

# Tony Payne's Thermonuclear Cricket

RE-LAUNCHED



## CRICKET PRIMER: BOUNCE OUTS, COMFORT SHOT AND POINTING

**Part 6** – Reprinted from: Nov/Dec 1986, Volume VI, Issue 6

**Question:** The Wires have not been treating me very well in this game. After my opponent closed 20s, I closed the 19s. His six-count on the on the 19s and 18s forced me to go for the 17s, and I bounced two darts after singling the 17 on my first dart. Next, he closed the 17s, and my outlook is not too cherry. I'm not really throwing all that bad, but I'm in this fix due to a combination of evil luck and really good shooting by my opponent. Outside of giving up, what are my options?

| OPENER | CRICKET | OPPOSER |
|--------|---------|---------|
|        | 20      |         |
|        | 19      |         |
|        | 18      |         |
|        | 17      | /       |
|        | 16      |         |
|        | 15      |         |
|        | B       | ?       |

**Tony:** Bounce outs do have a demoralizing effect on darters, but through experience, I've found that, strangely enough, bounce outs tend to even out between players in a match. I've noticed that if I bounce a dart, my opponent will

usually bounce one too, right in the same match. Now obviously you've got yourself in a hole here, and it's going to take some luck to get yourself out of it. In fact, your opponent is going to have to help you out of that hole if you're going to get back into this game.

Normally when I've found myself down by this kind of margin, I admit to myself that I have nothing to lose. It's time for all-out darts, and just acknowledging this to myself seems to lift my spirits, and I start to crank it up.

If I were in your shoes, I'd go strat for the bullseye and try to hit at least three, four, five or six corks. You can expect your opponent to go for 16s, 15s and then bulls. If he really respects your bull hitting potential, he may decide to close down the cork. This would be the best thing for you, providing he hits one one or two. If he closes the bull, you're really in a bind. Fifteens and 16s become your only available option. Point a bunch and hope you create enough time that you can go back and close your 17s, 18s and 20s.

The important thing here is **don't give up!** I've come out of the grave to win like this, and you can too. Remember, sometimes when a player gets a big lead on you, they tend to have a lapse in concentration and shoot a round where they hit nothing.

So, shoot your bullseyes and hope your opponent does not close the cork. If he doesn't, bang on them again for everything they're worth. Try to get him to close that bull. If he does close behind you, go to 16s. Bang them for all they're worth. Try to get points there, then 15s. Hope you create enough of a point lead to allow yourself six darts to close the 17s, 18s and 20s. If you only get three darts at those pies, you'd better throw three perfect ones. With six shots, you have a good chance to win the game.

Good luck. Next time, if I were you, I'd by some 'no-bounce' darts and then you won't have to worry about those bounce outs...

**Question:** My opponent and I are pretty evenly matched, averaging about 2.5 - 3 marks a turn. But at my second up, I threw a no-count and now I'm down by four marks overall. Should I go ahead and close up the 20s and take a shot at triple 19? Then, with just two darts, I'd be even and back in the position of going ahead.

**Tony:** If you feel most comfortable closing

the 20 and the 19, then those shots are probably the ones you are going to execute the best. When I started playing doubles with John Kramer, almost a year ago now (*back in 1985*), I noticed that when we were playing Cricket and I was trying to shoot the *Thermonuclear* strategy and he was trying to shoot his traditional game, my game fell a little bit and his did too. The reason is that I was forcing him to throw at numbers he was not particularly comfortable with, and I was doing the same thing in response to his strategy. Our execution suffered because we were not throwing at numbers we wanted to throw at. I find this is true with all darters. If you're throwing a strategy you're not comfortable with, you can not execute at the same level you would if you were throwing 'your' game.

| OPENER | CRICKET | OPPOSER |
|--------|---------|---------|
|        | 20      | X       |
|        | 19      |         |
|        | 18      |         |
|        | 17      |         |
|        | 16      |         |
|        | 15      |         |
|        | B       | ?       |

The important thing is to throw a smart strategy and be comfortable with it...not just to 'buy' into *Thermonuclear* strategy because it's mine.

When you are throwing the darts at your opponent's numbers (one's he's already closed), you are not going to get full dart value out of any trips you hit.

What you need to do is to familiarize yourself with a smart strategy, make friends with it,

adjust to it, and then you'll see your execution improve.

In the game you've described here, if you close the 20 and trip the 19 and with your third dart actually trip the 17—the absolutely the best thing you could do—all you've really done is make the game close to even.







In my opinion, with your opponent having two numbers he can openly point on you, you need to grab yourself a number so you can retaliate *if* he chooses to point. So, I say go for the 17s right here. Hit four 17s with your first two darts and pop a single 20 to close up that wedge. Then, if opposer elects to point you on the 19s, you retaliate with points on 17. If he close's 17s instead, you go to 16s.

It seems important to me that at this point, if he has a number open on you to point with, you should keep at least one number to retaliate with. As the game proceeds, he may try to surprize you with a big round of points. If, at that juncture, you don't have a number to point back on, you have to build a number for points purposes. For intance, if he hits a four count against you, you have to come up with a round of at least seven (three to close that new number and four to point) just to get back into the match.

So the situation is kind of like nuclear terror. You know: we aren't going to bomb the Russians because we know the Russians will bomb us back. Pointing in Cricket is sometimes like that: sometimes you do not point because you know you're going to get pointed right back.

Now, of course, if you could gain first strike capability without fear of retaliation, then that's the time to nuke him!

**Question:** My scores are on the right in this game (I'm the Opposer), and I seem to be playing follow-the-leader with my opponent (the Opener). But I'm executing a little bit better than she is. My question is, do I continue with this pattern with the 17s, 16s, etcetera, or is there something else I should be aware of?

| OPENER  |    | CRICKET   |  | OPPOSER |   |
|---|----|---|--|---------|---|
|  | 20 |  |  |         |   |
| X   | 19 |  |  |         |   |
|  | 18 |  |  |         |   |
| X   | 17 |   |  |         |   |
|   | 16 |   |  |         |   |
|   | 15 |   |  |         |   |
|   | B  |   |  |         |  |

**Tony:** I never follow the other shooter unless I'm forced to. I hate to follow. The darn thing about following is that you are giving your opponent

the initiative. This means she's always shooting at open numbers, and everything she hits is going to be worth full dart value. Whereas, if you're shooting behind her on closed numbers and you hit a single and hit another single and *then* hit a triple, you're only going to get the value of three darts, not the five-count you're entitled to. To me, this seems dumb. Playing behind the other guy isn't right unless you feel you are a superior player...and that's exactly what you say you feel right now. She's closed the 20s and you walk up behind her and close the 20s. She hits two 19s and you close them. She hits three 18s and you close them, etcetera.

In my opinion, the only time you did right by following her was on the 19s, where she left them open. Definitately, you should follow her on the 17s, because she is still open there.

But look ahead. What's likely to happen is that she will hit four 16s with her next round. If she does, are you going to follow her? Let's say she moves on to hit four 15s. Are you going to follow her then? Then let's say she hit a single 19 for the close, hits a single 17 for the close and hits a single bull. All of a sudden, you're faced with a 31 point deficit! You'll need five bulls on your next turn to win...and, if you don't get them, all she has to do is to hit two bulls.

It doesn't pay sometimes to just follow. You have to leave yourself open. You have to point a number sometimes just in case the points come up later and you need to *buy* a little time. To me, it's terribly important to have that little outlet there (a pointable pie, all your own), just in case.

**Question:** Do you have any rules of thumb regarding when, if ever, to start pointing in Cricket? Obviously, just closing out the numbers is the fastest way to end a game, but it seems to me that it may be dangerous *not* to score some points along the way. When the players are of greatly different levels of skill, the dangers may not be apparent. But when opponents are similar in ability, should they start pointing at a specific time in the game?

**Tony:** Players of ability are almost never involved in a game without some point scoring. That's because good players, if they begin by singling a number, usually trip it with the second dart, and points are automatic. Whether you call the result direct pointing, indirect points, or pointing on purpose, whatever, points were introduced into the game.

Don't be deceived. When I hit a single and follow it with a triple, it may look like I didn't score points on purpose. But believe me, I knew that if I tripped the second time, there were going to be points to count! If I didn't mean to point, I would have just said to my opponent, "We won't count those points."

Points are part of the game of Cricket. If Cricket was structured to be a friendly game, we would all be playing 'Close-out Cricket.'

If you look at the game of Cricket intelligently, you'll see that points are no different from close-outs. If you're down 16 points, you are down one dart. If you're closed on the 20s and your opponent has only two 20s, you're up one mark. Smart Cricket players look at the game in terms of marks. I'm ahead so many marks or I'm down

this many marks. That's the way you should look at it.

You've asked for some rules of thumb on when to introduce pointing into Cricket games. Personally, I point any time that I am concerned about my opponent being too close to me, or if he is ahead of me.

However, there are intelligent times to point and intelligent times not to point. Points create time. If you're ahead on the close-out side of the scoreboard and choose to point, all you are doing is extending the amount of time in the game. That does not seem intelligent to me. If on the other hand, you are behind and need more time to get back into the game, that's an intelligent time to point.

Also, if you know your opponent is intimidated by points, it's time to score some up. Pointing intimidates some players, but sometimes, pointing a guy fires him up.

In deciding when (not if) to introduce pointing, you need to assess the actual game situation. If you've lost the cork, you'd better figure on having to point unless your opponent falls down. Between players of equal ability at Cricket, the one who wins the cork should win the game! So, if I'm playing my equal and lose the cork and my opponent goes up and closes the 20, I figure all three of my darts are going to trip the 19. I don't care if I trip the first dart and trip the second dart, I'm still going to lay on there and hit those points and *'buy'* time!

So, when do you introduce points? Early in the game, late in the game, and time you need to *'buy'* time, and any time you feel they will help you out.

Picking the right time to point goes back to shooting what you feel comfortable with. If you feel comfortable pointing at a particular time, that's what you're going to execute best. If you instinctively feel you should point but attempt to close instead, I just don't think you're going to execute at the same level as if you'd done what you wanted to.



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