**Decisions, Decisions**

Two teams had been playing for 2 ½ hours in a tight match. Each team had won a game and now the third game was near the end as both pairs had reached the 50’s.

Play was at the foot of the court. Black was about to shoot the hammer. Yellow had 53 and black had 58. The court was running well and both players knew the drifts – after all it was the third game.

Black looked at the board shown in the diagram. There is a yellow eight near the center line on the left or yellow side of the board. Also, there is a black seven, right in the middle of the seven on the same yellow side.

Black studies the board that has several choices but must decide which shot to try.

**Decisions, Decisions.**

This is where shuffleboard gets very interesting. Situations pop up and players must decide what to do. They must make **decisions**.

Of course, the big decisions come at finish of matches, usually at the end of a long day of hard shuffling. Muscles are tired and minds are tired. It’s a tough time to make quality decisions. But that’s one test of a good shuffler.

Further, by the time matches are getting to the end and the scores are close, the word spreads that there is a cliffhanger on court so-and-so. A small crowd often gathers to watch the excitement. And if a player notices the onlookers, there is even more tension and pressure to make good decisions.

In this game, black has several reasonable choices.

1. Black can try for a ten to reach 75 and win the match.
2. Black can try to hit the yellow eight lightly so that black scores an eight and nudges yellow onto the line.
3. Black can hit the yellow eight firmly trying to replace it with a black eight while pushing the yellow off the court.

What would you do? All are reasonable choices.

As always, shoot the shot you are most comfortable with, the one you believe you can definitely make. After three games, you should have more confidence in one shot over another.

But given an open choice, I think I would try choice 2. I’d try to bump the yellow eight onto the line and score my black. That would make the score 53 to 73, not a bad lead even against two hammers. If I don’t get the yellow eight onto the line, it’s 60 or 61 to 73. Not good, but not a disaster, yet.

There is a lot to be said for hitting the eight firmly (#3) so it goes off the board and all yellow can have is 53. I wouldn’t argue with that choice. In fact, the more I think about it, the better it feels. **Decisions**.

In the match, black tried for a ten. That’s not a bad decision but I don’t recommend it. As it happened black shot too hard and went through the 10 to the 8/8 line. That left the score of 61 to 65, not so good against two yellow hammers coming.

**Decisions**.

They keep our game exciting. They keep our minds active and alert. They make shuffleboard a special and unique sport.

