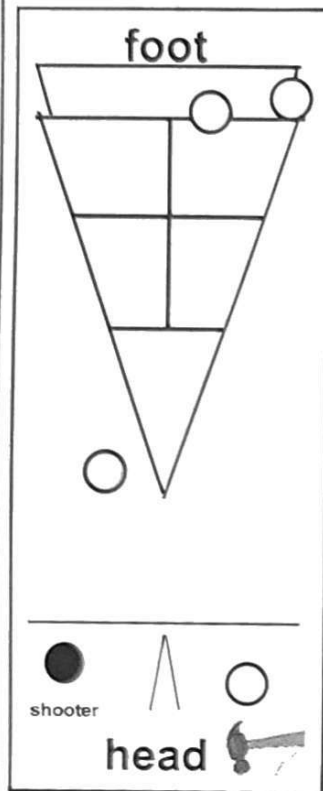


THE SEVENTH SHOT



What's the most important shot in a shuffleboard frame? Which of the eight shots is the pivotal one? Is it the first shot! The last shot? One of the others?

If I asked a group of experts, they'd likely say the last shot, the hammer. And that's likely correct because that's the one that wraps up the frame, the one that nails down the scores. The last one certainly has a major effect on the game.

Yet if you look back over a large number of my columns, as I recently did, you'll find that many of my diagrams focus on the seventh shot, the shot just before the last. I've written far more columns on that shot than on any other.

The logic works out like this. If the last shot is the one that finalizes the score, that nails it down, then the shot preceding that is the key defensive shot. The seventh shot is the one that determines the situation the hammer shooter will face.

Further, while the hammer shooter's choices are usually straightforward, the seventh shooter has many decisions to make. On the second to last shot, there are choices—good ones and bad ones. And the shot selection will have a major effect on the situation the hammer shooter will face.

Today's diagram shows a board presenting the seventh shooter with at least five possible shots. Can you find these five? Can you find more? Which would you take? Think about this before you read on.

The five shots I've identified for black are these:

- 1) Shoot down suicide alley, trying to hide a seven.
- 2) Play the yellow duck on the 7-10 line for a seven and a kitchen.
- 3) Try to nick the yellow disc on the -10/outside line into the kitchen.
- 4) Shoot a short eight or short ten.
- 5) Cover the point on the right side of the board.

These are possibilities I see. If you find more, great. (If you said to clear the St. Pete, you get a 10-off.)

Now which shot should yellow select on this seventh shot of the frame? All the possibilities I listed are decent ones or I wouldn't have listed them. Let's analyze them one by one.

- 1) Suicide alley is fine. Shoot it too short rather than too hard to avoid a kitchen. Even if it isn't made, the experience is good to have.
- 2) Playing the duck for a kitchen is dangerous and invites a reverse. I'd avoid that.
- 3) Playing the outside disc for a kitchen is a shot I love. It works only about one in five, but there is no danger when it doesn't. When the yellow disc is kitched, yellow must spend the hammer removing it and may miss or stick in the excitement.
- 4) I'm not much for shooting short 10's or eights, especially early in a game. Too often, the disc goes too deep and the hammer shooter gets a score and a 10-off. Avoid that.
- 5) Blocking up the area around the point is always good against a hammer.

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