

CHAPTER VI

SOME BASIC SHOTS — HOW TO USE THEM

In shuffleboard there are two distinct modes of play. They are called clearing the board and going on the board. The former is used by a player when he is ahead of, or even with, his opponent in score. The latter is used when the player begins to trail behind his opponent to the extent that his game is in jeopardy.

In this chapter we shall continue the discussion of the basic shots described in Chapter V. Here we shall discuss the correct use of these shots in each mode of play.

CLEARING THE BOARD

One of the basic principles of aggressive play is to keep the board clear of all discs when one is ahead in score, especially when he has the hammer. The object is to keep off the board any disc that might aid the opponent to score. The discs that are knocked away usually are the opponent's, but occasionally one of the player's own discs will stop in a position that would enable his opponent to hide a scoring disc. This maverick disc will be knocked away too in the process of clearing the board. The concept of clearing the board includes keeping one's own discs off the board as well as the opponent's until disc No. 8 is shot. This is to prevent the opponent from trying a kitchen shot.

When several discs are allowed to accumulate on the board during the play of a half round, the chance of a lucky shot occurring increases with each disc added to the number. The luck can be either good or bad, and often it comes in bundles of twenty to thirty points. This is a risk that no player who is leading in score can afford to take. Clearing the board is a simple technique for eliminating from the game a large amount of chance, thereby achieving a final score that more accurately reflects the skill of the players.

One sometimes hears the complaint that clearing the board makes an uninteresting game, but this complaint is never heard from players who understand the game. There are a variety of incidental plays available to the player who clears the board, and because no player can shoot perfectly, there is always the chance that

the next shot will result in an error that can be exploited. This possibility, with the consequent suspense, insures that the game will never be dull, and the suspense becomes greater as the player's skill increases.

The player who has the hammer and is clearing the board is the offensive player. (See Chapter XII.) The other player, though possibly even in score, is compelled to assume a less aggressive role throughout that particular half round. His plays normally consist of placing his St. Pete three times and then finally making a difficult and uncertain shot with disc No. 7, hoping to thwart the other player when he attempts to score with disc No. 8. The defensive player will feel real satisfaction when he successfully prevents his opponent from scoring his hammer.

A player always depends heavily on his hammers to make his scores. The hammer scores in addition to a few extra scores that the player is able to sneak in, constitute his game so long as he does not get seriously behind. The player who consistently scores on his hammer shots stands an excellent chance of coming out ahead in a game, but two or three hammers lost in a game can—not always, but can—result in disaster. Usually they must be made up by using more difficult shots. And this leads us to a discussion of the question: What does a player do when he gets behind in score?

GOING ON THE BOARD

We have seen how the player who is shooting the even-numbered discs can take the initiative from his opponent by clearing the board. The hammers alternate, however, so each player has the same opportunity; but after suffering the failure of a few shots, one player often finds that he is trailing badly though he is using the same strategy as his opponent. What can he do to get back into the game? He adopts the alternative mode of play. He goes on the board.

Kitchen Bait. When a player goes on the board, he simply shoots his disc down into one of the 7-areas without first placing a protective guard. A disc placed in this manner is commonly called kitchen bait. The opponent must

attempt to spoil this score. If the opponent's disc sticks, the player will try a kitchen shot, hoping to bring the opponent's score down by 10 points. The sole objective of this mode of play is to compel the opponent to put his discs on the board without a protective guard. Risky? Yes, very!

The kitchen shot is difficult. Expert players may make it not more than once out of three or four times even when they have the feel of the court, as they say, but a player cannot become better than an average shuffler without some degree of mastery of this shot. It is seldom possible to pull a bad game out of the hole without resorting to the kitchen shot.

A player may say that he cannot win by going on the board because his opponent is a better kitchen player than he. And he knows that he cannot win unless he does go on the board because he is too far behind to catch up with his opponent by relying on his hammer shots alone. So what does he do? He goes on the board. What else?

Replying to the Kitchen Bait. The experienced opponent seldom tries to bunt the bait into the kitchen. If he does use a kitchen shot, he is merely testing the player's mettle. The shot is never recommended. Hit and run is the correct reply to kitchen bait; that is, knock it off the board and get the cue disc off as well! Clearing the board is always the correct reply to any shot made with the thought in mind of tempting a player to place a disc on the board without a protective guard.

Where to Put the Kitchen Bait. The kitchen bait should be placed in the low 7-area for three reasons:

1. The farther away it is, the harder it will be for the opponent to knock it off the board, and the chance of the opponent's cue disc sticking is improved.

2. If the opponent decides to put the bait into the kitchen, his cue disc will stop close by in the 7-area where the player can more easily reverse the kitchen; that is, the player can bunt the opponent's disc against his own in the kitchen, thereby knocking his own disc out of the kitchen while leaving his opponent's disc in (Figure 20).

3. With the bait in the low 7-area, there is a good chance of the opponent putting his own disc into the kitchen while attempting to put the bait in (Figure 19).

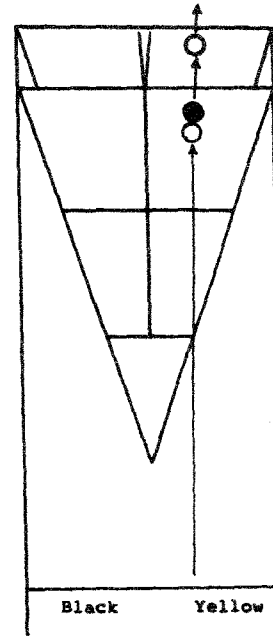


Figure 20

It is usually preferable to place the bait on the opponent's side of the board after his St. Pete has been placed, as at A in Figure 21. This is to minimize the risk of the opponent hiding the bait in the kitchen beyond the guard, or glancing his own disc for a well-hidden score beyond the guard as he clears away the bait. But, if the score is considerably one-sided and the play is near the end of the game, it will be to the opponent's advantage to ignore the bait when it is placed on his side of the board, and increase his score, which is rapidly approaching game point, by hiding a disc beyond the guard. In a situation such as this, the bait should be placed on the same side of the board as the St. Pete to compel the opponent to shoot at it. If the opponent needs only one disc to win, it may be necessary even to place the bait in the 8-area to block the opponent's attempt to score.

Another reason for placing the bait on the same side of the board as the opponent's St. Pete is that, in case the bait stops on the 7/8 line, it quite effectively blocks the opponent's next play, which would be to hide a disc beyond the St. Pete (as at B in Figure 21).

When disc No. 1 is being shot as kitchen bait, the player should place it on his own side of the

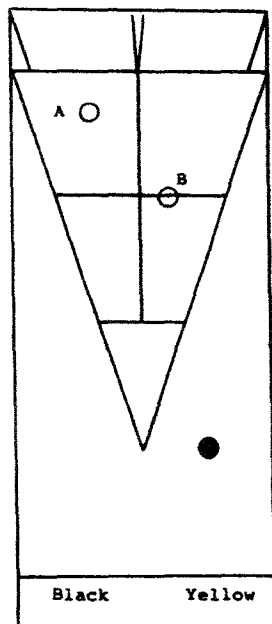


Figure 21

board where it is easier for him to make a kitchen shot and where his opponent will be less tempted to try a kitchen shot.

When to Play the Kitchen Bait. Normally a player goes on the board when he is about two discs behind, 14 to 16 points. But conditions alter this rule. Toward the end of a game, he may decide to go on the board when he is much less than two discs behind his opponent; whereas, at the beginning of a game, being 16 points behind might not be a cause for undue concern, because that much could be scored quite easily against the players in the first round if their opponents started off with the first two hammers. This would not call for going on the board immediately because in the next round the players, with their two hammers, would have a chance to recover.

When a player is about 10 points behind and a kitchen shot is not badly needed, and while he is still replying to his opponent's St. Petes by clearing the board, a quick change to kitchen bait with disc No. 6 may be good playing. If the opponent fails with a hit-and-run tactic or a kitchen shot, and his disc sticks for a score,

it can be put into the kitchen for keeps since he has used his last shot. But if the opponent succeeds with a kitchen shot, the player must use his last disc to reverse the kitchen (Figure 20).

As the player trails farther behind in score, he will have to play on the board with discs No. 2 and No. 4 also. If he falls still farther behind, he must play on the board with discs No. 1, No. 3, and No. 5 as well. He will be placing his discs on the board whenever he can.

SPECIAL SITUATIONS: KITCHEN AND KITCHEN BAIT

Several things can happen to a player to sidetrack his strategy. It is well to have some of these questions settled in one's mind beforehand.

If the Opponent Misses the Kitchen Bait. What should a player do when his opponent completely misses the disc which the player put on the board as kitchen bait? Some players, doubtful of their skill, would cover the bait with a guard and play the remainder of the half round protecting the scoring disc. But is this logical? No. What was the bait put out for in the first place? To lure the opponent to the board with a chance of putting one of his discs into the kitchen. It is not possible to lure one's opponent toward the kitchen by covering the bait. Therefore, to be consistent with his objective, the player should shoot another disc into the opposite 7-area, far enough from the first to discourage his opponent from trying to knock both of them out with a combination shot.

If the opponent's disc sticks when he attempts to remove one of the baits, the player should ignore his other unprotected bait and put the opponent's disc into the kitchen. If the opponent successfully clears away one of the two baits and does not stick, the player will shoot another 7 score, unless he is shooting disc No. 7, in which case he will usually cover the remaining bait; or if he is shooting disc No. 8, he will score an 8.

The paragraph above describes the usual way this situation is played, but no principle in shuffling can be applied without first analyzing each particular shot. There are always exceptions—booby traps for the unthinking player. Consider the following problem.

Analysis Problem (Figure 22). The game is doubles at the foot of the court. The score is Yellow 67, Black 64. Game point is 75. Black is about to shoot disc No. 7. What will he do?

Compare your analysis with the discussion of this problem at the end of the chapter.

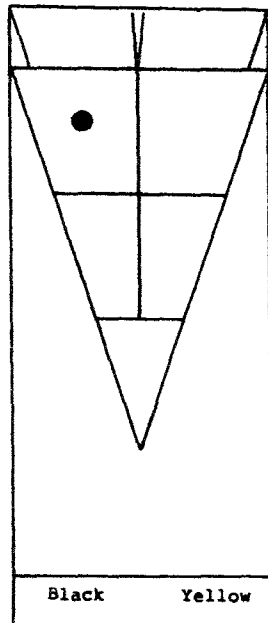


Figure 22

If the Opponent Shoots His Cue Disc into the Kitchen. What should a player do if his opponent shoots his own disc into the kitchen?

1. Assume that this is in a point game and the player does not badly need a kitchen shot. The player may be tempted to block the disc in the kitchen, but a blocking disc often has a way of embarrassing the player who shoots it by presenting his opponent with an unforeseen hide. An experienced player, especially when playing a game requiring a definite number of points to win, will not be distracted by an event such as this from pursuing his objective of racking up points toward the winning score. So rather than blocking his opponent's disc in the kitchen, the player will normally shoot for a score in the opposite 7-area, far enough away from the other disc to prevent a reversal of the kitchen shot.

Now his opponent has a choice. He may attack the scoring disc or dislodge his own disc from the kitchen. If he chooses the latter, the player will cover his score of 7 on the next shot and his opponent will have, at best, only two discs left. The player has a good chance of saving his score, and if he has the hammer, a good chance of scoring two discs.

But the opponent may choose to try a kitchen shot on the disc in the 7-area and score his cue disc as well, making a total of 17 points. He would prefer to do that most of the time when he is shooting his hammer. Therefore, if disc No. 6 were shot directly into the kitchen, the other player would not normally put disc No. 7 on the board to be attacked by No. 8. Blocking would be in order. If the opponent then scores an 8, he is still ten points short of making his hammer.

2. But if this situation turns up in a frame game, the more effective shot may be to cover the disc in the kitchen to prevent its removal, if this can be done without giving the opponent a hide. The choice of shots is dictated in this case by the objective of the game. In one kind of game the player must collect scores to win, so he plays on the board where the scores are. In the other game it is necessary only to be ahead in score after an agreed number of frames have been played.

3. Another consideration is the point to which the game has progressed. If it is late in the game with the player needing only two or three discs to win when the opponent shoots his cue disc into the kitchen, the player, to protect his lead in score, must keep his discs off the board even if he has the hammer shot in that half round. Covering the disc in the kitchen with a guard would be called for in this instance.

4. Still another consideration is whether the disc is in the deep kitchen where the opponent may have trouble with his next disc sticking in the kitchen when he tries to knock the first one out. And also to be considered is the condition of the court. If it is slow, there is a greater chance of the opponent's second disc sticking in the kitchen when he tries to remove the first one. The deep kitchen and the slow court are points in favor of shooting for a score and letting the opponent take his chances on getting his disc out of the kitchen.

When to Reverse the Kitchen. The reversing of a kitchen shot, which is illustrated in Figure 20, is really a difficult shot. Sometimes the scoreboard analysis demands that this shot be made, but most of the time the player has a choice. The use of this shot is not well understood by some players, who have the notion that, whenever it is possible to play a combination to reverse the kitchen, it should be attempted in preference to knocking their disc out of the kitchen directly. The truth is, of course, a combination should be attempted only when there is a good chance of its success, or when there is little chance of success with a direct shot. The odds on these two shots should be weighed carefully, and if the direct shot has more chance of success, it should be used immediately.

The combination is always attempted when the kitchen is a deep one and the opponent's score is in the clear and close by the kitched disc. The combination should not be used when the opponent's disc is nonscoring and poorly situated and the chance of succeeding with a direct shot is good. But, as suggested above, the player should never forget the scoreboard when considering the choice between these two shots.

ANSWER TO ANALYSIS PROBLEM (FIGURE 22)

The protecting of the score with a guard would be a losing play in this situation. The partners who are playing yellow need 8 points to win. The partners who are playing black will get two hammers if they can keep Yellow from winning in this half round. Black must not shoot into a scoring area that will give Yellow 8 or more points if he backstops. If Black should shoot another 7 in the opposite 7-area (difficult for Yellow to spoil with a combination shot), the best Yellow could do for himself would be to kitchen and score. The result would be Yellow 74, Black 61. With two hammers coming up, Black would be in a better position than he is at present; and if Yellow's kitchen shot should fail, Black would be in a very good position.

Why should Black not shoot a 10? Because only a high 10 would be safe. The risk of the cue disc stopping deep in the 10-area is too great.