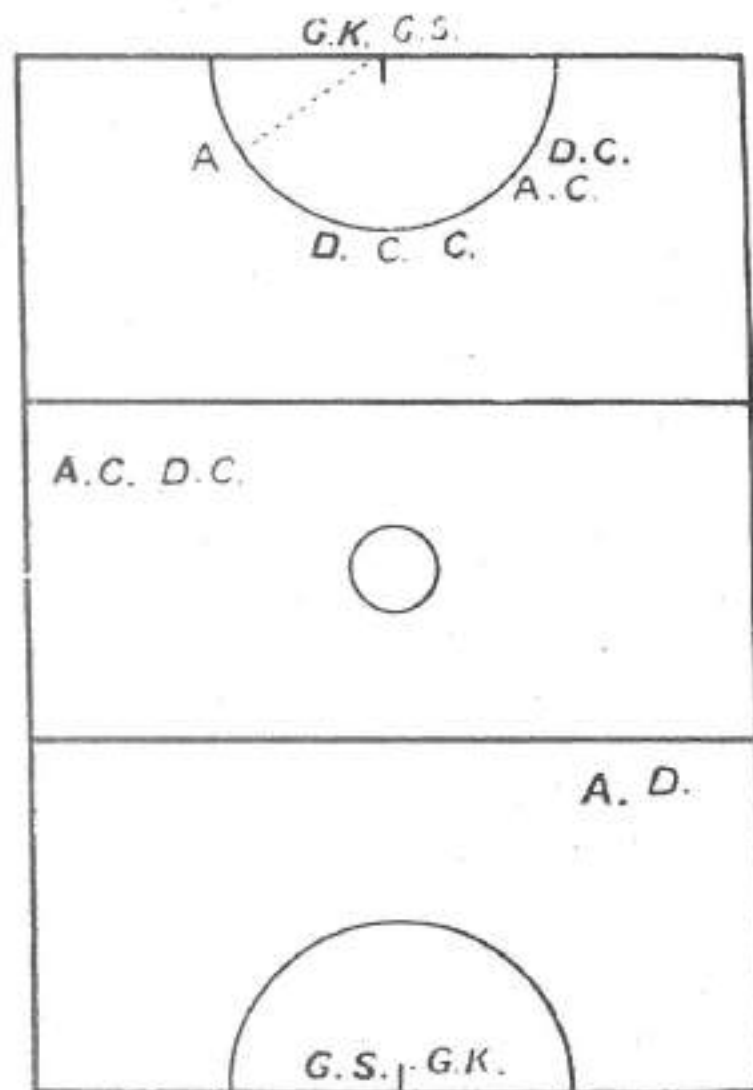


FIG. VII.  
A FREE THROW FOR "RODS"—  
RELATIVE POSITION OF PLAYERS.

It is a good plan now and again to have shooting competitions. Make all the players of one team stand outside the shooting circle.

**Shooting Practice.**

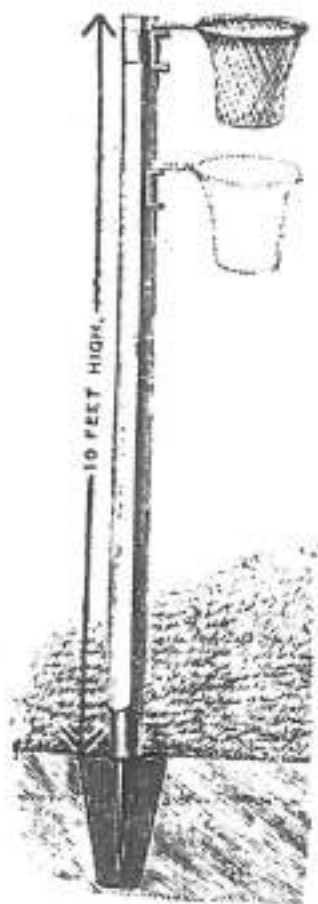
Each player throws for goal in turn from where she is standing. As soon as number one has thrown she runs out and returns the ball to number two on the circle, and so on until all have thrown. If a player nets a goal she returns the ball in the same way to her neighbour, but scores one point for her team. The opposing team do the same at the opposite end of the ground, and whichever makes the most points, when all have had one try, wins.

From a purely physical point of view the ban on other games, such as cricket, hockey, or lacrosse, cannot be applied to Net-Ball, since without a tool in the hand, one-sided play is impossible. The left hand is used as much as the right: the body as a rule, is in the upright position, or else super-stretched with the arms extended above the head. The game, too, though fast, lasts only 30 minutes--that is less than half as long as hockey: so that many girls who find hockey beyond there

strength, benefit by, and thoroughly enjoy Net-Ball.

Like all organised games, Net-Ball is essentially character building. The selfish player has little or no chance, seeing the ball must be disposed of within 3 seconds of receiving it. The rough player is penalised immediately by a free throw to the opposing team--from which it not infrequently scores. Good temper, pluck, determination, extreme agility of mind and body, are traits universally found among Net-Ball players, and best of all perhaps, that inexpressibly happy attribute, *esprit de corps*.





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