



ENTICING THE PLAY

#8

THE END GAME

More games are won and lost while pegging those last few points than by all the astute play of the previous hands. Most average games are decided by six points or less. Pegging becomes critical, to say the least, in these games. There are some keys to defensive pegging (covered below) and offensive pegging (covered in next month's column) that should be basic to your game. Many of them have been covered earlier in the section on "Pegging Traps" and should be used in the end game when you're playing offensively...you need pegs to win!

Defensive Pegging

But let's start with defensive pegging. Jake needs three pegs to win the game, and it's your lead (Jake's crib). You are dealt ace-4-4-6-7-king and need four points to win the game. Keep the 4-4-7-king. The "Magic Eleven" is covered with the 4-7 combination. You have kept a small pair to lead from, giving Jake only two chances to pair your lead card. The King gives you a safe "out" card. If Jake plays a "ten-card" on your 4 lead, for "14", you play the safe king for "24". Jake's odds of scoring "31" with a 7 are cut 25% because you are holding one of the 7's. Of course, if Jake pairs the 4 lead, the game is over as you score pairs royal for six points and win the game.

This was an easy example. Many time you will not be dealt such ideal cards. The rule to remember in defensive pegging is to always *try to lead a card smaller than a 5, preferably from a pair*. "Dump" your lone jack at a safe opportunity and always play the percentage play. Count the cards that can beat you and play accordingly. Don't play hunches!

The one exception to the percentage play: you have a lone 4 (or any lone small card) and were dealt a four card combination of 6-9 or 7-8 (6-6-6-9, 6-6-9-9, 6-9-9-9, 7-7-7-8, 7-7-8-8, 7-8-8-8) leaving three cards to beat the 4 lead, and four cards to beat the 6, 7, 8 or 9 lead. Despite the one-card disadvantage of leading from the 6, 7, 8 or 9m this is the percentage play, as any good player (especially Jake) will keep all small cards dealt to him, knowing this will be your logical play...and the bias of holding small cards will out-weigh the one-card disadvantage.

If Jake is dealt an ace-2-3-4-7-king, the 7-king will be discarded. For this reason when counting your losers in a desperation defense, if a 6 or higher card is a loser by only one card...lead it! If the 6 or higher card will be beaten two more times...Don't do it! Lead the small card. The law of averages will bite you sooner or later playing hunches.

Another defensive tip: Jake needs four or more pegs to win the game. Don't get caught with one small card with the count above "21". You may be trapped into a run. Either dump a lone small card in the crib, or better yet, play it early in the peg sequence (usually the second card played) to avoid a trap. And if Jake needs five or more points from the peg to win the game, don't get trapped with a 4-5-6 as your last pegging card. Get rid of these potential losers. Especially the 5. If Jake needs seven or more points, the 5 held to the last card can indeed be deadly...being trapped into a 4-5-6 combination, or a 5-5-5.

Good defensive pegging comes from practice. Study your opponent: learn his habits. Does he always lead a 4 to a 9? Does he always hold a pair for last? Study his habits and it may be a game-saver in a tight spot. But once again, don't play hunches.



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