

## Cribbage Psychology and Logic - Lesson #5

Most of what will be discussed in this lesson is "common sense". Since some would argue that "common sense" is becoming uncommon, the class has been developed. Although we have had previous classes on hand recognition, counting, discarding, and pegging, psychology and logic may be a very significant portion of the game. Your reaction and that of your opponent, observed behavior and attitude are often important keys to successful play.

In club play, you are likely to play the same people over a period of weeks. Remember the variety of attitudes and playing behaviors as they can become keys in successful cribbage. Does your opponent initiate a great deal of chatter when playing the opening card? Is the chatter consistent when that person leads from a pair or establishes a run sequence? Is that person baiting you so that they can benefit at the end of the play? Do some players lead from the small pair consistently? Does an opponent always lead from the four spot when holding the ace, hoping to gain 15-2? In those two cases, you know fifty percent of their hand on the opening lead. This can be an advantage in further play. Do you consider your opponent a skilled player? It's not wise to take chances with the skilled player! You may take some chances with a player of a lower skill level without paying a price. Also understand that an opponent may be watching your patterns of play over time. Vary your play somewhat so as to offer a surprise element from time to time. Board position will often be the key to such variety.

## CONVERSATION

Talk is cheap! Remember your opponent may attempt to mislead you into thinking the cut was beneficial or poor. Often good cuts, good hands results in negative talk from the holder. Bragging over poor cards is also a common deception. If you accept such verbal banter, your opponent may develop pegging advantages, etc. Many players delay discarding so that it appears they have a difficult situation rather than the "pat" hand with a "no-brainer" discard. It is an advantage in the game of cribbage to keep a poker-face and cut down on the chatter. LISTEN AND YOU'LL LEARN LOTS!

## SNEAKIN' A PEEK

This refers to that person who tips the deck when cutting for the starter card so that they have the advantage of seeing an additional card in the deck. Some players will sneak a peak while you are concentrating on your discard. Be alert and warn your opponent. The rules call for a two-point penalty, the points to be taken by the non-peeker. Knowing an additional card can benefit in the pegging, may also give an indication as to strength or weakness in the crib, and also can give some indication as to type of hand nonpeeker is holding.

## MEMORY

Memory is not the factor in cribbage that it is in bridge or pinochle where recall of the entire deck is essential to effective play. However it is good to remember those cards discarded and the manner of play of your opponents.

## WATCH THE SHARPIES

Many players arrange their cards from left to right with high cards to the left. If you do this and you are holding Q-J-10-2, when you lead the jack,

your opponent knows you have one card higher and most likley two cards lower. The higher card is likely to be the Queen rather than a king and one of the lower cards is likely to be a ten-spot. If the deuce is led, opponent knows you have led the lowest card in your hand and do not have an ace. In the case, you are holding 9-8-7-6, and you lead the seven; opponent knows you have one card lower than the seven and two cards higher. The lower card is likely to be the six and one of the higher cards is likely to be an eight. A nine as the last card is a good bet also. So, if you arrange your cards from left to right with large cards to the right and your opponents know that; you are at a great disadvantage. What's wrong with just picking them up as dealt? Some folks mix their cards after discarding. Either process does not allow your opponent to calculate the makeup of your hand based on card positioning. Of course, you can tum this bit of knowledge around and take advantage of those you know who arrange their cards in order.

#### MENTAL ATTITUDE

Many folks play cards to escape from stress, pressure from life situations. Don't allow the card game to become a source of stress or undue pressure. ENJOY TO THE FULLEST! When things are going badly on the cribbage board, treat yourself gently and understand that you'll get your share of breaks if you remain positive and keep the level of frustration at a minimum. DON'T MAKE DESPERATION GAMBLERS WHEN THINGS ARE NOT WORKING FOR YOU. If you are going to gamble and take such chances, do it when things are "running" your way. DON'T COMPLAIN ABOUT YOUR BAD LUCK AND THE GOOD FORTUNE OF YOUR OPPONENT! And what's the sense in arguing if you are so inclined when losing? If losing, the best thing to do is to make some friends graciously. FORGET THE GAMES THAT HAVE BEEN LOST AND FOCUS ON THE PRESENT ONE.

Even in those cases that you sense that your opponent is superior, imagine that you are superior and have the confidence to win that game. This assumption at least should help ease tension and allow you to play and enjoy the game in a more relaxed fashion. YOU'LL BE AMAZED AT HOW OFTEN YOU'LL WIN THIS GAME EVEN IF PLAYING SOMEODY WHO SEEMS TO HAVE "YOUR NUMBER ".

If you feel nervous or exceedingly "uptight", take a short walk, go the restroom, get a soda, or in some other way seek temporary distraction. Of course, we're talking about a relatively short distraction here.

#### LOGIC

This is the ingredient in cribbage which seems to give one "X-ray vision". Once applied fully logic gives you a quick and generally accurate picture of the cards your opponent is holding and the cards not likely to be held. The better the player, the greater advantage logic can play in the game. Better players will make the logical choices. Beginning or lower level players will play hunches, make illogical choices both in discarding and pegging situations, and will be difficult cases if applying logic. Here's an example of how logic may be applied.

Your opponent's board position suggests that their play will be defensive in nature. As the non-dealer, pone leads a Queen. Immediately, you may deduce that your opponent does not have any of the small five-point combinations (A-4, 2-3) and most likely does not have a single 2-3-4 or King. Why? Except for an ace held with 10-point cards, a defensive lead would be from a small card and the king would be more defensive than the Queen. The lead from the Queen may also suggest that pone holds a pair of Queens. We're still not sure as the Queen may be a sleeper card. Logic however tells us the most likely hand composition. Let's take the fifteen for two points with the play of the five.

This will let us know if opponent has a five-spot or all large cards. It also allows us to dump the lone five-spot which can be dangerous card at end of play and if all large cards are held by opponent, we can take the 31 for two with the play of the six spot. Your opponent plays the Jack and now you know the Queen was not a sleeper card but a basic part of the hand. Since your five was not paired, there is an excellent chance that pone holds other ten-point cards, most likely another Queen, ten spot, or the ace. Remember we have not ruled out the ace possibility. As a result when pone leads the Queen at the start of second round of play, the count is advanced to 13 rather than 14 with good effect to avoid the fifteen-for-two possibility. Sure enough the fourth card held is an ace. Applying logic has given you a fifteen-two, 31 for two, and you avoided giving opponent a fifteen two once the ace was played. LOGIC IS A MAJOR KEY IN PLAYING WINNING CRIBBAGE.