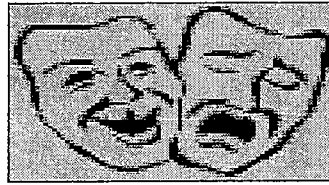**By DeLynn Colvert, author of, "PLAY WINNING CRIBBAGE"**

THE "TWENTY-SIX THEORY" (Con't)
#12

Playing the "Twenty-Six Theory," the dealer has the commanding edge in an average game, standing at 120 points after nine deals. The dealer will have first count on the 10th hand, and in control of the game. The average game gives the dealer the commanding edge...the winning edge. Of course, the odds of playing an absolute average game are astronomical, but nevertheless, the Cribbage Law of Averages gives the dealer of the first hand the edge.

Well, your thinking, so the odds are with me when I deal the first hand, and the odds are against me when I'm the non-dealer of the first hand. How do I pick up that extra 6% in winnings?

Once again, using the "Twenty-Six Theory," after nine average hands are completed, the non-dealer is seven points short of game. Seven tough points to peg on the 10th hand. The dealer, however, is one point short of game after counting his ninth hand and crib, needing but a single peg on the 10th hand, and has first count...a simple matter to win the game.

Playing to this average, the basic strategy of the game becomes apparent. The non-dealer must play offense with his very first card played in the game. The dealer must play defense with his very first card played in the game!

Why? The non-dealer must pick up an additional seven points over the average during the nine-hand game to gain the advantage. And, of course, the more points picked up over average, the better. Having first count on the ninth hand and within easy distance (less than 10 points) of winning is the goal of the non-dealer.

The dealer, on the other hand, must play defense--slow the game down--to insure counting first on the 10th hand. The dealer has nine points (+9), he can sacrifice to defense and still maintain his advantage. Remember, after counting his hand and crib on the ninth hand, he is one point short of 121, and will average 10 points on the 10th hand (non-dealers average 10 points per deal).

Of course, as stated earlier, a game rarely, if ever, runs exactly average around the board. Adjustments must be made as the score fluctuates during the game. A player may begin (as the dealer) playing defense, but may be forced into playing offense on the very next hand (if his first hand was a complete bust, scoring seven points or less). His strategy may swing back to defense later in the game if he scores a "barnburner," or if the game progresses at an extremely slow pace.

About one game in ten will run approximately average for the entire game. These are the games you must win! Whether you are the dealer or non-dealer on the first hand, these average games are yours.

And this is your winning edge! There are the games the "Twenty-Six Theory" will win for you.

The non-average games will be won by the lucky recipient of the good cards...the good cuts for the starter card (skill levels being equal). But, nevertheless, having knowledge of the "Twenty-Six Theory" will greatly aid you in winning these non-average games as well. And the old Law of Averages will give you your share of the good cards, the good cuts for starters and the pegging "breaks" will go your way as well.

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