Mark Hoffman



Introduction: Mark Hoffman was a respected detective within the SAW verse whose sister was slain by her ex-boyfriend. Heavily disillusioned, Mark created a Jigsaw-style trap to avenge his sister and frame the murder on Jigsaw, though this caught the killer's attention. John Kramer captured him and blackmailed him with the evidence of Mark's murder into working with him while also appealing to his dissatisfaction with the justice system. Through a combination of blackmail and genuine ideological realignment, Hoffman worked alongside Kramer for years, but he was unsatisfied merely being the muscle behind Jigsaw and instead wanted to run the games himself.

Note: It's shown Jigsaw had predicted his entire plan(s) years prior and set up contingencies to test/kill him if need be, though that doesn't denigrate Marks's strategic thinking from his end. He simply had the misfortune of facing a very brilliant opponent.

Pendulum Trap

But before ever meeting Kramer, Hoffman had impressed John with his revenge plot against Seth Baxter in 2004. He had been heavily depressed and an alcoholic, but even so he'd managed to, motivated by his burning desire for vengeance and disillusionment with the justice system, learn and almost replicate Jigsaw's quality in engineering with the pendulum trap, which warrants further analysis.

Seth Baxter wakes up in a dimly lit room chained to a table. A TV switches on and Jigsaw informs him that he has escaped justice for too long, let off with too light of a sentence. A pendulum hangs above him, and it will descend over 60 seconds, cutting him in half when it is finished. The only way to prevent it, the tape says, would be to reach his arms out as far as he could, press a button within a mechanism, and let his hands be crushed to dust. After some hesitation, he does so, but the traps stop for only a moment before bisecting him.

Now the obvious aspect is that the trap involves mechanical (which of course requires heavy usage of mathematics) and electrical engineering. Hoffman had designed a power descending pendulum, and that requires balancing the blade's weight while minimizing vibration, which could throw off its precise downward path. The structural integrity has to be right to handle the force of the swinging pendulum, which itself must also be carefully chosen to cleanly slice through Seth without losing momentum. Knowledge of electrical engineering would be required in order to rig the pendulum, which is seemingly powered by a motor, to descend at a pace synchronized with the clock and the end of the tape's message. To be a dick, Hoffman seemingly rigged the machine to even offer respite, a moment of false hope, to Seth after he pressed the buttons, before it continued its downward path. And to top it off, neither the police nor the FBI, who'd studied Jigsaw for years, ever caught onto the trap that killed Seth Baxter

being one designed by a copycat. Hoffman had mastered electrical and mechanical engineering to (nearly) replicate the quality of John Kramer himself, sufficient to fool law enforcement. Furthermore, John never rigs his traps, and the police within SAW know this; they even deduce that some traps were built by Amanda based on them being unwinnable. Yet Mark had managed to conceal the machine being rigged against the subject. The only flaw that differentiated the trap from John's was Mark's choice of metal within the pendulum; John would have used tempered steel, which he chides Mark over. This mastery is very impressive since Hoffman had achieved it over a short period of time (around a month) and was depressed and heavily alcoholic.

Next, the trap is carefully built to fit Jigsaw's creative and symbolic MO. Hoffman clearly did his research, designing the trap based on Edgar Allen Poe's *The Pit and the Pendulum,* where the narrator finds himself a victim of the Spanish Inquisition and is at the mercy of their torture devices. A pendulum hangs and descends from a ceiling panel with Father Time painted on it, representing the inevitability of death at the hands of time; and the pit itself represents hell, or self damnation within certain Christian theologies. So, Hoffman's message with the trap, fabricating it as Jigsaw's lesson, is this: "You have damned yourself through your destruction. And the only way to escape is to be reborn through sacrifice." This actually aligns well with Jigsaw's view of "immortality," as the trap communicates that Seth, like Kramer, can become "immortal" by undergoing a willing sacrifice. Given the tight time frame Seth is subject to, the test aligns extremely well with the inspiration.

More obviously, the tape that informs Seth of his situation delivers information with a voice nearly indistinguishable from John Kramer. (Meta note: Tobin Bell actually provided most of the voice for the tape. It is really him.) This is impressive since John, as shown in a flashback involving his wife, actually distorts his own voice to mask it and as a calling card of sorts. Hoffman was able to record his own voice, modify it to sound almost exactly like John Kramer, further modify it to sound like "Jigsaw," and he even threw in the signature warbles present in John's tapes. This shows a mastery of audio engineering.

And finally, we see that Hoffman accurately replicated Jigsaw's speech patterns, replicating the formula of Kramer's actual tapes - which typically chide the listener(s) for their sins, explains why they're in the trap, what they have to do to get out, and makes use of double entendres all with John's articulate,

philosophical vernacular. Again, the police never pick up on this, and even John doesn't chide him for anything but the metal quality/revenge motive.

The planning process for this likely involved discreetly ordering the components of the traps, or building them himself; acquiring the Billy puppet, or building one himself; acquiring the tapes from the police department; creating the tape; and stalking and subduing Seth in a secure place.

(Verbal Comprehension Index, Fluid Reasoning Index, Learning Ability, Fabrication, Scapegoating, Planning, Creativity, Emotional Engagement)

Killing Kramer

Goals: Hoffman's holistic goal is simply to continue as Jigsaw and be free of the leverage Kramer has on him. As a corollary, this requires killing Jigsaw's other protege Amanda Young, since she was loyal to John and was being trained to carry on his work.

(Note: In italics is theory, but it serves to make sense of Amanda's 180 turn around from SAW II and X from being loyal to Kramer and brainwashed to being disillusioned.)

Hoffman began his scheme by targeting Amanda. He manipulated her out of her brainwashing, convincing her subtly that Jigsaw's philosophy was wrong, that the subjects they captured simply needed to be put down. Now if he just outright began arguing against the "will to live" tests, then Amanda would warn John, so Mark had to be sneaky about it. And it worked. Amanda began rigging the traps John had her build. Mark knew that John would be smart enough to catch on and that, per his philosophy, would be inclined to test her again in a situation where she could either "live or die." Thus, he would have an opportunity to rig the game so that she dies. To do this, he investigated Amanda off-screen and discovered that she was connected to Cecil, the man responsible for killing John's unborn son.

The actual test involving Amanda bears fruition in SAW III/IV. It's a mere part of an incredibly complex chain of events with dozens of players that include the FBI, the police force, the several victims involved, Amanda, Dr. Lynn, John, and himself. Lynn was forced via an explosive collar around her neck to operate on John's brain tumor, and Amanda was being tested in her temperament in

keeping Lynn alive and refraining from killing her when John showed affection to Lynn. Thus, the fail condition would be Amanda killing her. Not only that, Amanda's test's fail condition was also a secret, one that John only reveals as she's dying from the punishment that John had orchestrated should she fail, that is, Lynn's husband Jeff would arrive at the exact moment Amanda shoots Lynn and kill Amanda in a rage. **To put it simply, Hoffman had deduced not only that the final game was a secret test of character for Amanda, but also that she would die if she failed.** Mark ensured that she failed by blackmailing her with the information he acquired. In another document, I went over just how impressive John's prediction of the events surrounding his death was: if Jeff was a little faster, Amanda wouldn't have shot Lynn since Lynn would reunite with the armed Jeff; if Jeff was slower, he would arrive later and possibly die in a shootout with Amanda after she regains her bearings after killing Lynn; if the judge Jeff saved happened to not be standing in front of the shotgun when Jeff was trying to save another subject, he might be able to stop Jeff from killing John; if Jill was a bit quicker to release details about John, Strahm would've discovered the facility sooner (canonically, he arrives at the scene moments after Jeff killed John) and prevented the execution of John and likely Amanda; and so on. John was able to predict all of this. But Mark's feat is even more impressive than John's in this case, because John is consistently parsimonious with the information he reveals to his disciples. As mentioned, he didn't reveal to Amanda that she was being tested until after she had failed, he didn't reveal to Hoffman that Gordon was a fellow disciple, etc, so Hoffman had made the same prediction with less information than John, not only showing his exceptional reasoning ability but also his ability to "anticipate the human mind" as John had taught him. Given the precision, he also would've had to simulate the events and players of the game in his mind, juggling all the details involved such as Jeff's temperament, Strahm's reasoning skills, Rigg's progress through his own set of games, etc, visualizing the events as they played throughout Gideon's meatpacking facility, Riggs' path as he worked through his trials through town, and the police station, an area comprising perhaps miles. More generally speaking, very temporally precise predictions require one to be able to make logical inferences by taking into account as much relevant information as possible, which is especially difficult since predicting the behavior of human beings is an "intractable problem," a problem for which there exists no algorithm or computer capable of solving given the unpredictability of human behavior as we are influenced by

innumerable variables - our past experiences, immediate sensory stimuli, priming from recent experiences, and so on.

How much information did he have? The films are loose with their flashbacks, but we're consistently shown that Hoffman helped build traps, gather info on victims, kidnap victims, and leave false clues for the law as part of Kramer's plans. It's likely he was able to make the prediction based just off this:

1. The layout of the game area
2. The traps involved
3. The victims and their background
4. The FBI's involvement (it's likely Hoffman was the one instructed to lure them to the final game via a key
5. John telling him that Amanda would be tested

Events proceed, and Amanda dies after shooting Lynn, Jeff avenges Lynn by killing Amanda, Jeff kills John, who tells him that Jeff's daughter is a part of the game, and Strahm kills Jeff after the latter threatens him while enraged. Hoffman proceeds with John's plan. Strahm gets locked in the room where John and Amanda's bodies are, but Strahm proceeds to a secret door, where John had left a tape instructing him not to proceed. In position, Hoffman subdues Strahm when the latter disobeys and situates him in a trap meant to be his execution - his head trapped in a glass box that slowly fills with water. But Strahm survives through an improvised tracheostomy using his pen, and that brings us to SAW V.

Analysis: It goes without saying Hoffman's strategy is effective. Through his reasoning skills, manipulation, and simple blackmail, he'd killed two of his biggest opponents. But we can see it's also well shielded. You could argue that the plan falls apart if Amanda doesn't kill Lynn, but Hoffman had reasoned to a certainty that she would. (1) She doesn't know the consequences of doing so. (2) The test John has for her directly preys on her feelings, testing her loyalty to him. Even without the blackmail, John's affectionate displays towards Lynn clearly enrage Amanda. (3) This is further compounded by Hoffman having already broken her agreement with Jigsaw's philosophy beforehand. (4)

Hoffman had blackmailed her with information about her past - which is that Amanda was involved with the death of John's son - so that she would kill Lynn.

Thus, based on his understanding of her character and situation within the game Hoffman knew Amanda would certainly shoot Lynn.

But we can imagine some other scenarios. Strahm's timing in arrival doesn't really confound Hoffman in any sense. If he arrives sooner and prevents Jeff from killing Amanda or Amanda from killing Lynn, Hoffman could've simply activated the lockdown system built into the room to trap the subjects, which he canonically did as part of Strahm's test, and gunned down the survivors (as he proves to be a very effective marksman later on) from the secret door. Since Strahm had arrived there alone without warning anyone, Hoffman would be free to reveal the game to the police at his discretion. Depending on Amanda's mental state, he could even count on her to cause a gunfight with Strahm in her highly shattered mental state. He could even leave the survivors to starve since Kramer rigged the area so that Strahm couldn't get a proper phone signal (shown in the beginning of SAW V).

(Fluid Reasoning Index, Working Memory Index, Verbal Comprehension Index, Processing Speed Index, Visual-Spatial Index, Emotional Understanding, Emotional Perception, Deductive Reasoning, Abductive Reasoning, Prediction, Overall Thinking, Strategy Effectiveness, Strategy Building, Strategy Fortitude, Strategy Shielding, Direct Manipulation, Information Gathering, Blackmail)

Strahm Framing

Goal: To frame Strahm as the second apprentice. But this is not the full strategy; it's only half of his strategy to deal with the FBI, the other half of which is seen in SAW VI.

And that brings us to SAW V. Most likely, Hoffman hadn't planned on Strahm surviving. It's shown during his scene that Hoffman had taken care to remove his gun and phone, and Hoffman is visibly shocked when Strahm is discovered to be alive right after asserting that "nobody made it." This forces him to adapt his strategy from just becoming Jigsaw to also getting rid of the FBI, Strahm in particular. This is because Agent Strahm had proven

exceptionally clever prior to the events of SAW V. He was the one to catch on that Jigsaw had a second apprentice besides Amanda, and his survival of the water box only further proved that. Hoffman knew that Strahm would put the pieces together between his second apprentice theory, the last thing he saw before being subdued being a large man in a pig mask who subdued him, and Hoffman being the only other survivor. With further research into his troubled background and research into Seth Baxter, Strahm and the FBI would close in on him. A letter he receives in his office marked "I know who you are" leads him to believe Strahm has already made the connection, forcing him to come up with a plan. He goes to the evidence room and grabs Strahm's phone. This marks the first step of his plan, which will become crucial later on. He visits Strahm after being told that Strahm's partner Perez had died (this was actually a scheme by Erickson). Strahm makes it very clear that he thinks the whole department is crooked, but Hoffman manipulates him by making himself look suspicious, telling him to "back the fuck off," raising his suspicion. Erickson arrives shortly, Strahm asks for another talk with Jill Tuck, and Erickson informs Strahm that he's off the case due to his recklessness in arriving at the game without telling anyone else. At the same time as all this, Hoffman has put forth into motion another set of subjects John had wanted him to test - the Fatal Five.

Now Hoffman already had a good grasp on Strahm's situation and personality. Per his prediction of Strahm shooting Jeff, he knew that (1) Strahm would be forced to kill an innocent, and (2) he would arrive alone. Strahm didn't really save anyone in the process, so it would be natural for Erickson to put him on leave due to his fruitless and reckless actions. This also indicates that Hoffman had profiled Strahm well in the short time he worked alongside him. He knew Strahm was passionate in his career to a reckless extent and very intelligent. Furthermore, he knew that the "death" of his partner Perez only made it more personal for Strahm, which both gave Strahm motive to continue his hunt for Jigsaw would also further give Erickson good reason to keep Strahm from the case. Thus, Hoffman reasoned that Erickson would put Strahm on leave, and Strahm would certainly continue his investigation into Jigsaw and the second apprentice theory no matter what.

Hoffman makes a call to the FBI asking if he could speak to Strahm about something urgent, sounding somewhat nervous. (He already knows Strahm is off the case.) Meanwhile, Strahm covertly sneaks back into his old office to look

for information on Hoffman, stealing files since he can't find anything on their internet database because Hoffman has no criminal records. He discovers the death of Hoffman's sister and the death of Seth at the hands of "Jigsaw." Erickson catches Strahm on the way out, and Strahm lies that he was just grabbing some stuff before his time off, leaving Erickson befuddled.

With the files and photographs, Strahm revisits the site of Seth Baxter's death. He notes how a small hole in a wall gave "Jigsaw" a perfect view of Seth's face as he died. This confirms that Hoffman is an apprentice for him, as the hole indicates that the killer wanted to personally see Seth's face as he died.

Hoffman receives another "I know who you are" letter. Strahm continues sneaking back into his office, and Erickson spots him. This leads Erickson to call Hoffman back. Hoffman explains that Strahm wasn't in his office, that Strahm had theorized about a second accomplice, and that he suspected the accomplice was someone within law enforcement. Due to Hoffman's manipulation, Strahm had been manipulated into acting heavily suspicious in the eyes of Erickson, and Erickson even discovers that all files on previous Jigsaw victims have been taken by him.

Later, Jill informs Erickson that she thinks she's being followed. She thinks it's Strahm, who meanwhile visits the site of Jigsaw's death and figures out Hoffman's plan was for them all (John, Amanda, Jeff, Lynn, Riggs, him, etc) to die, and Hoffman was supposed to come out as the hero and sole survivor. Meanwhile, Hoffman uses Strahm's phone to call Erickson before immediately hanging up. Erickson gets freaked out and has Strahm's phone tracked, but Hoffman had taken the precaution to make sure Strahm's couldn't be tracked yet. He only allows it to be tracked after returning to the control room of the Fatal Five's game. Hoffman returns to his office at the police station, where Strahm had been waiting outside in his car, allowing the latter to tail him to the renovated Nerve Gas House. Erickson acquires the phone signal from his team just then and heads to its location. There, he finds Strahm's phone, pictures of the Fatal Five, and a folder with pictures of himself. Thus, Strahm is now the #1 culprit for Jigsaw's successor.

Meanwhile, Hoffman has lured Strahm to a room with a large glass coffin filled with ice, and a tape instructs Strahm to enter the box - a test of whether Strahm has learned to trust him. Strahm ambushes Hoffman after he emerges from a

hiding spot with a syringe and throws him into the coffin, triggering the trap as the walls close in on Strahm. He tries desperately to escape the trap, shouts “I know who you are!” but is ultimately crushed to death, leaving only a hand.

Analysis

First, let’s go over the plan:
1. Set up the Fatal Five’s games
2. Steal Strahm’s phone
3. Make a call to Strahm’s office pretending to be nervous
4. Inform Erickson about Strahm’s “second apprentice” theory
5. Have Jill tell Erickson that she thinks Strahm is stalking her
6. Call Erickson from Strahm’s phone
7. Leave Strahm’s phone at the Fatal Five’s game
8. Lure Strahm to the glass coffin trap
9. Kill/Manipulate him

With this, Hoffman outsmarts not one but two FBI agents, predicting every move both of them make He predicted Strahm would get fired by Erickson for being reckless and too emotionally invested in the case, he predicted Strahm would continue investigating on his own, he predicted that Strahm would come off as suspicious when he returned to the station to get the files to do this, he predicted that Erickson would be spooked enough by then to track Strahm’s phone after he received a call from it, and he did all this to such a precise degree that Strahm’s death and Erickson’s discovery of the Fatal Five happened simultaneously, showing that he even grasped Strahm’s psyche so thoroughly that he knew exactly how fast he would catch onto Hoffman.

From Erickson’s POV, all evidence does indeed point to Agent Strahm:

- The apprentice would have to be someone physically strong, so that excludes Amanda and John
- The apprentice would have to be someone smart. Strahm proved to be intelligent several times.
- Strahm had previously been notably aggressive with Jill during his interrogation of her in SAW IV, he asked if they could reopen the investigation into her, and, as far as he knew, it’s entirely possible that John Kramer wanted revenge on his ex-wife after she left him. So

Hoffman manages to connect the dots in Erickson's mind by having Jill report Strahm.
- The apprentice would have to be someone with a law enforcement background since many of victims were chosen based off information in the police database
- Strahm was clearly deceptive in his first encounter with Erickson at the station
- And the photos, phone, and Fatal Five game just seals the deal

From a strategic point of view, this plan is brilliant since Hoffman structures it in such a way that it's a lose-lose situation no matter what Strahm does. If Strahm chooses to not investigate, Hoffman simply carries on as Jigsaw or waits for the heat to die down. If Strahm does investigate, then he incriminates himself as described above. By the time of the finale, Strahm has lost no matter what he does. If he escapes the trap, he's still successfully framed by Hoffman's actions. If Strahm escapes the trap after throwing Hoffman in there, then it'd be hard to explain it in any way that doesn't make it look like Hoffman had been forced into another trial by Strahm. The worst case scenario for Hoffman is that he dies in the struggle with Strahm, but that it's only a loss for him, not a win for Strahm, since it would be heavily suspicious for Strahm at that point to kill another officer; Hoffman had further made this clear by framing it such that it looks like (from Erickson's POV) that Hoffman had been looking into Strahm and his theory, so if Strahm killed him it would look like Hoffman simply got too close to the truth. And if Strahm entered the coffin, Hoffman would have easily incapacitated him. We see in the next film that the coffin is moved mechanically to a room just down the hall, Hoffman would've hidden and ambushed the disorientated Strahm. Judging by the syringe, it's also inferrable that Hoffman planned to perhaps recruit him as an apprentice, hence his tape asking whether Strahm trusted him, cut his hand off for the plan in the next film, or perhaps both.

Another strategically brilliant aspect is that it aligns well with John's prior plan in SAW IV, where Strahm was lured to the game site and forced to shoot Jeff. Hoffman took advantage of that and engineered a situation based on that where Strahm was inherently forced to chase him alone, due to how big of a mistake he made from a bureaucratic POV, thus isolating the smartest person bent on catching him. John's plan had also been to plant the seed in the minds of investigators that he was training a new apprentice (Riggs) within law

enforcement. While Riggs did die later on, Strahm formed a theory about there being a second apprentice from the get go based on Kerry's trap design. Hoffman knew that this would inevitably be vindicated later on, so he managed to turn this theory against Strahm by implicating him as the new apprentice.

Though Hoffman did have reason to believe events would play out as they did with Strahm not entering the coffin. (1) Hoffman had seen how Strahm had previously flagrantly disobeyed Jigsaw's instructions. (2) Strahm in general was a hotheaded person, disobeying his superior's order to drop the case. (3) Strahm notably has a glass motif throughout his appearances. A transition to his introductory scene involves glass shattering,his first trap involves a glass box, and the coffin is made of glass with broken glass shards thrown in for good measure. Furthermore, via metacognition he can know that his interactions with Strahm up to that point had been inherently deceptive, and Strahm from his point of view had made progress entirely by NOT trusting Hoffman. For example, Hoffman tried to debunk Strahm's second apprentice theory by bringing up how the heavier victims could've been set up by Amanda, John, or machines, but Strahm was vindicated when he directly encountered the second apprentice after seeing John and Amanda dead in the secret tunnel at the beginning of SAW V. It's likely Strahm would be further inclined not to enter the claustrophobic glass coffin based off his traumatic experience with the glass box.

What about the letters? It is revealed in SAW VII that Gordon had sent those letters. The entire Hoffman vs Strahm plot had been foreseen by John, and Gordon was instructed to send those letters to set Hoffman against Strahm. Strahm saying "I know who you are!" confirms this, as it shows John's trademark ability to predict people's behaviors. He had Gordon taunt Hoffman with Strahm's dying words before Hoffman ever put the pieces in play.

(Emotional Understanding, Emotional Perception, Strategy Alignment, Strategy Execution, Strategy Alignment, Strategy Adaptability, Strategy Fortitude, Planning Invincibility, Planning Contingencies, Planning Versatility, Prediction, Direct Manipulation, Indirect Manipulation, Logical Manipulation, Mass Manipulation, Abductive Reasoning, Trap Setting, Scapegoating, Misdirection, Fabrication, Information Control, Overall Thinking, Fluid Reasoning Index)

The FBI Strat Continued

Goal: With Strahm dead, Hoffman adapts his strategy to dealing with the remaining FBI agents. He can either kill them or leave them be depending on whether the misdirection holds.

The cold open of the film has two victims in a trap seeing who can cut off the most flesh to prove their will. Picking up right after the last film, Hoffman exits the coffin trap to find what remains of Strahm - a hand - and, with Strahm out of the way, begins ramping up his reign as Jigsaw with the subjects John left for him, CEO William Easton and his employees. Hoffman meets with Ericson and discovers Perez is alive, having faked her death. Also, the loser of the cold open has been discovered with fingerprints on his eyes and the scale that was used in the trap. Hoffman had used Strahm's hand to further incriminate Strahm. The FBI are fully convinced that Strahm is a Jigsaw apprentice now, especially since it's revealed that the victims of the Fatal Five game had been previously investigated by Strahm and Perez, so it seems to them that Strahm had become a vigilante. (John had evidently picked them specifically with this in mind.) They want to work with him. Hoffman feigns offense at their deception, using reverse psychology so they offer him "full disclosure" so he can work closely with them, having access to all their information.

Hoffman is later called to an examination of the latest victim. The examiner noticed that the victim of the latest trap was cut with a knife only previously used on Seth Baxter, and that trap's tape was missing too. Hoffman acts dumbfounded. The FBI plan to acquire the tape used in the Baxter trap, reasoning that perhaps there would be a discrepancy there too. Hoffman also meets investigative journalist Pamela Jenkins, who pesters him above Jigsaw and wants to meet with Jill.

Later that night, Hoffman breaks into Easton's building, sneaks into his work room, luring a security guard there, and kidnaps the CEO after the man accidentally shot the guard. He also kidnapped several other employees who worked there on the same night. This is very impressive since he got their files from Jill that very same day, so it's not like he had time to watch their routines to know when the optimal time would be to kidnap each and every one of them without being seen or leaving behind any clues. Pamela he kidnapped by

dropping a note off for her with Jill's address. After their brief meeting, Hoffman was able to ambush her in the halls.

Hoffman gets a call from Ericson informing him they found the Baxter tape and to meet in person to discuss something "time sensitive." They tell him the fingerprints contain the contaminant R12, production of which ceased in 1994. They plan on investigating the building where the prints were found with this in mind. R12 is used in refrigeration; this hints at what Hoffman is doing (keeping Strahm's hand in a portable fridge). In the same meeting, Ericson receives a call, a breakthrough of some sort regarding the Baxter tape, and urges Hoffman to follow him to the lab. There, the agent working on the tape remarks that whoever made the tape had access to very impressive audio encrypting technology. Hoffman anxiously paces around the room, grabbing a cup of hot coffee. Ericson then reveals that forensics had discovered that Strahm had to be dead when his prints were left on the victim because of the uric acid levels just as the tape reveals Hoffman's voice. Hoffman quickly slices Ericson's throat with a hidden blade, splashes the hot coffee in Perez's face to buy some time, stabs some sort of device that rings the alarms and makes the room go dark, overpowers the technician as Perez regains her bearings and uses her as a human shield before gutting Perez, leaves Strahm's prints on the scene, and pours gasoline all over the lab to set it ablaze. Thus ends his two-film strategy against law enforcement. He rushes back to the game site where Easton's game is taking place, where is ambushed by Jill, who had received instructions from Kramer to test Hoffman.

Jill shocks him with some sort of device, straps him to a chair with leather restraints, and places an upgraded reverse bear trap on him with a minute until the device would tear his face open. He's in an essentially unwinnable situation. An execution. The device activates just as Bryan 7(a player within Easton's game) pulls the lever for Easton to "die" in his final trial. Hoffman smashes his hand with the jaws of the bear trap, using the blood to slip his hand free, escapes from the chair, and, with impressive wherewithal, grabs a screwdriver to attempt to disassemble the device, albeit unsuccessfully. With seconds left, he notices the bars of the door to the room, smashes his face against it, jamming the jaws in there between the metal bars. The trap goes off, but he knows it would only buy him a few seconds. He tears his cheek free just as the jaws snap open, dislocating the bars. With a good portion of his face missing, Hoffman is left on the floor in excruciating pain and bloodlust

Analysis

His plan in VI is primarily to build on his work in V and make it look like Strahm was framing him, i.e. Hoffman framed Strahm to make it look like Strahm was Jigsaw and intent on framing Hoffman, a very complex scheme. How he does this revolves around victims of the cold opening. As mentioned, he cut a piece from them using the same knife he used on Seth Baxter several years prior, and he didn't leave the tape behind to break Jigsaw's pattern of leaving tapes behind. They'd notice the knife, be reminded of Seth Baxter, and catch onto the missing tape. This would incriminate Hoffman, but with the evidence against Strahm, it would look like Strahm was incriminating Hoffman.

(Though the tape used in the cold open also very accurately replicates John's voice, ensuring the survivor wouldn't be able to distinguish it from John's real tapes if the police showed one to them.)

His plan A was to simply fool them with this set up. If this worked, he had a number of ways to play it: he could continue working as an investigator alongside them, using his inside knowledge of the case to mislead them; he could disappear, letting the police think Strahm-Saw had kidnapped/killed him (this would be especially strong since Jigsaw had "kidnapped" Hoffman before in IV), since Mark's plan had already established Strahm-Saw has reason to go after him; he could test them one by one; or he could retire.

His plan B was in case the FBI did crack the forensic holes in the case, and it's what we see play out on film. He slaughters the FBI and concludes his framing of Strahm by burning all evidence, destroying the decrypted Baxter tape, and leaves prints behind that would be much harder to see through due to fire damage. We know he had actually anticipated this since he had the hand, a portable freezer for it, and gasoline; a huge risk not worth taking unless he specifically anticipated having to kill the FBI and destroy the site of the crime. We even see in flashbacks that he has a larger cooler unit in his base where he put the hand back after setting up his earlier crimes, so he had to have grabbed it out of there after receiving the call from Ericson. And finally, we see that he had gloves in his car which he takes off after destroying the lab.

While the riskier and less desirable outcome, plan B still leaves him with options. He could disappear as previously mentioned. With the FBI and their work destroyed, Hoffman's framing of Strahm would be solidified. He was their last public prime suspect, with an APB out on him to boot, existing evidence implicates him, and the police would have to start from scratch. He could disappear in a similar manner explained above, retire, or continue Jigsaw's work in the same city.

A brief note. While Easton's game is largely disconnected from the events of Hoffman's plotline unlike in SAW V, it does have the effect of dividing police attention. Rather than the police and FBI synergizing on the cold opening case, they're forced to divide manpower among the missing members of Easton's insurance company, the missing journalist Patty Jenkins, and the cold opening game, thus shielding his strategy. Another layer of shielding to consider is that by letting the FBI catch on to the existence of an accomplice within law enforcement, they'd inherently be set against the local police force, limiting the information they can share with them and even amongst themselves (hence them faking Perez's death). This is actually fairly similar to Light Yagami's own strategy against L and the police, and it likewise has the effect of heavily isolating his most dangerous living opponents - the FBI.

It's a common misinterpretation that Hoffman was sort of just bumbling his way through this film and the FBI cornered him, with Hoffman only escaping due to his combat skills. How do we know Hoffman isn't in fact bumbling his way through this?

1. Hoffman would have to go out of his way to re-use the exact same knife he used years ago. Hoffman had worked alongside John for years, conducted several tests for him after he became wheelchair-bound, likely making the cuts with the knife John did use, so he would know what knife to use.

2. The cold open victims were the first trials solely set up by him, not on John's orders. The timing isn't a coincidence. It happens soon after Strahm's death as part of his plan. If Hoffman had simply begun going after his own victims, he would've done so after the events of IV, where there was a time gap for him to pick new victims.

3. The missing tape is deliberate. Hoffman knew his encryption skills could fool forensics, hence him not taking the tape when he killed Seth, but drawing attention to it breaks the pattern established up to that point and leads the FBI to fastidiously review the cases they know, acting as a contingency in case the different knife went unnoticed.

4. When Ericson is pressuring Hoffman during the sound lab scene, he actually plays along with Hoffman's plan, explaining how it is possible that Strahm was trying to frame Hoffman. Hoffman relaxes at this and sets down his cup of coffee, thinking he might not have to resort to his plan B since plan A had them fooled, before Ericson explains the forensics evidence that disproves that, causing Hoffman to rearm himself with the coffee.

5. As explained above, the hand, freezer, gasoline, and gloves he brought to the FBI's lab.

One might be fooled by Hoffman's acting. It's easy to take it at face value as him genuinely getting flustered when the FBI increasingly close in on him, but the SAW films are very layered, and they establish well that he plays very well into the local bumpkin detective act while in fact being a mastermind second only to Kramer. We see this in IV, where Hoffman acts like a fool when Strahm deduces the second apprentice's existence, IQmogging the local detectives; V, where he makes a seemingly overly suspicious move in telling Strahm to fuck off, and also when he makes the call to Ericson; and VI, where he acts dumbfounded at the idea that an autopsist could notice a difference in the blades used to make a cut. Hoffman had merely played into their pride as big hotshot federal agents, which was shown in IV with Strahm and further in VI where they had the audacity to fake Perez's death, and made them underestimate him as a brute muscle detective/second-rank serial killer.

We can break up his whole plan across the two films into pieces since it's so complex and multi-layered

Layer I - Implicating Strahm

1. Set up the Fatal Five's game
2. Manipulate Strahm into chasing him
3. Steal Strahm's phone
4. Call Strahm's office pretending to be nervous

5. Inform Ericson about the second apprentice theory
6. Have Jill tell Ericson she thinks someone is stalking her
7. Call Ericson with Strahm's phone
8. Leave his phone along with other evidence at the Fatal Five's game
9. Lure Strahm into a different site where the glass coffin trap is
10. Kill/Incapacitate him

Layer II - Framing himself

1. Set up cold opening game
2. Cut out a jigsaw piece from the victim with the same knife used on Baxter
3. Take the tape from the site
4. Leave Strahm's fingerprints at the game site
5. Set up William Easton's game

Layer II A - the FBI are fooled

1. Let Strahm be Jigsaw
2. Work alongside the FBI, adjusting his tactics as need be

Layer II B - the FBI aren't fooled

1. Kill everyone
2. Destroy the evidence
3. Leave Strahm's (damaged) fingerprints at the scene

Let's sum up the case for Strahm and why it would be logical to conclude he's Jigsaw and seeking to frame Hoffman:

- Strahm was notably clever
- He has a motive/connection for and to the Fatal Five (Hoffman seemingly didn't know this, but it has to be said).
- His fingerprints were found at the site of another game
- The apprentice would have to be someone physically strong. Strahm's entry into the Jigsaw case + Kerry's death (requiring her to be hoisted up onto the trap) aligns very damningly.
- The apprentice likely has ties to law enforcement

- Strahm had acted aggressively towards Jill before, and now Jill had reported someone was following her
- His phone was found at the site of a game
- He had acted deceptively before with Ericson
- The same knife that was used in Baxter's murder was used in the new game, especially damning since Strahm had stolen all of the files on previous Jigsaw victims
- There were ostensibly two survivors (+Jeff's daughter) of the game from III/IV. With the assumption that one of them is an accomplice, it'd be reasonable to think that the one would want to finish the other off.
- Strahm was the one who first proposed the existence of another Jigsaw. In light of Hoffman's plan later on, it would seem from the police's POV that Strahm proposed this to lay the groundwork to frame Hoffman
- Hoffman had sounded nervous during his call with Ericson and, ostensibly, had revealed information that helped lead to the discovery of Strahm as Jigsaw. It'd be reasonable to assume that Strahm would want revenge.

This scheme achieves several things:

1. Gets rid of Agent Strahm
2. Continues John's work
3. Frames Agent Strahm in a double layer scheme that makes it seem like he's after Hoffman
4. Sets the FBI against the police
5. Gets rid of the FBI

His plan was so good that it was only Jill's betrayal that stopped him, as she trapped him and ran to the police to confess everything, sending Hoffman into hiding in the next film.

A common criticism is that the FBI acted dumbly, but they actually made some fairly clever plays if you pay attention. The post-credits scene for SAW VI actually reveals how they suspected Hoffman from SAW IV. Jeff's daughter, whom Hoffman had "rescued," was told by Amanda not to trust the man who rescued her. It's likely she said something to this effect to the cops and FBI, and they thus had formed suspicions against him. That is in addition to Hoffman escaping because of a "mistake" made by Jigsaw, who was otherwise flawless in

his killings. They hid the death of Perez from both of their suspects - Hoffman and Strahm - to keep her safe.

Their forensic genius is also well on display in SAW VI. Mere days after SAW V, they extract a heavy amount of info from Strahm's fingerprints that ultimately forces Hoffman to take them out with brute force. And their most glaring move, bringing Hoffman into the lab, can be excused as them not actually intending to arrest him there. As mentioned, Hoffman had made them underestimate him, so they were likely just trying to pressure him into slipping up and revealing incriminating information. Considering that both Perez and Ericson were armed, and Hoffman was seemingly unarmed, they had good reason to believe Hoffman wouldn't have resorted to a head on assault there. But Hoffman was both (1) enough of a badass to kill them all there without a scratch, and (2) knew he had to kill them there before they got the word out and formed a proper plan alongside the police.

(Strategy Alignment, Strategy Versatility, Strategy Execution, Strategy Effectiveness, Strategy Adaptability, Strategy Resilience, Strategy Shielding, Planning Coverage, Planning Intricacies, Planning Contingencies, Planning Versatility, Planning Invincibility, Unpredictability, Misdirection, Fabrication, Scapegoating, Information Control, Acting Skills, Mass Manipulation, Logical Manipulation, Direct Manipulation, Indirect Manipulation, Overall Thinking, Emotional Understanding, Emotional Management, Determination, Perseverance, Composure, Prediction, Anticipation, Improvisation, Abductive Reasoning)

Killing Jill
Goal: Kill Jill and Gibson

SAW VII picks up right where VI ended. Hoffman escapes the RBT. Despite having much of the right side of his face torn off, he's fairly calm and collected, sewing what remains of his cheek back together in a silent fury after collecting the bear trap, already intent on getting revenge on Jill. Meanwhile, Jill has fled to the police. She doesn't trust the FBI nor the homicide department, and she is instead fixed on talking to Matt Gibson from Internal Affairs. She wants immunity and protection in exchange for information. At the same time, Hoffman has anticipated this, destroying his phone and IDs, and has already formed his plan for revenge minutes after escaping the trap, as we see

him retrieve photos of Bobby Dagen in his hangar base. Bobby is a fraud who fabricated a story about surviving a Jigsaw trap, and John had even visited him once.

8 months later, we see that he's also set up another game, this one targeting a group of skinheads in a mechanics shop. None of the three skinheads survive. The police arrive there shortly afterwards as, at the same time, Hoffman kidnaps Dagen for his game. Gibson wonders the deeper purpose in choosing them as victims in that place, and they discover a bathroom with the message in blood "GIBSON SEE FOR YOURSELF" and the RBT on the floor below it. This leads Gibson to visit Jill in the safehouse they had for her, because Jill's fingerprints were on it. Gibson states Jill had never revealed why Hoffman was trying to kill her (so Hoffman had predicted that she would conceal that information). Just as Gibson leaves, the police there receive a CD addressed to Jill, and an explosion goes off at the junkyard seconds later. Gibson orders them to retreat from the site, not touch anything else, and call in the bomb squad. Back at the safehouse, Gibson plays the CD. The tape plays to reveal Mark standing directly in front of the camera, naming Gibson by name and offering to stop the new game in exchange for Jill. If he doesn't take the deal, Hoffman says, everyone will die. Gibson has the holding cell at the station cleared out and wants Jill there while it's on lockdown. This shows that Hoffman had predicted Gibson would be at the safehouse when the CD arrived there. As explained above, precise temporal predictions like that require a keen ability to model and predict the movements of people across time and space as they are guided by their psyche to planned/unplanned stimuli to make logical inferences.

A body from the junkyard arrives at the police station's morgue. Gibson analyzes the CD and notices an angel doll behind Hoffman in the footage. He knows it from somewhere. Moments after, Gibson receives footage of Bobby's kidnapping. Later, the station receives a time-delayed email with a cryptic clue, urging Gibson to look past their "old grudge," beyond the crossroads to the "Clear Dawn." Gibson gets the hint and mobilizes a few officers to follow the trail. "Crossroads" is in reference to the location - Crossroads Manufacturing - where Hoffman had saved Gibson's life years prior by executing a junkie in cold blood. The same angel doll there seemingly confirms this was where Hoffman

recorded the messages. Hoffman said Gibson owed him, Gibson reported Hoffman for brutality. Regardless, Hoffman got promoted and Gibson eventually moved to IA, where he busted three of Hoffman's guys. Hoffman swore vengeance on him for that. Gibson then connects the dots. The junkie had been institutionalized at the Clear Dawn Psychiatric Hospital; this must be where the game is taking place. Gibson raids the location with a SWAT team, but the game goes on. Gibson gets a call from the station. The technician there managed to trace the email back to the junkyard, and Gibson leaves the SWAT team to go back to the junkyard and get Hoffman.

There, Gibson grabs a few officers and reexamines the mirror where the earlier message was written. Smashing through it, he discovers the hidden section of the shop and finds a room where a figure cloaked like Jigsaw sits in front of some computer screens. The monitors display Bobby's game and the interior of the police station. He sees the same angel doll from earlier. It's actually the corpse of one of the skinheads. Hoffman had switched places with him in the bodybag, which is now in the morgue. Just as Gibson pieces it all together and attempts to route every officer back to the station, a sentry in the corner of the room pops up and kills everyone in the room. At the station, Hoffman stealthily carves a path to Jill through the few officers there. Jill's cell is hidden behind a locked, thick steel door with an officer behind it. Hoffman grabs the corpse of one of his victims, knocks on the door with it *Weekend at Bernie's* style, and stabs the officer when he opens before gunning down the last officer between him and Jill. Jill stabs him in the neck, but that buys her only a few seconds to run. Unfortunately, due to Gibson's lockdown order, no one can go in or out of the station, and she's now alone there with an angry Hoffman. Hoffman eventually finds her, beats the hell out of her, and puts her in the reverse bear trap, which does kill her.

Having gotten revenge on both Gibson and Jill, Hoffman returns to his hangar base to get money he had stashed to ditch town, blowing it up to destroy all traces of his stay there, but unfortunately Dr. Gordon and two other accomplices in pig masks ambush and sedate him. Gordon chains Hoffman to the bathroom from the first SAW. Hoffman immediately rushes for the only tool available - a rusty saw - to cut off his own foot to escape, but Gordon throws

that away, shutting the door behind him to leave Hoffman to die in darkness, presumably putting an end to Mark Hoffman's reign as Jigsaw.

Interestingly, there are conflicting thoughts on Hoffman's fate from official sources. The screenwriters in the DVD commentary stated that Hoffman died in the bathroom because Gordon had taken precautions to make sure Hoffman wouldn't have any way to escape. But Costas Mandylor (Hoffman's actor) stated that Hoffman had survived, and the filmmakers for *Jigsaw* considered bringing him back for a sequel. *So it's entirely possible that Mark Hoffman had again cheated death, somehow beating another unwinnable trap.*

Dagen's game is perhaps the only big game by Hoffman not ordained by Kramer. We saw in SAW V that John had given him the information on the Fatal Five shortly before his death, SAW VI that Jill had provided him with the subjects for Easton's game, and the only other game he did was one to misdirect the police. So it's likely that Hoffman had heard this from John that Bobby deserved to be tested, gotten the signed book from him at some point, and then devised Bobby's game entirely on his own, which is very impressive considering the sheer scope of it all. He modified an entire psychiatry hospital with several advanced traps, gathered information on and kidnapped the neo-nazis, remodeled the auto-shop, and gathered the tools and machines for all of that without leaving a trace for the clue until he was ready to kick off his plan. Since he never prepared the game prior and kept the information for it hidden in his hangar base, where he kept money and weapons in case he needed to make a getaway from the city, this likely means that Hoffman had devised Bobby's game as a possible countermeasure against the police sometime before Jill's betrayal, masterfully adapting it into his strategy to get revenge.

Now something else very interesting is that Bobby's game was almost, most likely, completely hands off because Hoffman didn't have the ability to oversee the game (having hidden in the bodybag), but we still see that certain aspects of the game activate without any visible triggers such as the strings in other SAW films often attached to victims that trigger traps when broken. For example, Bobby plays a recorder taped to the wall and this activates Kale's game with the one minute timer. This could mean that Hoffman had very accurately

predicted Bobby's progress through the game such that these components activated independently.

Analysis:

His plan, which he impressively seems to have thought up while in excruciating pain from his torn cheek and mangled hand, centered around controlling the movements of Gibson and Jill, isolating the latter, dividing police attention as much as possible, and concealing his intentions and whereabouts.

First, he begins by targeting the skinheads. This serves to show that Jigsaw's work isn't finished. It announces that there's another game, putting pressure on the police., and, on a personal note, Hoffman hates neo-nazis since Seth Baxter was one, so he gets to kill some. After that, he kidnaps Bobby Dagen and associates for the film's main game.

Gibson

When the police investigate the junkyard is when we see Hoffman beginning to indirectly control Gibson's movements. The RBT with Jill's fingerprints (with the message on mirror encouraging him to "see for himself," which he thinks is in reference to the RBT) leads him to investigate and discover Jill's deception, which leads him to her safehouse. He had arranged for the CD to be dropped off there around when Gibson was there, showing he predicted Gibson's movements very precisely. And this led to Gibson going to the station to analyze the footage.

There, Hoffman had timed an email to be sent there (again, showing precise foreknowledge of Gibson's movements) that hints Gibson to go to Crossroads Manufacturing. When Gibson goes there, he sees the angel doll. This confirms in his mind that Hoffman had recorded the video there. There, he has the flashback about the junkie Hoffman had shot. This flashback causes Gibson to recall the detail about the junkie - that he was released from Clear Dawn - and take officers there. Hoffman's tape instructing him to look past Crossroads to the Clear Dawn, i.e. go from Crossroads -> Clear Dawn, proves that Gibson had taken the exact path that Hoffman wanted him to. And this, his ability to exactly predict Gibson's thought process and bring about the memory he wants with the proper stimuli, shows Hoffman's keen understanding of the man.

At Clear Dawn, the police manage to track the email back to the junkyard, and Gibson decides to personally go back there to get Hoffman. This was likely orchestrated by Hoffman. He referenced their old grudge, which caused him to remember Hoffman's promise to get vengeance, making him think it was personal, causing him to go back there. Once he's there, he gets the double meaning of the message on the mirror "SEE FOR YOURSELF" and enters the secret hideout Hoffman had prepared. A figure in Jigsaw's infamous cloak sits in front of a few monitors, but it's actually the corpse from earlier. Gibson moves closer to investigate the corpse and monitors. The monitors there show footage of both Bobby's game and the police

station. Gibson sees the bodybag being brought and surmises Hoffman's plan, but this was actually a distraction on Hoffman's part to catch him offguard. A sentry gun in the corner pops up while he's distracted and massacres every cop in the room. (The sentry gun was either timed, showing insane foresight on Hoffman's part; subtly triggered by something in Gibson or his allies hit in the secret room when they entered; or Hoffman had a remote way of triggering it from the bodybag along with a way of hearing when Gibson was in the room.) Thus ends one aspect of his strategy in VII, which fulfills his old promise to get revenge on Gibson.

Jill

His manipulation of Jill's movements is much simpler. She had already had reservations about staying at the safehouse, believing that Hoffman knew its location, and Hoffman proved that seconds later with the CD sent there. By easily tracking her down, Hoffman demonstrated that they couldn't hide her from him, so the only logical choice would be to forego evasion in favor of protection, sending her to the station. To fortify the place, they even completely lock the place down, which turns out to play very well into Mark's favor.

This might seem odd, but with the tape seemingly negotiating for a deal and by merely sending a CD there instead of directly attacking the safehouse, Hoffman had planted the idea in Gibson's head that he wouldn't go for any head-on assault. This makes Gibson think he's playing defense and trying to exchange hostages for Jill when he's really on the offense.

The Police

It's subtle, but this is the strongest aspect of Hoffman's strategy. By dividing the police's attention between three different targets Jill was left with only a few officers guarding her. Again, they didn't think he would risk a direct assault, so they thought it was safe to send more officers out to deal with the junkyard threat or Bobby's game.

First, the junkyard. Of course, there's the obvious - dead bodies which will naturally draw police attention - but the explosion Hoffman sets off is also critical. (1) It draws immediate attention from the officers at the scene, allowing Hoffman to switch places with the dead man in the bodybag. (2) It draws more officers to the scene. Gibson orders the bomb squad to rush down there in case there are more bombs. (3) It serves to conceal Hoffman's secret location inside the junkyard. Gibson ordered that officers retreat and play it safe, lest they set off another explosion or a trap. Jigsaw had used boobytraps against the police on several occasions, so this was a natural reaction. And (4) when Gibson finally bites the bullet in a hail of gunfire, this would naturally keep police fixed on the site even if Gibson managed to give out a panicked order for every officer to go back to the station, an order which likely wouldn't have

worked anyways since it'd be difficult to explain the plan he had deduced and there were seemingly more pertinent problems at the junkyard and hospital.

Second, Bobby Dagen. Firstly, Bobby was kidnapped in broad nightlight, footage of which was captured on camera (as Hoffman wanted). Even prior to Gibson's discovery, that would already mean a few officers were focused on finding the famous author. Once they discover the hospital, that draws several heavily armed police out, away from Jill to deal with the more immediate threat. And we know he intended on the police discovering Bobby's game since we see the officers there get hit with boobytraps when they take an alternate route. Bobby himself was guided through paint, lighting, and trials to take the path he did, one that included going through a room with most of the floor missing, while the police were forced to take an alternate route. Again, this too would draw attention away from Jill, as officers would request for backup dealing with Bobby's game. After all, no one but Gibson had a clue as to Hoffman's location, so from their POV Hoffman could be there, armed and ready to kill.

Ultimately, it's no surprise Hoffman had only a few officers to deal with at the station.

Just like in SAW VI, we can think of the plan in layers, but this time in terms of what he does and what he makes the police think he's doing

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Layer I - The Real Plan

1. Set up Bobby's game
2. Set up the sentry gun
3. Arrange for the CD to be sent to Jill's safehouse
4. Send the timed email to the police, setting it to arrive when Gibson's at the station
5. Set the angel doll at Crossroads Manufacturing
6. Skinheads' game + RBT on the floor
7. Deliberately kidnap Bobby Dagen in front of a camera
8. Have the CD arrive at the safehouse, causing Jill to be moved to the station
9. Set off the explosion when Gibson is at Jill's safehouse
10. Swap places with the corpse in the bodybag
11. Have the email arrive at the station when Gibson is there, sending him to Crossroads
12. Facilitate Gibson's flashbacks via the email, allowing him to make the connection to Clear Dawn
13. Allow the email to be traced when Gibson and several cops are at Clear Dawn, causing Gibson to return to the junkyard
14. Kill everyone at the station
15. Kill Gibson via sentry gun while he's distracted by the corpse and monitors

Layer II - Fake plan I

This is what the police believe initially in Steps 1-2

1. Set up Bobby's game

2. Set up the skinheads' game + RBT
3. Sow division between the police and Jill with the fingerprints on the RBT, which shows that Jill was being deceptive and possibly hid other criminal activities
4. Send a CD to Jill's house as a threat, holding the participants in Bobby's game hostage in exchange for her life

Layer III - Fake plan 2 (The fake fake "real plan")

This is from steps 1-4 - what the police believe Hoffman wanted them to believe is the real plan.

1. Set up Bobby's game
2. Set up the skinheads' game
3. Send the CD to Jill's house as a threat, holding the participants hostage
4. Send the email with the clue to the manufacturing area and the hospital
5. Have Gibson go there to confirm that Hoffman was there via the angel doll, then connecting the dots to Clear Dawn hospital
6. Have a final showdown at the hospital

Layer IV - Fake plan 3 (The fake "real plan")

From the police's POV, this is the actual plan that Hoffman was hiding, one seemingly interrupted halfway through via the email being backtraced.

1. Set up Bobby's game
2. Set up the skinheads' game
3. Send the CD to Jill's house
4. Send the email to the police
5. Have Gibson go to Crossroads, then Clear Dawn
6. ???

If you're keeping count, that's 1 real plan that's made up of 3 fake plans, 2 of which are meant to be seen as real from the police's POV. It's more centered around Gibson, but by allowing the police to move past layer II, the first fake plan, they're more inclined to believe layer III is the real plan, since after all, Jigsaw has a history of playing mind games from their POV. So from their POV: Layer II was the misdirection he allowed them to easily see through, III the fake plan is the "real plan" he was actually trying to get them to believe, and IV is the real plan. Though they don't exactly know the exact end to which IV served since it seems to them that they caught him in a mistake halfway through it.
It achieves these goals:

1. Killing Jill
2. Killing Gibson
3. Continuing John Kramer's work
4. Divides the police's attention

5. Endlessly misdirects the police
6. Ensures he can escape after it's all done

Another extremely complex scheme, indeed, let's go over the strategic benefits of this contrived plan. Of course, he could've played it much the same by dividing their attention with two different games and going for a direct assault on the safehouse. He's demonstrated superb combat ability before. Let's assume he employs a similar strategy with two separate games to split their manpower, though not sending that video that shows he had it out for Jill, before heading over to Jill's place to kill any cops there. The disadvantage would be that this is extremely obvious. The police already had reason to believe Hoffman was out to kill Jill, so they might anticipate a divide-and-conquer strategy and put more men in the safehouse or tell them to be on guard. Second, Hoffman doesn't know the layout of the safehouse. Something as simple as that could prove detrimental and allow Jill to escape or the cops there to get the better of him with superior knowledge of the environment. Third, Hoffman does know the layout of the police station, having worked there for years, and adding to this, Hoffman does have cameras there he can hack to monitor the situation there, assessing if he can or can't take however many cops are stationed there. Fourth, the police station limits Jill's movement. She's obviously less familiar with it than him, and Hoffman's plan ensured she would be locked in there. Between killing a few cops in a familiar location that served as a cage for his prey and a few cops in an unfamiliar location that was open for his prey, the police station proved preferable. And lastly, the police under this strategy had been lulled into a very false sense of safety. As far as they knew, Hoffman, should he go for any sort of assault, would go for either a showdown at the hospital, a showdown at the junkyard, or he'd attempt to kill the officers at the safehouse to get to Jill. These locations were where Hoffman's plan had created the most noise with bombs, gunfire, boobytraps, an active game, and a breadcrumb of clues. They didn't know that he knew that they had moved her to the police station, so they hadn't anticipated that his plan would culminate with an attack there. So the plan has the effect of giving the police three possible, logical locations to expect Hoffman - the safehouse, the junkyard, or the hospital - in a masterful misdirection.

Quick note: Given that the film happens in almost real time over the course of a few hours (after the 8 month time skip after Hoffman stitching himself), he set up most of it prior to the main events of the film. Preparation would include hacking into the police station, discovering Jill's location, acquiring and setting up all of Bobby's trials, modifying the junkyard auto–shop to conceal the secret room, and setting up the sentry.

Now a quick count of the contingencies Hoffman had set in place to ensure events played out as they did: The RBT feeds into selling layer II of the plan, as it would seem from the police's POV that Hoffman wanted to make the police distrust Jill with the revelation that she had tried to kill him, which would from them think that he thinks that they think that this detail would make them more open to giving Jill up, Hoffman made sure to be spotted on camera kidnapping Bobby to draw attention to his game, the explosion prevents further searching of the junkyard, the explosion baits more police officers into investigating the junkyard, the

explosion ensures that Gibson thinks that Hoffman really was at the junkyard (as if he set it off because was cornered), the explosion could also function as a way to make a getaway if events had played out differently, the angel doll at Crossroads ensures that Gibson thinks that he's making genuine progress on Hoffman, the emails being encrypted makes the police think they're being sent in real time (despite the acknowledged timed release) so Hoffman seems to be hiding defensively at his base, the boobytraps for the SWAT team ensured that Bobby's game played out to completion, the hacked cameras ensure that Hoffman can know events are going according to plan - he can get out of dodge if not, the boobytraps for Bobby's game also ensured that the SWAT there called for backup, killing Gideon keeps the junkyard cops focus on the junkyard, seemingly making a mistake in the footage plays into the police's understanding of Hoffman (someone who seemingly got screwed over by stupid mistakes against Jill and the FBI), getting captured on camera further leans into this clumsy act, forcing the police to adopt a fortress/lockdown strategy ensured that neither could Jill leave the station once every guard was dead nor could any officer outside enter, and the division of police after it's all over over three active crime scenes allows him to make a clean getaway. That's 17 total.

Again, Hoffman is only foiled by an out-of-left-field move at the very last moment from John Kramer in directing Gordon to take him out, something he couldn't possibly have anticipated. And what about Lawrence? As far as can be inferred, he had anticipated that Hoffman would go after Bobby and was keeping an eye on him. It's possible John Kramer had told him to do so in his postmortem tape or at some point when he was alive to set up Hoffman's defeat. Since Hoffman didn't know Gordon was brainwashed, he wouldn't find it suspicious to see Gordon at the location, a support group meeting for Jigsaw survivors. Gordon presumably saw Hoffman kidnap Bobby, tailed him to his base, and then set up an ambush there.

(Strategy Shielding, Strategy Alignment, Strategy Effectiveness, Strategy Fortitude, Planning Process, Planning Coverage, Planning Formulation Speed, Planning Contingencies, Planning Versatility, Planning Invincibility, Planning Complexity, Emotional Understanding, Emotional Perception, Emotional Engagement, Misdirection, Information Control, Fabrication, Logical Manipulation, Mass Manipulation, Indirect Manipulation, Emotional Manipulation, Prediction, Anticipation, Fluid Reasoning Index, Working Memory Index, Visual Spatial Index, Verbal Comprehension Index, Trap Setting, Information Gathering, Unpredictability, Improvisation, Determination, Perseverance, Composure, Linear Thinking, Non-Linear Thinking, Metacognition, Holistic Thinking, Creativity, Deductive Reasoning, Abductive Reasoning)

Feat Framework

While Hoffman did lose, it's very important to note that Hoffman was not in an easy situation at all. This is most clear when we consider the **External Challenges** and the **Quality of Opponents** Hoffman had to deal with.

One external challenge Hoffman faces is that he daylights as a detective. He's surrounded by people trained to spot liars, colleagues who are hunting him down, and yet Hoffman maintains his cool 24/7 despite his highly stressful situation. Another obvious one is the logistics involved in setting up the traps. Kramer had designed every trap, but Hoffman still had to discretely assemble them in semi-public locations. Before any complex schemes can begin, Hoffman has to be extremely careful to not get caught by a mundane mistake like someone stumbling upon the location of one of his games or leaving DNA behind at one of the traps. As Strahm states, "Jigsaw doesn't make mistakes!" and, logistics-wise, Hoffman managed to maintain Kramer's flawless record.

Hoffman had an extremely high quality of opponents. To start with, even the FBI and police he outmaneuvers are, unlike in many other films and shows, very competent, and his schemes largely rely on them being able to pick up on the clues he allows them to gain. We can see this in his SAW V plan, where he trusts Erickson to follow the false breadcrumbs that lead him to conclude Strahm is the new Jigsaw. Agent Strahm in particular is exceptionally clever. As mentioned, he was the first to pick up on there being another disciple besides Amanda, he improvised his way out of the box trap designed to execute him, he was able to discover the site of John's game in SAW III/IV, and he was able to deduce Hoffman's history with Kramer largely through intuition. But the big one is, of course, John Kramer, the main antagonist of SAW who foresaw and planned out most of the events of SAW I-VII, a time frame encompassing years, with an uncanny ability to pick up on and model the behavior of the people he has in his games. While John beat him, Hoffman has the honor of being one of the few people to boast a genuine victory over Kramer, as he managed to kill John's wife, Jill Tuck, despite the numerous challenges and contingencies John had thrown him: Agent Strahm and the FBI, Jill Tuck and the police, and only finally losing to Dr. Gordon, John's seemingly final posthumous ace up the sleeve who completely blindsided him.

Hoffman's Crystallized Intellect:

Mechanical Engineering - Obviously. He was already proficient prior to working with John, and he should have only gotten better.

Electrical Engineering - ditto.

Audio Engineering - His fake Jigsaw voice was well encrypted enough to fool the police and FBI the first time, and it seriously impressed the FBI technician later on.

Forensic Science - Hoffman was a detective prior to working with Jigsaw. His precise foresight in his VI plan would also likely require him to know the flaws in his usage of the deceased Strahm's hand.

Chemistry - Many SAW traps utilize acids and toxins. By the time of SAW II, John was wheelchair-bound, so it was likely up to Hoffman and Amanda to synthesize the poisons he had invented and set up traps that utilize acids. We see that Hoffman also quickly scrambled together bombs in VI.

Toxicology - ditto.

Pharmacology - ditto.

Botany and Animal Biology - Likely. We see John studying botany in Rebirth, and there's diagrams around his deathbed of humans and animals. He likely discovered the toxins he utilizes through his knowledge in these fields, and for Hoffman to help out he likely had to pick up a few things.

Explosives Engineering - ditto. SAW V also makes use of a bomb trap that destroys a room.

Medical Skills - Many traps require precise biomechanical knowledge and skills. The Steam Maze trap in VI revealed that Easton had had a key implanted in him well enough that he hadn't noticed prior to it being revealed to him. In VII, we see in his hideout diagrams of the human body, which he likely used in that film's circle of silence trap, which involved a key implanted inside a woman's stomach attached to a hook.

Hacking - Hoffman had hacked into the police station's cameras in VII

Firearms - Obvious since he's a trained cop and very proficient killer. He also utilized a machine gun in a trap.

Psychology - Whether intuitive or learned, he's very proficient in this based off his foresight. Though it is likely he has some formal training based on his career as a detective and having a Bachelor of Arts degree.