

CHAPTER XI PREGAME SHOTS

The following discussion is in accordance with the rules of the National Shuffleboard Association. Various state rules differ widely in some respects.

PRACTICE SHOTS

Games in organized groups are usually preceded by several practice shots. The number of shots varies with the group. The national rules state that "Two full rounds of practice with each color are allowed for each player or team before play." The two players may shoot their discs alternately, Yellow first, or each player may shoot his four discs in succession, again Yellow first. If either player chooses to shoot all of his discs in succession, one of the players at the opposite end of the court may be asked to clear off the discs before the next player shoots his four.

There is always the question of how a player should use his practice shots. The answer, of course, depends on what the player wants to learn about the court. Some of the things he will want to determine are:

1. **Drift.** How much? Which direction? Is it uniform or spotty?

2. **Speed.** Is the court slow, fast, or medium? Is the speed uniform?

3. **Feel of the Court.** Try to determine just how much force is needed to make a particular shot.

Gathering so much information with so few shots is a big order. If a player has played a particular court before, he may be able to concentrate on the second and the third objectives, as the speed of the court is the characteristic that varies from time to time sufficiently to require reassessment. Drift in a court will change as the speed varies, but it is a characteristic that is less variable than speed.

A player cannot learn all he would like to know about a strange court in a few shots, so he must be selective while gathering his information. He should work out a pattern of practice shots that he likes to use whenever he starts a serious game; and while the practice shots are being made, the player should observe the movement of his opponent's discs as closely as his own as they travel the length of the court.

Each player will use his own judgment as to which shots to take to acquaint himself with the court, but the following suggestions should be helpful:

1. Practice shots should be made on an open section of the court. The discs should come to a stop by themselves. This is not a time to practice tactical shots; while bumping each other's discs around, the players learn nothing of importance about the court.

2. Shooting for the 7-area is a good average shot between the kitchen and the 8-area. It is a shot that the player should be able to make without the fear of sending his cue disc into the kitchen. This shot helps the player to get the feel of the court. It is useful, too, in making a hide.

3. Drift on the court should be determined for those areas where special care must be used when placing a disc during the game. If the court is found to have a bad drift, the practice pattern should be changed to include some special shots that the player will want to use because of the drift. After the players at both the head and the foot have had their practice shots with one color, the opponents will change positions and will practice with the opposite color. Each player to learn the court so he can make an intelligent choice of color. And how is the color choice made? It is made by the player who wins a simple competitive play called lagging for color.

LAGGING FOR COLOR

After the last practice shot has been made, the referee walks down to the middle of the court and announces to the players at the head that they may now begin shooting for the choice of color. The referee stands at the deadline (the second crossline) where he will judge the seventh and the eighth discs when they are shot.

Yellow shoots first, trying to place disc No. 1 on the deadline. Black follows with disc No. 2. These are only practice shots again, and the referee immediately removes the two discs from the court. Each player has two more practice shots, which the referee also removes. Then comes the test. Yellow shoots disc No. 7 at the

deadline and Black follows with No. 8. The referee judges these two discs carefully and announces which player has won the lag. The winner chooses the color he and his partner will play in all the games of that match.

One thing to keep in mind during the lagging is, that if the eighth disc strikes the seventh, which is already in its position on or near the deadline, the player of the eighth disc is disqualified and the choice of color goes to his opponent.

Choosing the Color. If the game is doubles, the choice of color should be made by both partners. Sometimes one end of a court drifts more than the other, or, perhaps for personal reasons, one of the players may have a preference for a particular color. For instance, if there is no detectable drift in the court and the game is a point game, the players might choose to shoot the black discs because of the possibility of their getting one more hammer shot during the game than their opponents will get.

If the court is well known to both players,

they will have decided before the match begins which color they will take in the event that they win the lag; but on a strange court, the partners who win the lag will come together on the court to agree on the color choice. This decision will be made on the basis of the information that the players gleaned from their practice shots. Then the player who won the lag will inform the referee of their choice.

Either player of a doubles team may shoot for color. After the last practice shot has been made, the player at the foot of the court may come to the head to shoot for color. He need not necessarily return to the foot after the lagging is finished. At this time the players of either team may exchange positions on the court. This may be done only once during a match, and it must be done immediately after choosing the color.

The disadvantage of changing ends after the lagging is that neither player will be playing the game at the end of the court from which he made the practice shots.