

Cornhole

Game Play

Cornhole match is separated into innings (or frames). During each inning, each player or team will throw their designated four bags. The manner in which the bags are thrown depends on which format of cornhole is being played: singles (1 vs. 1), doubles (2 vs. 2), or crew (4 vs. 4).

In singles (1 vs. 1), both players throw their four bags while standing on opposite sides of the same board (left vs. right pitcher's box), alternating throws between the two players. After all eight bags are thrown, both players walk to the opposite board, while remaining in their lane, to tally the score. To begin the next inning, both players turn around to throw at the other board in the same manner. The effect of this is that by always staying in their respective lane, the two players will alternate each inning throwing from the left vs. right pitcher's box.[8][9]

In doubles (2 vs. 2), one partner from each team stands in the left pitcher's box of one board while the other partner stands in the right pitcher's box of the opposite board. Thus, each team's partners are on opposite ends, facing each other, both in the same lane. From here, gameplay is similar to singles: the two opponents at one board alternate throwing their four bags at the other board, after which a mid-inning score is tallied; then their partners at that board alternate throwing their team's four bags back at the other board, after which the final inning score can be tallied. In doubles, players may not change sides, i.e. one partner will throw from the left pitcher's box of one board and the other from the right pitcher's box of the other board for the entire game.

In the crew format (4 vs. 4), play is identical to doubles, but with two teammates at each of the two boards, one pair in the left pitcher's box of one board and the other pair in the right pitcher's box of the opposite board, each pair facing each other, in the same lane. Instead of each partner pitching four bags per inning (as in doubles), in crew each teammate pitches two bags per inning, again alternating throws both with the opposing team (as in singles and doubles) and with the player's teammate who is standing with them at the same board.

Note that in doubles and crew, the score for any inning is based on eight throws per team, as opposed to four throws per player in singles.

In all formats, the pitcher must throw the bag within 20 seconds. The time begins when the pitcher is inside the pitcher's box with an intent to throw. The first pitch of an inning goes to whichever player or team scored in the previous inning. If neither player or team scored in the previous inning, then whichever pitched first in the previous inning will

again pitch first in the next inning. The first pitch of the first inning can be decided by a coin toss.

A legal pitch must be tossed while the pitcher's feet are within the pitcher's box. If the pitcher begins the throw with a foot beyond the foul line or otherwise steps beyond the foul line before releasing the bag, the pitch is a foul and does not count. A foul throw cannot be re-taken and the bag is removed from play before continuing. If a foul bag moves other bags in the field of play, those bags are returned to their prior position before continuing, including if a bag was moved into the hole. If a bag lands only partially on the board and is also touching the ground, it does not count and is removed before continuing.

Scoring

To score points, bags must be on the surface of the board or fall through the hole. To score three points, a bag may fall directly into the hole, slide into the hole after hitting the board, or be knocked into the hole by another bag. A bag remaining on the board scores one point.[8][1] A bag partially on the board and partially on the ground ("dirt bag") does not count and should be removed before the next throw.

In cornhole, cancellation scoring is used. When the scores are tallied at the end of an inning, whichever player or team scores higher is awarded points equal to the difference between both sides. For example, if Team A scores 12 points in an inning and Team B scores 10 points, then Team A is awarded two points (12 minus 10); whereas if Team A and Team B both score 12 points, the difference is zero, and no one scores. Play continues until one player or team reaches or exceeds 21 points at the end of an inning. By using cancellation scoring, it is only possible for one side (or neither side) to score in any inning, so match ties are impossible.

Different variations in scoring or house rules are sometimes used. Sometimes, a bag hanging over the hole, but which has not fallen through, is scored as two points. Other variations include requiring one team to reach exactly 21 points without going over to win. If a team exceeds 21 points after an inning (called "busting"), different punishments might be used such as automatically returning to 15 points, returning to the team's prior score, returning to the prior score minus one, etc. In some versions, if a team "busts" three times, their opponents automatically win the match.

Strategy

Gameplay strategy varies by player and skill level. At the professional level, players can easily slide all four bags into the hole if no bag blocks the path. Defensive strategies are

often employed to slow down gameplay or force opponents to make difficult decisions. Defensive plays might include throwing a blocker bag that rests in front of the hole, thereby forcing an opponent to either slide through the blocker bag to reach the hole, throw another blocker behind the bag, or attempt a risky airmail shot over the bag aiming directly for the hole without touching the board. Bags can be made out of different materials to help strategies such as the blocker bag be easier to execute.[10]

There are many types of shots that players use depending on the situation. The slide shot is one of the most basic shots and is when a bag lands on the bottom two thirds of the board and slides into the hole. Another shot used is the blocker bag as mentioned above along with an airmail. A more complicated shot is the bully bag where a player will push their opponent's bag away from the hole either to the left or right well keeping their own bag in line with the hole making it difficult for the opponent to get their bag into the hole. The rolling shot is another technique that allows the player to "rollover" any bags blocking the hole such as a blocker, although this shot is more complicated.[11]

Practicing and perfecting these shots allows players to be prepared and ready for any strategies their opponents throw at them. Knowing when to utilize each shot is an important part of the game and can help aid players of all skill levels.