

Shuffleboards: Learning The Characteristics of a Shuffleboard Table

When I throw practice weights, I don't check lag speed, I check for breaks (right-to-left and left-to-right movement). I shoot at a speed to make sure my weights go off. I imagine every practice shot is my hammer and I'm shooting to stick a 3.

I throw as straight up the right rail as possible, and I watch to see if the weight goes to the right of the numbers, crosses directly over the numbers or breaks all the way past the numbers. Then I throw a right span and check to see how gradual the break is to the middle. I do the same with my left hand.

When I throw practice weights I'm not only checking for breaks, I'm trying to find which side of the board is lower (from left-to-right, right-to-left). Almost every shuffleboard has a low side. If I throw straight up the left rail and it goes past the numbers and the right rail stays to the right of the numbers or breaks directly over the numbers, this tells me from the end I just shot, the board is low to the right. Usually, if a straight shot up the rail breaks all the way past the numbers, my span will go right over the numbers or break a little past.

My right cross go-around is going to have more action back to the middle. If there is a weight I want to go around on the left side of the board, it's going to come back to the middle and hide better. If I want to go around a weight with left cross, I don't have to push it over there very far, because the board already takes it past the numbers. So if I want to go around a weight left cross I just want to get the weight started to the right rail and let the board do the rest of the work.

This also tells me if I need to stick a weight right cross, I need to shoot directly at the weight or a little past. If I need to stick a weight all the way on the right rail (left cross), I don't need to shoot it over there as much because the board already takes the weight 3/4 of the way across the board.

You are probably wondering why I don't check the lag speed. To me it is more important to know how to stick a 2 or 3 on your hammer, than to know the lag speed. This is my theory on tournament boards. Most of the time, whoever doesn't have the hammer, is going to try to make you play for a stick shot on your hammer. It's a new board, it's unfamiliar and that's their best chance at getting a switch hammer (means you hit and go and no points are scored).

When I throw practice weights at stick speed, if they don't go off, this tells me it's going to be slow lagging. If they never even try to sit down this tells me it's fast. When I don't have the hammer, I usually try to check finger shots, freehands and crosses. When I check spans, free hands and crosses, I'm looking for crowns and difficult inconsistencies on the board. I'm trying to find difficult spots for them to stick a weight on their hammer.

When I check shots, I shoot all different speeds. If I get into trouble, the more speeds I've checked, the better idea I'll have on how to get out of trouble with pick-out shots. Try to make every shot have a meaning.

You also want to look for dumping rails. If you shoot a rail shot and it dumps before it gets to the scoreboard, you need to remember that when you are on the other end. If there is a weight you want to go around and it's close to that dumping rail, you need to recalculate your odds for getting around that weight. It's a lot more risky.

Remember this is A way not THE way. This is just what I do and it's worked for me. Take from it what suits your game. Thank you for reading.