

CHAPTER IX MORE SPECIAL SHOTS

THE BACKSTOP

A player often uses a disc that is already on the board to backstop his cue disc in the area he wants it. When a disc is hit head-on, the cue disc comes to almost a complete stop at the point of contact. Usually there is very little forward movement of the cue disc after its head-on collision with the target. Figure 42 shows some common uses of the backstop. (In each instance, consider that the disc in question is the only disc on the board.) Each of these plays has been, or will be, discussed in another section. The uses of the backstop which are illustrated in the diagram are:

1. To score and clear the backstop off the board. A, B, C, or D might be in this group.

2. To score and kitchen the backstop. The same discs, A, B, C, or D, might be in this group also.

3. To reverse the kitchen. Disc E, which is in the deep kitchen, is ideally located for a reversal of the kitchen.

4. To shoot a high 7 or a high 8. The player can use disc C, if it is his opponent's disc, as a backstop to place his cue disc so close to the 7/8 line that his opponent cannot, in turn, backstop against it and score.

5. To double a score, as can be done if the disc at B is the player's own disc.

The national shuffleboard rules require that any disc that passes through the kitchen and stops eight inches or less beyond the baseline must be removed from the court immediately so it cannot backstop another disc in that half round. An example is the disc at F. If F were touching the baseline, it would be left on the board. The referees often ask the players who are seated at the receiving end of the court to remove these discs, but a player must remember that he should not touch one of these discs until the referee asks him to do so.

The backstop shot is more reliable on a slow court than on a fast court because there is less tendency for the cue disc to glance on impact with the target. The target must be hit on dead center and usually the cue disc must be moving slowly as it strikes the target on a fast court. The slow speed of the cue disc makes the back-

stop shot susceptible to any drift in that particular part of the court. So under the conditions that may exist on a fast court, backstopping may be tricky, especially in the case of a long shot.

In Figure 43, Yellow can use his own disc in the 7-area as a backstop for spoiling Black's score of 8, while at the same time using Black's 8 as a backstop for his cue disc, to score an 8 for himself.

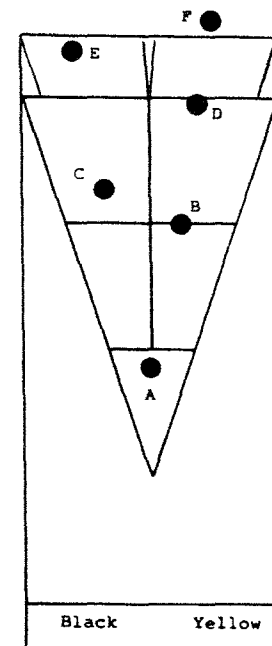


Figure 42

SHOOTING A HIGH NUMBER

The high numbers referred to here are: a high 10, as at A in Figure 44; a high 8, as at B; a high 7, as at C. High number means that the scoring disc is so close to one of the horizontal lines that the opponent cannot use the disc as a backstop to score his cue disc. A high number is difficult to shoot since, if the disc stops only 6 inches beyond the line, it becomes useful to the opponent as a backstop. And in the case of

the high 8 and the high 7, the disc becomes a good backstop if it falls short and stops on the line.

The High 10. The high 10 is a difficult shot to place, and a low 10 is easy to score against. When the player shoots too far into the 10-area, his opponent often tries, even though it may be an ill-chosen shot, to cause his cue disc to stick for a score and to send the player's 10 score to the kitchen. Many low 10's land in the kitchen, not because it is an easy shot or the correct shot, but because this shot intrigues many shufflers. This is sometimes called an up-and-down shot—10 points up and 10 points down. It is very tempting.

But, not infrequently, the player immediately regrets his choice of shot as he watches his opponent's disc leave the low 10-area and stop in the deep 7-area for a score. The shot, of course, should be made with kitchen-speed-plus, and occasionally an up-and-down shot will come from it.

If the low 10 happens to be near the centerline, it can be scored upon, and the disc can be kitched by sending it directly down the centerline, thus avoiding much of the risk of dropping it into the scoring area. And, sometimes, especially when one is shooting his hammer shot

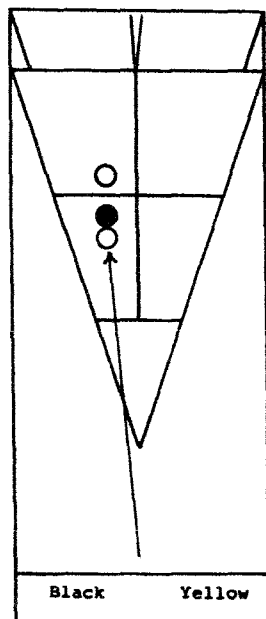


Figure 43

and there are other scores on the board, it may be better to spoil the low 10 by bunting it gently upon the centerline.

When a player chooses to shoot a high 10 with disc No. 7, it is better that his disc fall short of the score than overshoot into the deep 10. Short of its goal the cue disc will serve as a nonscoring block for the opponent's hammer, rather than as a backstop; and as a block, the disc will never find its way into the kitchen.

A disc snuggled into the corner of the 10-area on the opponent's side of the board presents the opponent with a greater problem than a disc in the opposite corner (Figure 45). The disc must be hit lightly to keep the cue disc from glancing out of the 10-area; it must be hit with precision to make a kitchen shot. The combination of these requirements is so difficult that if both goals are sought, often nothing is achieved.

The value of a high 10 is greater on a fast court as it is then more difficult to score on.

The High 8. Because of the difficulty of shooting a high 10, most players prefer to shoot a high 8. To shoot for any score of 8, the player can use the midpoint of either one of the 8/10 line segments to spot the shot (Figure 46). Since each of the 8-areas is wider at the back than at the front, shooting across the midpoint is like shooting the cue disc into the small end of a funnel. Once the disc enters the funnel safely, the sidelines are no longer a hazard since the moving disc has more and more room as it slides forward. The funnel principle is more effective when the shot is made from near position 2, toward the 8-area on the opposite side of the board. With this shot, the player's cue disc will cross the far corner of the 10-area, as shown in the drawing, and if the cue disc falls short of its goal in the 8-area, it will give the player an occasional score in the corner of the 10-area as a bonus for poor shooting.

The shot to the 8-area on the player's side of the board should be started from position 1. The midpoint of the other 8/10 line segment can be used to spot this shot, though more care must be taken to keep the cue disc off the centerline. When the center of this 8-area is used as the aiming point, scores are sometimes lost by the cue disc stopping on the sideline.

In replying to a high 8, the opponent must decide whether to attempt a glance shot to score or a kitchen shot, when scoring seems too difficult. One or the other of these two shots is almost always used when the player is shooting his hammer.

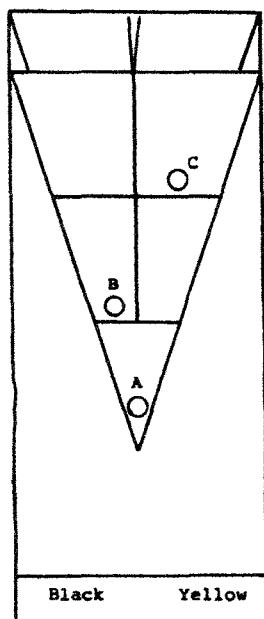


Figure 44

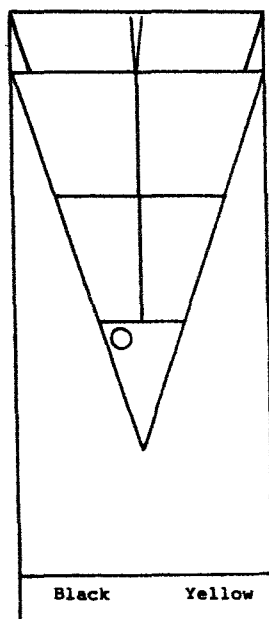


Figure 45

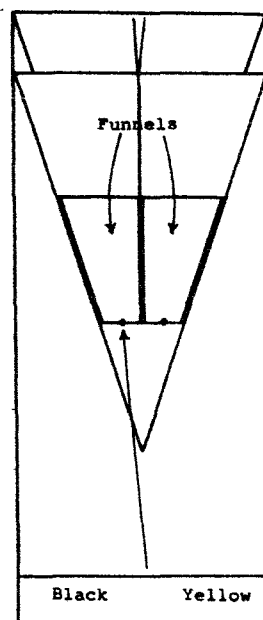


Figure 46

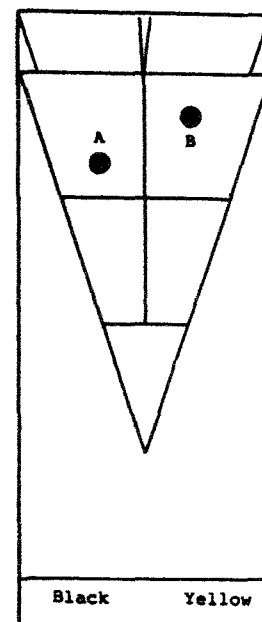


Figure 47

The value of the high 8 and the high 7 is greater on a slow court because the opponent's disc must glance a considerable distance to score, and a glance is more easily performed on a fast court.

The High 7. This disc is more difficult to place than the high 8, and the shot is seldom attempted unless a disc is already in the 7-area, as at A in Figure 47, that can be used as a backstop to insure that the cue disc will be stopped close to the line. If Yellow were to choose between disc A or disc B for an attack with his disc No. 7, he would choose A because that shot would give him a high 7, against which it would be difficult for Black to score his hammer.

The opponent finds it easier to score against a high 7 than a high 8 because of the greater width of the 7-area, but he also senses a greater danger from the near-by kitchen area.

When a player is in doubt of the depth of the space between the opponent's disc and the cross-line, as at A in Figure 47, he should ask the referee to tell him whether there is room to score behind the disc. He is permitted to do this under the national shuffleboard rules.

THE SNUGGLE SHOT

Whenever the score is uneven in a game, a half round in which both players score equally favors the player who is ahead. If a player is far ahead of his opponent, the advantage of an even half round becomes so great that the player can safely ignore his opponent's scoring disc, if doing so makes the scoring equal in that half round. On this principle lies the value of the snuggle shot.

Figure 48 shows Black's disc in the deep 7, where he shot the disc as kitchen bait. Yellow could have kept the score even by clearing the board, but, perhaps fearing that his cue disc might stick and be vulnerable to the kitchen on the next shot, he preferred to even the score by snuggling his cue disc close to Black's score, so that each player scores a 7. This play favors Yellow because he is so close to the winning score. Black cannot afford to let him have this score, but it is a problem for Black to spoil Yellow's score without doing greater harm to himself. A direct hit, even at high speed, will spoil Black's score and leave Yellow's disc on the board in almost the same place. If the shot is attempted with finesse, it may result in a fiasco,

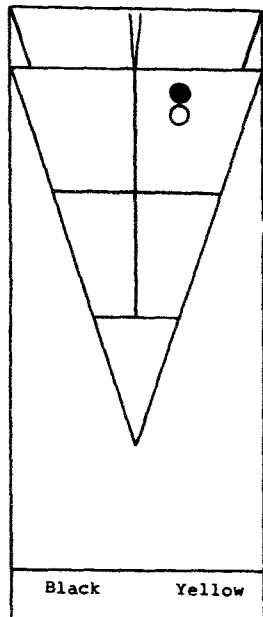


Figure 48

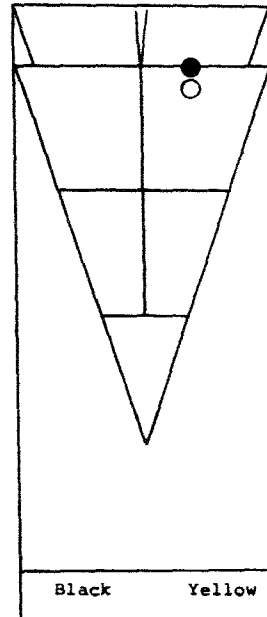


Figure 49

leaving Black's scoring disc or his cue disc in the kitchen.

The snuggle is a shot which requires a delicate touch. It can easily fail, and when it does, the result will always be less desirable than a clearing of the board; and, of course, the snuggle shot should never be used when clearing the board will leave the player in a superior position. It is primarily a shot to be used late in the game.

Beginning players may have a little difficulty deciding when to use the snuggle shot. Some, for instance, snuggle their cue disc behind their opponent's liner, or behind their opponent's disc which is just over a line. It is not so difficult to understand why these shots have no value to the player.

Figure 49 shows an instance in which the snuggle can be useful to a player who is slightly behind in score. Assuming that Yellow is behind in score and is shooting the odd-numbered discs, he can make this shot with discs No. 3 and No. 5, but preferably not with disc No. 7. There is more risk with the seventh disc. If the attempted snuggle should go too far and put the black disc into the kitchen, the opponent would reverse the kitchen with his hammer, and the player would be unable to retaliate.

WASTING A SHOT

There are times in a game when a particular disc may be a liability rather than an asset. The player may then decide to waste the shot rather than to place the disc on the board. The purpose of wasting a shot is to prevent the opponent from using the disc to his own advantage, as trying to play it for the kitchen, or scoring against it as a backstop, or using it for hiding a score.

Or perhaps the liability is the hammer that just happens to be there after the game is won. A player does not try to score his last hammer when it is not needed to win the game, because the shot can possibly fail and in some way give the opponent the score he needs to win. For instance, the hammer shot might spoil some of the player's scores that are already on the board, or nick one of the opponent's nonscoring discs giving him an unexpected and undeserved winning score; or it might bunt one of the player's discs into the kitchen, or stop of itself in the kitchen. Important games have been lost by experienced players because they failed to waste their hammer shot after the game was all but won.

The most sure way to waste a shot without in any way affecting other discs on the board is

to shoot the disc off the opponent's side of the court before it reaches the deadline. Often, however, players choose to waste a shot inconspicuously by shooting the disc so close to the opponent's edge of the court that it cannot be put into the kitchen, although it is over the deadline. One may also waste a shot by shooting the disc straight ahead so that it stops before it reaches the deadline, but one should never waste a shot by shooting the disc the entire length of the court when there are other discs on the board. One should use as much care when wasting a shot as when shooting for another purpose.

There is an unwritten rule in shuffleboard circles that demands that a player, for the sake of good sportsmanship, continue to play a somewhat normal game when he is ahead in score, and not resort to wasting shots simply for the purpose of keeping his opponent from scoring. A player might be criticized from the sidelines, for example, for shooting a disc off the side of the board, even in the last frame, simply to maintain a lead. This notion of good sportsmanship is not shared by the spectators of other sports. A team on the basketball court, for instance, does not hesitate to stall during the final seconds of a game to keep the opponents from scoring.