

# Cribbage

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timated that he has won 61 percent of his matches, but came up just short in a play-off Sunday.

As is rather common in such a tournament, players of Toll's status don't always advance.

Scott Kooistra, the director of the Grand National XXIV, said Sunday that cribbage is typically two-thirds luck and one-third skill.

"You can get on a hot run of cards and beat anybody," Kooistra said. "I could never beat Bobby Fischer in chess or Tiger Woods over nine holes in golf, but here, anybody could literally beat anybody."

At least for one game.

In the end, the top players — particularly in a weekend tournament with 70-80 games — tend to rise to the top.

Why is that?

Because the game involves a lot of "mental math," according to Perkins, of North Carolina. For example, players receive two points for every combination of 15, so that's where experience plays a key factor, the Hall of Fame player said Sunday.

It's all about playing prob-

abilities, but yes, there is some luck involved, Perkins said.

"Anybody here could beat anybody," she said.

That's a big part of the excitement of a national tournament, according to Kooistra, himself a well-known cribbage player. Not only do certain players surprise on a given weekend, but fascinating storylines may emerge, and this weekend in Yankton was no exception, Kooistra said.

- Take, for instance, Bob Fitzgerald and Bill Shoemaker, from Connecticut who shared a room and ironically qualified as 1-2 during Saturday's competition.

- Or the woman, Ruth Capps, from Yankton had only played cribbage for quarters on Mondays at The Center in Yankton. She came to the Yankton Cribbage Club one time, but finished second out of 124 players on Thursday at the national tournament.

- And there was even a famous player, Shoemaker, who is an MIT graduate

With as much action as players see in a weekend, is the game mentally taxing?

"Oh, definitely," Perkins said.

"It takes you three days to win.

And for us, we played 22 games (Saturday)."

With so much luck involved,

there is also a certain level of superstition by many players, she added. For example, some will carry good-luck charms with them, or in more light-hearted examples, won't eat anything all afternoon if they're winning.

"Luckily, cards don't have a memory and the pegs don't have a memory," Perkins joked.

Even though there are more than 200 active cribbage clubs in the United States, the game will need a younger crowd to ensure its strength in the future, Toll said.

He teaches cribbage to students in grades 5-7 at a local school back home. "They love it," Toll said.

"We're trying to get more youth involved," he added. "That's our goal."

Not only does cribbage help younger players sharpen their math skills, it helps develop social skills, Perkins said. Players frequently laugh and joke with each other during a game.

"It's very sociable, but at the same time, you want to win," Kooistra said.

Next year's Grand National event will be held in Bethesda, Maryland, just outside of Washington, D.C.

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# Online

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the secretary of state's office will allow Nebraska residents to register with a valid driver's license or photo identification. Nebraska has about 1.1 million registered voters.

Morfeld said the new system will improve access to voting and likely increase turnout among highly mobile groups, such as college students and low-income residents. It also meets the demands of a public that already uses the Internet to file taxes and pay bills, he said.

The online system was approved by lawmakers and former Gov. Dave Heineman last year, and required collaboration from the secretary of state's office, the Department of Motor Vehicles, the Office of the Chief Information Officer and two private firms.

Nebraska joins 23 other states that have started using an online registration system, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures. Arizona was the first state to do so in 2002, and Pennsylvania and Hawaii launched their systems last month. New

technology has helped the registration lists become more accurate, secure and cost-effective, said Katy Owens Hubler, a senior policy specialist for the group.

"It's really gained steam in recent years," Owens Hubler said. "It typically has bipartisan support. It's one of those things in election administration that everyone can agree on."

Iowa Secretary of State Paul Pate announced last week that voters in his state with a driver's license or photo identification will be able to register to vote online by Jan. 1.

Nebraska's system will allow state officials to use an applicant's driver's license signature to register a new voter, rather than relying on paper registration forms. The state DMV already lets voters register when applying for a driver's license.

Nebraskans for Civic Reform is working to spread word about the new system while encouraging greater voter participation. The organization is hosting an educational event at 9 a.m. Tuesday on the University of Nebraska at Omaha's Barbara Weitz Community Engagement Center, said Bri McLarty, the group's director of voting rights.

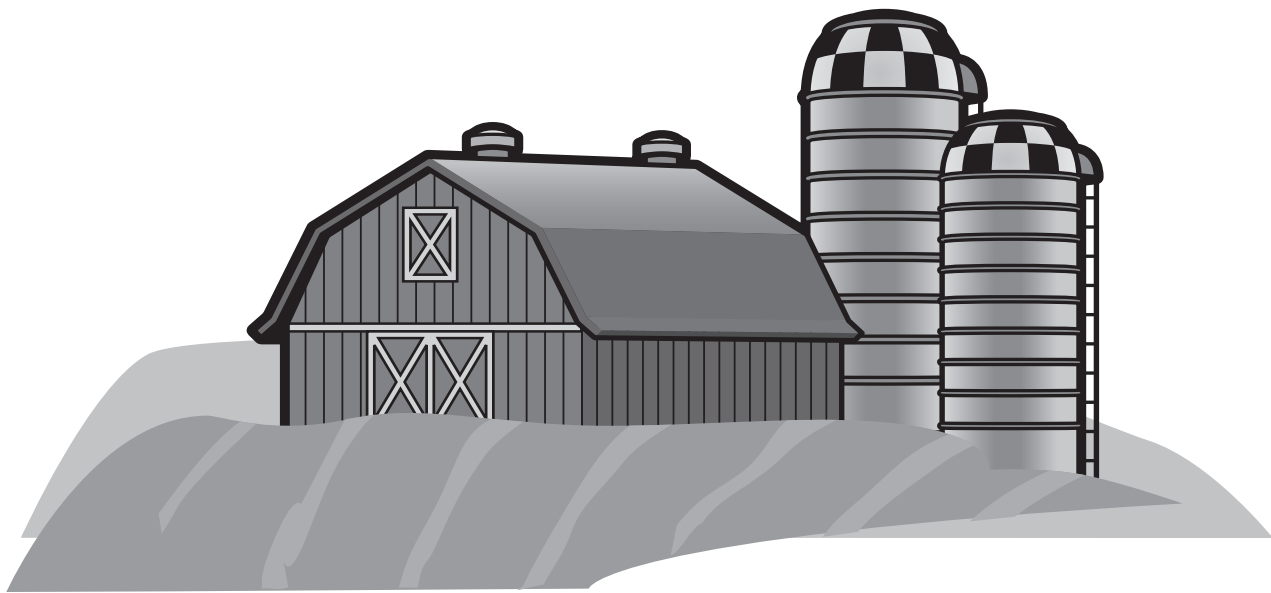
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