

# The Rules of Trugo

**As adapted for the Australian Masters Games  
Canberra 2025**

***Celebrating 100 years of Trugo***



*Claus Ebeling (left foreground) and Tom Grieves (right kneeling)  
founders of the sport of Trugo at the Western Oval (Whitten Oval),  
Footscray. The Age 12 October 1938.*

## The Game of Trugo

The 2025-2026 season is the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the game of Trugo. Trugo is a rare example of an Australian heritage sport and is based on the antics of workers at Melbourne's Newport Railway Workshops in the early 1920s who used newly arrived rubber rings destined for the suspension of carriages for a variety of spontaneous games. The game we know today as Trugo was invented by Thomas Grieves on his retirement from the Newport workshops and began to be developed as a team sport after Grieves met up with a former blacksmith-turned engineer, Claus Ebeling, in Yarraville. After several years of informal games on the Footscray flats and in the Yarraville Gardens, the two men founded the Yarraville Trugo Club in 1936.

From Yarraville, Trugo clubs began to spring up along the train line from Williamstown to Footscray but remained exclusive to Melbourne's West until 1940. In that year, the Lord Mayor of Melbourne, Frank Beaurepaire, took up the cause of Trugo as part of a Wartime fitness campaign and helped establish the Carlton Trugo Club. This was followed by a number of other councils introducing Trugo as part of their broader social programs aimed at activating local communities.

By the late 1940s, it appeared Trugo was destined to become a popular senior's sport across Australia being introduced to country towns in Victoria and New South Wales, as well Western Australia and Tasmania. However, as the decades progressed Trugo retreated to its traditional inner Melbourne homeland so much so that even in towns where large clubs had been established such as Shepperton and Wagga Wagga all memory of it evaporated.

Today, Trugo is only played in a small number of inner Melbourne suburbs, but it has now opened up to all ages and genders. There are also signs that interest may once again be growing beyond its traditional homeland. Many appreciate Trugo's unique heritage with the sport retaining its links to its railway past hidden in the measurements of the courts and in the retention of the buffer ring which has stayed relatively unchanged since it was utilized in the upgrading of old railway carriages.

It is hoped that by bringing the game to the Australian Masters Games in Canberra more Australians will be intrigued by this small slice of Australian sporting history and Trugo can become a regular feature of the games.

For players, friends and families interested to know more about the history of Trugo and how the sport is played the following references maybe of use:

Dexter, Rachael (producer) & Mie Sorensen 2020 'Trugo: Melbourne's own working-class sport'.

*The Age*. <https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/trugo-melbournes-own-working-class-sport-20200207-5izn6.html>

Thomas, P.S. 2022. 'The West's Own Tru-go'. *Westsider*, 19 July  
<https://thewestsider.com.au/the-wests-own-tru-go/>

Traditional Sports Encyclopedia: Trugo  
<https://www.traditionalsports.org/traditional-sports/australia-oceania-pacific/trugo-australia.html>

Wixted, David & Simon Reeves. 2006. Footscray Trugo Club Pavillion and Grounds, 139 Buckley Street, Seddon: Conservation analysis. The City of Maribyrnong.



*The Trugo ring which is at the heart of our game arrived in the Newport Workshops in 1919 as part for the suspension mechanism for the new electric motors being installed into carriages. Today they are manufactured in Melbourne by Welco exclusively for Trugo.*

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# THE RULES OF TRUGO

## DEFINITIONS

### In these Rules:

- a) **“AMGTC”** means the Australian Masters Games Trugo Committee
- b) **“VTA”** Victorian Trugo Association
- c) **“Court”** means a single playing area 90 feet long and 5 feet 9 inches wide
- d) **“Conductor”** means the nominated representative of the AMGTC appointed to conduct each round of the series
- e) **“Extreme Conditions”** means conditions including but not limited to extreme heat, extreme cold, persistent or heavy rain, lightning, high winds, civil disturbance, mandated government health restrictions, fire, flood, smoke, the possibility of falling branches and unplayable courts
- f) **“Innings”** each round of four shots per player
- g) **“Shot”** means the event of a ring being struck by a player and the passage of the ring

### Trugo Expressions:

- “Poster”** called out when the ring hits or touches the post
- “madonna”** four out of four rings goal in a single innings.
- “mary”** failure to score in a single goal in an innings.
- “The Possible”** a perfect score, 24 goals for 24 shorts.

## EQUIPMENT AND COURTS

All measurements are retained in the Imperial System due to their relationship to the game's railway heritage.

### Court Dimensions

- a) All competition matches to be played on grass courts 90 feet long x 5 feet 9 inches wide (27m x 1.7m), the length to be measured from goal line to goal line.
- b) If multiple courts are laid down, they must be a minimum of 5 feet 9 inches apart (1.7m).

### Goal Posts

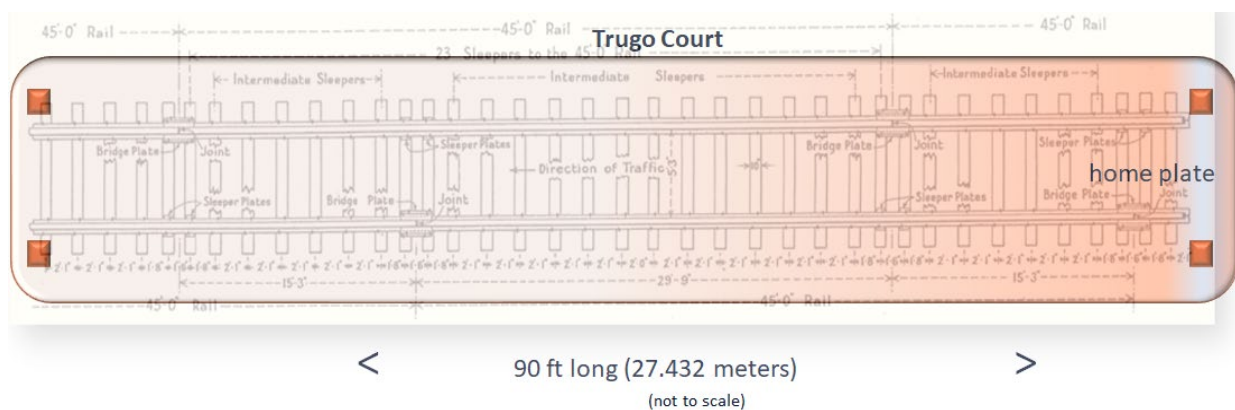
- a) The posts shall be constructed of wood, metal or other suitable material with an upright hinged to a flat base.
- b) The uprights shall be at least 15 inches (38cm) and not more than 18 inches (45cm) high and at least 2 inches (5cm) and not more than 3 inches wide (7cm), with the base approximately 4 inches (10cm) square.
- c) The base should be drilled so the post can be firmly pegged to the ground. No part of the base shall infringe on the area between the two



- goal posts or protrude into the playing area.
- d) Two goal posts shall be positioned at each end of the court.

### Width of Goals

- a) The width of the goals is 5 feet 9 inches (1.7m).
- b) A measuring stick, tape measure or similar device shall be used to establish a centre line on the court and set the width between the goal posts.



*The 90ft length of the Trugo court corresponds to two spans of 45ft rail that were being used to replace three spans of 30ft rail during the 1920s and 1930s. According to some oral traditions the length also corresponds to the length of a rail carriage.*



*The width of the Trugo goals represents the width of a Victorian rail track. The broad gauge or Irish gauge of 5ft 3in plus 3in either side for each of the rails.*

## **Plates**

- a) Two required for each court.
- b) Plates shall be of a size recommended by the VTA, which is 15 inches long x 9 inches wide (38cm x 22cm).
- c) Plates shall be canvassed rubber, not lighter than 5/16<sup>th</sup> inch, preferably with a steel or aluminium backing.
- d) Each plate shall be clearly marked with a white line, 1/8<sup>th</sup> inch thick (3mm), along the centre from end to end. Two further white lines, also 1/8<sup>th</sup> inch thick should be 3/4 inch (19mm) either side of this line. A 1/8<sup>th</sup> inch (3mm) white line is marked at right angles to these lines across the plate 6 inches (152mm) from the front of the plate. This line will define the goal line.
- e) An elastic band is looped parallel to this line to hold the ring still until it has been hit.
- f) The plate should be drilled to enable it to be securely pegged to the ground.
- g) Plates should be levelled with an appropriate instrument.

## **Laying Down Courts**

The goal posts and plates are to be carefully laid out. The court is a precisely measured rectangle with dimensions of 90 feet x 5 feet 9 inches with goal posts and plates carefully aligned along a straight line and the plates positioned precisely at the mid-point between the goal posts. The following is a suggested methodology:

- a) A string line is laid the length of the ground with the court distance 90 feet marked by a knot (or similar method).
- b) The plates are laid down with the long centre line aligned with the string line and the short centre lines 5 feet 9 inches apart.
- c) The plates are then firmly pegged to the ground as level as possible.
- d) The measuring stick is centred on the plate and used to place the goal posts in the correct positions. These are then pegged firmly in position.

## **Catching bags**

A device for catching rings must be made available for use at each end of the court. A suggested method of construction is:

- a) Catchers be constructed in the shape of a "nose bag," from canvas or other suitable material.
- b) A steel ring is sewn into the mouth of the bag and this ring is affixed to a broomstick type handle approximately 4 feet long.

The primary consideration in constructing catchers is that the device must enable players to catch rings safely.



*Rings passing through the goals cleanly are threaded on to the handle of the catcher. Rings wide of the goals are placed on the ground or on a spool.*



*Mallets are home made of timber and may be decorated. The striking surface of the mallet has a rubber surface, commonly crepe rubber from the company Leffler in Melbourne. It is also popular for players to name their mallets.*

### **Mallets**

- a) There is no restriction on the size, weight or material used to make mallets.
- b) The AMGTC shall have unfettered power to investigate and rule upon the legality of any mallet used in competition.
- c) For the purpose of clarification, the mallet must not have any protuberances of the type used on bows in archery competitions.

### **Trugo Rings**


The rings are made of vulcanised rubber 4 inches in diameter by 1&1/2 inches wide and are available from Welco Pty. Ltd. Tullamarine, Melbourne.

### **Scorecards**


Scorecards will be provided by the Conductor of each round. Names on scorecards must be in block letters and must include given and surname. Scorecards should record scores for a single court with a maximum of eight names per scorecard. Cards are to be checked by scorers at the end of each half of the game to confirm their accuracy. At the end of each round, they are to be submitted to the Conductor.

### **Scoreboards**

Scoreboards will be supervised by the Conductor with scores tallied and displayed at the end of each game.



## AUSTRALIAN MASTERS TRUGO – MATCH SCORECARD



Team Name \_\_\_\_\_

Round \_\_\_\_\_ Court \_\_\_\_\_ Half \_\_\_\_\_

PLAYER'S NAME	1	2	3	TOTAL	1	2	3	TOTAL	GRAND TOTAL
	/	/	/		/	/	/		
	/	/	/		/	/	/		
	/	/	/		/	/	/		
	/	/	/		/	/	/		

Date     /     /     Signature \_\_\_\_\_

*Scores are recorded during play for each of the player's six innings (24 rings) and totaled up at the change of ends.*

### SOUTH MELBOURNE MENS TRUGO CLUB

HOME TEAM			VISITORS		
SOUTH MELBOURNE			V Footscray Dogs		
1	HARRY	18	1	Paul Thomas	18
1	DAVE	17	1	James Nixon	15
2	Michael	14	2	Justin Mansfield	20
2	KERRY	09	2	Darren Stevenson	18
		38			71
1	Michael	15	1	Justin Mansfield	16
1	KERRY	09	1	Darren Stevenson	16
2	HARRY	16	2	Paul Thomas	16
2	DAVE	16	2	James Nixon	14
		114			62
					133



*Scoreboards come in all shapes and sizes but need to record the team names, the court number and the score of each player. Total scores are recorded after each half.*



## **PLAY**

### **Conditions of Competition**

- a) For the purposes of the Australian Masters Games teams will consist of four players which can be made up of mixed or single gender. Two players from each team play the first half (openers) with the other two playing the second half (closers).
- b) Participating teams will be divided into pairs with the two teams playing across two courts. Opposing teams move to different ends of the court with one team knocking and one team catching. Once all the rings have been caught, the roles are reversed.
- c) Up to two reserves may be registered for each team. Players cannot be exchanged once the round has commenced unless injury or sickness occurs during play in which case a reserve shall finish the 24 shots and their score shall be added to the original player's score. Any player found by the AMGTC to have abused this Rule shall be disqualified.
- d) The competition will consist of three rounds of games. Round 1 & 2 will include all registered teams with the top scoring 4 teams, based on the total number of goals scored across the first two rounds, progressing to the Champion's round, Round 3. For Round 3 all four teams commence at zero with the champion and other place getters based on the number of goals scored in the round.

### **Inspection of Plates and Equipment**

- a) The captains shall inspect the plates and equipment before the game to ensure a safe and fair playing environment for players.
- b) Players are not allowed to move or interfere with the plates such as stamping on them.
- c) Any adjustments, defects or concerns shall be brought to the attention of the team captain who will consult with the Conductor of the round.
- d) Any infringement of this rule could result in a one goal penalty to the player involved.

### **Match Officials**

- a) A conductor will be appointed for each round of the championship and will supervise the draw, ensure the courts are set up in accordance with the rules, delegate scoring, signal the commencement of the games, resolve appeals and ensure the safety of participants and spectators.
- b) Each team is required to provide a person to catch and a person to score on each court. These can be team players or volunteers. They, together with the active players, are the only people allowed in the playing area without the permission of the conductor.

### **Inclement Weather and Extreme Conditions**

- a) Captains are to be mindful of the health and welfare of all players before any other considerations when exercising discretion under this rule.
- b) In the event of extreme conditions, the captains may agree to postpone or abandon the game after consultation with the Conductor.
- c) If a game is abandoned, all scores shall be disregarded, and the game shall be started afresh.

- d) The team named in the original game must play in the replayed game unless the opposing captain consents or, in the absence of such consent, the Conductor grants permission after hearing submissions from both captains.

### **Court Draw**

- a) Prior to the commencement of each round the conductor will draw teams from a hat and assign them playing courts with two teams playing across two courts. The team drawn first for each court is assigned the home plate and will knock first with the second team catching.
- b) Rounds will be conducted over two days though this is dependent on the number of teams competing. The first-round draw shall be announced one week prior to play by AMGTC. Adjustments may be required on the day of play where there are late withdrawals.

### **Practice Hits**

- a) Each player is allowed to hit four rings from each end of their court in the First Round as practice.
- b) No practice hits are allowed in round 2 or the Champion's Round.

### **Order of Play**

- a) The two openers for the team on the home plate take their position, one on each court, and begin play together with the opposition catching. After they have played four rings each, they swap with the two remaining players who each play their four rings.
- b) The roles are then reversed after the first team has completed their innings (eight rings on each court) and all rings are with their opponents.
- c) No player shall leave their end of the court or hit a ring until all rings have been hit from the opposing end.
- d) After all players have completed three innings, a total of 12 rings, teams change ends and repeat the process. This allows each player to have a total of 24 shots, 12 from one end and 12 from the other.

### **Striking Rings**

- a) Preparatory to the player taking their shot the player must place the ring on its edge on the plate with the ring restrained by the elastic band.
- b) The player may address the ring in any manner but must not move their feet during the process of swinging their mallet and striking the ring. This does not preclude a player rocking up on their heels or toes so long as some part of the foot remains grounded. A shot commences when a player takes a position intending to address and strike the ring.
- c) A shot concludes when the ring is caught or retrieved by the catcher or the ring comes to rest short of the goal line.
- d) If at any time after a player has commenced to swing their mallet with the intention of striking the ring and the ring rolls off the plate whether struck by the mallet or not, the player shall be deemed to have completed a shot. The exception is if it is known or virtually certain that the player did not cause the ring to move, for example, movement due to wind or flying debris.

- e) If at any time after a player has commenced to swing their mallet with the intention of striking the ring and the ring commences to roll but does not leave the plate with or without the intervention of the player, the player shall be permitted to take another shot.

### **Scoring & Catching**

- a) Each goal is equivalent to one point.
- b) A goal is scored when a shot passes cleanly between the goal posts and entirely passes the line of the goal posts.
- c) A ring which entirely passes the line of the goal posts but then rolls back and contacts a post or comes to rest short of the goal line shall be a goal.
- d) A ring coming to rest on the line of the goal posts shall not be a goal.
- e) A ring which comes to rest short of the line of the goal posts by reason of contact with any plate legally positioned between the goal posts shall not be a goal.
- f) A ring striking any coping, edging or any other fixture before passing the goal line shall be deemed a wide.
- g) The catcher shall be the sole judge of whether a shot is or is not a goal.
- h) The catcher shall signal a goal to the scorers by raising one arm perpendicular to the ground.
- i) A wide shall be signalled by extending one arm horizontal to the ground.
- j) Each ring scoring a goal shall be placed on the handle of the catching bag.
- k) Each ring which is not a goal shall be placed on the ground behind the goal or on a ring spool.
- l) The catcher shall call the score to the scorers after each four hits, (such as “no score” or one, two, three or four goals that player), and ensure that his call is acknowledged by the scorers.
- m) A hit post, however slight, shall be deemed a wide or ‘poster’, and shall be indicated to the scorers by laying the post down and calling ‘Poster’. A ring travelling over the post whether it touches the post or not shall be deemed a wide or ‘poster’ and shall be indicated to the scorers by laying the post down and calling ‘Poster’.
- n) The decision of the catcher is final and should be made without consultation.
- o) Where there is uncertainty or the catcher fails to observe the ring pass through the goals, the catcher should award the goal.

### **Coaching**

- a) Coaching, or any sort of advice, is not allowed to be given to any player who is at the plate.
- b) The only exceptions to this rule are that a vision impaired player may be told if their last shot is a goal or a miss and a player with a disability that prevents them being able to place the ring on the plate may have another person perform that act.

### **Results of Games**

- a) Scorers shall compare scorecards at the end of each game as to accuracy.
- b) The captains shall record scores on the scoreboard and check them to be accurate.

## **Protests**

Any team wishing to enter a protest for an incident occurring in a game or a dispute with a score etc., must notify the opposing captain and the Round Conductor before the final scores are approved. Where the Conductor cannot resolve the dispute, it will be forward to the AMGTC for resolution before the completion of the Australian Masters Games and their decision shall be final.

## **Ties**

- a) In the case of one or more teams scoring the same number of goals required to qualify for the Champion's Round, Round 3, a goal shootout will be played. Each team member will have four shots from each end of the court. In the advent of a second tie the process shall be repeated until a decision is reached.
- b) Where individuals are tied for awards (Rounds 1 & 2), a similar shootout will occur with players taking four shots from each end of the court. However, if two or more players should tie with 'The Possible', that is 24 goals each, all will receive an equal medal and no shootout will be played.

## **Venue**

- a) All rounds shall be played on grounds selected by the AMGTC.
- b) The conduct of all rounds is the prerogative of the AMGTC.
- c) The AMGTC shall direct the preparation and laying down of the courts to be used for each round.
- d) Once laid, no play is to occur on any court prior to the commencement of the game. Practice hits are only allowed in the first round.

## **Awards**

- a) All awards shall be in the form of medals.
- b) Team medals for Gold, Silver and Bronze will be based on the scores of the Champion's Round only.
- c) Singles championship medals, Gold, Silver and Bronze, shall be awarded to both men and women players based on the highest number of total goals after Round 1 and Round 2 (combined goal tally).
- d) Gold medals will be awarded to any player achieving 'The Possible', 24 goals in a single round. Only one medal will be awarded per player for The Possible.



## Australian Masters Games Medals for Trugo

ROUND	INDIVIDUAL MEDALS	CONDITIONS
Round 1 & 2	<b>Men's Singles Champion</b> Gold, Silver and Bronze	Highest number of combined goals for Round 1 & 2
Round 1 & 2	<b>Women's Singles Champion</b> Gold, Silver and Bronze	Highest number of combined goals for Round 1 & 2
All rounds	<b>"The Possible"</b> Gold Medal	Players scoring a perfect score, 24 goals from 24 shots in any round. Only one 'Possible' medal awarded per player during the championship.
ROUND	TEAM MEDALS	CONDITIONS
Champion's Round	<b>Australian Masters Grand Champions</b> Gold, Silver and Bronze	Top scoring teams in Champion's Round