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Pegging Pointer #1

The Zone is proud to introduce Dan Barlow, noted Cribbage expert and player on the Zone. Dan writes Pegging Pointer, a series of articles devoted to Cribbage play and strategy. He also has a series of excellent books on Cribbage, which can be obtained from his Web site.

Purchase Books From Dan Barlow Publications

By Dan Barlow

Watching your opponent's cards during the play is a good strategy. Often you can base a key decision on an educated guess about his/her holding. For instance:

Opponent	You
K	5(15-2)
K(25)	2(27)
4(31-2)	?

Opponent has played two Kings and a Four, and your last two cards are a Seven and an Ace. You obviously choose the Seven. Opponent is more likely to be holding an Ace with K-K-4 than a Seven or an Eight.

This is excellent strategy, but don't get carried away with it. Your decision is seldom so clearcut. In fact, in most cases, when trying to determine your opponent's remaining card or cards, there will be several strong possibilities and even more not-so-strong possibilities. If opponent has shown up with a Five, Six and Seven, his/her fourth card could easily be any card in the deck, with the exception of an Ace.

In short, figuring out what your opponent HAS is strictly guesswork. But there is a closely related strategy that involves very little guesswork: figuring out what your opponent DOESN'T have. Say you hold 5-9-10-J. You lead the Ten and your opponent plays a Seven. You should now play your Nine, making the count 26. Why? Because if your opponent had the Five needed for 31, he presumably would have used it to score a 15-2.

Here's another example. Holding 3-8-10-10, you lead the Eight. Your opponent plays a King; you play a Ten for 28; and he/she plays a Two for 30 and a go. You note that opponent has played a King and a Two. It looks like he/she might have a Three to go along with those two cards, so you start to play your Ten. But wait! If opponent had a Three, surely he/she would have

played it when the count was 28. So the Three is your safest lead.

Whenever your opponent fails to peg, make a mental note of the card he/she obviously does not have. You'll often find you can use this information to your advantage.



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