

PERFECT IS THE ENEMY OF GOOD

Typically, once each ball has a clear path to a pocket, players can begin selecting a key ball. Steve Mizerak recommended applying this principle later in the rack, while Ray Martin often chose to shoot balls that could have potentially served as break shots or key balls early if there were better options.

Players should retain balls that are advantageous for potential end patterns due to their position and eliminate those that do not serve this purpose. Clearing obstructing balls, preserving those valuable to the end pattern, is considered a successful strategy.

It is generally advised not to focus exclusively on executing a “perfect” break ball, key ball, or end pattern. Players are advised to refrain from attempting shots outside their comfort zone and to address position problems with insurance balls, thereby preserving future plays. The preferred approach is to maximize available choices and reduce dependency on a single outcome. If only one viable shot appears to be available, opting for alternatives such as safety or a deliberate foul may sometimes be appropriate. Perhaps, shoot that shot and then play a safety or foul. Flexibility and multiple options are viewed as important parts of successful play. Effective strategies involve starting or continuing with the best available shot, rather than attempting to eliminate all risk. The emphasis is on identifying solutions.

The selection of key and break balls should occur as early as possible, although timing may vary with each rack. Steve Mizerak suggested focusing on the end pattern when about 5–6 balls remain, maintaining flexibility before that point. Ideally, the K2K (key ball to key ball) and the key ball form a stop-shot triangle with the break ball, yet professional matches rarely display consistent stop-shot patterns, even though these are highly desirable.