

CHAPTER VII GUARDING AND BLOCKING

Guards are of two kinds: A protective guard, such as a cross guard, which is placed for the purpose of protecting the player's next shot, and a preventive guard, which is placed to forestall an anticipated play by the opponent. The latter form of guard is more often called a block.

THE TAMPA AS A PROTECTIVE GUARD

A protective guard, which has been mentioned but not discussed at length, is the Tampa. This guard should be placed close to the apex, but unlike the St. Pete, the Tampa is not a cross guard. The player puts it on his own side of the apex, as shown in Figure 23. The drawing shows the correct position of two of Yellow's guards, the Tampa (T) and the St. Pete (S). Black's guards would be in the same positional relationship to him.

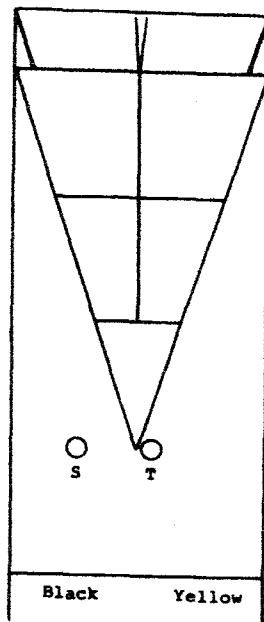
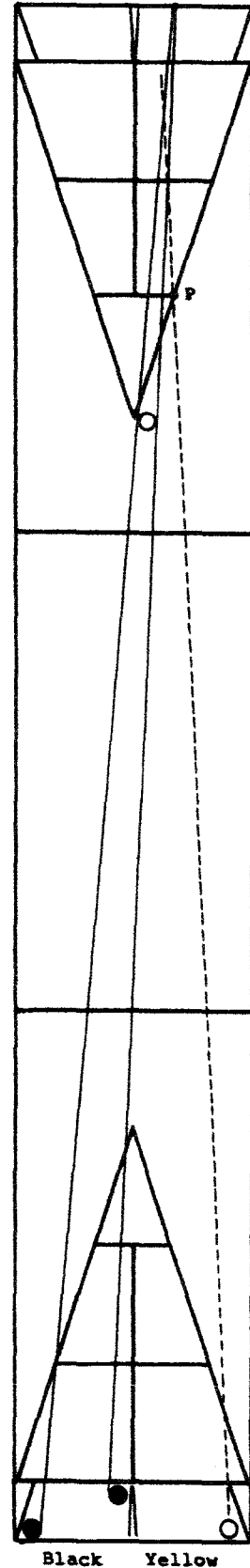


Figure 23

Figure 24, a scale drawing, shows the shape and the comparative size of the hiding area beyond a Tampa guard. Yellow has an excellent



hiding area a few inches from the centerline. To hide the cue disc in the protected area beyond a correctly placed Tampa, the player can spot his shot by aiming at the intersection of the 8/10 line and the sideline of the shufflegram (point P, Figure 24).

The drawing seems to indicate that Black can use this hiding place too, but when the Tampa is correctly placed, it is seldom possible for the opponent to shoot a disc past the Tampa so that it will cross the centerline.

However, Black would not need more than three or four inches between the apex and the Tampa to make this shot possible. Figure 25 illustrates this shot. It is a difficult shot for a beginner and a good one to set up for solo practice as it will surely develop precision. With its mental hazard, it requires real discipline of the practicing player.

By selecting the correct aiming point, the player can achieve a good percentage of success with this shot. Start the shot from position 3, and aim at the apex. Shoot to have the disc stop in the 7-area. If the court drifts toward one's opponent, this shot can be cut a little thinner, with the aiming point at the intersection of the 8/10 line and the centerline. This is not a commonly used shot, but like every other special shot, it can be very useful at the right time.

Nor can the Tampa be misplaced very many inches toward the apex without becoming useful to the opponent (Figure 26). If it stops ex-

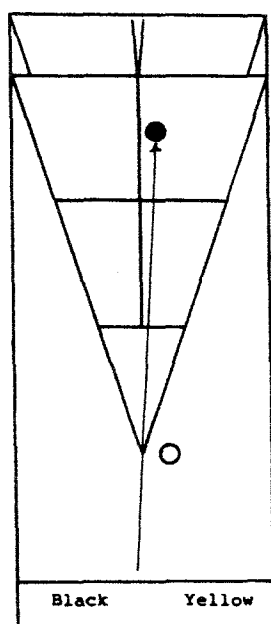


Figure 25

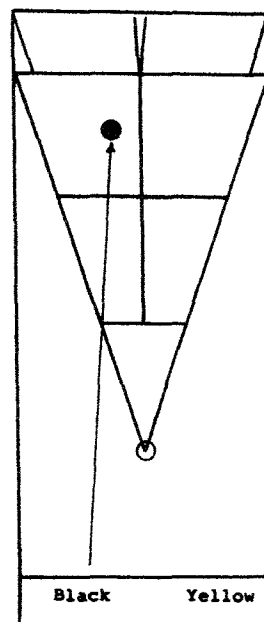


Figure 26

actly on the apex, both players have an equal hide, and in this situation the hide favors the player who gets in there first.

Now it is seen that a Tampa that is misplaced only a few inches either to the right or to the left becomes a guard for the opponent, and for this reason, a player must be very careful with his aim when he shoots this guard. Many experienced players scorn the Tampa because of this particular difficulty.

Special Uses of the Tampa. Despite its weaknesses, however, some players like to use the Tampa as an alternative shot to the St. Pete when they shoot disc No. 5. Discs No. 1 and No. 3 are shot as St. Petes, then No. 5 is shot as a Tampa. The change in the placing of the guard sometimes causes the opponent to aim carelessly, which may result in his disc sticking as he clears away the Tampa. Then the player can hide disc No. 7 beyond the stuck disc. Also, when shooting a Tampa with disc No. 5, the player gets a chance to find the correct range for shooting a high 10 score with disc No. 7, which the player intends to do if the opponent's disc No. 6 does not stick as he knocks away the Tampa.

The Tampa can be effective, too, on a drifty court. This use of the Tampa will be discussed in detail in Chapter XIV.

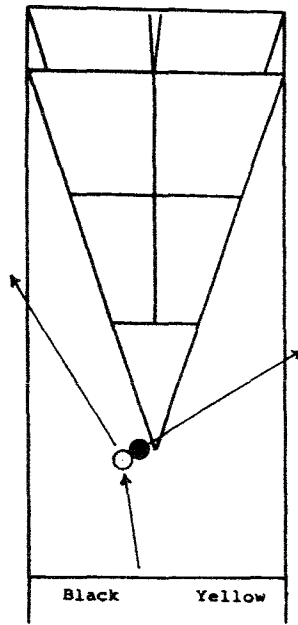


Figure 27

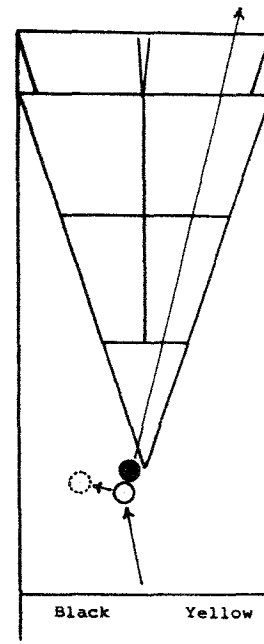


Figure 28

REPLYING TO THE TAMPA

Normally, the correct reply to the Tampa is to clear the board, but since the Tampa is so far from either side of the court, it is often difficult to get the cue disc entirely off the court after it strikes the Tampa. The shot is a greater problem on a slow court. Shooting from position 2 when clearing the Tampa, the player can increase his chances for success with this shot.

The cue disc should strike the Tampa on the side opposite the apex (Figure 27). At this angle it is easier to get the cue disc off the court, and if the disc does fail to clear the court, it will stop somewhere near the player's own St. Pete position. If the cue disc is shot to glance in the opposite direction and does not leave the court, usually it will be useful to the opponent for a hide, unless it stops at the player's Tampa position.

But there is also a disadvantage in striking the Tampa on the side opposite the apex. It is the risk of causing the Tampa to stop in the scoring area. The player must always guard against this possibility by shooting fast enough to insure that the Tampa will leave the court whichever direction it goes.

There are three things to consider when spoiling a Tampa guard: Do not drop it into a scoring area; do not let the cue disc stick,

leaving another guard as effective as the first one; do not let either disc glance to a place that will give the opponent a good hide.

OTHER RESPONSES TO THE TAMPA

The following responses to the Tampa guard must be considered as inferior shots in normal play, though sometimes there may be particular situations in which a player would prefer to use one of these shots. The new player can try the shots on an experimental basis just to become familiar with them.

Kitchening the Tampa. Some players deliberately try to kitchen the Tampa and cause their cue disc to glance to their own St. Pete position (Figure 28). The risk in this shot is obvious. If the player is behind in score and badly needs a kitchen shot, he may assume the risk, which is considerable, of kitchening the Tampa; but kitchening a Tampa just because it is there is not good playing. There must be a better reason.

Scoring in the 7-Area. A fairly strong play in this group of shots is the placing of a disc in the 7-area close to the centerline, as at R in Figure 29. This disc is not hidden, but it is a difficult one to spoil because the opponent must shoot close to the guard. The spoiling of this

score is risky with a slow shot when the scoring disc is near the kitchen. But if the disc in the vicinity of R does not stop near the centerline, this shot is ineffective.

Although this shot involves some risk for the player, the chance of his shooting the cue disc into the kitchen is no greater than it would be if he were shooting kitchen bait. The shot is sound for disc No. 6 when the opponent is shooting a Tampa with disc No. 5 to get the range for a high 10 with disc No. 7.

Reversing the Tampa Guard. Occasionally, when a player attempts to clear away his opponent's Tampa, the shot is far enough off so that the cue disc glances across the apex to the player's own Tampa position. Of course, this is a fortunate circumstance, since the player has completely spoiled his opponent's guard and has set one up for himself in the same shot. But, desirable as this situation is, a player cannot use this combination as a deliberate reply to the Tampa. The reasoning is, that since the chief argument against using a Tampa is that it is a difficult shot to make, then how much greater should be the argument against reversing the guard, which is simply shooting a Tampa the hard way. In other words, it is very difficult to control the glancing of a disc with the accuracy needed to produce a safe and useful Tampa.

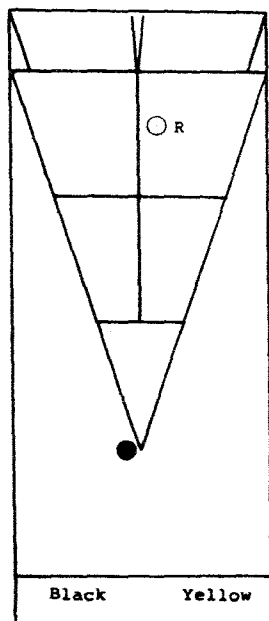


Figure 29

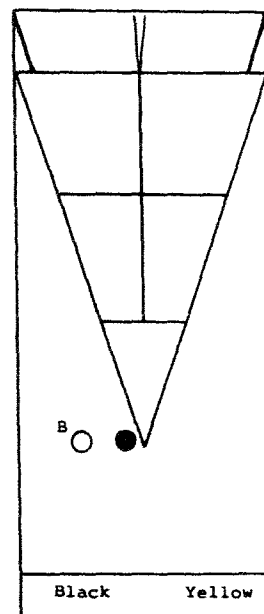


Figure 30

Filling In. Blocking, or filling in, is sometimes used as a reply to the Tampa, as placing a block at B in Figure 30. This block is placed close enough to the edge of the court to discourage the opponent from taking a hide along the edge. To the player who uses the fill-in method of replying to the St. Pete, this method of replying to the Tampa must seem illogical, since when using it, he places his opponent in exactly the same situation as he attempts to place himself when the opponent's guard is a St. Pete. That is, he leaves his opponent a chance to bunt the Tampa on to the scoring area beyond the double guard on the next shot. (See the section below on the Tampa block.)

THE TAMPA AS A PREVENTIVE GUARD

The blocking game is contrary to the concept of clearing the board. The experienced shuffler, who always plays a conservative but aggressive game, in most cases will shun the blocking technique and will vigorously pursue the clearing of the board and the using of every available hide. But it would be wrong to discredit completely a particular shot simply because it does not generally conform to an accepted mode of play. If one plays the game logically, he will always be assessing the value of special plays as they apply to a particular situation. The basic consideration

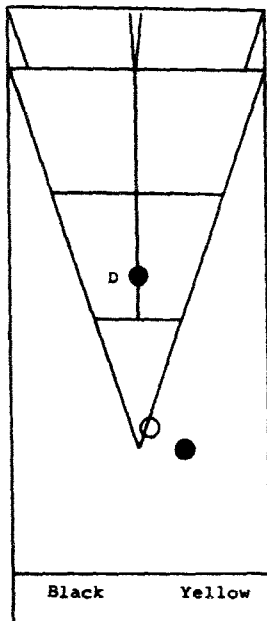


Figure 31

is the risk of the shot, and that is not constant from game to game.

The plays in the last part of this chapter are not presented as methods of playing the game, but rather as possibilities for use in special situations. There is no shot, however useful, that is acceptable all of the time; and no shot, however risky, is unacceptable in every instance. There is a place in this game for every kind of shot, though some of them are not used very often.

The Tampa Block. Tournament players seldom use this shot, though mediocre players, who always seem to have difficulty clearing the board, often use this shot as a substitute for clearing the board (Figure 31). This must be considered an inferior shot when it is used in this manner on a normal court. But sometimes, when the game is being played on a slow court, a player may find it very difficult to clear the board, even though he shoots hard. Rather than have his discs stick near his opponent's St. Pete position, he may decide to block, especially when the St. Pete is a few inches closer to the apex than normal. The player may shoot a deep Tampa (Figure 31) to block his opponent's next shot, which would be to hide a disc beyond his St. Pete. This leaves a

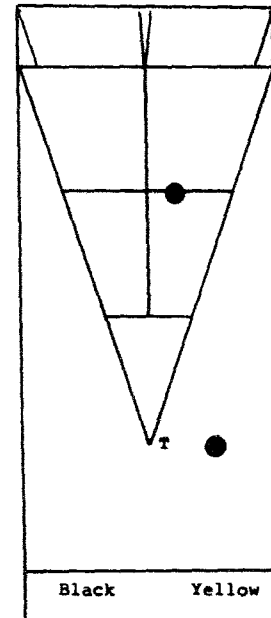


Figure 32

double guard at the apex on the player's side of the board.

The player does not expect that his opponent will leave the double guard alone, but if his opponent fails to spoil it, the block becomes a potential bunt shot with the cue disc sticking in an excellent position to reinforce the St. Pete guard.

There is one thing to keep in mind when using a Tampa block. The guard is essentially a Tampa, and all the precautions related to the placing of a Tampa must be used when one makes this shot. If the guard is placed so that the opponent can slip a scoring disc beyond it, the opponent has a double guard. And, too, the guard must be placed so as not to block the other side of the board from the player.

Replying to the Tampa Block. The opponent can reply to the Tampa block in several ways.

1. He may knock it off the board and get his own disc out of the way so he can use his St. Pete hide. This is the usual reply when the player's strategy is clearing the board.

2. He may knock it off the board and let his own disc stick in its place as a potential bunt, to score on his next shot.

SPECIAL SITUATIONS INVOLVING THE TAMPA BLOCK

Sometimes the Tampa block can be used to exploit an error. The success of the following plays depends on the misplacement of the opponent's cue disc.

The Nonscoring Hide. Figure 32 shows a very important use of the Tampa block. The attempted hide by Black has stopped on the 7/8 line. This play should now be blocked by Yellow with a disc at T, the Tampa position. This block prevents the opponent from having another chance to use the hide. If the guard were knocked away, the opponent would have a potential double. The same principle would apply if Black's disc happened to stop on the 8/10 line.

The Misplaced St. Pete. Placing a block in the Tampa position may be a more effective reply to a St. Pete that goes too far than clearing the board (Figure 33). One should study the possibilities of this shot carefully. The St. Pete should be in a position that allows room between the two guards for shooting the cue disc to the position of X or Y. Although there may be a possibility that the opponent may slip a hide between the guards to Z, the risk will not be significant because it will be a difficult shot. Very likely his reply will be to knock away the Tampa. The advantage of this play is that it neutralizes the opponent's guard and, in the same shot, it sets up a guard for the player. Probably, the best reply to this shot is to knock away the Tampa and cause the cue disc to glance a few inches to make a double guard.

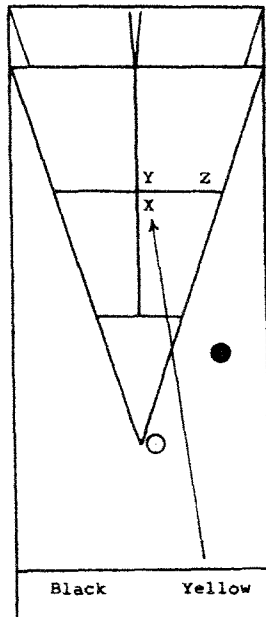


Figure 33

3. He may be able to bunt his St. Pete for a score and stick to keep the double guard formation.

4. He may place his cue disc on the centerline as a potential double (as at D in Figure 31).

5. He may, like some players who seem to be irked by the Tampa block, want to kitchen it whenever it appears; but that is always risky. It is so easy to make one's opponent a gift of seven points by underestimating kitchen speed.

OTHER PREVENTIVE GUARDS

A preventive guard may be used to forestall a shot to any part of the scoring area, but from the foregoing analysis of the St. Pete and the Tampa, it is apparent that a guard placed in any other position is likely to give one's opponent the advantage of a hide. So the player must consider the situation carefully before using a blocking disc in some other position. With a protective guard the situation is different. One places a guard wherever it is necessary to protect a score, but rather than to place a preventive guard in a position that will provide a hide for the opponent, the player should find an alternative shot.

A Nonscoring Disc on a Crossline. Two places a preventive guard can be used effectively are shown in Figure 34. When a kitchen bait, or any other disc, stops on a crossline, the usual reaction is to clear the board; but if the disc that stops on the crossline is not kitchen bait, a guard to prevent doubling on the opponent's next shot can be effective. The guard is placed in the player's St. Pete or Tampa position. The disc at A can be blocked by a St. Pete at S; the disc at B, by a Tampa at T. Then Yellow will, if given a chance, play a backstop shot against the blocked disc, A or B, to score an 8 and to send the liner to the kitchen beyond a double guard.

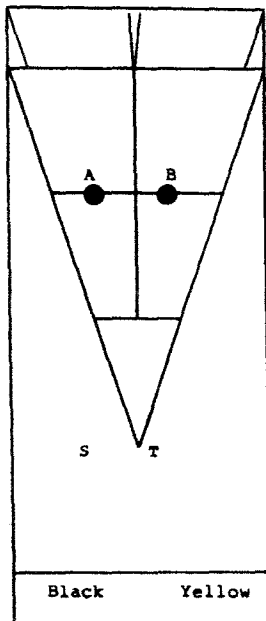


Figure 34

The strength of this play lies in the fact that the player is able to set up a guard for himself without delay and at the same time create problems for his opponent. If the opponent is an experienced player, he will not allow this play to develop as planned; nevertheless, the play is still effective in that it compels the opponent to deviate from his planned strategy.

Blocking with Disc No. 7. When shooting disc No. 7, the player may block the board. Figure 35 shows three positions at which a single disc may be placed as a block. Blocking with disc No. 7 is much more effective, however, when other discs are already in front of the scoring area. A block consisting of only one disc serves more as a distraction to the opponent than as an effective block.

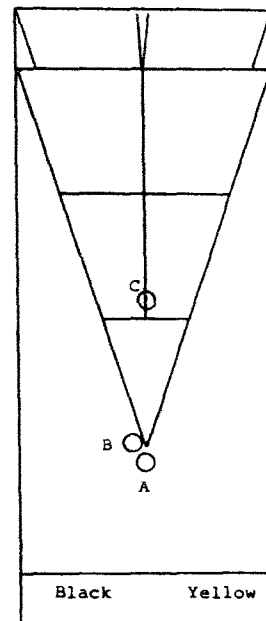


Figure 35

Blocks A and B, in the vicinity of the apex, may cause the opponent to shoot a bit wide and get a liner. If the Tampa at B is to be used, the player should remember to shoot it on his opponent's side of the board. C is a good position to use when the court has a drift in that area; the opponent may nick the guard at C, giving the player a score, or he may go on the sideline trying to compensate for the drift. The disadvantage in placing a disc at C is the danger of not getting it fully out of the 10-area, where the opponent can use it as a backstop for a certain score of 10 for himself.

When the board is clear, the alternative to blocking the board with disc No. 7 is shooting a high number, which will be explained later.