

# The Education Column

## 4. Little Bob and Penultimate

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This fourth article looks at two methods where the treble plain hunts to fourth place: Little Bob Minor and Penultimate Doubles. Penultimate serves to introduce the concept of **when** to do work by observing the treble, but the work itself is extremely simple.

1. Introduction: good teaching
2. Bastow
3. Stedman Quick Sixes
4. **Little Bob and Penultimate**
5. Original
6. Introduction to Kaleidoscope
7. Kaleidoscope, Mexican Wave
8. Back to Basics: 3-and-2

### Little Bob

In previous articles we looked at Bastow (where the treble plain hunts to seconds) and Quick Sixes (where it hunts to thirds), so the obvious next stepping stone towards plain hunting on higher numbers is a method where the treble plain hunts to fourths. Of course there's no need to find a practice method to achieve this when there's a perfectly good 'real' method: Little Bob. (Please don't ask for a formal definition of a 'real' rather than 'practice' method — I suspect that, like beauty, it is in the eye of the beholder.)

Little Bob Minor is shown in *Diagram 4.1*, and is well worth ringing with your student on the treble, but most students who can attempt this will probably also have the necessary skills to plain hunt on five or six. Certainly though, if you have more than one student ringing, Plain Hunt Doubles will prove very much easier than Little Bob Minor.

So instead let's look at a different practice method. It's not often rung and indeed I'd never heard of it until attending an **ART Module 2**<sup>1</sup> course. As usual, we'll look at how to ring it, then why it's useful.

### Penultimate Doubles

*Penultimate* means *last-but-one*, with the prefix 'pen' coming from the Latin and meaning 'almost', as in *penumbra* or *peninsula*. So in Penultimate the treble hunts to last-but-one place. As we're wanting the treble to hunt to fourth place, we'll look at Penultimate Doubles (*Diagram 4.2*), but the concept is easily extended to higher numbers.

The working bells all spend almost all the time plain hunting (but, unlike the treble, they hunt all the way from the lead to fifth place). The only exception is that they makes **long 5ths**<sup>2</sup> once in a plain course, which is 32 changes long. This '**work**'<sup>3</sup> happens when they are at the back over the treble. Another indicator is that the long fifths comes after the treble has taken you off the lead (though the 3 needs to be awake, as it makes long fifths immediately).

### Why is this useful?

As with the other exercises that we have looked at, there is more than one benefit. Ringing the treble serves as a further stepping stone for your student on the way towards Plain Hunt on five or six, though hunting up to fourths is not that much easier than hunting up to fifths. For the whole band, Little Bob will be no problem if your other ringers are experienced, but Penultimate

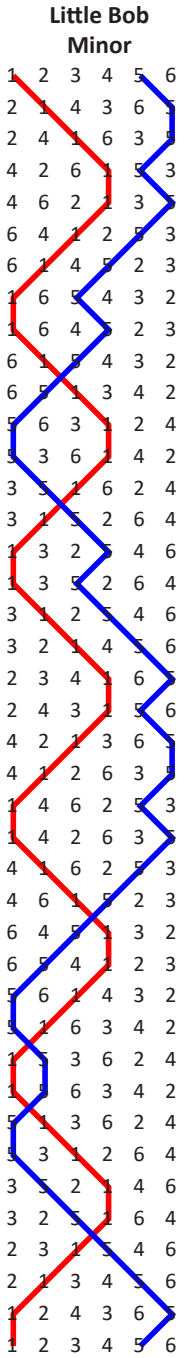


Diagram 4.1

Doubles is much easier you have other learners not that far ahead of your student on the treble.

But the main benefit of Penultimate is for the ringers on the working bells, especially if they are confident at plain hunt but only just beginning to learn methods.

We have already seen how Bastow allows these slightly more advanced students to practise the actual work of dodging 3-4 up and down and making long fifths, which they will need in Plain Bob Doubles, but without having to worry about WHEN to do the work (because, for example, they ALWAYS dodge in 3-4). In this exercise it is the other way around — it gives practice at working out WHEN to do something different, but without that different work (ringing four blows at the back instead of two blows) being very challenging or occurring too often.

One clue about when to make the long fifths is after the treble **takes you off the lead**<sup>4</sup>. This encourages the student to be aware of who is taking them off the lead and where the treble is, both useful skills. The other clue is that the long fifths is made over the treble, which is making fourths at the time. This encourages an awareness of who you are ringing over, and where the treble is.

### How methods work

Penultimate also leads to a useful discussion about how methods work. The one and only feature of this method is that the treble goes up only to fourth place, and each working bell makes long fifths once in a plain course. If you are at the back and try to come back down after only two blows when the treble is immediately below you, you'll bump into it. So the unusual behaviour of the treble in fourth place forces you to stay at the back longer than you otherwise would.

For many people learning to ring, an understanding of method construction and how the behaviour of each bell affects the others comes a lot later, if ever. Here's an extremely simple way to introduce these concepts at a very early stage, with students who are only just beginning to move on from Plain Hunt.

David Smith, CCCBR Education Committee

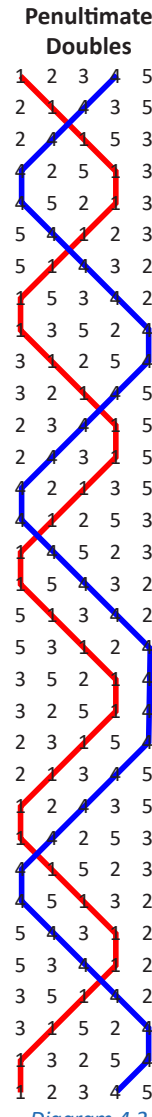


Diagram 4.2

### Jargon Box

- 1. ART Module 2**  
ART is the Association of Ringing Teachers. Among other things, ART runs courses for anyone interested in teaching ringing. Module 1 deals with teaching bell-handling, and there are a couple of versions of Module 2, both dealing with the early stages of ringing as part of a band. See [www.ringingteachers.org](http://www.ringingteachers.org)
- 2. Making long fifths'**  
'Making fifths' means ringing two blows in fifth place. 'Making long fifths' means ringing four blows in fifth place.
- 3. 'Work'**  
In many of the simpler methods the bells spend most of the time plain hunting, with occasional exceptions (such as dodging somewhere). These exceptions are called 'work'. In Penultimate the only work is making long fifths: it is the only time you do something other than plain hunting.
- 4. Take you off the lead**  
In Penultimate, as in many other methods, each bell frequently hunts down to the lead, then leads for a handstroke and a backstroke, then hunts up. We say that the next bell to lead 'takes you off the lead'. It can be very helpful to know or see which bell takes you off the lead. In Penultimate Doubles, if it is the treble, you know you will be making long fifths when you get to the back.