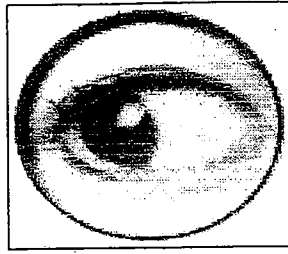


The following article was written by Dan Barlow, author of "Cribbage For Experts"



It seems that the pegging game should be the one aspect of cribbage in which the expert has a clear advantage over the intermediate player. Luck should be equal, and no one should have trouble figuring out which cards to throw to the crib. But if you've ever done any kibitzing at a tournament, you've undoubtedly seen people make some pretty strange tosses. I, myself, have thrown away many tournament games by tossing the wrong cards.

Needing a dozen to go out, with first count, in a crucial tournament game, I was once dealt 2-3-4-8-10-K. I kept 2-3-4-10, which wins if a 2 or a 3 is cut, but I should have kept the 2-3-4-8, which wins on a 2, 3 or 4 cut. Needless to say, the cut was a 4, and I pegged nothing.

Here's another boner I pulled in competition: Needing only three holes to win, with first count, I was dealt A-3-8-J-J-Q. I saved the A-3-J-J, which wins on any of six cuts, or any time I match the suit of one of my Jacks. Pretty good odds, but A-8-J-J, 3-8-J-J, A-J-J-Q and 3-J-J-Q all win on any of seven cuts, or a matching Jack. Of course, the cut was a 6 and I pegged nothing. Had I saved the A-8-J-J, I'd have been a lot happier.

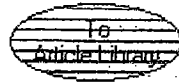
You'll probably say that these mistakes are forgivable given the pressure and time constraints of tournament cribbage, and you may be right. But what would be unforgivable would be for me to encounter the same hands in the same situations and make the same mistakes. It's not a bad idea to keep a mental or even written notebook in which you file away the mistakes you make. The same hands, situations and decisions do come up over and over, and if you learn from your mistakes, you'll continue to improve.

Here are a few items from my own file. 10-Q is better than Q-K. When throwing to your crib from a hand such as 4-5-6-10-Q-K, throw 10-Q, not Q-K. True, either way you need a Jack to form a double run, but 10-Q can form a run and even a double run without a Jack(8-9-10-10). Q-K is comparatively useless without a Jack.

Everyone likes to throw 5s in their cribs, especially your opponents, but the truth is that it's rare that he/she can afford to pitch a 5. The 5 usually goes with more than one of his/her other cards. Thus, it's a good idea to give your opponent A-9, 2-8 or 3-7 and, yes, you can even get away with 4-6 most of the time; although I don't recommend it to those with weak hearts.

Aces, deuces, Queens and Kings don't form runs as easily as the other cards. Put them in your opponent's cribs, not your own. Don't throw away points to keep from giving an opponent an A-2 or Q-K. Those aren't as dangerous as they may seem.

A lot of people always break up the points in bad hands, hoping for a miracle cut. Most of them would be shocked to learn how often the best strategy on these hands is just to save the most points possible.



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SPS 12/19/97