

Lary Faris

Recovered Shuffleboard Coach Articles

1998-2003

24 historical articles from owner-supplied newspaper clippings and transcriptions

CourtShuffleboard.com Historical Archive

Prepared September 2026

Archive note

This collection brings together 24 recovered Lary Faris shuffleboard articles dated from August 1998 through January 2003. It is a recovered selection, not a complete run of the Shuffleboard Coach column.

The article text is reproduced from owner-supplied working transcriptions and clean transcriptions prepared from owner-supplied newspaper clipping images. Formatting has been standardized for readability, but the historical wording is not intentionally modernized.

Two dated articles tracked in the research chronology are not included because their working transcription files were not found in the preserved source set used for this release: "Chasing Discs Is a Losing Proposition" (May 4, 1999) and "Try to Shoot From No. 1 Position" (September 3, 2001). They are listed here so the gaps are visible rather than silently filled.

Some articles refer to diagrams. Where a diagram is embedded in a preserved source DOCX it is retained in this collection. Where the transcription source contains no diagram image, none has been invented.

Rules, terminology, court specifications, costs, organizations, and biographical notes in these historical articles reflect their own time. For current playing rules or court specifications, consult the current governing-source materials on CourtShuffleboard.com.

Separate annual Faris collections for 1991 and 1993-1997 are already preserved in the Books & Historical Materials archive. A 1992 annual collection has not been located; this collection does not invent or reconstruct one.

Known chronology gaps

- May 4, 1999 - Chasing Discs Is a Losing Proposition
- September 3, 2001 - Try to Shoot From No. 1 Position

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Source and editorial boundary: Historical authorship remains Lary Faris. This archive preserves supplied/transcribed historical text for research and educational reference; CourtShuffleboard.com does not present period advice as current governing authority.

Opening St. Pete Shot Critical to Winning

Lary Faris — August 12, 1998

Shuffleboard, like chess, has several standard openings. The most commonly used one of these is the St. Pete pilot, also called the cross-court block.

Most players are quite familiar with this opening and I've written about it in several columns.

Ask 10 shufflers to tell you what a St. Pete pilot is and, surprisingly, they'll likely all give you the same answer. (There aren't very many other questions shufflers will agree on.)

Yet all St. Petes are not made alike. There are variations that should be employed in specific situations.

The shuffleboard St. Pete, we will see, has several suburbs. It's like the real city of St. Pete in that respect.

Normally, the St. Pete is located point high and about half way between the point of the 10 and the outside of the court (see A on the diagram).

There are several situations in which you might want to try a northeast suburb, that is, a position a little closer to the edge of the court and a little further down the court (B on the diagram).

One is a game situation in which you are ahead and you want to be sure your opponent doesn't try suicide alley. After all, he is desperate and might get lucky.

Another is a court situation in which a strong drift toward the middle of the court turns suicide lane into 7s heaven.

Yet another situation is when you are playing an opponent who uses suicide alley and is good at it. In all of these cases, adjusting the St. Pete to position B is effective.

You might want to try a southern suburb in two other situations, that is a position closer to the lag line (C on the diagram). This is often called a high St. Pete.

One situation is the game situation in which you need an 8 much more than you need a 7. With the high St. Pete, there is more room to get in behind with an 8.

The other is a court situation in which a strong drift to the middle makes your hiding shot come back out.

With the higher St. Pete, it is less difficult to hide a 7 against the drift. In these two cases, the adjustment to point C is effective.

Finally, on a court that drifts to the middle so much that you simply can't hide, you may want to move to a far northern suburb (D on the diagram).

That is, locate the St. Pete at the spot where the 8/10 line meets the 8/outside line.

With your St. Pete in that location, you can sometimes bump it into the 8 instead of trying to hide behind it.

It's a last resort on a difficult court.

Be careful not to be a developer. That is, don't create a suburb of your own by mistake.

Don't be casual when shooting the St. Pete. Be as careful with it as you are with your hammer.

Otherwise, you may find yourself in a suburb where all the shuffleboard losers live.

I don't know what the St. Pete Chamber of Commerce would say about this, but I'm interested in your comments.

Always Be Careful About Falling Into Traps on the Board

Lary Faris — June 16, 1999

Farrell Bruner was one of the all-time great shuffleboard players. I was highly honored in 1968 when he asked me to be his partner in the Summer National Doubles at Lakeside, Ohio. Bruner was a tough-minded, tournament-hardened competitor. He and the great Web Smith had teamed to win six consecutive Florida statewide tournaments, a feat never equaled.

Bruner knew all the fine points of the game and never made tactical or strategic errors. He was a good shooter, but he seldom tried difficult shots. He'd look for easy shots with sure payoffs. Least of all, Bruner never chose dangerous shots. Unfortunately, I chose a shot with a hidden risk and blew our quarterfinal match.

Here's how it went. I got trapped in a situation that comes up frequently. See if you recognize it, and see how you'd handle it.

Bruner and I were ahead 57 to 39. I was shooting from the foot of the board and it was my opponent's hammer. It was a situation that called for us to clear the board and let our hammers put us out in a few frames.

I set a St. Pete pilot and when my opponent went to the board, I cleared it. When my opponent went to the board with his second shot, he hit the 7/8 line on my side. This happens frequently and I have written about it before.

I made my first mistake when I covered the 7/8 liner with a Tampa. I've written before that Lew Tansky says to clear these liners. I should have. Bruner squirmed a little, but not as much as he would on my next shot.

My opponent now shot down his own side of the board for a deep 7 close to the 7/7 line. Look at the diagram. What shot would you take then? Think it over before you read on. Remember the score.

I decided to go after the 7. I wanted to clear it with my shooter. That would leave my opponent with nothing to do but try to score his hammer and that would not gain much on our lead. Would you have made that choice?

Well, Bruner wouldn't have, and as I shot I could sense his consternation. He knew disaster was coming. To hit the 7, my disc had to pass very close to the Tampa that I had placed to cover the 7/8 liner. It didn't go past it as I had intended, but it caught just a little of the Tampa. My disc clipped that Tampa and moved it.

Bruner's head dropped. I had moved the Tampa and missed the 7. That left the 7/8 liner uncovered and before I could stop staring, my opponent had doubled on it for a score of 22 in the round. That was enough to set them up to win the match.

What shot would you have taken? Well, I never should have covered the 7/8 liner in the first place. But once that happened and my opponent scored his 7, I believe I should have shot down my own side of the board and hit the 7/8 liner myself, trying for a hidden 8 and a 10-off for my opponent, leaving his 7 alone.

By the way, Bruner forgave me. While he was a tremendous competitor, he was a super sport and we were friends for many years.

When Your Aimer Goes North for the Summer, Shoot With Your Mind

Lary Faris — June 13, 2000

Has your "aimer" ever left you?

That is, have you ever run into a slump, one in which you can't hit your target?

Your discs seem to go all over the place. You miss open 7s and 8s. You're in Florida, and your "aimer" has gone north for the summer. We all have these spells, just as even the best baseball players have their slumps. It's bound to happen — even if the players are making \$5 million a year.

The key question is how to get out of the slump, how to regain control of the discs, how to shoot where we're aiming. How can we get our aimer to return to the courts as soon as possible?

I have a theory: that the problem looks physical, but is primarily mental. Therefore, the solution is a mental and not a physical one.

It's more likely that our aimer left our head than our body. Usually we attack slumps from a physical standpoint. We ask someone to watch us shoot to see what we're doing wrong. The watchers always have ideas like follow-through more, keep your arm in, bend more (or bend less). We try these suggestions — and things get worse. Has anyone ever asked for shooting help and gotten a suggestion that suddenly cured the problem?

I know of no instance where the magic execution of a mechanical change quickly recovered shooting accuracy.

Try the mental approach. In this, forget mechanics. That is, don't think much about feet or arms or bending. Just take a natural position and shoot.

When you shoot, concentrate with all you have in you on your target. Try for everything you're worth to shoot where you're aiming. If you miss, shoot another disc, and another, and another.

Keep focusing on hitting your target. Sometimes you'll hit it, sometimes you won't.

What I think gradually happens is that your body learns on its own. When you hit the target, your body tries to remember that groove. Muscles and nerves record their work. Then when you shoot again, they try to play back the exact timing and movement.

This timing and movement coordination sometimes isn't something you think about or control. You condition it into your muscles and nerves and whatever else your body uses.

Shoot with ultimate concentration. Your body will capture the groove for you. Give it a chance.

Note: The above is for the proven players who are in a slump. Beginners must get their mechanics organized or they'll not shoot well at all.

Today's diagram shows a shot choice for yellow, shooting the hammer from the foot in a doubles game. She's ahead 67 to 49 and has an almost open board. Only a black disc on the 7/10 line is showing.

There's no question in my mind: Go for the 8, win the game. Forget the chance to score a 7 and kitchen black. What if the score is 67 to 61?

What if it's the head of the board?

What if she's been hitting the $7/8$ line?

Do these different situations change the choice?

Get Prepared for Repeat Situations

Lary Faris — April 21, 2001

Shuffleboard, like all sports, has a number of situations that occur repeatedly. These come up in almost every game or at least every two or three.

These situations need to be analyzed ahead of time. The correct shot choice needs to be determined in advance, lest the player, in the heat of battle, make a hurried and unproductive choice.

Today's situation is one of those often-occurring ones. Players need to know how to respond to it and how to handle special cases that court drifts or end-game scores may call for.

Yellow leads with a St. Pete and black clears it. Yellow puts up a second St. Pete and black tries to clear it, but misses.

On his third shot (the fifth of the round), yellow tries to hide. He just knicks his St. Pete and changes course a bit. His disc goes on into the 7 — an open 7.

This happens frequently.

Black now sees a wide yellow St. Pete and an open 7 for yellow on the black side of the board (see diagram).

What should black do? What are black's choices?

1. Clear the 7. This choice would leave yellow the St. Pete to hide behind.
2. Replace the 7 and try to kitchen it. This would leave yellow a chance for a reverse, a 7 and 10-off of his own.
3. Replace the 7 and push it on through to 10-off. This leaves yellow a good kitchen shot.
4. Snuggle on the 7. This is not bad if the shot is accurate.

Probably, the best choice is a snuggle, No. 4. It should be a little toward the outside on the 7.

If it works, yellow has a tough shot coming up. If the snuggle falls short or runs to the inside, black may have two scores. If the snuggle is too hard, yellow will have a good kitchen shot.

I'm not very good at snuggling. I'd most likely clear the 7. Then he'd still have to make it. And I'd still have my hammer.

If the court is running poorly, by all means clear.

But if the court is running very well, and black is handling it well, he might want to try a cut kitchen, hitting the 7 on the left. He'd try to roll his shooter to the far left side of the 7 and hope the yellow 7 went in the kitchen at the triangle or to the right of it.

Now if black is ahead in a 74-point game, snuggling is even more attractive because it will advance the game.

That is, 7 yellow and 15 black is a more desirable score than 0 yellow and 8 black, even though the differential is the same.

That's a pretty complicated analysis. It's doubtful a player could run all of it through his mind in a game. He'd better have his thoughts together ahead of time.

I had time to think about this and I may have it correct. But maybe I missed a point. Let me know.

All You Need Is a Broom

Lary Faris — July 9, 2001

Dear Coach: We recently moved to Florida and would like to build a shuffleboard court in our backyard. Would you please advise us on how to do this? We enjoy your column. Florida Reader.

I've received several letters along the lines of the above. Folks have discovered shuffleboard, are enthusiastic about it, and want to have a backyard court. I appreciate the interest and motivation behind the desire.

I answer all my letters from readers. (As I've said before, the ones who send self-addressed, stamped envelopes get answered first). Here are some of the things I point out in my court building letters.

It's very important to look at the potential cost right at the start. A good court will easily cost \$4,000 to \$7,000. If that amount sounds like a 20-off to your budget, forget it. You won't get it cheaper.

Also, before you get serious, look over the prospective location in your yard. A court is big. Check the diagram.

While the basic court is 52 feet by 6 feet, with gutters and benches it's 59 by 10, and you'll need room for the construction activities, so add some more space.

Do you have an area this big? The site needs to be flat, no slope or hillsides. When fill dirt is used to level a site, the court will always surely settle unevenly and wind up being very drifty.

Are you still there? You'll want to get a contractor who has built courts before, and there aren't many. Niddy, of Sanford, Fla., is one of the most widely used.

Many sidewalk builders will say they can build a court, but if they can't show you an example of their shuffleboard work, forget them.

Our courts have too many fine points that well-meaning, but inexperienced contractors don't know.

Once your court is built, you'll need to stain it, line it, seal it, equip it, and landscape the area around it.

You may want to try this yourself, but you'll be happier with the result if you use experienced professionals.

When you're done, hold your breath when you shoot your first disc. Keep your fingers crossed that it doesn't drift.

After all that work and money, if you end up with a curvy court, you'll want to take up boxing and get your head smacked.

Probably all this has made you as tired as it has me. Perhaps too tired to play and that's what we started out wanting to do.

As an alternative to building your own court, why not join the local club?

There you'll find courts already built and maintained. They will already be stained and lined. Most of them will be level. Other players will be ready to shoot with you.

All you'll have to do is sweep one off!

In no way am I against backyard courts. They are very handy and can be lots of fun.

I knew a man who designed his house so he could have one in his basement.

Harold Edmundson, as past National Shuffleboard Association president, has one in his back yard and plays on it in the snow. I had one built in a park near my house.

On the other hand, playing at the local club is much simpler. Just grab your cue and head there for a morning of fun.

The most you'll need is a broom.

Learn What Is Right Shot; Always Take It

Lary Faris

July 9, 2002

Shot selection is a key to shuffleboard prowess. Players who take the right shots win. Players who take the wrong shots lose.

That is, most of the time.

In a recent tournament, I saw the reverse happen in two games, one right after the other. In one game the shooter took the wrong shot and won; in the other, a player took the right shot and lost.

In the first game, the score was 65-50 in favor of the shooter. He was at the foot in a doubles match and had the hammer. The board was clear and open.

I'd expect eight out of 10 experts would say the hammer should be shot for an 8. That would move the score to a solid 73-50, positioning the leading team to survive the opponent's two hammers and then to move to a win.

A few shufflers would try for a 10, moving to put the game away. But a miss is quite likely -- 10s are hard to make and harder to make under pressure.

Shooting for a 10 is the wrong shot.

But the shooter made his 10, smack dab in the center, and won the game. The odds were not there for him, but he made a good, but wrong, shot, and won.

Soon after that, in another match, I watched a player make what I think is a correct shot, but when he missed it by a whisker, he lost.

I've shown the situation in the diagram. Yellow opened with a St. Pete, and black in trying to clear it, rolled to a black Tampa for yellow. The score was 64 for yellow to 56 for black.

The question here is: "Should yellow take the hide?"

My answer is yes.

The board was running fine, yellow had hidden there before, and there was a slight in-drift favoring the hide. I'd sure take it. Grabbing a score at that point would mean yellow then needed to make only one of their two upcoming hammers.

That's a great spot to get to.

The shooter agreed and made the hide attempt, the correct shot.

However, his disc drifted a bit earlier than he had allowed for. His hiding shot brushed the Tampa. This not only careened his hiding shot to a useless spot at the side of the court, but also moved his Tampa to the other side of the point, where it then became a Tampa for the opponent, black.

Now disaster struck when black hid, yellow missed, black hid again and yellow missed the clip-out shot again.

Black then scored his hammer and the game and match were over.

Should yellow have taken the hiding shot? I sure think so. It just went off by a quarter of an inch.

It took the three perfect shots by black and two missed by yellow to lose the game. Those shots decided the game, not the attempt to hide.

What's the lesson from these two situations?

I write them here to urge players to stick with the correct shot selection. Seeing a wrong shot win or a correct shot lose doesn't change a thing. The wrong shot is still the wrong shot and the right shot is still the right shot.

There are odds on the out-come of every shot. Sometimes the short side of the odds has its day -- but the odds don't change.

Try to always shoot the right shot.

(Now I'm sure I'll get lots of mail fussing with me about this one!)

Lary Faris has played shuffleboard for more than 60 years, has won a record 14 national championships, and is a member of the National Shuffleboard Hall of Fame and the International Shuffleboard Hall of Fame, as well as the state Halls of Fame in Florida and Ohio. Questions and comments are invited and can be sent to Lary Faris, 223 Jasmine, Lakeside, OH 43440.

Learning From a Couple of Masters
Lary Faris
Aug 15, 2002

Attending a Florida Shuffleboard Masters tournament is a stimulating experience. Spectators get to watch the best shufflers in the world and spectators and players alike get to chat about interesting and challenging situations.

Two of my friends, Paul Prescott and Dave Stott, both regular Masters participants and fine strategists, passed on to me interesting situations during the 1995 Masters. It was several years ago, but we can learn from them today.

Paul reported on a common situation in which a player with a hammer is way ahead and needs only one score to go out. Normally the player will simply clear the board and score the hammer for a win.

When I'm in that situation, I decide ahead of time that I'm going to shoot my hammer for a score regardless of what discs my opponent puts on the board.

To do this, I clear discs, but I clear on just the edge of the target so I don't stick and wind up in the soup (10-off).

Missing the target is not at all a disaster because with the lead, scores can be given away; but sticking can be a big problem because of the threatening 10-off.

In his big game, Prescott, shooting yellow, was ahead 69 to 35 and had the hammer. He cleared the first black disc but missed the second, a deep black 8. Then black scored a second deep black 8 on the opposite side. What should Paul do with his third disc, the sixth shot of the half-round?

Paul could try to clear both 8s, but his shooter could bounce from one to the other and slither right into the 10-off. That can happen. He could clear one 8 or the other, but he might stick and get kitched by black on the next shot.

Paul, with the nice lead, simply shot to the far edge of the board, leaving the two 8s. He reasoned since black could cover one 8 or the other, but not both, that he would have a nice backstop for his hammer. Good thinking.

Of course black could score a third disc. Putting the third score in the 10 would make it tougher on Paul, indeed. In that case Paul could use any of the discs as a backstop, but if he somehow left three scores and rolled to a line, black would suddenly be at 61 with a hammer coming. Paul made his score and won.

Dave Stott always has interesting finishes in mind. Both he and Gloria are among Florida's best. Dave reported the following:

Black is ahead 74 to 67 but play is at the foot (in singles) so yellow has the hammer. Black goes into the 7 to keep yellow from scoring an 8 on his hammer. On the third shot, sixth of the half-round, yellow tries to snuggle the black 7. He lands about a foot short of the black 7.

Black shooting his last disc, the seventh of the half-round, faces the situation shown in the diagram. What on earth should he do? If he goes to the other 7, yellow can replace him and tie at 81 to 81 or win if he can kitchen black.

Not good. If he slams into the yellow 7 and clears all the discs, he, leaves a shot at an 8 for black. Thus, it seems, the yellow 7 must come off.

Stott could have hit it hard on the side to clear it or he could hit it soft for a roll or a kitchen. Dave hit it with moderate speed on the left and cut it into the kitchen far to the right, a great choice and fine shot.

Thanks to Paul Prescott and Dave Stott for today's column.

Lary Faris has played shuffleboard for more than 60 years. Questions and comments are invited and can be sent to Lary Faris, 223 Jasmine, Lakeside, Ohio 43440.

2 Points to Remember: Curves and Shoulders

Lary Faris

Aug 29, 2002

Every tournament I attend offers a number of new and exciting situations to write about in my "Shuffleboard Coach" column. A tourney at Fort Myers was no exception.

A few years ago, I was playing with Buck Buchanan, a fine shuffler and fine person from Winter Haven and Pennsylvania.

He was president of the National Shuffleboard Association and is now president of the International Association. What a worker for our sport.

At Fort Myers, Buck and I lost our first match but made it to the finals in the consolation, where we met E. B. Smith and Don Bladorn from Naples and Avon Park. Both are superb Florida shufflers.

Our court was very yellow. That is, the discs drifted about five inches from the yellow side toward the black side.

In the first game I was shooting the yellow. I decided to use a Tampa rather than a St. Pete. With that much drift, I was afraid attempts to hide behind a St. Pete would go too far and be exposed on the outside. I felt that I could avoid this problem by using a Tampa.

So I led with a Tampa and watched as E.B. Smith moved his disc to the No. 4 spot. He aimed toward the centerline and his disc went right toward the 8/8 line and the drift then curved its path so that it traveled down the centerline. The diagram shows this.

E.B. had a good tactic. Placing a score near the centerline would give me, yellow, a problem. If I shot at his score, even though I could see it, my disc would drift away from the target and miss.

To kill his score I would have to shoot hard. So he had me in a tough spot.

The key here is that E.B. moved his shooter to the No. 4 position. Had he shot from the No. 1 spot, his disc would not have stayed close to the centerline, it would have curved away.

To make the shot he needed the angle provided by the No. 4 position.

I'm going to remember this tactic the next time I'm shooting uphill with about a five-inch drift.

At this same tournament a gentleman stopped me and thanked me for writing this column. He said that I had won many games for him. Wow, was I flattered.

He reached into his pocket, pulled out his billfold, and took out an old folded clipping. It was a column I wrote awhile back on shooting.

In it I suggested that players should keep their shoulders square while making a shot.

Often I see players letting their shooting shoulder lag behind. Then when they shoot and the arm comes forward, so does the shoulder. And the shoulder movement messes up the shot. (I've learned this the hard way.)

As a shuffler moves forward into a shot, the shoulder should be square and in place, no movement. Let the arm then be a pendulum and swing easily forward with the shoulder fixed in place.

Some players have a habit of putting their nonshooting hand on their knee and that is good because it stabilizes the shoulders.

Well, I was glad to hear that I had really helped a shuffler. And at the same time I made a note to check my own shoulder next time I practice. How about yours?

Lary Faris has played shuffleboard for more than 60 years, has won a record 14 national championships, and is a member of the National Shuffleboard Hall of Fame and the International Shuffleboard Hall of Fame, as well as the state Halls of Fame in Florida and Ohio. Questions and comments are invited and can be sent to Lary Faris, 223 Jasmine, Lakeside, OH 43440.

10-Off a Vital Part of Game Strategy

Lary Faris

Sep 9, 2002

Shuffleboard's 10-off feature is unique in sports. Coupled with the need to reach a certain score, 75 points usually, to win a game, it adds greatly to the depth of strategy and tactics shufflers must consider and employ.

Often keeping out of the nasty 10-off becomes the overriding consideration in shot selection. It becomes more important than scoring and more important than giving the opponent a 10-off.

A recent game supplies a good example.

Buck Buchanan and I were shooting and were ahead at 47 yellow to 54 black. We had the next two hammers. I was at the head and was about to shoot my third disc, the sixth of the frame.

My opponent had been going into the 7 as kitchen bait. I was clearing.

On my previous clearing shots my shooter had cleared the target disc but had stopped short of the gutter, landing on the 7/outside line.

My opponent had tried to score a deep 7 near my black disc, but shot too hard and went into the 10-off. It was shallow, just barely in.

So I was looking at the board as shown in the diagram. What shot should I try to make?

Remember, I'm at the head of the court with the hammer. I'm shooting the sixth disc, then the opponent will shoot the seventh, then I'll shoot my hammer.

What shot would you select?

My thinking developed along these lines. I first looked at the area near the 10-off and my black disc. Could I put my shot there in such a way as to prevent yellow from removing his 10-off?

Yes, I could try that, landing my shooter near the black disc (A).

But what if my shot went into the 7 and then yellow executed a reverse? That reverse could be done, even against a shallow 10off.

No, I thought, I'd better stay away from the far 7 and yellow's kitchen because somehow, somehow I could land in the soup myself.

So I looked at the other side of the board. What could I do there?

With my opponent in the 10-off and me having the hammer, I was looking for a way to net two scores. So maybe a 7 on my own side of the board would be effective (B).

If my opponent shot at it and kitched it, I'd still have my hammer to try a reverse and, of course, his own 10-off would remain.

So that's the shot I selected. I wanted a shallow 7, and shot a little short, hanging on the line by an inch. My opponent then cleared his 10-off. Then I shot my hammer and caught an inch of the 7/8 line.

So instead of netting two scores, I had no score at all.

Was that a catastrophe? No. Did I make a bad shot selection? Not really.

The key is that I stayed out of the 10-off. While I hadn't scored and hadn't given my opponent a 10-off, I still had 54 points on the scoreboard. And that's a great number to have.

As it turned out, my partner hammered, our opponents hammered, and then when we got the hammers back, partner and I both scored and we won the game and match.

Staying out of the 10-off was key.

In hindsight, the best shot would likely have been a waste shot: a disc into the gutter or by the outside lag line. What do you think?

The 10-off dominates much of our tactical thinking. It's often more important to stay out of it than it is to score or to keep opponent in it.

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Stay Away From Trying To Hammer the 10s

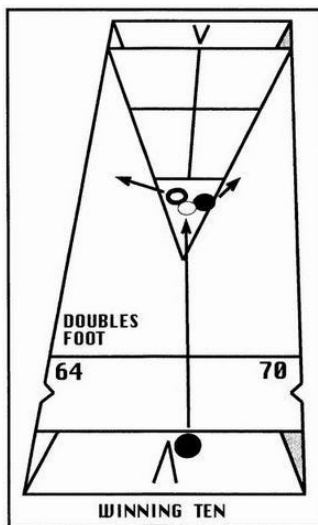
Lary Faris

Sep 16, 2002

Some baseball players swing for the fences, only to whiff and lose. Some football players go for the long pass, only to fail and lose. And some basketball players go for the threes, only to miss and lose.

What's this got to do with shuffleboard? Well, recently I watched a shuffler throw his hammer at the 10. He caught a line and he lost. This happens all the time. Shufflers, please stay away from trying to hammer 10s. If you don't, you'll lose.

In the game, the error was obvious to all but the shooter. Play was at the foot with yellow leading, 65 to 64. Black had the hammer and an open board. He shot for the 10. With a point total of 64, it was a crazy shot. Soon it cost him the match.



Other wasted 10 hammers are more subtle. Say the score is 55 yellow to 74 black, and yellow has two hammers coming. With play at the head, the yellow shooter has an open board when his hammer comes. Should he shoot for a 10?

Many players do. I wouldn't. First, he'll likely not make it, but even if he does, his partner will have to make a second 10 to win. But a good defender at the foot will either cover the 10 or have a score on the board. That yellow player at the foot will never have a chance to even try the 10 shot.

Now what if the score is 58 to 74, with play at the head and yellow having the hammers? Oh my, the 10 gets more tempting, doesn't it? Maybe, please, just this once? Nope. I'd still go for the 8. I suppose many of you will argue with me on that one.

Continuing the 58 to 74 example, say I was at the head and I made my 8. That makes it 66 to 74 with play at the foot. If the 10 is open when the foot player's hammer comes, should he try for it?

Gosh, I'm really not sure. Maybe. At 66 to 66, I wouldn't because an 8 would move yellow to the lead at 74 to 66 and defending against two hammers with 74 isn't so bad. Defending against two hammers at 74 to 74 is tough, but not impossible.

If you insist on shooting for a 10 at 66 to 74, be sure to allow for the drift. I've seen more missed 10s go left or right than I have go long or short. The 10 is narrow and the drift will be pronounced for a disc slowing to a stop.

Should you ever shoot for a 10? Oh sure. I saw a game in which the score was 72 yellow to 71 black, with black having the hammer at the foot.

Yellow managed to hide an 8. Black, correctly, went for a 10 with the hammer. True, he could have tried to combo out the 8 by driving the cover onto it, but that's a lower percentage shot than going for a 10 and even if he makes it, yellow has the next two hammers.

I saw Dave Stott shoot the winning hammer into the 10. The score was 64 to 70. Dave had black at the foot and had the 70. But on the board was a yellow 10. Further, there was a second disc on the other side of the 10 as I've shown in the diagram. Dave had a basket that he couldn't miss. And he didn't. He won.

On the hammer, forget the 10 is there. Shooting for it will often cost you the game.

Lary Faris has played shuffleboard for more than 60 years, has won a record 14 national championships, and is a member of the National Shuffleboard Hall of Fame and the International Shuffleboard Hall of Fame, as well as the state halls of fame in Florida and Ohio. Questions and comments are invited and can be sent to Lary Faris, 223 Jasmine, Lakeside, OH 43440.

Gain on Scoreboard Is Crucial

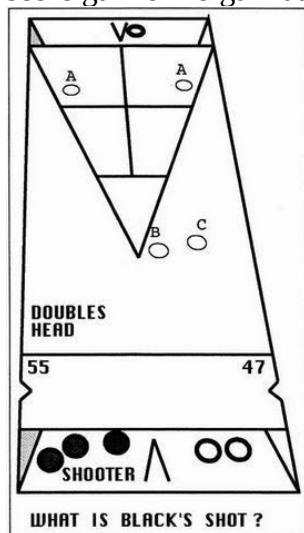
Lary Faris

Sep 25, 2002

One of my biggest problems in shuffleboard tactics is moving opportunities from the court to the scoreboard. That is, often after four or five shots in a frame, discs on the court are in positions very favorable to me.

My difficulty is in keeping my opponent in trouble the rest of the frame so that I can put some gain on the scoreboard where it counts.

One example is what to do when I already have two good scores on the board. Where do I put the next shot? The usual answer is to score a third disc. But often this ends up with just a one score gain or no gain at all.



I keep thinking about that how to find a better shot, one that will gain two scores. I've written about this in the past and will again.

Today I want to discuss the case in which the opponent shoots a mid-frame shot into the 10-off. How can that mistake be captured so that it ends up on the scoreboard at the end of the frame?

The situation usually occurs when you are ahead and your opponent is shooting to the 7 as kitchen bait. Sooner or later his bait shot goes too far and winds up in the 10-off. Now, how do you use that error to put a gain on the scoreboard?

Here's an example. The score is 47 yellow and 55 black in a doubles match. It's black's hammer at the head. The diagram shows this. Yellow led with a deep 7 and black cleared it. Then yellow shot for another deep 7, got it too far, and wound up in the 10-off. I've shown this on the diagram as being located just to the yellow side of center and about mid-deep.

Now if I'm the black player, I say to myself, "That's the break that should win this close game for us." Yes, it can be the game winner, but it has to go up on the scoreboard first.

What is black's shot? Let's assume that the court is running well with a minor general drift off about two inches toward yellow. Where does black shoot? What are the possible choices?

Let's look at three shots that I've seen players select. The first is for black to try to score a wide 7 on either side (A and A). This has the advantage of making a reverse difficult. On the other hand, it may give yellow a chance to kitchen black. Also sometimes the attempt for a 7 goes wide and nothing is gained. Overall though, it's not a bad choice.

A second shot I've seen used is to cover the 10-off (B). This is not a good choice. The cover probably won't protect both sides of the 10off anyway and the opponent will remove it.

Further, the cover disc will be a Tampa (albeit, a little wide) for yellow. Yellow may simply hide an 8 or a 7. And then the Tampa is in the way somewhat on the hammer shot. Forget the cover shot.

A third choice, one I like, is to simply shoot a St. Pete (C), setting up a hide for the next black shot. Against a St. Pete, yellow is in a bind. Yellow can remove the 10off, but that leaves the hide. He can remove the St. Pete, but that leaves the 10-off.

This is similar to shooting a 7 and then covering the 7. It's simply the reverse, but by shooting the cover first, yellow doesn't have the 7 to try to kitchen or use on a reverse. That is, black is making a play but staying off the board.

Of course, yellow can ignore both the St. Pete and the 10-off and shoot a 7 himself. Black can clear that and yellow still has a 10-off. But it gets deeper here because now the black St. Pete is useless to black because black has only the hammer left.

So then yellow ignores the St. Pete and removes the 10-off and gets out of trouble. Maybe black should ignore the 7 and go for the hide anyway?

Oh my, see, it does get complex. I'd guess I'd take my chances with the St. Pete.

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In Game of Precision, Shoot for a Specific Spot Lary Faris

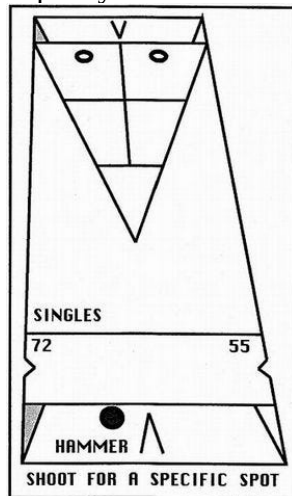
Oct 2, 2002

Shuffleboard is a precise game. "Approximatelies" and "about-theres" simply don't get the job done. Each shot must be shot at an exact speed and at a specific point.

Does that sound obvious to you? Are you thinking, "Of course you have to shoot very precisely on every shot. Everyone knows that."

Yes, everyone does know that. But everyone doesn't do it. Let me give you some examples.

When you hide do you pick out a special spot in the 7, allow for an exact amount of drift and shoot for your precise target? Bet you don't. I bet you just kind of shoot past the pilot disc and expect your shooter to float on into the scoring area, somewhere.



When you are going to the board as kitchen bait, do you shoot for an exact spot? Or do you just pick one side of the court or the other and then let it go, just aiming generally toward the 7?

When you snuggle, do you decide exactly where you want to snuggle, allow for the drift of a slowing disc and then aim at an exact spot? Maybe you do, but more likely you just shoot toward the snuggle disc and then pray and hope.

We all are guilty of the above sloppy play. We end up leaving our hides in the open, putting our 7's in the kitchen and leaving our snuggles as far apart as a divorced couple. This is nonprecise shooting. I call it "shooting approximately."

I'm certainly one of the guilty shufflers. I remember shooting approximately and loosing a match at the age of 19. Then in 1967, I missed an opportunity to make a big score in a National Singles final by shooting approximately. And not long ago, in another National finals I lost a game again by shooting approximately. You'd think I'd learn.

In the case when I was 19, all I had to do to win the match and the tournament was to remove and replace an open 8 with my hammer. It looked so easy that I just let go in the general direction of the opponent's 8. I was off two inches to the outside and rolled onto the line and lost.

In the 1967 case, I had a great chance to hide an 8 behind a Tampa. The problem was that there were two nice backstops and it looked so easy just to shoot toward them.

Instead of picking an exact target, I just shot in the general direction of the 8. I figured the backstops would catch my shooter for me. Well I was too far off and my shooter rolled to the line for no score. I finished second.

In the case of the more recent tournament final, I had the situation that I've shown in the diagram.

I had won the first game and was about to win the second and the championship. I was ahead with my opponent, yellow, at 55 and me, black, at 72. Further, I had the hammer.

My clearing shot had failed me, and when I got to the hammer, I was facing two open 7's. It wasn't a bad situation. I was relaxed, too relaxed. I thought to myself that all I really had to do was score.

It would be nice to remove a 7, but I really didn't need to. I looked at the 7's and saw them as a nice backstop, but I also thought that a shot at them could roll to a kitchen.

All those were good thoughts, but I never really choose a specific spot. With visions of a national championship dancing in my head, I just shot in the general direction of the 8 and 7 areas on the right side of the board, not really having decided whether I wanted to remove the 7's, snuggle it, or just score an 8.

With all that undecided thinking, my shot was very approximate. It was too soft to remove a 7 and too soft to snuggle. It was too hard to score an 8. What it was good for was stopping on the 7/8 line, a disaster. I lost the game (but won the third game and the championship).

Shoot precisely on each shot no matter how easy the shot looks.

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Frame Games -- Not a Timeless Pursuit

Lary Faris

Oct 8, 2002

There will always be a battle between frame gamers and point gamers. These two shuffleboard formats each clearly have a strong and unyielding following. The advocates are usually firmly positioned on one side or the other.

Of course, the big advantage of a frame game is that it will be finished in a predictable amount of time. That makes planning and tight scheduling feasible. Rounds can be set for 9 a.m., 10:30 a.m. etc.

In point games, no one can even guess how long a match will take. One hour? Three hours? Who knows? Games cannot be scheduled in advance and tournaments are invariably held up by one match that takes forever to complete.

The difference between frame and point games is similar to the difference between football and baseball games. TV networks can safely expect that football games will be completed in just about three hours. The stations love this. They can plan their programming efficiently. Baseball games can take almost any amount of time, from under two hours to over four. Networks and stations hate this and their plans get messed up.

Yet both are loved and each has its charm. Baseball takes us back to a day when we weren't so rushed and scheduled. It takes us back to a time when an event was over simply when it was finished, not when a certain predetermined time was reached.

But our world today demands tight scheduling and frame games often fit our lives better than the unpredictable length point games.

I suppose supporters of each will argue forever or at least well after I've shot my last disc or written my last column. I do enjoy both; each has its proper place.

In the International Tournament, where scheduling is a must, frame games work better. The same is true for league play and pot lucks. In the Los Angeles area, tournament play must be over by 3 p.m. or players get stuck in rush hour traffic, so they play frames. On the other hand, in major Florida expert tournaments, point games are best because they are the truest test of shuffleboard prowess.

Nowadays in Ohio, some tournaments have an either/or format, that is, 16 frames or 75 points, whichever comes first. I'm not sure about that arrangement. It confuses me but it works.

Both point games and frame games can produce exciting finishes. Usually I write about point games. Today I'll cover the last shot of a frame game.

In the diagram, the score is yellow 52, black 50. It's down to the very last shot. Of course, this means it's yellow's hammer. On the board yellow sees a black 10, a very high 10 at that. Also, on yellow's side, there is a black 8, right in the middle of the 8.

Now what is yellow's shot? He has two basic choices. Yellow can remove and replace the black 8 for a tie, or yellow can hit the 10 toward the 8 to remove both blacks for a win. Which shot would you try? Or would you find another choice?

Of course, as always, the shot choice depends on the court and on what shots have been working. But all things being equal, I'd go for the tie. I'd try to remove and replace the 8.

A good player would probably make that shot 80 percent of the time. Removing both of the blacks is iffier. A good player would be lucky to succeed 40 percent of the time.

Oh yes, while 80 percent is better than 40 percent, the 80 percent shot gets only a tie, not the win that the 40 percent shot does. Now if the player wins half of his ties, the 80 percent drops to a 40 percent chance of a win and that's the same as the other choice. Seems the shots are about equal.

I'd still go for the 8 and the tie and try to win in the overtime. But in the game that I watched, yellow went for both black scores, removed both, and won. Exciting frame game!

To Improve Your Score: 'Got Three, Get Four'

Lary Faris

Oct 15, 2002

After I walked off the court with a win, Paul Prescott asked me, "Why did you cover the 7 on that second to last shot?"

I replied, "I simply figured the way he could hurt me the most was the reverse. I wanted to cover the outside of the 7. Didn't do a very good job, did I?"

Paul went on, "How about the got three, get four rule?"

I admitted, "Well, I'm awful when I get two or three scores on the board. I just don't cash them in. But this time I did just want to cover the outside of the 7 to prevent the reverse."

Paul started to add, "But if you had another score, so what if he reverses?" But Paul's a polite guy and he then shut his mouth and dropped the subject. He had mercy on me.

The situation is shown in the diagram. Black is ahead with the score at 35 to 55. It's a doubles match, the black players are up one game, play is at the head, and black has the next two hammers.

Yellow has had a bad frame. Black is about to shoot his third disc, the sixth of the frame. One the board, as shown in today's diagram, are two black 7s and a yellow 10-off.

The 7 on the left is high and close to both lines, the 10-off is mid-deep, and the right-side 7 is in the center of the 7. The court drifts from yellow toward black.

What is black's shot? I'd shot to a location to the right of the 8 area to cover the outside corner of my seven attempting to prevent the reverse. I didn't get my block out as far as I should have and left a shot at the reverse for my opponent. His shot went too wide though and missed everything. I simply shot an 8 with my hammer for 10-off and 23 and a victory.

I was pleased until Paul started me thinking. Paul's rule, got three, get four, called for another black score, either in the left 8 or in a similar spot in the right 8. (The rule also says got two, get three.)

Now say that black does shoot to the left 8. Yellow can then try the reverse using either the 7 or the new 8. Let's say he uses the 7. He reverses the 10-off and keeps his own 7, a little wider than the black one was. Black still has the hammer and can replace the 7 but the split will be too wide for a reverse. That would give black 12 for the frame and move the score to 35 to 67. Not too bad.

Of course, yellow could have done his reverse using the 8 instead of the 7 and that winds up the same. But if yellow gets lucky and the 8 knocks out one of the 7s on the way to the reverse, things begin to slip away.

But then with the third score on the board, Paul's choice, a missed reverse (or missed kitchen for the black disc) leaves the door open for black to score the hammer for three scores and a win like I did. So Paul's choice is sound. He's a smart player.

Now wait a minute, my choice wasn't so bad either. It certainly kept me out of very bad trouble. I'm not so sure it was wrong the more I think about it.

Paul's rule is good. Got two, get three. Got three, get four. Start there. Then think a little about what shot might be even better, one that perhaps might seal a win. If you find one, shoot it.

But don't think too long. Tossing on another score always will be a good choice and almost always the best (I think).

Analyze Each of Three Choices, Take Best Shot

Lary Faris

Oct 29, 2002

Yellow is behind 61-55, but has the hammer at the head end in a doubles match. How does yellow play it? I can see three ways, three tactics. Let's look at them.

First, yellow can clear board and hope to score his hammer and then expect partner to do the same at the foot. That would move the score to about 70 to 61 with black's two hammers coming up. Yellow then needs to try to stop one of black's hammers, to stay alive for the next yellow hammers. It's a straightforward tactic and I've used it often, mostly with success.

A second commonly used tactic is simply for yellow to go right to the board, hoping to get black in the kitchen some way. Many use this tactic and it works very often.

A third tactic is to try to get two yellow scores while giving black one. That gives yellow's partner the opportunity to score his hammer for a win. That can work, too.

Which would you use? I've used all three and won some and lost some. A few years back when I was battling hard for wins, I loved to use the first option, putting pressure on myself and partner, but even more pressure on our opponents.

Because black is ahead, they likely won't try for 10s or 8s to defend against the first two yellow hammers, because they would be sitting ducks for kitchen tries. So yellow can often make those first two hammers. And it's often possible to prevent one of black's two hammers.

Then yellow has two tries to go out and win. Not at all bad.

When I seem to have a good kitchen game going, I usually try the second option, especially against a poor board clearer.

Nowadays, I have more adventure in me and I'm more likely to try number three just for the fun (provided my partner understands this.)

So in a recent match, when my opponent led with a wide Tampa, I tried to cross the center line and hide. I was hoping to hide one score and get a second score with my hammer, while trying not to give up more than one score to my opponent. But, alas, in my excitement, I shot too hard and went into the kitchen. Then my opponent scored an 8 behind his wide Tampa.

What was my next shot? (Check the diagram). The first thought was to nick out the 8, yet it was well covered. I gave it some thought and decided I could still stick to my tactic.

So I left the 8 and removed my 10-off. I surprised myself and some of the spectators. But it wasn't a bad choice since the black 8 was high and it would be hard for black to get two scores. And then, as I had hoped, black did shoot short on his try for a second hide.

So there I was with my chance to make two scores available again. It was risky because black could poke his third disc in for the second score but he likely wouldn't be successful and he might even knock out his one good 8. And if he did score two, I still had my hammer to try to get at least one out and keep the game alive.

So I took the hiding shot and would like to say I made it and won. But I have to be truthful. It was a heartbreaker as my hiding try got 99.99 percent of the way over the 7/7 line but was just not good. We had three calls, but it was on the line. Black did try for a bump and failed and I did score my hammer. My partner tried for two but only got one. We lost.

You'll Go Far to Match This Dedication

Lary Faris

Nov 5, 2002

Now here is dedication to shuffleboard. Four fine shufflers from Lee County get up early every Monday and drive to the location of the weekly Florida State shuffleboard tournament.

They sometimes drive three hours and almost always close to two hours. And when they are all done on Monday, they drive back to Lee County. Tuesday morning, the winners get up early and do it all over again.

Steve Biaggi, Jean Guy Martineau, Skip Wilde, and Ray Razor are the traveling shufflers. As I understand it, when they get to the tournament they flip coins to decide how they will pair up each time.

Once they got up early and drove three hours to Fort Pierce and flipped to decide the pairs for the day. Then, quick as an unwanted kitchen, the two pairs promptly drew each other.

I was sitting in the stands in St. Pete one day, watching some fine shuffleboard when Steve Biaggi came up to me and showed me an interesting situation. He knew how to handle it and wondered if I would agree.

I was sitting with Rosaire Biron and Chris Stutzman, both all-time greats, so I had lots of help if I needed it.

The situation is this: Yellow leads 74 to 53. Play is at the foot in a doubles match. It's yellow's hammer and black is about to shoot his last shot, the seventh shot of the frame. On the board is a black 8 on the black side of the court and a yellow 10-off, also on the black side and way over in the corner. I've shown the positions in today's diagram.

Of, course, the question is, "What is black's shot?" What do you think? Make your decision before reading on.

Let's think first about all the things that have to be considered. First is the score. Note not only that yellow is at 74 and about to go out, but also that black is just three scores from game.

Next, the hammers. It's yellow's hammer, but with play at the foot, black will have the next two hammers.

Now the discs on the board. Study them carefully.

In the game Biaggi reported on, black covered the yellow kitchen by shooting to the 8/outside line. And as a result, that shot allowed yellow to make a game winning shot by replacing the 8 and removing the 10-off with it. Obviously, black made a sorry shot choice.

The correct shot is to cover the good black 8. Yellow is then in trouble. He can remove his 10-off with his hammer or he can score an 8. Either choice keeps the yellow score close to game, but also lets the black score get to 61 with two hammers coming. While black isn't assured of making two hammers, being at 61 does give them a great chance to pull out a win.

The lesson here, I think, is to be both offensive and defensive at the same time. In this case, black absolutely must keep yellow, with 74 and a hammer, from going out.

He has done this by putting yellow in the kitchen. That's his defense. Suddenly, he must, on his fourth shot, think offense and look at his own score. Fifty-three is one of those magic numbers in our game. It says to many shufflers, "Steal a score and make two hammers and you win!"

Another message here is that there are two kinds of 10-off situations. One is a pure 10-off with no other discs on the board. A hammer shooter must either remove it, or take 2-off by scoring. The hammer shooter cannot make any points.

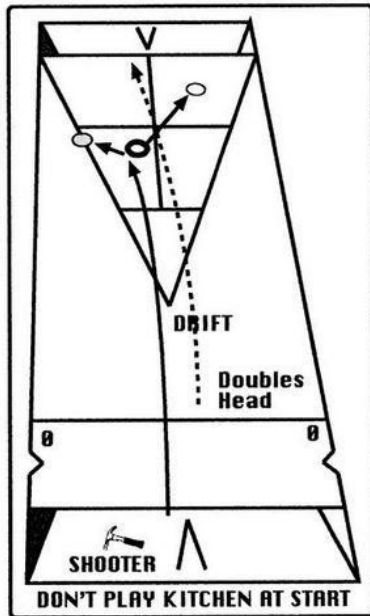
But the second kind of a 10-off is a reversible 10-off. That is, there is an opponent's disc on the board above the 10-off. If that disc is in or near the scoring area, the hammer shooter may be able to score and also remove his 10-off and gain points.

But the most important message here is to have friends and enjoy shuffleboard, just as the four guys from Lee County do.

Learning Good Timing Will Help Your Game

Lary Faris

Nov 14, 2002



"Timing is everything," goes one expression. From the Bible comes, "A time for . . ." And from Charles Dickens, in high school, I read, "It was the best of times, it the worst of times . . ."

What does this have to do with shuffleboard?

Simply said, "A lot."

Not long ago I was chatting with a shuffler who had played many tournaments with the great Roasire Biron. We talked about some of the tactics Biron had used so well.

One of that partner's favorite stories was how he noticed Biron find a spot on the court with a strange drift during the pre-game shots. He told how Biron would save that spot for use late in the game when it would make a difference in a win and a loss.

No use wasting it early in the game. Save it for a win. Timing.

I almost never try for a high 10 early in a game against an opponent's hammer.

True, I might steal his hammer at that time, but I'd give him a lesson on the drift there. Then, if I need a defense later in the game to prevent him from going out, I'd not have that tactic available. Timing.

On the other hand, early in the game it's a good idea to shoot to various areas of the court to see how they go. Even though the pregame shots have given information about some key parts of the court, those 10 shots don't tell the complete story.

I always try some Tampas early in the game. I need to know the drift at that location.

It's a disaster if I wait until late in a game to set a Tampa, only to find out then that there is a drift in that spot that pushes the Tampa to the side enough to allow the opponent to use it as a St. Pete for a hide. Timing.

Jacques Bergeron, one of the world's best shufflers, has a court chart on his wrist with a number of key locations pre-marked permanently on it.

In the pre-game shots, he uses an erasable pen to mark the drift on those key spots as he learns it from his 10 shots.

But Bergeron is a precise and very smart player. He has more than 10 spots on his chart.

So early in the game he tries to find situations where he can make a learning shot that shows him the additional spots. Then later in the game, he knows what he needs to know.

Watch him later in a game. He always has his drift figured correctly. Timing.

In the first rounds of a morning game, I almost always clear board.

Now some would want to play the board so they learn it and that's fine for them. Their approach is to find out what the board and discs do early in the game so they can use that information. Good timing for them.

But for me, in the morning I'm not yet physically loosened up as well as I need to be. So I've found that for me a couple of rounds of hard clearing is just what my shoulder needs. Timing.

Today's diagram shows a foolish shot. It's a matter of timing.

It's early in the game. The diagram shows the score as 0-0, but it could be most any early game score. It's black's hammer. Yellow has a fat 8 on the board. Of course, black's shot choice is to hit the 8 to try to replace it. But should he try to kitchen it?

Early in the game, the kitchen shot is a bad choice, especially in doubles. Here, the problem is that black doesn't have much experience with the drift in the 8.

If he tries to kitchen the 8, he is shooting slowly and will pick up as much drift as there is. Also, black may not yet be sure of the disc speed and could have a slow disc.

The diagram shows the disaster that can result. Black's hammer slides to the outside and it simply shoves the 8 to the opposite 7 and runs off the side of the court.

That is a costly lesson and, if in doubles, will badly discourage a partner.

So, save the kitchen try for later in the game when the drift and disc speed are known.

Lary Faris has played shuffleboard for more than 60 years, has won a record 14 National championships, and is a member of the National Shuffleboard Hall of Fame and the International Shuffleboard Hall of Fame, as well as the state Halls of Fame in Florida and Ohio. Questions and comments are invited and can be sent to Lary Faris, 223 Jasmine, Lakeside, OH 43440 or to 1414 Fox Hills Drive Sun City Center, FL 33573.

With Game on Line, Think Clearly; Do Only What's Necessary to Win

Lary Faris

Nov 26, 2002

An awful lot goes through a shuffler's head when deciding not only what shot to take, but also how to shoot it. Today's diagram shows a situation at the end of a very long and important match. It may look simple but I'll pass on to you the thinking that went with it.

The diagram shows what yellow faced on his hammer in game three. Play is at the foot. Yellow has 67 and black has 73. Yellow has been using tactics designed to give him an open shot at an 8 on his hammer, but is now looking at the black 7, which is a game-winning score for black.

So what is yellow's shot choice and how does he shoot it? What is the thinking that goes through yellow's mind?

First, yellow must think of the score and recognize that simply scoring an 8 will get his score to 75, but with the black 7, he'll lose 80-75.

So yellow likely is thinking that the black 7 must go. Yellow can hit the yellow 7/8 liner for his 8 and drive it into the black 7, and remove that score. That's a difficult shot, but not too difficult.

But, but, but . . . If yellow is thinking clearly, he will realize that if he simply doubles the 7/8 liner for 15, he can leave the black 7 where it is, and still win at 8280. Now doubling is an easier shot than trying to combination out the 7. So at this point yellow has done some decent thinking.

In the game, yellow shot at the 7/8 liner and his shot drifted to the right before it hit the 7/8 liner and his shooter rolled to a line. He did hit the 7/8 liner and it did push the good black 7 several inches, but the 7 remained good. Yellow lost 74 to 80.

After the game, yellow's partner jumped him, announcing loudly, "All you had to do was make the double. You didn't have to remove the 7." Oh my, how smart partners can be (and how rude). Yellow simply answered, "I know that, I just made a bad shot." And that was the truth.

So what went wrong? Later, when the disappointment had worn off, I talked to yellow.

It came out this way. Yellow knew very well that a simple double would win it. He just missed the drift. Why did he miss it? It was game three and he knew the drift was there.

The best he and I could figure out was that with all the thinking about what the score was and what shot to take and how hard to shoot it, well, it seems his brain had handled about all it could.

He simply didn't think enough about drift allowance. He allowed some drift, but didn't recognize that, because he was shooting slowly to make the double, the drift would be more severe. And it was.

The message here is two-fold. First, is to do only what is needed. In this case yellow was OK. He only needed the double to win. He didn't need to remove the 7.

The second learning is that, especially at the end, we shufflers must pause a second and clear our heads. We must, after deciding what shot to take, consider how to deliver the shot.

It's very often simply a clear head at the end that separates the top players from the average players.

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Frame or Point Games? Like Baseball-Football Contrast

Lary Faris

Dec 3, 2002

There will always be a battle between frame gamers and point gamers. These two shuffleboard formats each clearly have a strong and unyielding following. The advocates are usually firmly positioned on one side or the other.

Of course, the big advantage of a frame game is that it will be finished in a predictable amount of time. That makes planning and tight scheduling feasible. Rounds can be set for 9 a.m., 10:30 a.m. etc.

In point games, no one can even guess how long a match will take. One hour? Three hours? Who knows? Rounds cannot be scheduled in advance and tournaments are invariably held up by one game that takes forever to complete.

The difference between frame and point games is similar to the difference between football and baseball games. TV networks can safely expect that football games will be completed in about three hours. The stations love this. They can plan their programming efficiently. Baseball games can take almost any amount of time, from under two hours to more than four. Networks and stations hate this and their plans sometimes get messed up.

Yet both are loved and each has its charm. Baseball takes us back to a day when we weren't so rushed and scheduled. It takes us back to a time when an event was over simply when it was over, not when a certain predetermined time was reached.

But our world today demands tight scheduling and frame games often fit our lives better than the unpredictable length of point games.

I suppose supporters of each will argue forever, or at least well after I've shot my last disc or written my last column. I do enjoy both; each has its proper place.

In the International Tournament, where scheduling is a must, frame games work best. The same is true for league play and casual mixers.

In the Los Angeles area, tournament play must be over by 3 p.m. or players get stuck in rush hour traffic. On the other hand, in major Florida expert tournaments, point games are best because they are the truest test of shuffleboard prowess.

Nowadays in Ohio, some tournaments have an either/or format, that is, 16 frames or 75 points, whichever comes first. I'm not sure about that arrangement. It confuses me.

Both point games and frame games can produce exciting finishes. Usually I write about point games, which I favor for top tournaments. Today I'll cover the last shot of a frame game.

In the diagram, the score is yellow 52, black 50. It's down to the very last shot. Of course, this means it's yellow's hammer. On the board yellow sees a black 10, a very high 10 at that. Also, on yellow's side, there is a black 8, right in the middle of the 8.

Now what is yellow's shot? He has two basic choices. Yellow can remove and replace the black 8 for a tie, or yellow can hit the 10 toward the 8 to remove both blacks for a win.

Which shot would you try? Or would you find another choice?

Of course, as always, the shot choice depends on the court and on what shots have been working. But all things being equal, I'd go for the tie. I'd try to remove and replace the 8.

A good player would probably make that shot 80 percent of the time. Removing both of the blacks is more iffy. A good player would be lucky to succeed 40 percent of the time.

Oh yes, while 80 percent is better than 40 percent, the 80 percent shot gets only a tie, not the win that the 40 percent shot does. Now if the player wins half of his ties, the 80 percent drops to a 40 percent chance of a win. And that's the same as the other choice.

So it seems the shots are about equal. I'd still go for the 8 and the tie and try to win in the overtime. But in the game that I watched, yellow went for both black scores, removed both, and won. It was exciting.

(I know, I know, a black kitchen would also win for yellow.)

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The Frame Game -- Two Ways to Go With One Shot to Play

Lary Faris

Dec 10, 2002

Let's play frame games today. I know, most of the big tournament play in Florida is 75point games. But still most of the other games are frame games, and there is far more recreational play than tournament play.

I'm one of those who believe a 75-point game is the best test between two shufflers. Needing to reach a certain point level adds a special challenge that other sports don't have.

At the same time, I'm the first to admit that frame games are almost as good and have a special pressure when the inevitable end draws near.

In today's column I'll cover the finish of a frame game, the very last frame. Here's the setup:

It's the last frame of a 16-frame game. Yellow, of course has the hammer, the last shot of the game. The score is 43 yellow and 54 black. How would each player play the frame?

It's obvious that yellow needs two scores to win. Any two will do it. Makes no difference whether they are 7s, 8s, 10s, or 10-offs, any two will do. Black's obvious strategy is to clear board.

If he has no black discs on the board and clears all the ones yellow puts on the board, then yellow can score only his hammer, and he can't get 11 points with just one disc.

So black's lead is a very wide St. Pete. He may as well shoot it off the court but a wide St. Pete covers the far outside corner of the 7 in case one of his clearing discs hangs up there. But he absolutely must make the St. Pete wide or he will invite a suicide alley shot by yellow that just could work and get him beat.

So against the wide St. Pete (or a shot off the court) yellow must go to the board and hope for a stick or a miss. If he gets a stick, he must try a kitchen shot. But what if he gets a miss? What is his next shot then?

Some readers will have already said to cover the good yellow score and maybe have wondered why I even asked. Others may have jumped at the answer by saying, "Score a second score." So here we go, two opinions and a great debate.

In the diagram I have shown two possible locations for the yellow score, location A and location B. (Don't get confused by the diagram and think there are two scores. I'm showing two possible locations for the one score.)

Now what should yellow do if the score is in location A? What if it's in location B? Or should he do the same for each location?

It seems to me that location A calls for a cover shot and location B calls for a second score.

"How's that," someone among you will ask. It depends on whether the cover shot will also serve as a pilot, that is, will it be in the St. Pete location for yellow? If it is, use the cover.

If black nicks out the score, yellow can hide another one because of the favorable pilot. Of course if black nicks out the next score, the game is over and black wins but covering is still yellow's best chance.

On the other hand, if the score is at location B, a cover shot will be a pilot for black. If black picks out the score, yellow can't hide again. And besides, if black decides he can't pick out the score he can simply hide one himself.

So if it's location B, yellow should score a second score. Place it away from the first score but be sure to have it in the scoring area so that if it hits a line, a double is still possible.

Of course, if black clears both, he's going to win, but yellow at least took his best shot.

The Point of a Point Game Is Having a Strong Finish

Lary Faris

Dec 17, 2002

Endings in point games are often intriguing. Today I have shown the mental challenges the player with yellow at the foot had to deal with in a game in Ohio.

In his first challenge, the yellow player had the lead at 66 to black's 63. Also, yellow had the hammer. Yet, yellow was more than 7 or 8 from game and black had the next two hammers. Black led with a St. Pete.

What is yellow's response? Should he clear? Should he go to the board? Should he do something else?

In the game, yellow cleared. Then he cleared two more St. Petes, but seemed surprised when black covered the 10 with the seventh shot. Yet it was a natural, expected shot for black. So yellow couldn't try for the game winning 10. He had to try for an 8, and he hit a line.

Should black have gone to the board and engaged in board and kitchen play? Maybe. I'll leave this choice up to you. Personally, I likely would have done exactly what yellow did, but not because I wanted, or expected, to get a shot at the 10, but rather, hoping to score an 8 on my hammer, to move the score to 74-63.

My feeling is that with 74 points, my partner and I can play very tough defense even though our opponents have 63 and two hammers.

The second challenge is when the blocks come back to the foot once more. Black at the head had scored an 8 with his hammer, so now the score is 66 yellow to 71 black, with black having the hammer.

What is yellow's lead? In the game, yellow led with a St Pete. Is that a good choice? Well, on the third St. Pete, black stuck and yellow had the hide he had been setting up.

But as he looked at the board, he realized a hide would do nothing to save the game. So why had he been setting St. Petes in the first place?

With yellow behind at 66 to 71, he must go to the board, hoping he can play kitchen if black sticks on a clearing shot.

Point games present mentally challenging endings. That's why many of us say that point games are superior to frame games. Frame games have a definite place, and that's when time is controlling.

Either way, we can have loads of fun with our shuffling.

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One Error Is Followed By More, Then More . . .
Lary Faris

Dec 24, 2002

Shakespeare must have been watching the same shuffleboard game I was watching when he came up with the title, "A Comedy of Errors."

Let me tell you about two frames.

The score was 59 yellow to 63 black.

Yellow had the hammer.

Play was at the head in a 75point game. Think about how you would play it as yellow and as black.

Well, in the game, play started with yellow shooting first. But if you read the first paragraph, you'll see that yellow had the hammer.

That's crazy.

Before the frame even starts, yellow should consider the score and the lead and have a plan.

The question for yellow was how to try to use the 2 hammers to get 16 points.

Two 7s or a 7 and an 8 would not do it.

So yellow should have been thinking about shooting for a 10 with his hammer or maybe going 2 for 1 or whatever tactic he felt would work. But in no way, if he has his head in the game, does he lead by mistake.

Then, when they started over and black led, black shot carelessly to a narrow St. Pete, that is, a St. Pete close to the point, as I've shown in the first diagram.

That's another error.

Now this opened up suicide alley for yellow to try a 2-for-1 play.

Yellow could shoot down the yellow side of the court and try for a hidden 7, the very extra score he needed.

With it, the two hammers wouldn't have to be 8s to win.

Sure he'd have left black with a chance to hide, but that would have only moved the black score to 70.

But as the comedy continued, yellow cleared the narrow St. Pete and missed his chance.

Then on the 7th shot, with an open board, yellow simply covered one side of the board when he should have either covered the 10 or gone to the 7.

But alas, on the hammer, black shot right through the 8 into the 7.

More errors.

As it turned out, their partners made more errors and didn't score, so the discs came back again with the score still yellow 66, black 63.

Yellow led a decent lead, a St. Pete, and black cleared it, also a proper tactic.

So it got down to the 7th shot, with an open board, and a chance for another error.

What would you, shooting yellow, have done?

For some reason, yellow simply covered the 10.

Useless.

Yellow should be in the 10, forcing black to shoot at that winning disc.

If it's a fat 10, so what?

If it goes too long, on onto the 8/8 line, so what, it's still a hindrance.

But leaving it 2 feet above the point is . . . well, just one more error.

If Shakespeare and I had been watching together we'd have agreed the tactics were wrong, because I know he was a great shuffler.

But if I was naming his play, we'd have differed.

I'd have called it, not a "A Comedy of Errors," but rather a "A Tragedy of Errors."

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During Tense Games, Think About Tactics That Will Serve You Well

Lary Faris

Jan 10, 2003

It was the finals of a major shuffleboard tournament. There was a nice crowd watching four top expert shufflers.

All four men were friends, but tensions were high with both teams wanting to win.

It wasn't the 72nd hole at Augusta, but for these players, it might as well have been.

The score was 73 for black and 59 for yellow, first game. Play was at the head with black out, meaning yellow had the next two hammers.

The court was running well and the players were all aware of the slight drift from black to yellow. The game had been nip and tuck all the way, and as the score shows, the major difference was that black had had two extra hammers at that point.

Experienced players will see the keys in this situation. At 59, yellow needs 16 to go out, that's two 8s, or a 10 and a 7 (or an 8), or three scores.

At 73, black needs only one score to go out and also can take a 10-off and still be only two scores from game at 63.

Note that with black at 73, yellow cannot ignore a black score.

Black led a wide St. Pete. His tactic, expecting yellow to go to the board, was to clear yellow's discs, and then to try to be in the 7 on the seventh shot.

That would force yellow to remove the 7 and keep yellow from scoring the needed 8.

Of course, yellow could go to the board with an 8 and keep black from being in the 7 on the seventh shot.

Intriguing.

Yellow did go to the board, versus the St. Pete, with his first shot. He shot an 8 and black cleared it.

Yellow then changed his tactic. He decided that going to the board as kitchen bait wasn't his best choice. Even if he got a kitchen, as noted above, black would still have 63 when their two hammers arrived.

Further, yellow thought, even if he scored an 8 with his hammer, his partner most likely would face a 7 on the hammer from the foot and not be able to shoot for the second 8 and the win.

Besides, black was a great board clearer and yellow had to figure the discs would all fly off the board.

So yellow decided to take a chance.

Since he knew that the standard tactics would likely lead to black winning when their hammers came up, he felt a gamble was in order.

He decided that instead of playing for a 10-off for black by being kitchen bait, he would rather take a risk and try for two scores and thus set his partner up to use his hammer for a win.

Thus, with his second shot, the fourth shot of the round, yellow put up a wide Tampa.

It was about 3 inches wide of the normal Tampa position (see diagram). It gave black a chance for game.

With the wide Tampa and a drift in his favor, black tried to hide the winning score.

As often happens, he shot it well but his disc hung on the paint on the 7/7 line and didn't quite make it into the 7.

Yellow promptly hid a 7 on his side behind the Tampa. (He later said he wanted an 8, but shot it a little too hard.)

Now black was heading for trouble, but still needed only one score for a win, so he shot for the hide again, having a great chance to score or to hit his fist hide attempt on in or, even better, to double for two 7s and an almost unbeatable result.

But alas, his hide shot, just like the first one, hung on the 7/7 line just up court from his first try.

Now it was yellow's hammer and he had just what he wanted. With the buried 7, his score could move to 66 and now his hammer and his partner's hammer would bring a win.

And yellow did score his hammer and so did his partner and they won. (And they won the second game for the tournament championship.)

Was yellow's gamble a good one?

I think it was. With black at 73 it was time to be desperate and try most anything that might pull the game out of the fire.

Should black have tried the hiding shots?

Sure.

But he should have made one of them or he deserved the loss.

Now readers, how else might each player have played that round from the first shot on? Discuss this.

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The Shuffler's Eternal Question: 'Should I Try for an Eight or Ten?'

Lary Faris

Jan 14, 2003

Today's situation can start not one but two debates. So take it to your shuffling group and discuss it. I'm sure you will get differing points of view. But please, please, don't get into a big argument, just have fun with it.

The diagram shows the situation. Yellow has the hammer in a singles match and leads 57 yellow to 20 black. On the board is only one disc. Black had tried to steal yellow's hammer with a short 10 and his shot went too far and landed just barely on the 10/8 line, right in the middle. It's a common situation, often seen in tournaments and fun games.

The first question is: Should yellow use the black disc as a backstop or simply score an 8? The second is: If he uses the black disc as a backstop, how should he execute the shot. (And at the end, I'll have more questions for you.)

I'll stick my neck out and say what I'd do. Assuming the court was running well and I knew the drift in the 10, I'd use the backstop and try to hurry the game to 75.

My argument is that anything can happen and this game should be secured as a win ASAP. With a backstop, yellow has about as much chance of making a 10 as he does of scoring an open 8. So I'd go for it.

It can be argued that my selection makes more sense if the score is 58 for yellow and I'd agree. In that case yellow needs only a 7, not an 8, on the next hammer for the win. Yet with black having only 20, on the next hammer, black can place his last disc, the seventh of the round, almost anywhere, and yellow can ignore it and still shoot for the 8.

Now if you want to go with my choice and shoot for the 10, you can read on about how to execute this shot. If you ignored the backstop shot, you can jump to the end and forget this part.

Many shufflers would shoot softly and drift into the 10, hoping to barely bump the backstop for a 10, or even to stop a little short of it for a 10. I said many shufflers would execute the shot this way, but maybe I should have said that almost all would do it, including almost all experts. But I wouldn't.

When I have this shot, I shoot my disc harder, as if I'm trying to kitchen the black 10, but a little harder. So often I've seen the softer shot go awry. Sometimes it stops way short on the point. More often it goes a little long and drifts to the side, rolling to a line and giving black an 8. The problem here is that the soft shot may pick up more drift than expected.

The shooter has learned the drift in the 10 by shooting at kitchen speed. So I think he should shoot at the speed for which he knows the drift. He should stay with an almost sure thing.

A softer shot will almost always pick up more drift, and so often players forget that. Or even if they do remember that, they still have no idea of how much more drift there will be. So their shot often fails.

So debate the two questions.

And then here's more to debate and discuss. What if the score is 57 yellow to 50 black? Or 60 black? What if it's doubles at the head? Or at the foot?

Isn't this fun? Shuffleboard is such a great game.

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After nearly 14 years of writing weekly columns on how to play the game of shuffleboard, and how to improve your game, columnist Lary Faris has retired. A shuffler for more than 60 years, Faris has been inducted into the Florida, national and international shuffleboard halls of fame. Today's column is his final one.