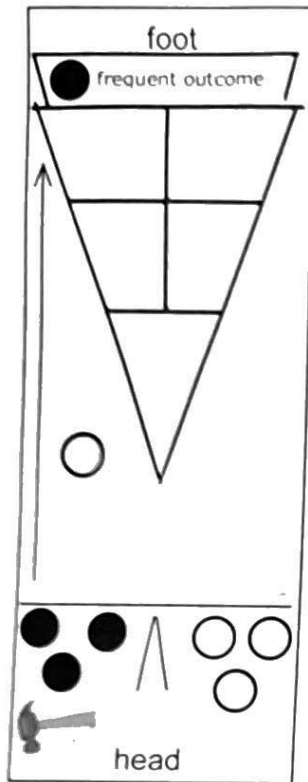


SUICIDE ALLEY



If you've played more than a couple of games of shuffleboard, you've likely heard the term "suicide alley." The name makes it obvious that it's a place to stay away from and out of.

Yet that's not the whole story. While in most game situations suicide alley can lead to disaster, there are other times when its use is appropriate. I've seen championships won in suicide alley.

Suicide alley is the path straight down the outside on your side of the court. Usually we think of it as the outside 2-1/2 or 3 feet. It comes into play when your opponent has set a St. Pete. Suicide alley becomes the path down the court on the outside of that St. Pete (see dotted line). Suicide alley is attractive because it looks like a great route to a hidden seven. It seems like it would be easy to simply shoot down this alley and bury seven points.

Yet the word alley is most appropriate here because the outside of most courts is often rougher and curvier than the middle area. Alleys have gravel, potholes, and mud plus cats and barking dogs. The outside of the court is similar if you're a careful shuffler trying to make a precise shot. The surface is bad and there are many distractions to catch a shooter's eye.

As a result of these obstacles, discs shot down suicide alley seldom end up in the seven. Often they stop short, often they drift out to the court's edge, and often they find their ways into the kitchen as if they were drawn to the refrigerator for a gobble of food. As far as the game of shuffleboard goes, that's suicide. Stay out of that alley--most of the time.

Now there are at least three situations in which use of suicide alley may be useful, and advantageous:

A player may want to try the alley early in a game. This is to test it, to get a feel for it. Usually a player shoots a little softer than needed so the shot definitely doesn't go in the 10-off. The testing shot will usually stop short of the seven and not be a problem for the shooter.

There are two advantages of this early game testing. The obvious one is that the shooter gets a feel of the alley. The other is that the opponent may fear that you're going to use the alley to advantage during the match.

As a result, he may move his St. Pete out six inches to stop you, and in so doing, he makes own hides more difficult.

A second reason to use suicide alley is when you have a big "in" drift, maybe a foot or so. With that, the discs seem to be sucked into the seven. There are several courts at Lakeside, Ohio, that just pull suicide alley shots into the seven. It's almost impossible to get 10-offs. If this is the case, use the alley, it's a friendly place.

Finally, suicide alley is safe on the seventh shot against an opponent's St. Pete. While you're leaving your opponent's pilot, it won't do him much good on his hammer. So go ahead and use the alley and try to hide a seven.

In this tactic it's best to shoot a little on the short side so you don't get a 10-off. Shoot soft and accept the fact that only two or three out of ten will be good scores. That's often enough for a win.

(with permission from Larry Faris)