

## MISSING THE MARK

It is not always the best shot that wins a game. Sometimes it is minimizing your mistakes that wins a cricket match. Let's take a closer look at a couple of these shot shortcomings.

### Example One.

This situation occurred at the Lucky Strike Filters New Orleans Open earlier this year. We (with partner Rick Ney) were in the top four of the cricket doubles, into our third leg. It was a seemingly harmless situation; it looked like we had the game under control. There was no way that we could lose it, just throw three fat darts.

And that's exactly what I told my partner, who backed off a little from the line. I advised him to hit fat 15, fat 15, fat 16 and we'd win the match.

You know, a lot of times the team that wins is not necessarily the team that hits the big shots. Sometimes it's the team that doesn't make a mistake—especially as you approach a decision-making or crisis-type situation. Any good cricket match always hits a crisis and the team that emerges out of the crisis is usually the team that is going to win. That's exactly what happened here. We won the cork and started off strong, playing a good game. As the match got down to the 17-16-15 area, our opponents suddenly start hitting seven-counts instead of three- and four-counts. Subsequently our game went from seven-counts and five-counts down to three- and four-counts.

I could feel the conditions really getting tense. I sensed that both of us

were getting tight, and as I told my partner, instead of trying to hit the triple 15, if he hit two single 15s and a single 16 we were going to win the game. Shoot nice and fat singles and I'd hit the bulls and the game would be over. First dart was in the big fat *two*. Second dart out of his hand was a fat 15. So now he's facing the situation of getting the point lead with 15s (348; 378 if it's a trip 15) but leaving the 16s open and expect an avalanche of points. Or close the 16s.

At the very worst for us, they have to hit three perfect darts to win, and if they do the game's over. But here I thought we should go ahead and close the 16. We still own 15s and they'll have to hit some bull's-eyes as well.

So, Opposers went up and the first dart out of their hands was a trip 15 to close, which was somewhat of a surprise to me, I admit. I thought maybe we could get them to shoot two darts at the 15 and only one dart at the cork. Next dart, single bull, then single bull again.

Now that I look back, if I'd known the first dart out of their hand was going to be a triple 15 and their next two darts in the bull's-eye, I would have told my partner to hit the 15, as we would have needed the points. But you never know the future of the game before the darts are shot.

So I walked up to the line needing to hit four bulls. I figured if I could put

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all three darts in the bull's-eye, one of them is going to score in the double and we would win the match. That was precisely my thought as I approached the line. First dart, single bull; the second and third dart were the same ... we lost the game.

The reason we lost this game, as some people said, was because we should have banged on the 15. Well, of course you're right — now. If they only hit two bulls after tripping the 15, yes, the chances are. ... But the way I look at it, that's not what beat us. Strategy is not what beat us. What beat us in this situation was that we made a mistake by missing one of the fat darts that we were supposed to hit—that, and a little bit of bad luck. I mean, if you put three darts in the bull, at least 51 percent of the time one of them is going to pop in there for a double bull.

Even the best-laid plans sometimes go a' fault, and this was certainly one of those times.

### Example Two.

This circumstance came about in the finals of the cricket doubles at the Sportcraft Dallas International Darts Classic. It was my shot, and the way I looked at it, the shot to take was bull, bull, bull to win the game.

This was a nice, tight match all the way down, and really, we had the game in hand at all times. And it's another match where I don't think the strategy beat us; it was just failure of execution.

Normally, in order to execute, you

have to have confidence in your game. Another very important point here is that you have to know the limits of your game. In a predicament such as this where there is a whole lot of pressure, if you don't hit the three bulls you can pretty much count on the game being over.

If you hit the first two darts in the bull, you're committed to throw the third dart at the bull as well. If one of your darts is going to miss here, you want it to be your first dart, because that leaves you two darts to go at the 17 for additional points. One 17, if you look, doesn't help you one bit. But two 17s *do* help.

So after having given it a little thought—more thought than the situation deserved, because I normally shoot the three darts at the bull for the match—I pretty much made up my mind to do just that.

But ... Rick wanted me to shoot 17s, which put me in a compromising situation. You want to shoot what your partner wants you to shoot, but if you believe you can hit the shot to end the game, you almost feel that you

deserve to give the game that shot.

So that's how I approached it: I believed I could hit the three darts into the bull's-eye and that is the way I shot it. The first dart went in, the second dart in. The third dart should have been in, but it caught a piece of the flight and slipped into the other side of the wire. So I went from hero to a bum in a matter of microseconds.

To me, *that is* still the way to shoot it. On the other hand, a big triple 17 with the first dart would have made the situation a whole lot better—but like I said, you must know the limits of your game and I know three darts is well within my limit, so I took the shot and I missed. It cost us the game, but we still rallied and came back the next two games to win the match.

The big point of these two examples is that it is not always the best player or doubles team that wins a cricket

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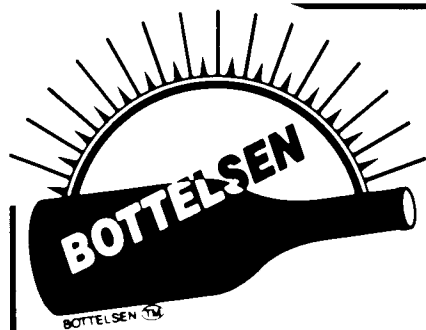
match. And it's not always the guy who hits the big shot that wins.

I think a lot of cricket matches, as I said before, approach a crisis point in the 16 and 15 area and then it's during that particular turn that the person who doesn't make a mistake either by shot execution or strategy usually comes out the winner.

Hitting a three-count doesn't seem like much at the time, but when you are tip-toeing on a tight rope a three-count can be an awfully big shot. To miss that three-count by just one dart will often knock you off that tight rope.

The mistake? Even though a big shot wasn't demanded here, our inability to hit them at that point in the game cost us that first match. But the second lesson to learn here comes from our second match and its eventual outcome. Do not let mistakes haunt your game. Let'em go, a decision was made, the shot was taken.

You just aren't going to win every game. ... That's just the nature of a cricket match and if the best team always won, then nobody would play.



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