

GREATER TRENTON DART LEAGUE

PLAYER ENHANCEMENT SERIES

EVENT 2, February 28, 2013 – Basic Cricket Strategy

In the second event in the series of GTDL Player Enhancement Sessions, we'll focus on the basics of Cricket strategy.

Some of the concepts we'll be discussing:

- Basic mechanics of the dart-shot.
- Everyone is capable of hitting any target on the board at any time.
- The basics of the cricket game.
- Preparation for your turn.
- The start of the game.
- To point or not to point.
- Playing the game
- The extra dart

Before we start, let's just say there are exceptions to every concept above. As you play more, gain experience, build your strategy and your execution improves, you'll start to find those out and apply them when appropriate. You'll also see that some of the concepts overlap and in some cases are even contradictory. It's the concepts we want to promote, the decisions to use them are yours.

Cricket is also a very subjective, flowing game. The game is rarely ever played in a straight down 20-15 then bull fashion, but often more in a seemingly random pattern that ties together the best value of a given dart or the pattern of throwing (20s then 18s, or 19s then 17s). Cricket is very much like a chess game with no two identical games over time. There can be the sense of 'feel' at times, and a risk/reward decision often comes into play

Basic mechanics of the dart-shot

While basic mechanics are important, like any sport, every person adapts their style to what suits them. Tall or short, lefty or righty, thin or not-so-thin, good balance or not, a lot of lean or a little lean, we all find what works for us. There's the right mechanical dart stroke, but hey, we're not machines, so we have the human dart stroke, and it differs for each of us. The basics however hold true. The more parts of your body that move during a stroke, the more parts there are to move wrong during that stroke. If you can limit the amount of motion in your swing to just the parts necessary, you'll likely find a more repeatable stroke, which will then help you be consistent as you get better.

Everyone is capable of hitting any target on the board at any time

Darts is just as mental as it is physical. If you go to the board thinking you can't hit something, you probably won't. If you go up positively, it will help, and if you miss, you'll adjust your target for your next shot. Don't defeat yourself before you even take your shot.

The basics of the cricket game

The rules are simple – the first player/team to close all of the numbers from 20 down to 15 inclusive, plus the bull, with **equal or more points** wins the game. Very simple, right? Unfortunately, unlike the game of '01, where it's a straight race to the outshot, and where your opponents score has little bearing on your decisions, in Cricket, your opponent's actions have a direct impact on your strategy. While your mental ability and execution are always part of the game, in Cricket, the current situation of the game plays a bigger portion of the game than in '01.

Preparation for your turn

It's your turn, what should you do. First, check the scoreboard. Know the situation at hand. Go to the line knowing what you'd like to hit with your three darts. If, in turn you hit each one, move on. If you miss, have an idea of what change in strategy makes sense. This is no different than '01; know your shot and your likely misses. Adjust as needed. Having a plan when you step to the line allows you to stay in rhythm and routine and should help your execution. If you go to the line with three darts, and think about each one individually when it's time to throw them, you're likely going to lose that rhythm, generally for the worse.

The start of the game

It's the first turn, what should you do? I would tell you to commit to the 20's and throw them all there, even if you hit a triple 20 with your first or second (and even your first and second darts). Here are the reasons:

- A single extra 20 now, means that your opponent, right from the start needs to hit 2 extra marks during the game (or 1 extra bull). Two extra 20's now means your opponent is down 3 marks or 2 bulls. 3 20's is 4 marks or 3 bulls. A very sizable advantage to start with.
- It puts immediate pressure on your opponent.

Let's look at an example. You start and throw a triple 20, and choose to follow it up with 2 single 19s (a very solid 5 count by the way.) Your opponent can close both the 20s and 19s, and with the extra dart, throw a 19 (now the highest number on the board). You now need 5 18s and a 19 to regain the lead. If you would have thrown 2 extra 20s, your opponent would have needed a round 9 (2 triple 19s and a triple 20) to take the lead. Anything else and you'd still be in control at the start as either they would have left the 20s open for you to score, or, left the 19s open for you to close and prevent them from scoring.

To point or not to point

Points are part of the game, simple! It's also probably the most controversial part of the game, period! Everyone's opinion is different, and could even change whether you are pointer or the one being pointed. There really isn't a good answer here other than this "If throwing for points with any particular dart at any time increases your chances to win the game; then shoot points". There are times when points are unnecessary and just prolong the game. There are times when points are necessary to prolong the game. Only the game itself will dictate. As your opponent's execution level increases, you'll find that the amount of points necessary to be comfortable will increase accordingly, and your strategy may change. You should use points as a tool to help you win games -- they are part of the game.

Playing the game

During the playing of a cricket match, you always want to be in a position where you are dictating your opponent's actions. If an extra point means your opponent must go backwards first, then they aren't moving forward towards a win. If you're opponent puts you in a position that you must go backwards, you should find a way to correct that first,

and then fix the problem. At the non-advanced levels, this is the simplest rule of cricket – **Get your points and the lead, then move on.** Generally, you want to avoid chasing your opponent. Chasing means that what your opponent throws, you throw, and what they close you close. If they've gone first and close 20s, and you do the same all the way down the board, you'll lose the game. At some point you need to jump a number, and force your opponent to throw extra darts backwards before moving on. You always want to be in a position where you can shoot what you need to move forwards, and chasing your opponent doesn't allow you to do that.

The extra dart

At various times during the game you'll have an extra dart in your hand and no specific need. If you believe that a high percentage of your shots are in the single, think where that single dart has the most value to your game. As an example, if your opponent has a number closed; let's say 17s and they can score on you and you have no 17s yet. You have 15s open to score and a 15 point lead. You have one dart in your hand. If you throw at the 17 and hit a single, you still need 2 at a later time, and they can still score on you. The single 17 offers little value to the game. However, if you shoot another 15 with the last dart, they now need to throw 2 darts (if singles) to get the lead back. That's probably a better value for that dart. Of course, if you hit the triple 17 you look like a hero, or they hit the triple 15 then you need to adjust on your next three. The exception here would be if you already have two marks on the 17, and the extra dart closed the number and prevents them from pointing.