



Win big in the backyard

LEISURE PURSUITS PUT BRAGGING RIGHTS UP FOR GRABS. SEIZE THE SEASON WITH THESE SECRET STRATEGIES

1 NAVIGATE A MINI-GOLF MINEFIELD

Your goal To drain the long ones
Your strategy Don't let the course play you. "Avoid hitting off the dots on the tee mat," says Joe Aboid, commissioner of the Professional Putters Association. "The ball hiccups as soon as it's hit." For a much truer roll, tee off from the flat spots of the rubber surface between the dots. **Be wary of bank shots, too.** It's particularly difficult to predict how a ball will bounce off concrete. "You're asking an inconsistent obstacle to give a consistent bounce," says Aboid. Instead of trying to ace the geometry, roll the ball to a point on the carpet that's part of the way to the hole, he says.

2 STYMIE ANY BOCCE OPPONENT

Your goal To cozy your balls closest to the target ball (the *pallino*)
Your strategy Toss, don't roll. Since

you'll probably play on a bumpy lawn or beach, not a bocce court, **keep the ball airborne for as long as you can,** says Michael Grasser, captain of the 2007 U.S. Bocce Federation's open-ruled national championship team. A long throw eliminates some bumps and keeps the ball from losing momentum and veering off course. And err on the short side to block your opponent.

3 TOP OUT THE SLEDGEHAMMER TEST

Your goal To ring the bell and win your girl a really big stuffed animal
Your strategy **Technique trumps brute strength,** says Ben Sugerman, Ph.D., a physics and astronomy professor at Baltimore's Goucher College. If the mallet hits the target inaccurately, the effectiveness of your swing will be diminished. Aim for the edge that's closest to you, and make sure you follow through. "Swing with

your dominant hand close to the head," says Joel Raether, an assistant conditioning coach at the University of Denver, who has athletes use sledgehammers to develop power. "This helps ensure the accuracy of your swing."

4 EMPTY THE POOL WITH A CANNONBALL

Your goal A spectacular splash
Your strategy Increase your momentum and sacrifice your skin. "If you come straight down from a vertical jump, you hit a disk of water only as big as your curled-up body," says Sugerman. "But if you come at the water from a fast run, you're able to slide into the pool and pick up a lot more water as your body makes more contact." **Spreading open from the classic cannonball tuck position just before impact increases your body's surface area.** Who said winning should be easy?



5 WHIP THE H-O-R-S-E COMPETITION

Your goal Cold, quiet domination
Your strategy Skip the circus shots and stick to the basics. **"Luck shots have a catch—you have to hit them first,"** says Cleveland Cavalier Lance Allred, who won the 2008 NBA D-League All-Star H-O-R-S-E competition. The best shot to master is the angled bank shot near the baseline. "Go as far toward the baseline as you can while still being able to hit the backboard first, and then shoot the ball high," Allred says. It's more likely to drop through the net from a high angle.

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