

CHAPTER I

MATERIALS NEEDED FOR THE GAME

The materials needed in this game are few: A court, a set of discs, a cue, and a scoreboard are the major items; but an eraser and some chalk will be helpful.

THE COURT

The game of shuffleboard is played on a concrete slab, 6 feet wide and 52 feet long. The actual playing area is 39 feet long, which is clearly marked off on the slab as shown in Figure 1. The additional length is divided into standing room for the players, which is 6 feet 6 inches in length at each end of the playing area. Beyond the standing area, at each end of the court, the slab should extend another 4 feet for the players' benches.

When two or more courts are constructed side by side, they are separated by a concrete alley, 2 feet wide. The alleys slope from each end of the court to a water drain at the center. Back of the baseline at each end of the court, the surface of the alleys are level with the court surface.

These characteristics of the alleys are important to the enjoyment of the game. The depressed surface of the alleys along the scoring areas stops the fast moving discs as they leave the courts, so that they do not disrupt a game on the adjacent courts. The surface-level ends of the alleys facilitate the sliding of the discs into their starting position with the rubber-tipped end of the cue, without the need of the players stooping to touch them with their hands. Back of the baselines, the alleys are regarded as legal standing room for the players of either adjacent court while they are making a shot.

The Shufflegram. In this work the scoring diagram will be designated as the shufflegram. This word, which is a contraction of the expression shuffleboard diagram, has been coined by the author. Since shuffleboard has undoubtedly

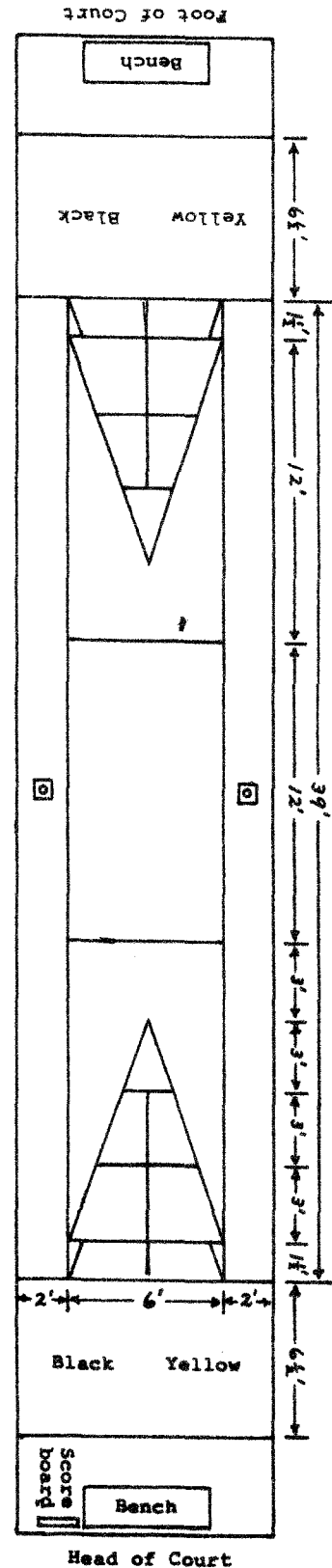


Figure 1

come of age, it is felt that the scoring diagram should bear the dignity of a name. The parts of the shufflegram are usually described as follows (Figure 2):

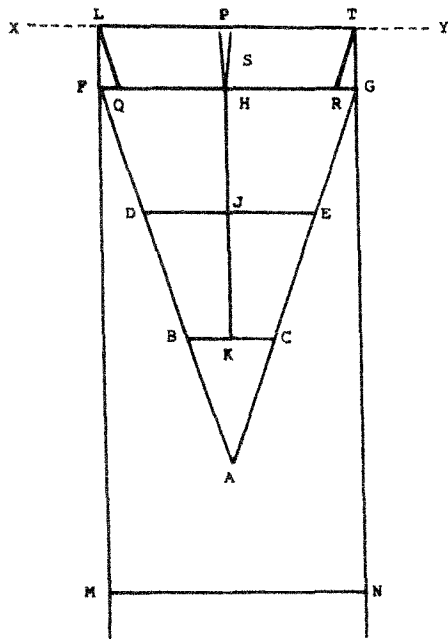


Figure 2

1. Deadline, MN
2. Apex, or point, A
3. 8/10 line, BC
4. 7/8 line, DE
5. K/7 line, FG
6. Baseline, LT
7. Centerline, KH
8. Separation triangle, 5
9. Sidelines, AF and AG
10. Corner 7, inside of the angles F and G.
11. Edges of the court, LM and TN
12. Baseline extensions, XL and TY (Imaginary lines across the alleys.)

The Shufflegram Areas. Figure 3 shows the shufflegram areas. The official names are 10-point area, 8-point area, 7-point area, and 10-off area. The 10-off area is commonly known as the kitchen. The numbers are never marked on a shuffleboard court.

To score, a disc must lie wholly within a scoring area and not touch a line. When judging a disc, the referee stands directly above the disc and looks straight down to avoid an error of parallax; that is, looking under the rounded edge of the disc. The best position to take when judging a close disc is to stand with both eyes over the line.

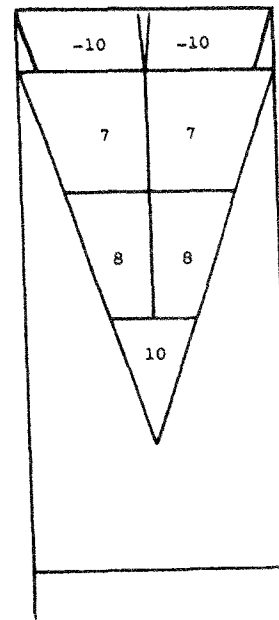


Figure 3

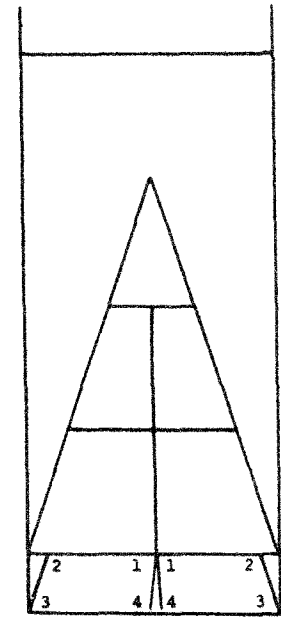


Figure 4

The referee judges the disc as scoring if he can see any amount of green court surface, however thin, between the white line and the disc. If there is no green, the disc is nonscoring.

Starting Area. Starting area and kitchen are two names for the same part of the shufflegram. When discs are shot from either end of the court, they are started in the 10-off area, or kitchen. The separation triangle, which is the division between the two opponents' starting areas, is not a part of the kitchen. A scoring disc in the kitchen gets 10 points off even when it is lying on the separation triangle. Notice that the separation triangle is a wedge-shaped figure with no base.

The discs may be placed in any arrangement in their respective starting areas as long as they do not touch any boundary line, including the separation triangle. The discs may be shot from any position within their own starting area, although the starting of a shot from the correct position is often important to the success of the shot. The corners of the starting areas are numbered in this work as shown in Figure 4. These corners will be designated hereafter as position 1, position 2, and so forth.

Most shots are made from position 1; a few are made from position 2. Positions 3 and 4 are for special situations. A player uses position 3 in preference to position 2 when he needs the width of the entire starting area to shoot

THE CUE

close to another disc to strike a target beyond, or to hide a score. This tiny advantage is sometimes important. Sometimes, too, when the player seems to have a temporary problem of overshooting the aiming point, he may start a few shots from the back line, positions 3 or 4, to minimize the risk of his shooting his cue disc into the kitchen. Usually, however, shots that are made for the same purpose are started from the same position.

Court Construction. Before leaving the subject of the court, a few words of advice may be appropriate. The foregoing description of a shuffleboard court and the accompanying drawing (Figure 1), which are far from complete, have not been presented here as an aid for court construction. The reader is cautioned, at this point, against attempting the construction of a private court without detailed plans, because anything short of excellence would be almost worthless. Too many nonregulation courts have already been built that have been a disappointment to the owners. The National Shuffleboard Association has standardized the shuffleboard court dimensions and has prepared a set of detailed drawings that is available to any would-be court builder.

However, court construction is not a formidable job even for the amateur. Any workman with a good knowledge of cement work can build a court, but the builder should understand that correct dimensions, a level surface, and a good surface texture are all very important to the enjoyment of the game, while other details are important to the permanency of the structure.

A SET OF DISCS

The simplest description of the discs is found in the rules of the National Shuffleboard Association: "Discs shall be made of composition not less than 9/16 of an inch and not more than 1 inch in thickness, 6 inches in diameter, and not less than 11-1/2 ounces in weight. New discs shall weigh 15 ounces. Four discs shall be colored red, four colored black. These eight discs comprise a set. (Other colored combinations may be used, as white or yellow, in place of red.)"

Few courts today use red discs. Yellow is much preferred anytime that the lighting conditions are not the best. Hereafter, throughout the following chapters, the colors will be designated as yellow and black.

The national rules require nothing of the cue other than: "The cue shall not have an overall length of more than 6 feet 3 inches. No metal parts on the cue shall touch playing surface of court."

Originally, cues were simply forked sticks of rather crude design and made of wood, a fast-wearing material. Their use in a tournament today would still be legal, though hardly desirable.

Cues are of two basic designs: the rider, which is rather uncommon today, and the glider. Their differences are easily recognized. The forks of the rider cue are connected by a cross-piece that rests atop the disc. The cue does not touch the court; hence, the name rider. The forks of the glider cue straddle the disc and glide along on the surface of the court.

One cue cannot be recommended in preference to the other since the players who own each of them seem to be happy with their choice. And since it seems that most players do have a definite preference for one kind or the other, the only advice that can be given to the beginning player is to try out both kinds before buying an expensive cue.

Some of the characteristics of a good cue are: Straight shaft, light weight, not too small at the handle end, and low-friction glides. Low-friction, pivot-action glides slide more smoothly and do not produce an irritating sound on the concrete. In addition to the qualities listed above, one might add that, for comfort alone, the fiberglass shaft can be highly recommended. League games are sometimes played when the weather is cold enough to make a metal shaft feel uncomfortable in the hand. Fiberglass actually seems warm on a chilly day.

Everyone seems to prefer a light-weight cue; that is, until he attempts to play a game on a windy day. Snap-on weights can be obtained from shuffleboard supply stores that will stabilize the cue to some extent in a wind. Although the weights are quite common, few people seem to be using them. The problem seems to be that a player has to readjust to the court after snapping the weight on his cue.

One end of the cue shaft is rubber tipped, and discs should always be moved around and arranged with that end of the cue. The head, or working end, of the cue should be off the court when it is not performing its basic duty in a game because high-speed discs can damage the alignment of the cue head.

THE SCOREBOARD

At one end of the court, designated as the head, stands the scoreboard beside the players' bench where one of the players in a friendly game can tend the scorekeeping. Three designs of the scoreboard are in common use.

The traditional board (Figure 5) is a grid, marked off on a chalkboard to accommodate four columns of numerals, usually with eight or ten numerals in a column. The squares along the top are colored alternately yellow and black, showing that the scores of the players of the yellow and black discs are to be recorded in the columns as indicated. And along one side of the board, from top to bottom, the squares are colored alternately yellow and black, showing which player, Yellow or Black, has the first shot in each half round.

Another kind of board, which is smaller than the traditional board and which has no color indicator, looks like an ordinary chalkboard divided into halves by a horizontal line. When Yellow is out (plays first), the scores are posted in the upper half of the scoreboard; when Black is out, the lower half. The scores are erased as the space is needed for new scores. Since there are only a few scores on this board at one time, the numerals can be made large and will be clearly visible from a distance. This scoreboard is sometimes used in tournaments.

The universal scoreboard, designed by George Merz, has been adopted by the National Shuffleboard Association as the official national scoreboard. The outstanding feature of this scoreboard is the rotating color indicator. The four adjustable positions of the color indicator are adequate to adapt the scoreboard to all the variations in shuffleboard play. They are:

Position 1. Doubles, first game. Yellow out first at each end of the court.

Position 2. Doubles, second game. Black out first at each end of the court.

Position 3. Walking singles, first game. Yellow out first at the head of the court; Black out at the foot.

Position 4. Walking singles, second game. Black out first at the head of the court; Yellow out at the foot.

A nonwalking singles game is recorded on this board by posting the scores of the players at the head of the court in the two left-hand columns and the scores of the players at the foot of the court in the two right-hand columns.

The Importance of the Scoreboard. The scoreboard gives the players and the spectators three bits of information about the game in progress: 1. The score of each player at the moment. 2. Which player has the first shot in the half round or frame being played. 3. The number of the frame being played. (If the game is a point game, the number of the round is not important.)

Simple as this information seems to be, it is of the greatest importance. Experienced players analyze the postings on the scoreboard before every shot. Their strategy and choice of shot is determined by their analysis of this data.

The success of many games depends upon the selection of the correct shot. The beginning player should accept this principle although he will not fully comprehend it until he has had some experience with the game. The beginner should strive to improve the quality of his scoreboard analysis in order to make the choice of the correct shot a habit. This means that even in a casual, friendly game one should strive always to make the correct plays. Therefore, throughout the following chapters, whenever the merits of a play are discussed, the importance of first considering the score will be emphasized.