

SUPPOSE THE THEORY OF 26 IS REALLY ONE OF 25?

As explained in earlier classes, I am the type who must test everything in actual play. I did that with 1,000 games and the results confirmed my earlier suspicions. I don't average 26 points on those 3 counts (dealer hand, crib, and non-dealer hand to include pegs). Even though discarding and pegging are real strengths of my game, I attain 26 points as an average in only 42% of the games played. Here's the amazing part. My average is 26.44. How is it possible to meet the averages expected in dealer hand size, crib, pegs and yet fall short? Now I understand why I deal so frequently just over the skunk line (holes 91, 92, & 93). Does that fit for you? And how do my opponents do? They do even worse! They achieve that magic total 35% of the games played and average 24.55. See spreadsheet "A Distorted Theory of 26." So that being the case, what can I do about it?

First of all, I'm am going to quit thinking about par holes for dealer and non-dealer and look at the cribbage board as containing four streets or legs. Street one involves the first 30 peg holes. Street two is comprised of holes 31-60. Street three embodies holes 61-90. Street four is made up of holes 91-120.

The we'll establish a critical position zone on each of the four streets with a recognition that the purpose from hand one is to enter that zone as deeply as possible. By the way a basic understanding of the Theory of 26 may cause you to grasp this concept quickly and with a fuller understanding. These critical position zones (cpz's) are 5 holes in length and occur as follows: street one, holes 17-21; street two, 43-47; street three, 69-73; and street four, 95-99. The dealer has advantage when dealing from these zones even if non-dealer is ahead by 7-10 holes if average conditions prevail in game. The non-dealer should make every attempt reach these zones prior to dealer reaching them. Non-dealer should attempt to overtake dealer on opening hand. It gets increasingly difficult to overcome dealer advantage later in game. **DON'T WAIT!**

Get deep in zone & nowhere can the effect of that be demonstrated more clearly than in that fourth street critical position zone, holes 95-99. If you're dealing from hole 95 and your opponent is in a similar position on the board, your chances of winning that game are only slightly more than 50%, from hole 96 odds of winning approach 60%, from hole 97 winning success is near 70%, from hole 98 it's an 80% chance, and from hole 99, your chance of winning given average game situations is 90%. So each of those holes in that zone add about 10% to your chances of winning. Go for the games by shooting for a superior position.

Let's also define hand size so that is clear as we proceed. A poor hand is one of 0-5 points. An average hand is one of 6-9 points. A good hand contains 10-13 points. Hands with 14+ are considered excellent. Now with this understanding of hand size definitions, we can look at board position in good perspective.

YOUR DEAL - hole 17. Where do you need to be for your next deal? Minimum position is hole 43 & 47 would be deep into that zone. You pick up a good/excellent hand (10-14+ points). What is your strategy? If holding ten points, you need a few pegs. If holding 14+, you may wish to play it safe, close the count at 31 or take safe pairs or runs. If you get into pegging, do so without offering high-scoring pegging opportunities to your opponent.

Suppose you pick up a poor to average hand? If you are ahead at this point in the game, play on as you must attempt to gain position for your next deal. You need some pegs since even an average crib will not be enough.

OPPONENT HAS DEAL - hole 17 (both players 16 or 17). You have an excellent hand with a count of sixteen points. Play on as you want to approach that second street cpz (holes 43-47). By playing on you will improve your position. You may still deal slightly short. If you don't peg, you may deal 10 holes short.

If you have a poor or average hand (0-9), play defensive in both pegging and crib discards. If you have a six point hand, you would need to peg 20 holes to make critical zone on second leg. Not likely! Try to keep you opponent at hole 30 or lower through defensive play in pegging game and crib count.

REMEMBER THE GOAL FOR SECOND STREET IS TO BE IN CRITICAL POSITION ZONE TWO (HOLES 43-47) WITH YOUR OPPONENT TRAILING.

Now you have the deal and you're in hole 44 with your opponent six holes behind. Your hand count after starter card is good/excellent (10-14+ points). Play defensively & protect your advantage. Let's assume you have a 16 pt hand and discarded a 6-7 to your crib and a five is the cut. **DON'T GIVE AWAY THIS HUGE ADVANTAGE WITH CARELESS PEGGING!** The object is to win the game; not to win the hand!

Your opponent is dealing at hole 50 and you are 15 points behind. You've got to attempt to cut this margin. Play your position first. If you have had potential for 16 points or more, **GO FOR IT.** If you play overly defensive with this point deficit, you will likely be even further behind. Use defensive play only when it benefits your game or protects your advantage.

NOW LET'S TALK A BIT ABOUT FOURTH STREET! If you are in good position, take safe pairs. You cannot afford to give up six or twelve points pegging in this last leg of the game. Giving up that many points or even 31 for 5 will often move this game to the victory column of your opponent.

You have the deal with both players at hole 92. You have a 12 point hand, average pegs of 3, and average crib of 4. This would put you at hole 111. Scoring a ten-point hand at end of game is often tough to do. Take pegs and increase your chances to win. Your

CPZ = Critical Position Zones

opponent can't get out from 92 even with a 24 hand! In this case, pegs will increase your chances substantially of winning the game.

OPPONENT DEAL - hole 116 (both players five holes from win). Object is to keep dealer from pegging out. Hold enough points to count out. Don't get cute as non-dealer and think you can peg out. **DO NOT KEEP TIGHTLY BUNCHED CARDS OR EXCESSIVE POINTS.** If you have 2-2-3-4-J-Q, hold 2-3-4-Q so that you have an escape card and in end of game pegging Jack is only 10 pt card dealer is likely to retain. Remember the dealer can give you four pegs and chalk up a win by scoring five.

OVER THE LONG RUN, EVERYBODY GETS SIMILAR CARDS. THE DIFFERENCE IS IN HOW THEY PLAY THEM. IMPROVED SKILL, BETTER JUDGMENT, AND GREATER KNOWLEDGE OF THE GAME WILL INCREASE THE AMOUNT OF GOOD LUCK ONE EXPERIENCES AND DECREASE THOSE TIMES OF BAD LUCK AS WELL. THE BEST CRIBBAGE PLAYERS ARE GOOD DISCARDERS, COUNT WELL, AND MANIPULATE THE GAME TO THEIR ADVANTAGE THROUGH BOARD POSITION AND PEGGING STRATEGIES.

Let's look at some other examples and discuss

