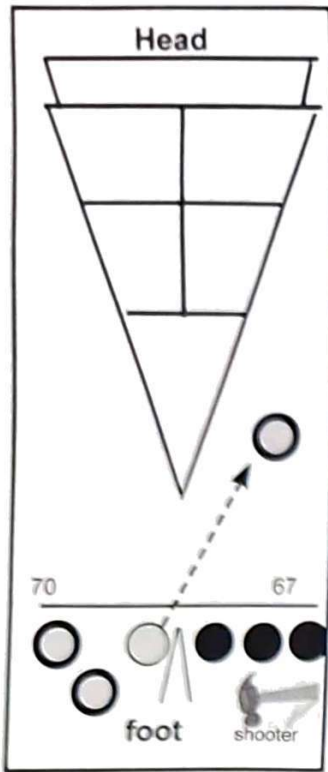


EIGHT POINTS NEEDED



The score was yellow 70 and black 67. I had the 67 but it was my hammer. I needed eight points. Seven wouldn't do. How would I get the eight?

Before the frame even began I was considering all the possibilities. Play was at the foot of the court in a doubles match. Sure, I had the hammer and could try to shoot for my eight, but I knew I'd never have a chance to do that. My opponent, shooting yellow, would most surely put his last disc in the seven. I'd have to shoot at it because it would be the game score and I'd not be able to try for my eight.

I thought about maybe shooting my hammer for a ten against a yellow seven but that would only tie the score and wouldn't be worth the gamble.

So as the frame started, I was resigned to having to use my hammer to remove my opponent's seven. My hope would be to kitchen it. Yet even that would make the score 60 to 74 and with two yellow hammers coming, the game would still be in jeopardy.

My opponent also had been thinking about my need for an eight. He knew he'd be going into the seven with the seventh disc. He was aware of the score and knew how to hold me. Or did he?

It was time to play and he casually led out with a St. Pete. I guess he didn't want to go on the board and chance getting kitchened. It was a good lead but not if he wanted to be in the seven on my hammer. Do you know why?

Right away my mind said, "There's an opportunity here." As he expected, I cleared the St. Pete, taking a chance that he'd replace it with another. He did.

Zing. I shot an eight. I left his St. Pete. I could tell by his reaction he knew he'd goofed. He was trapped. All he could do now was clear the eight and he did.

So I shot another eight. And there he was, down to his last shot, the seventh disc. This was the disc he was going to put in the seven for me to waste my hammer on. Yet he was looking at my black eight on the board. He had to knock it out. He couldn't shoot a seven as he had planned. What was he to do?

If yellow cleared my eight, he'd leave me an open board on my hammer. I'd shoot for the winning eight. If he replaced my eight, held his own, and kitchened me, he'd have some hope but I might reverse on him. If he tried that and didn't kitchen me, he would not only have given me a shot for an eight, but he'd have even left me a backstop.

He made a good choice, hitting the eight on the outside, rolling his shooter off to the side. He hoped he might kitchen my eight but it went off the other side. Now I had the board open for my hammer. I could shoot for my needed eight. I felt pretty darn good. I'd outfoxed my opponent, a masters player. There were a lot of shufflers watching and I knew they'd shake my hand. We'd won the first game and this gambit had set up a win in game two for the match.

I positioned my disc carefully. I thought about the last hammer I had sent that way and mentally adjusted for drifts and speed. Away went the disc, dead on target. I rooted it to keep going as it approached the 10/8 line and relaxed with relief as it passed over it into the eight. I was pleased that I hadn't clutched and left my shot short.

But the darn disc kept going. Why didn't it stop? The dangerous 7/8 line was getting closer and closer. ~#!&*@!! It touched that cursed line. No eight, no game, no match. Such is life in shuffleboard. We lost that game.

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