

CHAPTER 5

Investment Analysis for Funds and Profits

Many people ask, "What is the best color group to own?" You would be amazed at how difficult it sometimes is to convince people of the fact that *no single color group can be called better than any other if the position in the game is unknown*. Pulling two color groups out of the context of a game and calling one better than the other is as meaningless and foolish as quoting a few words out of the context of an entire speech. Mr. Expert knows how the general circumstances of a game determine the changing values of color groups. Market conditions can make something valuable today and worthless tomorrow.

It is essential that a player understand the basic principles of investment analysis if he hopes to become a winning player. Without a basic knowledge of what makes a color group valuable at a given time in a given situation, he will be fooled time and again by players who offer deals which look good on the surface, but are rotten inside. This chapter analyzes the basic principles of investment analysis. By applying these principles, a player can accurately gauge the immediate and potential values of color groups. Trades are a combination of dollars and sense.

This chapter introduces the "changing value" theory of color groups. It also details the five vital questions which Mr. Expert asks about every position, how the answers to those questions can make *any* color group into a lethal weapon, and the ways in which Mr. Expert compares color groups in light of their possibilities for exploitation.

The first principle of investment analysis is a simple one:

ANY COLOR GROUP IS BETTER THAN NO COLOR GROUP. The utilities and Railroads bring you nice Christmas bonuses, and ownership of four Railroads is nothing to sneeze at, but these properties simply do not have the power of color groups (if you are unfamiliar with the board, the Railroads and utilities are not color properties). Use this principle to your advantage in proposing trades. You will find that many players have a warped fascination for utilities or Railroads and might be willing to give up a color group or some key trading properties to get them. Just be careful that *you* don't flush your money down the Water Works.

The second principle of investment analysis is the "changing value" theory itself. Its underlying precept is that:

ALL COLOR GROUPS *CHANGE* IN VALUE OVER THE COURSE OF A GAME, DEPENDING ON THE FINANCIAL AND STRATEGIC POSITIONS OF THE OWNER AND THE OTHER PLAYERS, AND ON THE AVAILABLE HOUSING SUPPLY.

Why do you need a changing value theory? To show how questions like the following two have very different answers in different situations:

1. Which are more valuable, the Light Blues or the Yellows?

Situation A: If you have \$2500, the Yellows are better—you can develop them fully and they pack a more potent punch.

Situation B: If you have only \$600, and the Bank has only 12 houses left, the Light Blues are better. You can tie up all 12 houses on the Light Blues, a much more helpful tactic than spreading only four houses over the Yellows (houses cost \$150 on the Yellows, \$50 on the Light Blues).

2. Which are more valuable, the Oranges or the Dark Blues?

Situation A: If you have \$1200 and the Bank has only six houses, the Dark Blues are better—they can be built to their devastating critical level, whereas the Oranges (a three-property color group) cannot.

Situation B: If you have \$1200 and the Bank has 12 houses, most experts would take the Oranges because of the fairly equal *total* rent (\$750/750/800 and \$1100/1400) and the opportunity to absorb twice as many houses.

As you can see, a color group's value is subject to a wide variety of conditions. But given a specific set of conditions, how does Mr. Expert estimate the relative value of two different color groups?

To compare a series of advantages, it is first necessary to decide very clearly in your own mind what it is that you are comparing. This is the reason for the third principle of investment analysis:

UNDERSTAND THE DIFFERENT ADVANTAGES TO BE DERIVED FROM OWNING ANY COLOR GROUP:

1. BANKRUPTING POWER.
2. HOUSE-SOAKING POWER.
3. PROFIT-EARNING POWER.
4. GLAMOUR POWER.

We will explore each of these advantages in detail and show which color groups have more of these advantages in which situations.

The first advantage is **BANKRUPTING POWER**. Because bankruptcy is the key to victory, bankrupting power is essential to the assessment of the value of any given color group in a given situation. This power is a measure of how deadly it is for a player to land on the color group when it is fully developed. Since the highest possible rent on a property is the rent with a hotel,

bankrupting power of any color group is computed by examining the rent with a hotel on the most expensive property in the color group. The Dark Blue group has the most bankrupting power; the Purple group has the least.

Since the only way to win the game is by bankrupting the other players, bankruptcy underlies almost any strategy, either directly or indirectly. Therefore, it is according to bankrupting power that the novice player mistakenly values his color groups at all times. But this is a horrendous error! Bankrupting power is not the only advantage which a color group offers. It is only a single standard by which to measure a color group's value. It does not take into account such critical aspects of the game as house-building costs and the frequency with which people land on the color group. Mr. Expert uses bankrupting power as a tool for measurement, not as the sole measure of a color group.

The second advantage is **HOUSE-SOAKING POWER**. This is the ability of a color group to absorb houses and to control the housing market, as described in Chapter 4. A color group's house-soaking power is determined by two factors:

1. *The price of houses.* Color groups with low building costs are ideal for soaking up houses. At only \$50 or \$100 for each house, the first four color groups after Go have strong house-soaking power.

2. *The maximum number of houses that can be built on the color group.* Since color groups consist of either two or three properties, this affects how well you will be able to control the housing market. Thus, the Light Blues have more house-soaking power than do the Purples, as they can soak up four more houses for only \$50 apiece. It is important to note that with any two color groups in his possession, a player could monopolize 50–67% of the total available houses. And after all, the game is Monopoly!

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The third advantage is PROFIT-EARNING POWER. This is the power of a color group to bring you more money for each dollar you invest in improving it. This advantage is related to the amount of money you have available to invest, since a cheap color group at the critical level will bring you more money than an expensive color group with two houses on each property. In general, the more money you put in, the more you get out.

The profit-earning power of a color group is a measure of the speed with which a player recovers the money he invests in developing the properties. The faster the color group returns your investment, the sooner you can look forward to earning profits. Obviously, your opponents will have to land on your color group if you plan to make any money from it. For this reason, profit-earning power is related to the probability that an opponent will land on any property in your color group on any turn.

The mathematical details are unimportant, but a general knowledge of the odds of landing on a color group can be important. The following is a list of all the color groups in the order of the probability of landing on each one:

Most Probable: Oranges
Reds
Yellows
Greens
Maroons
Light Blues
Dark Blues
Least Probable: Purples

According to this list, the Light Blues are landed on more often than are the Dark Blues. Does this mean that the Light Blues have a higher profit-earning power? Definitely not!! To determine profit-earning power, you must also consider the amount of rent collected whenever a player lands on the color group. A player may not

land on Boardwalk very often, but when he does, it's expensive!

Therefore, we have used a computer to simulate tens of thousands of rolls of the dice in a Monopoly game, and we have computed the order of the color groups' profit-earning powers at different levels of investment. Keeping in mind that profit-earning power is only one aspect of the value of a color group, here is a list of color groups in order of profit-earning power:

		NUMBER OF DOLLARS INVESTED IN HOUSES				
		\$500	\$1000	\$1500	\$2000	\$2500+
Profit-Earning Power	MOST	Light			Dark	
		Blues	Oranges	Oranges	Blues	Greens
		Purples	Dark			
			Blues	Yellows	Oranges	Yellows
		Oranges	Maroons	Dark		
				Blues	Yellows	Reds
		Maroons	Light			Dark
			Blues	Reds	Reds	Blues
		Dark				
		Blues	Yellows	Maroons	Greens	Oranges
		Yellows	Greens	Greens	Maroons	Maroons
		Greens	Reds	Light	Light	Light
			Blues	Blues	Blues	
LEAST	Reds	Purples	Purples	Purples	Purples	

As you can see, the profit-earning power of any color group changes, depending on how much money you have available to invest. This is precisely as the changing value theory would predict. In general, the most valuable color group in terms of profit-earning power is that group on which you can afford to build straight to the critical level.

While we're inspecting this chart, we should dispel some old wives' tales about the profitability of some color groups:

a. If you have a lot of money to invest (\$2500+), there are three better color groups in which to put your

money than those Dark Blues with the infamous Boardwalk.

b. At times, those two cheap Purple properties are actually the second most profitable color group on the board.

c. The Yellow group is always more profitable than the Red group, even though the Reds are landed on more often than the Yellows.

d. If you don't have too much cash, the Oranges are the most profitable place to put your money.

Profit-earning power is a very important measure in the estimation of the value of a color group.

The fourth and final advantage of a color group is **GLAMOUR POWER**. Why will a lot of people pay a lot of money to see a movie with Robert Redford or Cybill Shepherd, even if the movie doesn't get excellent reviews? The glamour of these movie stars is enough to make people want to see the movies, no matter how good those movies really are. Monopoly has its movie stars too! Many players find certain color groups more glamorous than others. They are willing to give up a lot for these color groups, whether or not they are really valuable in the situation in question.

Glamour power is a highly subjective value which you can alter by the way you speak of the different color groups in any given game. It can be determined only by psyching out your opponents to discover if they have any hidden preferences or prejudices about color groups. In most novice games, the Greens and Dark Blues have very high glamour power (as do the Railroads). Some players would trade their families' jewels for Boardwalk; other players really love to play engineer on the Railroads. But after all, most players do not have the benefit of the profit-earning power table which you just saw, and do not understand how the value of a color group changes as the game progresses.

It is up to you to use your powers of observation to discover just how much glamour power a color group has in any given game. Once you discover what your op-

ponents prefer, you can offer them what they want, but on your own terms. Most opponents do not have the will power to resist their favorite properties.

Knowing the four advantages which a color group can provide, how do you pick the best color group for your specific needs? This is a very difficult question to answer in detail. There are no hard-and-fast rules which can tell a player that he should *definitely* take the Orange group instead of the Yellow group. After all, the Oranges are better for house-soaking, while the Yellows are better for bankrupting, but the Oranges return your investment faster for smaller investments, and on and on. Even experts will disagree on which property groups are better in the same set of circumstances. The only thing that is certain when making a judgment about a color group is that there is always room for intelligent disagreement.

Yet, even with many possible "correct" opinions, there *are* some objective measures that all players can use to make comparisons. There are definite reasons why we can confidently state that, except in the most severe economic depressions, Boardwalk and Park Place are definitely better than Mediterranean and Baltic if you are looking for a color group which will give you a balanced attack early in the game. The Dark Blues are clearly superior in three of the four power categories. Their only major weakness is their inability to be used for rapid house-soaking. Unless we were interested only in soaking up houses, the Dark Blues would clearly be more advantageous than the Purples.

But once we compare color groups that are not total opposites, all-encompassing generalizations are no longer possible. The specific circumstances must be taken into account, and the weight assigned to each advantage or disadvantage of a color group varies with those circumstances. The manner in which the situation shapes a color group's value is summarized in the fourth principle of investment analysis:

* * *

A COLOR GROUP'S VALUE TO YOU IS DETERMINED AT ANY MOMENT BY YOUR ABILITY TO EXPLOIT ITS PARTICULAR ADVANTAGES.

Since there are four basic advantages to owning a color group, a player must judge whether the color group he is considering will provide him with the advantages he needs. Then, he must decide whether he can make full use of those advantages if he has them at his disposal. For example, if you wanted to soak up the last 10 houses because your opponent was about to build on the Greens, you would look for a color group such as the Light Blues. If you had enough cash on hand and you owned the Light Blues, you could meet your objectives. In this case, you would be able to exploit the advantages of the Light Blues—advantages which would help your position—so they would be very valuable to you.

Similarly, if you had lots of cash, but there were no houses left in the Bank, you would not be able to exploit the high profit-earning power of the Yellow group. Thus, in a housing shortage situation, the Yellows should be regarded as being worth very little at the moment. If you don't have the ability to end the housing shortage, you can be sure that your opponents are not going to cooperate and release houses for you to build. The Yellows would be strictly a speculative long-term investment.

Unfortunately, there is no easy way to instantly evaluate how well you can exploit the advantages of a color group at a given moment, taking into account all of the necessary psychological factors (this is why computers cannot play the game as well as people, yet). There are, however, several basic positional questions which you should *always* ask yourself whenever you estimate your power to exploit a color group. Any time you rate your position (which should be often), ask yourself:

1. *How many other color groups have been built to the critical level? How many could be built to that level on this turn?*

2. *Is there a housing shortage?*

3. *How much money do I have?*

4. *How much money do my opponents have?*

5. *In what ways could the game drastically change its character as a result of one roll of the dice (for example, a key unbought property, a jackpot square, an expensive rent?)*

It is obviously impossible to show precisely how the answer to each question will tell you how well you can exploit a specific advantage of a specific color group. That is not the purpose of these questions. Rather, the answers to these questions, when taken together, will give you a general knowledge of what are the most important variables in the game at that moment.

Each question by itself can, however, serve as a general barometer of certain trends in the game. For instance, if your answer to the first question is that very few color groups are well developed, then you are probably in a fairly "young" game. It would take several setbacks to seriously hurt any player's position in the game. For this reason, you can afford to acquire a slightly more expensive color group, one whose profit-earning power is not the best for you yet. You know that you will have time to accumulate more money over the next few turns without being forced to pay any large rents. This extra cash would give you enough money to build to the critical level on your more expensive color group and allow you to best exploit the profit-earning power and bankrupting power of your position.

Your answer to the second question is also an important indicator. If there is a housing shortage, then the value of any new color group (or any undeveloped color group) is in immediate jeopardy. If you have any immediate hopes of exploiting the profit-earning power of that color group, you will need another source of houses that you can make available for your new color group. Don't forget, your opponents' hotels can be broken down to grab what appear to be available houses. Do you have enough cash to withstand a bidding war if an auction is

necessary? If you aren't sure that you have a means of getting houses, a new color group's profit-earning power is unexploitable, and so is its bankrupting power. Don't trade all of your property away for a Marvin Gardens which can never bloom.

The answer to how much cash you have available to invest is the most obvious general indicator of how well you can exploit the advantages of any color group. The earlier table clearly demonstrated that the amount of cash available for investment directly affects the profit-earning power of any color group. This is only a general indicator, however, because your cash can be increased in an emergency by the methods which will be explained in Chapter 14, or just as easily wiped out by bad luck. For now, realize that in a game with a lot of developed color groups, you will need a \$300-500 *cushion* to survive minor difficulties. If you are forced to destroy all of your margin of safety to properly develop a color group, you are probably taking on more than you can handle. Even a small rent could make your houses come tumbling down even faster than they went up, and you'll be much the poorer for it. Therefore, the amount of cash on hand is an important indicator of how well you will be able to exploit the advantages of a color group.

The amount of cash available to your opponents will also help to guide your attitude toward which color groups would be most helpful to your position. If your opponents are poor and have traded to gain complete color groups, the middle-priced color groups are attractive to you for their easily exploited profit-earning power. Assuming you have a moderate amount of cash, you should be able to beat your opponents before they are able to develop to the critical level. A color group with moderate rents, when properly developed, could keep them from ever getting off the ground. On the other hand, if your opponents are powerful, you will need a more expensive color group with a high profit-earning power for larger investments, in order to fight back. The power of your opponents should play a major role in your decisions.

The final question is a measure of the explosiveness of the game. How has the game been so far? Are the houses constantly being built and torn down again? Has there been a lot of trading and screaming? Have large sums of money changed hands fairly regularly? If so, then your game is relatively unstable. If things have been relatively calm, then you can afford to relax—you're in a fairly stable game. A good test of the game's stability for you is to ask yourself, "How many bad rolls can I afford before things begin to get tough?" If your answer is one or two, the game is unstable. Any more and the game is peaceful.

Why know the game's stability? You guessed it! Because changes in stability, like most other things, affect the values of the various color groups. In a highly stable game, profit-earning power and house-soaking power are at a premium, and your ability to exploit the advantages of any color group can be measured fairly reliably from your cash on hand. In a game subject to wild swings in several directions, bankrupting power is at a premium, and everything should be geared toward exploiting that advantage to the utmost. If someone's about to go broke, make sure it's to you!

That's investment analysis in a nutshell. You are now able to tell, to some degree, how much a color group can help you in a situation. The next chapter deals with strategy—how to merge your helpful color groups into a coordinated attack.

CHAPTER 5 SUMMARY

- I. The "best" color group.
- II. The "changing value" theory.
- III. Color group advantages:
 - A. Bankrupting power.
 - B. House-soaking power.

- C. Profit-earning power.
- D. Glamour power.
- IV. Value is limited by your ability to exploit advantages.
- V. Position evaluation questions.

CHAPTER 6

Strategy Selection, or Planning Your Plunder

The preceding chapter should have put to rest any question as to a "best" color group. The best color group at any time is dependent on the situation. The game is constantly changing, especially when properties are still unowned. It is this same constant change of conditions which makes selecting a strategy during the game a difficult and often unreliable procedure. Surely there is no strategy which will be better than all others at all times.

Using a strategy can help us keep our goals and objectives clearly in mind. Since our strategy is always subject to immediate revision, it does not constitute a rigid plan of play. Rather, its purpose is to force us to plan ahead, anticipate likely situations, and prepare our reactions to those situations. Strategies are kept in mind and used as general guidelines for trading and developing. For that reason, a player who knows fairly well what he wants to do will have an edge over his opponents who do not. It is important to remain constantly alert while playing, and any plan, no matter how temporary, helps us to stay sharp.

There are several fundamental principles that are involved in selecting a strategy. All good players begin each game with essentially the same plan of attack: to buy all of the properties they can and to get a complete color group as quickly as possible, in order to knock out their opponents. However, players rapidly diverge from this strategy after the first few trips around the board. Trading soon becomes the only alternative for the player who wants to get a color group by means other than luck. This is the point where strategy considerations be-

come very important. Here are the five fundamental principles that must be understood and adhered to throughout the game.

ANY GOOD STRATEGY IS GOOD ONLY AS LONG AS THE CONDITIONS ON WHICH THE STRATEGY IS BASED REMAIN CONSTANT.

For example, suppose your strategy is to lure your opponent into giving up several cheap color groups for one powerful, but hard-to-develop color group. You plan to be able to tie up enough houses and charge enough medium-size rents to prevent him from ever building up that powerful group against you. This strategy is good as long as your opponent cannot afford to build quickly to the critical level. If he somehow manages to obtain a large amount of money, you must shift your plan of attack, and fast! Why? Because one of the basic conditions on which your strategy is based is your opponent's lack of money, and that no longer exists. In this case, it may be too late to do anything. This leads to an important corollary to the first principle:

Try to select strategies which depend on the fewest varying conditions. The more variables there are, the greater the likelihood that something will go wrong.

ALL STRATEGIES REVOLVE AROUND PROPERTY ACQUISITION—EITHER THROUGH BANKRUPTCY OR THROUGH ACCEPTANCE OF PROPERTY IN LIEU OF RENT.

Since you hope to be the first to bankrupt other players, the immediate aims of all your strategies fall into one of two categories:

a. *To stop other players from building while you develop and improve your own position (a "holding strategy").*

b. *To outbuild and overpower your opponent by sheer force (an "aggressive strategy").*

Obviously, the importance of timing should not be underestimated when selecting your plan for snatching

your opponents' properties. Keep in mind too that all strategies rely on property *development* to be successful. Having color groups without a sufficient flow of cash to build correctly is a disastrous error. It is rather difficult to convince another player to give you a property when you owe *him* rent. Developing property is the only way to acquire more property. Remember, a player with \$10,000 cash and no color groups on which to build will lose very quickly if he doesn't buy some property. The biggest lakes run dry without rain.

STRATEGIES ARE A COMPROMISE BETWEEN WHAT YOU WANT AND WHAT YOU CAN GET.

By using a strategy and understanding what makes that strategy work, you stand a much better chance of getting exactly what you want. But as you have seen, strategy selection must be based on the conditions at the moment. If, for some reason, you want to own the Dark Blue group, but Boardwalk and Park Place are owned by two other players, your chances of acquiring that color group are slim. Undoubtedly, you could form a strategy to trade with each player in order to acquire the necessary property, but such a strategy would be very risky. You might get Park Place and then discover that the player who owns Boardwalk doesn't want to trade. Then you'd be stuck holding the place (Park Place, that is). It would be much smarter to use properties which you already own and to attempt to improve your position from that base. This leads to the next principle:

AIM YOUR STRATEGY AT SOMETHING THAT WILL PROVIDE IMMEDIATE ASSISTANCE IF YOU CAN GET IT.

Remember that your first and foremost concern is to stay alive in the game (dead men reap no rents). If you are trying to bankrupt somebody by making trades against him, he had better have some properties that will help your position immediately. Long-range plans are a luxury in a Monopoly game. If your opponent has the

third Yellow property and he won't sell it or trade it, then you must force him to give it to you. If you are successful, then the immediate benefit will be the completion of the Yellow group for you. You are pursuing a property which will provide immediate improvement of your position—a wise objective. Although it is sometimes necessary to trade for a property, just so that you can turn around and trade it away, it is much safer to try to obtain something which has direct and immediate value to you. The laws of supply and demand are sometimes very fickle, and properties are often valuable only because they are valuable to an opponent. In such cases, you may be forced to rely heavily on the assumption that your opponent will trade. In general, however, when forming a strategy it is *preferable* to aim for things which can help directly to improve your position, independent of the activities of the other players.

KNOW WHAT SPECIFIC OCCURRENCES WILL FORCE YOU TO ABANDON YOUR STRATEGY.

A captain always knows when to abandon ship. A strategy is a very touchy thing. You may be counting on a player not to build houses on his properties, or you may be relying on a certain property to remain unowned for a little while longer. Whatever the situation, it is important to be aware of the potential problems which might arise as a result of a single action. In these cases, unlike the uncontrollable conditions described in the first principle, it is possible to bring psychological weapons into play to prevent such occurrences. If a player is about to spend money to build houses that would upset your plans, discourage him! Keep in mind at all times that you have the power to influence the game through your conversation. Always seek to minimize the possibilities of something upsetting your strategy. The numerous psychological weapons at your disposal will be explained in later chapters. For now, be aware that some smooth talking at the right moment can save an entire strategy.

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How can these fundamental principles be applied? Just as in investment analysis, there are many different factors which Mr. Expert weighs when selecting a temporary strategy. He asks himself such questions as: "What is the financial position of the other players?" "Can I afford to build to the critical level on the color groups I am interested in?" "Who owns the key properties in my strategy?" "Are there any immediate threats on the board right now?" "If my opponents have a big advantage in cash, will stalling help me catch up?" "Is it possible for me to stall trading?" "Is there a housing shortage?" "If not, can I create a housing shortage?" The answers to these questions shape the expert's decision as to which direction his strategy should take.

When are most strategy decisions made?

a. When a color group is completed ("Should I wait, trade, or build?").

b. When a trade is offered.

c. When your opponents prepare to trade in a way which can harm your position (most trades between opponents are harmful).

Such times of decision do not come too often, and mistakes at these critical moments are often irreparable. Games among experts are won or lost because of a player's ability or inability to make the correct strategy decision about a once-in-a-game chance ("Should I accept that trade?"). When making a decision, a player must take all of the factors detailed earlier in this chapter into consideration. Then he must evaluate what appears to be the best course of action.

There are four general types of strategies. Although most strategies in individual games are combinations of these strategies, these are a close approximation to an accurate classification of the thousands of possible plans of attack which can be successfully employed to make the most of a situation. They are intended to be a general outline of what a player can be seeking during a Monopoly game.

THE QUICK KAYO (the Atomic Bomb Strategy). This strategy is very risky, especially if other color groups are developed by your opponents. It is usually used only if:

a. you are *desperate* to bankrupt another player or to force him to tear down his deadly hotels, or

b. you have only one color group and have no choice but to develop quickly to prevent your opponents from acquiring enough money to develop their color groups.

This strategy is usually implemented by mortgaging all unnecessary properties and using *all* your cash to leap to the four-house or hotel level. The element of timing in this strategy is vital. You must take your opponents by surprise, and it is usually most effective if one (or more) of your opponents is six, seven, or eight squares before your color group. Just before he rolls, ask that the dice be held and announce, "Wait a minute! I want to build."

Then, pump *everything you have* into building as high as possible. Don't worry about your cash cushion—if this fails, you haven't any hope anyway. Obviously, the greater the bankrupting power of your color group, the more likely you will be to succeed. This strategy is also most effective if your opponents have relatively little cash on hand.

If there are no other developed color groups on the board, then the Quick Kayo is obviously quite safe. This is rarely the time such a strategy is employed, however. Usually, it is used when the situation has forced you to trade away your chance at a color group with high profit-earning power because your opponents have been maneuvering to keep you from getting any color group at all. Your objective in this strategy is to gain the necessary properties to switch your attack to a more stable, long-term strategy. If you are successful, you have salvaged a poor position and given yourself excellent winning chances. The risk is high, however, and the more your opponents have developed their color groups, the riskier this strategy is, because *you have no cash cushion*.

The Quick Kayo is really no more than an accelerated version of the general principle of building as fast as possible. The major difference is that the Quick Kayo is a no-holds-barred, caution-to-the-winds strategy. The principle of building early is not nearly so risky, since you keep a cash cushion, and is always correct procedure.

THE HOUSING HOARD (the Ho-Ho Strategy). Several earlier examples have demonstrated the power of this strategy. It is most effective when you own two or more cheap color groups and your strongest opponent does not have the money to develop his more expensive color group right away. It will take him some time to build to the critical level (assuming he knows to build to that point), and during that time you can move to soak up as many houses as you possibly can to create a housing shortage. This strategy, like the Quick Kayo, is a race against time. The object is to be the first to buy as many of the available houses as possible, even if it requires mortgaging and depleting your cash reserves.

Your chances of success are greatest when one of your other opponents also has a relatively cheap color group, on which he has built moderately, but not quite to the critical level. Between the two of you, your goal is to tie up at least 26 houses, leaving only six for your dangerous opponent with the expensive color group. It is usually easiest to tie up so many houses if your opponent is unaware of the rules concerning housing shortages. Many players have no idea that a housing shortage will prevent them from building, so don't be surprised if your opponent sits back complacently while you buy all of the houses!

Once you have absorbed as many houses as possible, it is no longer important that your opponent owns a color group with more profit-earning power. He will not be able to exploit it. As long as you control the housing market, your medium-sized rents will effectively drain your opponents' money. Without houses, they will be unable to replenish the cash being drained from their

positions. You bankrupt your most powerful opponent first, and use the properties you acquire from him against your other opponents. Patience, and victory is yours.

THE BRUTE FORCE BATTLE (the Muhammad Ali Strategy). This is the simplest and most common of all the strategies. Your plan is to develop color groups with higher profit-earning power than your opponents', and then to outslug them with your more intelligent investments and higher rents. What could be easier? This strategy is most effective if you have two color groups built to the critical level. Many deadly winning combinations include one expensive color group and one cheaper color group. The strategy is to use the revenues from the less expensive color group (which has high profit-earning power for small investments) in order to finance the expensive building on the more powerful color group (for example, Light Blues and Yellows, or Oranges and Greens). Your goal is to make maximum use of the profit-earning power of each color group you own, by exploiting one fully (at the critical level) before beginning to work on the second. Combining a cheap color group and an expensive color group can give you added flexibility. In a housing shortage, you will be able to release the necessary houses onto the housing market by building up to hotels on your cheaper color group.

It sounds great, right? But there are two weaknesses to the Brute Force Battle. First, it is often quite difficult to acquire two color groups from your opponents, and the strategy is less effective with only one color group. Second, there is a tremendous amount of luck involved. One bad land on an opponent's color group can ruin your entire game. In this strategy, your opponent will quickly realize that unless he builds to the critical level too, he will be wiped out. He will usually copy your correct building pattern. In any fight which depends only on slugging power, someone can land a lucky punch and break your jaw! Although your skill and knowledge will always give you an edge in this strategy (maybe he'll fall into the hotel trap!), this is not enough for most tourna-

ment players. The smart guys never want to fight unless the odds are heavily stacked in their favor.

THE LYING-LOW LARCENY (the Divide-and-Conquer Strategy). This strategy is the most complicated, the most challenging, and probably the most enjoyable of the four strategies. The theme of this strategy is for you to keep your opponents at each other's throats, while you clean up quietly. Technically, a good player is always doing this (see Chapter 11), regardless of which strategy he is using, but in many situations it is a perfectly legitimate strategy all by itself. When employing the Lying-Low Larceny as your key to victory, the secret is to never appear powerful and to mislead your opponents about the true power of your position. In this strategy:

a. Build only to the critical level on a color group no more expensive than the Oranges.

b. Keep quiet about how much money you have, unless your opponents ask.

c. Do everything you can to keep other players from trading.

d. Play down the importance of your own position, pointing to those players who have more expensive color groups.

e. Quietly amass enough property, in small maneuvers which do not attract attention, to suddenly build up your properties and crush your opponents before they know what hit them.

While other chapters will explain in more detail how to carry out those strategies that you plan to undertake, this chapter should have given you a good theoretical base from which to play an intelligent, winning game. Although it is possible to win many games by using tricks and legal loopholes, you will find it much more satisfying to win game after game by simply outplaying your opponents. If you have a thorough understanding of these principles of strategy and you practice them, such satisfying victories will be yours.

CHAPTER 6 SUMMARY

- I. A strategy is good only while the conditions remain constant.
- II. Property acquisition—through bankruptcy and in lieu of rent.
- III. Strategy as a compromise.
- IV. Aim your strategies toward goals which give immediate aid.
- V. When to abandon ship.
- VI. When strategy decisions are most often made.
- VII. Common strategies:
 - A. Quick Kayo.
 - B. Housing Hoard.
 - C. Brute Force Battle.
 - D. Lying-Low Larceny.