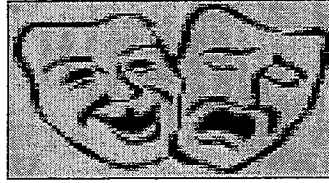


By DeLynn Colvert, author of, "PLAY WINNING CRIBBAGE"



THE PEGGING TRAPS

#3

Setting traps in pegging can net tidy sums of points and can be the deciding factor in the game. The easiest card to trap is the five, the next easiest to trap is the jack, then the ace, the 2, and then the three.

THE NON-DEALER 5-CARD TRAP

First, let's trap the 5. The most common hand in cribbage is "ten" cards combined with one or more 5's. In fact, this hand will be played about one time in four. This hand offers several varieties of traps. Let's describe the hands you must hold if you're the non-dealer and playing the first pegging card. The slickest and easiest trap: your hand must contain three key cards, 6-6-4. Lead a 6. Jake cannot play his 5 (this would allow you to score an easy three-card run) and is forced to play a "ten" card. You play your other 6... and the trap is sprung! Jake must play a 5, making the count "27". You follow with your 4 for "31" ... a run of three and two points for "31". A total of five points. Poor Jake comes up empty! This play works whether Jake has one or two 5's.

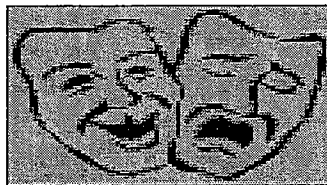
Another variation of the 5 trap; Uncle Jake must have two 5's to spring the trap so it is a little tougher to pull off. In this case, you must have four key cards: 6-7-7-"ten" (the second seven could also be an 8 or 9). Lead the second seven (or the 8 or 9), and almost certainly, Jake will respond with a safe "ten" card. You respond with your "sleeper ten" (if you're lucky, you'll get a pair for two points). If the trap works, this will be a "go". Jake is forced to lead his remaining "ten" card. You respond with your 7, forcing the trapped 5's into the open to run the count to "22". You then add your 6 for a run of three and a "go" for four.

Both traps usually net five points for you, and one point for Uncle Jake. A profit of four points pegging when you're the non-dealer is excellent, indeed!



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THE PEGGING TRAPS

#4

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THE DEALER 5-CARD TRAP

Trapping the 5 when you're the dealer: the key is at least two cards that combine with a 5 to form a run (3-4, 4-6, 6-7) and then pegging so that Jake cannot safely "dump" his 5 (or 5's) without risking retaliation of a pair or run. Let's go through one example of the dealer trapping a 5: you are the dealer and hold 3-6-7-8. Jake leads a king. Respond with your 8 for "18". Jake may "dump" his 5 here, but the odds are he will play a "ten" card trying for the "go" at the count of "28". You then play your 3 for "31". The trap is sprung. Unless Jake is a very shrewd player, he will probably lead his remaining "ten" at this point, and you follow with your 7 for "17". Jake's trapped 5 is played ("22") and you follow with your 6 for a run of three and a "go"...scoring four points. This trap nets five or six points, and results in Jake being blanked.

The trap has a good chance of succeeding if Jake has two 5's. But the odds are he will dump a 5 at the count of "18", and escape the trap. A player of lesser skill probably would not dump his 5 at this point, and would be trapped. The key to the trap is, of course, keeping the 3-4, 4-6, or in the example, the 6-7, for your last two cards to catch your opponent's 5.

This example also illustrates the advantage of keeping a "Magic Eleven". For example, your hand contains a 3-6-7-8-9-king. You are both within pegging range to win the game. Discard the 9-king (ordinarily a poor discard to your crib). The chance of a 5 trap, plus a pegging shutout (with the "eleven") make this the correct play.

A pegging tip: If your last two cards are a 5-"ten" and your opponent does not have a "ten" card on the table, and it is your lead, play the 5! You will escape any planned traps by your opponent! You will lead into a "15-2" at times, but this is preferable to a run of three (which will occur more often than the "15-2").

