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

Logic! A five-letter word for thinking! After playing several hundred games of cribbage, standard plays become apparent. You will be able to develop "X-ray" vision, a la Superman, *if you work at it!* This is especially true when playing accomplished players like old Jake, the "snake". Beginning players make too may mistakes to allow full play of logic but, of course, it works to some degree on all players.

A winning cribbage player must be able to "read" his opponent's hand rapidly. This ability is acquired through study, practice and critical observation of your opponent's habits and style of play. Surprisingly, the better the player, the easier it is to apply logic to read his game...his cards.

Beginners play hunches, make unorthodox plays and will surprise you with a poor play. These hunches and unorthodox plays, though confusing to the good player, will lead to defeat for the beginner. And despite being able to "read" the good player's hand by applying logic, the good player will be tougher to defeat. The good player's game is based upon playing the odds, applying his analysis of your game and his hard, cold logic... a very tough combination to beat. Without applying logic of your own, the consistent logical play from the good player will beat you. But, by applying good, sound logic you will, at worst, play to a stalemate and, at best, come out victorious.

Let's have an example of how to apply logic. Your analysis of Jake's board position indicates he will be playing defensively. As the non-dealer he leads a queen. Immediately, you may deduce he does not have the small five combinations (1-4 or 2-3) or any 2's, 3's or 4's, nor does he have a king (unless he has two or more queens). Why? A defensive play would be to lead a 2-3-4 (a 57% less chance of your opponent scoring on a small card lead--three losers vs. seven losers if a lone queen is led). Jake may have a lone ace, 5's or he may have led a "sleeper" queen to his basic 6-7-8 combinations. But his lead, by logic, almost certainly ruled out any 2-3-4 cards remaining in his hand.

You play a 5 on the queen lead for a "15-2". Jake plays a jack for "25". You now deduce that Jake has all "ten cards" remaining, probably another queen and a 10, with a lone ace or king a possibility. Why? If he had two jacks, he would not "dump" one here, but would "dump' a lone jack or ten card (the most likely lone "ten" card to be dumped is the jack). If Jake does have two jacks, then he also has two queens (with the queen being the first play...the safer defensive play). And since Jake did not pair your 5, his chances of having a 5 have dimmed (unless he is playing desperation defense and pairs royal would surely beat him). After seeing Jake's first two cards, logic decrees that the remaining two cards are, in order of probability, queen, 10, king, jack and ace. Since the queen play was followed by

a jack, the queen was not a "sleeper", but part of a basic "ten" card combination.

You play a 6 for "31". Jake begins a new sequence with another queen. Now logic tells you the odds are that the remaining card is most likely a 10 or a king, the next most likely card would be a jack, then the ace...and then any "sleeper" cards (6-7-8-9) or a third queen. You would then play a card that Jake would *not* logically have in his hand-- a 2, 3 or 4. You hold a 3 and a 4. You play the 3 for "13" (remember, logic decrees Jake may have an ace--if you played the 4 for "14", Jake may play an ace for "15-2").

Jake does have an ace for "14". You complete play with your 4 for "18" and a "go".

Applying logic has saved two points (not allowing Jake the last "15-2") and has not cost you, playing offensively, points.

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