

Barricading

I watched in horror as a shuffler hit his opponent's dead disc into the seven and just about gave away the game. I asked a player near me why the shooter had taken that shot.

"He had to," was the answer. "Look at the score." Both the shooter and the spectator were missing one of the primary tactics of shuffleboard.

The tactic is "blocking" or "barricading" or "cluttering" the top of the court. Regardless of the term used, it involves spreading three or four discs across the top of the court so that the hammer shooter has interference to a scoring area.

Let's look at the situation

It's the seventh shot and black is shooting against yellow's hammer at the head of the court. Yellow has a nice lead of 56 to 43.

Black has three discs on top of the court. They are on his side about point high.

What is black's shot?

In the example above, black, shot the middle disc, a yellow one, and tried to kitchen it but shot too soft and gave up a soft seven. That seven plus another one from black's hammer positioned black's partner to put away the game.

When questioned about the shot with the spectator, he said it was the correct choice. He said any good shooter could make that shot and put the black disc into the kitchen He said it was a matter of poor execution, not poor shot selection.

He went on to say that black's other possibility was to try to bump the black disc into a score, one that would be covered by the top court discs but he rejected that, saying the score called for a kitchen, not good points.

But, neither the shooter nor the spectator recognized the opportunity to simply add to the top of the barricade. All black had to do was shoot to a spot about eight inches to the right of the point, a spot close to the X that's shown on the diagram. That's a fairly easy shot.

With that disc located, a four disc barricade would be in place. Now yellow is stymied. There is no easy shot available for his hammer to the scoring areas. He's blocked out by a cluttered top court.

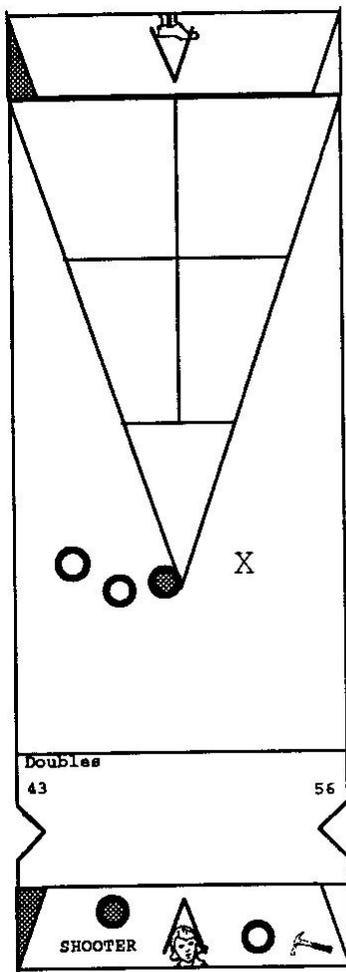
Sure he can try to go through the eight-inch hole or he can go down his own suicide alley, and he may score there. But his odds have greatly reduced. He'll likely not score. Although this hammer steal won't turn the game around for black, it sure will tighten things up.

Be alert for opportunities to barricade the top against hammers. Even two or three disc barricades make hammer score attempts more difficult. (Note: be sure it's your opponent's hammer, and not your own, when a barricade starts to develop.)

Here is another tip. When your partner is shooting toward your end of the court, be sure to get up and check close discs. Don't try to judge close discs from the bench.

A while ago I sat and called a hide attempt no good. I was sure it wasn't fully in the seven and that a sixteenth or so was on the 7/8 line. I waved no score.

Then at the end of the round, as I gathered in the discs, I saw it wasn't on the line at all. It was a good seven. It was too late. I just removed the discs and sat in silence. I didn't say anything- until today.



WHAT IS BLACK'S SHOT?