

## CHAPTER XII STRATEGIES

Strategy is a word that one hears often on the shuffleboard courts. A suitable definition of this expression would be a series of plays that are planned to accomplish a single objective. Then, besides strategies, there are the incidental shots. These shots are the player's reactions to his opponent's unexpected plays, or his reactions to the unexpected results of anticipated plays. Although an incidental shot is not a part of a planned strategy, it should support the strategy. But why belabor the point when, after all, there are only four discs to shoot? Perhaps because it has been customary to speak of strategy in shuffleboard circles for a long time, but let's continue to investigate the idea.

### OFFENSE AND DEFENSE

The two objectives of a shuffleboard game are to score as often as possible and to prevent one's opponent from scoring whenever possible. Offense and defense in shuffleboard are related to these two objectives. An offensive play is a shot that is made to increase the player's chance of scoring. A defensive play is a shot made primarily to keep the opponent from scoring.

A strategy, however, can include plays of either kind. For instance, setting up a cross guard with disc No. 1 is a defensive shot, but it is a part of an offensive strategy because its purpose is to prepare a situation for scoring. Likewise, clearing the board with disc No. 2 has a double purpose: to prevent the opponent from scoring (a defensive shot), and to prepare the board for scoring disc No. 8 (an offensive strategy). By successfully clearing the board, a player can keep his opponent in a defensive position throughout the half round; but one failure to clear the board will allow the opponent to make an immediate use of the offensive aspect of his shot.

There is no place in the game of shuffleboard for defensive strategies—only defensive shots. Because defensive strategies will not win, a player should always plan to take the offensive. When a player is behind in score, he must play the offensive as strongly as possible. The mode of play known as going on the board is offensive strategy carried to a daring extreme.

When a player has the option of scoring beyond his opponent's guard (offensive shot), or knocking away the guard (defensive shot), the player usually chooses to score, knowing that in doing so he forces his opponent to play the game his way (offensive strategy) and to go after his score; otherwise, the player will be chasing his opponent without a chance to score his own disc (defensive strategy).

The blocking game (Chapter VII) is as near to a defensive strategy as one can get, and this sort of game often leads the player into a series of defensive shots aimed at preventing his opponent from scoring. Thus the blocking game may cause a player to lose the chance to pursue an offensive strategy, and the opportunity will go to the opponent by default.

### STRATEGY, DISC BY DISC

The following sections are a play-by-play review of the strategies that have been covered in the foregoing chapters. The shots that are discussed herein are both strategic and incidental since they cannot very well be separated in a discussion of the game.

**First Disc.** There are two approaches to a half round of shuffleboard—set up a guard or play on the board. When a player is ahead of or even with his opponent, he should shoot disc No. 1 as a guard. The player who is behind in score will at least be considering the playing of disc No. 1 on the board as kitchen bait. There is very little variation in the shooting of the first disc.

Sometimes, when a player's score is close to game point, the first shot may be wasted to prevent an attempted kitchen shot. When the player is but one number from the winning score and his opponent is badly in need of a kitchen shot, the player, knowing that his opponent will play discs No. 2, No. 4, and No. 6 as kitchen bait and then use No. 8 to kitchen anything on the board, may shoot the first disc close to the edge of the court where it cannot be kitched and where it will not be a potential hide for a kitched disc. This strategy requires clearing the board successfully for the next six shots and shooting a good hammer, which is quite an order.

**Second Disc.** When disc No. 1 is correctly played as a guard and the player of disc No. 2 is not behind in score, he will clear the board or block the board with the second disc. (Blocking is almost always an inferior play to clearing the board.) But, if the player is behind in score, he may play disc No. 2 as kitchen bait.

When disc No. 1 is played as a cross guard but goes too far, leaving the opponent a poor chance for a hide, the player can place the second disc in his own cross guard position. He can repeat this play with disc No. 4 if his opponent clears the board with No. 3; but with disc No. 6, the player should clear off disc No. 1, which he left on the board, so his opponent cannot use it as the only available hide for disc No. 7.

When disc No. 1 is poorly placed as a cross guard by being several inches toward the apex, the player may be tempted to try an alley shot; but this is not a recommended shot.

When disc No. 1 is correctly played as kitchen bait, indicating that the opponent is behind in score, the player of disc No. 2 will clear the board. He should not try to kitchen the bait. When disc No. 1 is correctly played as kitchen bait and it stops on a line where it becomes a potential double, disc No. 2 is used to clear the board.

**Intermediate Discs.** By the time even the first two discs have been played, the game may have developed unpredictably; but the intermediate discs (No. 3, No. 4, and No. 5) continue in a logical manner the style of game begun with the first two shots. If the initial guard has been displaced, it will be replaced with disc No. 3 and with No. 5 also if necessary. If the guard was not displaced and there is no scoring or threatening disc on the board, disc No. 3 should be hidden in the scoring area beyond the guard. If the opponent has used disc No. 2 to score, then No. 3 will be used to knock it away.

The player should be opportunistic with the intermediate discs, taking advantage of any errors that may turn up in the opponent's plays. Any of the intermediate discs should be used to sneak in a hide whenever the opportunity turns up to do this without giving the opponent a free number.

In a sense, the function of each player's first three shots is to prepare the board for the player's last one. When the player has the hammer, he desires to have the board clear of scoring discs when he makes his last shot. However, disc No. 7 is rather ineffective when the board is clear; it can be used to the best ad-

vantage when there is a chance to hide it. So it logically follows that sometimes the player of the odd-numbered discs may be more concerned with blocking the board than with keeping it open.

Whereas disc No. 4 almost always is used to clear off the opponent's potential double, discs No. 3 and No. 5 are used sometimes to cover them, when that can be done without giving the opponent a place to hide his next shot (Figure 34). An exception with disc No. 4 is when No. 3 is shot as a hide and stops on the line. Disc No. 4 should be used then to block the opponent's next play, so that he does not get a second chance to hide a score beyond the guard (Figure 32).

**Sixth Disc.** The function of disc No. 6 is somewhat different from that of any of the others. It can serve no useful purpose as a St. Pete or a Tampa since the player's next disc will be the last shot of the half round and will need no protection. Therefore, if the player is even or ahead in score and the board is clear, disc No. 6 is more a liability to him than an asset. Almost anywhere the player might put this disc, it may be a hide for the opponent's last shot, or it may be vulnerable to a kitchen shot, or possibly both. So under these conditions (ahead in score and the board clear) disc No. 6 is often wasted. Some players prefer to waste this shot in an inconspicuous way by shooting the disc toward their St. Pete position but closer to the edge of the board so it cannot be kitchened or used as a hide.

When the board is clear, disc No. 6 should never be placed in a guard position, but if the player has an unprotected score on the board, he will use disc No. 6 as a protective guard in whatever position it is needed.

If the player is ahead in score and there is another disc of either color on the board that can serve even as a poor hide for disc No. 7, then No. 6 should be used to clear the board. Or if one of the player's own discs happens to be in a nonscoring position where it is vulnerable to a kitchen shot, again, disc No. 6 should be used to clear the board.

If the player is behind in score and the board is clear, disc No. 6 should be used as kitchen bait. The player may decide to do this even though he is not far enough behind to play kitchen bait with the other discs during the half round.

**Seventh Disc.** Disc No. 7 has many uses. If it cannot be used in its primary function, hiding a score, its secondary function is to reduce, as far as possible, the opponent's chance of

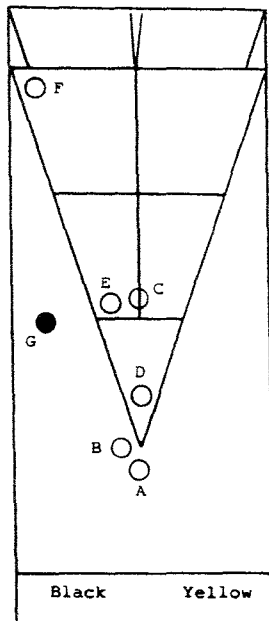


Figure 68

scoring with his hammer. When it is placed as at A or B in Figure 68, the seventh disc serves as a block. As a block it is not much more than a distraction to the opponent as he shoots his hammer; but there is always the possibility that the opponent's disc will nick the block and miss its goal, or that the opponent will miss his aim while trying not to nick the block.

The 7th disc, when placed at C, is often an effective block, especially if the court drifts. Care should be taken not to have C lying partly in the 10-area where the opponent can use it as a backstop for an almost certain score. Also, the disc at C becomes less effective when shot too far.

Discs at D and E are high numbers, which are useful ways to employ disc No. 7 when the player is behind in score. At F is the corner-7 shot, which can be used if there happens to be a guard in the vicinity of G.

Disc No. 7 should be hidden if there is the possibility of even a partial hide. If it is a poor

hide, the opponent will be compelled to shoot at it; and even though he spoils it, he may be unable to score with his hammer. When considering possible hides for the seventh disc, one should not overlook the possibility of hiding a score in the 10-area beyond the opponent's Tampa.

If the opponent needs nine or ten points to win the game, disc No. 7 must be used to block the 10-area. The player must be careful that he does not overshoot into the 10-area, where his disc will serve as a backstop to give his opponent an almost certain win.

**Eighth Disc.** With the clearing of the board strategy, the first three shots in a hammer half round are a preparation for the last shot, which is the shot on which the player chiefly relies to make his scores. Other scoring in the hammer half round, though important, is incidental. The player who can score four out of five of his hammer shots is usually in a good position in his game. The value of the hammer shot is so clear to all shufflers that most of them do not take unnecessary risks with this shot, preferring rather to shoot for a simple score than to try for a higher gain from a more difficult shot. The player will always ignore a partially hidden disc when shooting his hammer, unless the hide is the winning score for the opponent or brings him perilously close to game point. The player will take the easy doubles in the vicinity of the 8-area on his hammer shot.

If the opponent has an unguarded scoring disc on the board, the player will try to spoil that score and, at the same time, grab a score for himself. If he is far behind in score, he will attempt a kitchen shot and a score even when the disc is on a line. If the disc is on a line and cannot be played for both a kitchen shot and a score, the player must decide from his analysis of the scoreboard which of the two shots is more useful to him.

A player who is clearing the board will kitchen a pigeon (a disc lying on the 7/8 line) only with his hammer shot, so that the kitchen cannot be reversed. If the pigeon is the player's own disc and he is shooting the odd-numbered discs, he should knock it off the board or block it with the seventh disc or earlier.