WEEK 1'S TIP ---- HOW TO DETERMINE A DOUBLE HIT

These are from Dr. Dave's website

- · HSV B.6 Double hit detection and avoidance
- · HSV A.9 Double hit near miss
- · HSV A.10 Slight double hit
- · HSV A.11 Non double hit with follow
- · HSV A.12 Double hit
- · HSV B.36 Various miscues with double-hit rule interpretation

Generally, if the cue ball goes forward when the balls are very close to each other (cube of chalk width or less) after the hit it is a double hit.

WEEK TWO'S TIP - FOUL - NOT HITTING THE CUE BALL WITH CUE TIP

This is an enforced rule in our league. 1st offence Standard Foul counting towards three foul penalty. Second offence is unsportsmanlike conduct -1 for the foul plus a serious foul -15 points, the balls are re-racked and the offending player must complete an opening break sequence.

6.6 Touched Ball

- It is a foul to touch, move or change the path of any object ball except by the normal ball-to ball contacts during shots.
- It is a foul to touch, move or change the path of the cue ball except when its in hand or **by the normal tip-to-ball forward stroke contact of a shot.** The shooter is responsible for the equipment he controls at the table, such as chalk, bridges, clothing, his hair, parts of his body, and the cue ball when it is in hand, that may be involved in such fouls.
- If such a foul is accidental, it is a standard foul, but if it is intentional, it is 6.17 Unsportsmanlike Conduct. (**My emphasis in bold**.)

This video clip is from the 2000 Maine Event Tournament. Efren Reyes has just missed and leaves Dallas West with no shot. Dallas plays an intentional foul, Efren plays a intentional foul also but hits the cue ball with his ferrule. This is a foul, but it is an unsportsmanlike foul for deliberately hitting a ball with something other than the tip in a forward stroke.

VIDEO CLIP:

https://vimeo.com/359914779

Foul Types

The following are standard fouls at 14.1:

- Cue Ball Scratch or off the Table The cue ball is in hand behind the head string
- Wrong Ball First
- No Rail after Contact
- No Foot on Floor
- Ball Driven off the Table (All object balls driven off the table are respotted.)
- Touched Ball
- Double Hit / Frozen Balls
- Push Shot

- Balls Still Moving
- Bad Cue Ball Placement
- Bad Play from Behind the Head String For a foul under the second paragraph of 6.11, the cue ball is in hand behind the head string for the incoming player.
- Cue Stick on the Table
- Playing out of Turn
- Consecutive Fouls
- Slow Play

4.11 Serious Fouls

• For Rule 6.14 Three Consecutive Fouls, only standard fouls are counted, so a breaking foul does not count as one of the three fouls. A point is subtracted for the third foul as usual, and then the additional fifteen-point penalty is subtracted and the offending player's consecutive foul count is reset to zero. All fifteen balls are re-racked and the offending player is required to shoot under the requirements of the opening break.

6.17 Unsportsmanlike Conduct Fouls

• For 6.17 Unsportsmanlike Conduct, the referee will choose a penalty depending on the nature of the offense.

This is an enforced rule in our league. 1st offence Standard Foul counting towards three foul penalty. Second offence is unsportsmanlike conduct -1 for the foul plus a serious foul -15 points, the balls are re-racked and the offending player must complete an opening break sequence.

WEEK THREE'S TIP - DEFLECTION AND THROW

DEFLECTION

Deflection (also known as "squirt") and throw are terms you're bound to come upon as you progress in your game.

Let's define these terms, and then explain how they affect your game.

Deflection, sometimes called squirt, is the altering of the path of the cue ball when english is used.

- The cue ball struck on the right side will shift slightly left, and a cue ball struck on the left will shift slightly right.
- A soft stroke at a short distance will produce the least amount of deflection.
- A harder stroke at a longer distance will produce the most amount of deflection. The more english that is put on the cue ball, the greater will be the deflection of the cue ball's path.



THROW

Deflection refers to the altering of the cue ball's path, throw refers to the altering of the path of the object ball.

- Right english will "throw" the object ball to the left; left english will throw the object ball to the right.
- Because the cue ball hits less of the object ball on sharper cuts, the sharper the angle of the cut, the less throw will result.

Opposite of deflection, a softer shot will produce more throw. Again, the more english used, the greater the result.



FIND OUT MORE FROM DR. DAVE

GEARING

Striking an object ball with english will cause it to move in the opposite direction of the english. If you have two balls frozen you can use this effect to throw the second ball the same direction of the english.



Photo from Pooldawg.com

Week 4 Tip of the Week Tangent Line

The tangent line is an essential component when learning to position the cue ball. Sometimes, even advanced players needed to be reminded about the basics.

If the cue ball does not have any top or bottom spin when it collides with an object ball, then the cue ball will travel down the tangent line without deviation. This is known as the "90° Rule", and this type of shot is called a **stun shot**. The stun shot is made in the slide zone.

If the cue ball collides with an object ball straight on without top or bottom spin, then it will stop in its tracks. This type of shot is called a **stop shot**. Stun and stop shots are the most consistent shots you can use for positioning.



If the cue ball has topspin, then the cue ball path will bend forward from the tangent line when the spin catches (after a delay), creating a **follow shot**, **narrowing the angle**. This "30° Rule" is used for a forward rolling cue ball. This will reduce the tangent angle from 90° to 30°. Hitting it harder will widen the angle. Similarly, if the cue ball has bottom spin, then the cue ball path will bend backward from the tangent line, creating a **draw shot**, widening the angle.

Fortunately, there is a way to visualize the amount of change to the tangent line with draw. The more draw the more the tangent line will widen. Use the **trisect rule** to determine the tangent line with draw.

Trisect Rule

For a typical amount of draw, the angle between the final and initial cue ball directions is three times the cut angle, and the impact line trisects the angle.





Typical draw is defined as the amount of draw required to cause the cue ball to come off the object ball, at a $\frac{1}{2}$ ball hit, 90°. Less draw = less than 90°, more draw = more than 90°.

Putting it Together

In this diagram you can see with the different amounts of top and bottom give you different amounts of movement of the cue ball. Follow moves the cue ball forward at 30°. Stun moves the cue ball along the natural tangent line at 90°. Draw moves the cue ball back three times the object ball's cut angle. Get on a table and work with these. It will help your position play. Ask me to show you when you see me at Earle's. (Pictures from Dr. Dave and Pooldawg.com)



Tip of the Week, Week Five "Wagon Wheel System" By Ted G. Brown

Ted Brown came up with this system when he was playing One Pocket Count, more on that later. This is a system to move the cue ball around to different diamonds, using only, center line english. When you go to get to the higher number balls use a short stabbing stroke to get the correct draw for your shot. This is a very hard drill to get through completely.



Be sure to pocket the 15 ball in the center of the pocket (no cheating the pocket). Once you have each of the balls hit and are comfortable try to hit them in succession 1 -12. Take two tries at each ball. See how well you do with a possible score of 24

Pro Level:	18+	Balls
"A" level player:	12 - 18	Balls
Good Amateur:	8 - 12	Balls
Amateur:	5 – 8	Balls

If you find yourself cheating the pocket, set a piece of chalk next to each side pocket point.

Remember this is a position drill. Work on putting the cue ball just where you want it to be.

Commitment During Your Shot

Commit to cue ball shape *from an erect position before bending to your stance*. If you plan, say, a medium speed stroke with one tip of top english from a standing position, bend down, set the tip where you planned and stroke as you planned.

Keep Your Body Still

If when you get down on your shot you need to move left or right to get lined up on the ball, stand back up, reposition your body and get back down. Best aiming position is done with your feet getting you in line for the shot before you get down on the shot. Ask me to show you how much you move during your shot.

The Danny Dileberto Rule

"No nonchalantin' your shots." This means aim each shot like your sock money depended on it.

When You Are in a Slump

Shoot mostly soft and medium strokes no more than a tip's width from center along the vertical axis. It is amazing how this will improve your game.

Practice with a Purpose

Don't just knock balls around the table and call it practice. Have a plan in mind, do a specific drill. Plan position off of a shot, reshoot until you can constantly make the shot. "Amateurs practice until they make a shot. Pros practice until they don't miss the shot."

Quiet Eye

Psychologists and neuroscientists have now identified some of the common mental processes that mark out elite athletes such as Serena Williams. And one of the most intriguing aspects appears to be a phenomenon known as the "quiet eye" – a kind of enhanced visual perception that allows the athlete to eliminate any distractions as they plan their next move. Intriguingly, quiet eye appears to be particularly important at times of stress, preventing the athlete from 'choking' at moments of high pressure. It may even lead to the mysterious 'flow state'.

It's not just budding sportsmen and sportswomen who should take note. The same lasersharp focus can help doctors maintain their focus as they perform keyhole surgery, and it is of increasing interest to the military.

"There is a small window of opportunity for the motor system to receive information from the eyes," explains Sam Vine at the University of Exeter. "And experts have found a better way to optimize that window and to keep that window [open], which helps their movements to be really accurate and really precise."

Unexplored territories

The concept of quiet eye originates with the personal experiences of a kinesiologist called Joan Vickers. As a student in sports science – and a keen athlete herself – Vickers always had been interested in how our athletic talents vary so much from day to day.

While playing on the university basketball team, for instance, she once scored an extraordinary 27 points within the first half of a match. Another time, she had a stunning winning streak while serving for the university volleyball team. But both miraculous performances were one-offs – each time, her magic touch disappeared the next day.

"It kept on running around my head – how could I have done that? Physically I didn't change," she says. On the other hand, why were the elite athletes she envied not only so good, but also so consistent?

Embarking on a PhD at the University of British Columbia, Vickers began to suspect the secret lay in the way that elite athletes see the world. She hooked a group of professional golfers up to a device that precisely monitored their eye movements as they putted their balls. She found an intriguing correlation: the better the player (as measured by their golfing handicap) the longer and steadier their gaze on the ball just before, and then during, their strike. Novices, by contrast, tended to shift their focus between different areas of the scene, with each fixation lasting for shorter periods of time.

The general idea that you should 'keep your eye on the ball' is well-known, of course – but this suggested something more intricate, with the precise onset and duration of the gaze correlating with an objective measure of sporting success.

The finding was also at odds with the equally prevalent assumption that expertise comes from more rapid mental processing. According Vickers' results, the expert athlete actually slowed down their thinking at the crucial moment.

"I knew I was seeing something that no one had ever seen before," says Vickers, now a professor at the University of Calgary. "I felt like Columbus or the Vikings."

The quiet eye has since been observed in many other sports, including basketball, billiards, volleyball, football, tennis, archery, and ice hockey. Needless to say, the exact location of the gaze depends on the task in question. During a free throw in basketball, for instance, the gaze needs to land on the front of the hoop's rim; for a football penalty kick, it should be on the top left or right corner of the net; and for an ice hockey goalkeeper, their gaze lingers on the puck just before their opponent released it from the stick. In each case, a steadier final fixation, just before the critical moment, marks out the expert athlete, who hold their gaze for 62% longer than novices.

Crucially, the differences in this dwell time of the quiet eye don't just predict the overall differences between elite and novice players; fluctuations in the onset and duration of the quiet eye can also explain lapses in the athlete's individual performance, which would again reaffirm the idea that it is itself a critical part of the mental processes.

Camilo Sáenz-Moncaleano, who recently examined the quiet eye in tennis players, suspects that most athletes had not made a conscious decision to change their eye movements; for many it's probably a behavior that they picked up implicitly. "They won't know the name of the term, but they know how to do it," he says. "It's a natural thing."

Budding athletes will be heartened to hear that the quiet eye can be taught, however. In one of the first tests of quiet eye training, Vickers took a university basketball team and hooked them up to her eye-tracking devices so that they could become more aware of their gaze as they practiced 'free throws'.

As she had hoped, their performance improved – by 22% – over the next two seasons, compared to an 8% improvement in a control group. By the end of the second season, the team had reached a level of accuracy that was even higher than the NBA average.

Psychology is, of course, replete with apparently promising interventions that have subsequently failed to replicate. But this was not just a one-off result: quiet eye training has since helped many other amateur and professional athletes – including national volleyball teams and Olympic skeet shooters – to achieve their potential.

A recent meta-analysis confirms that the quiet eye is a strong and highly consistent effect. In 2017, the **European Journal of Sport Science devoted a whole issue to exploring the phenomenon**.

Surgical Precision

Given these striking results, the scientists have now started considering applications beyond elite sports. A University of Exeter study, for instance, has found that quiet eye training can help children with coordination problems improve their physical abilities, contradicting a commonly held belief that they instead suffered from some problem with the motor system itself. The team are also conducting some (currently classified) research with the military.

Vickers welcomes these attempts to elaborate on her initial research. "I feel really proud of that group in Exeter – they've really taken the ball and run with it," she says.

Her research has shown that quiet eye training also could accelerate doctors' learning of new skills. Her group recently measured the gazes of expert surgeons and then trained a group of first-year residents to mimic their eye movements – including the longer fixations that are characteristic of the quiet eye. Based on the assessment of independent surgeons, the measure appeared to have accelerated the doctor's learning and improved their overall accuracy, compared to a control group given a more traditional technical training.

Given that the differences in quiet eye can last a fraction of a second, the current training relies on the feedback from expensive gaze-tracking equipment, meaning that the benefits are currently out of most people's reach. Sáenz-Moncaleano, however, points out the technology is developing rapidly. It's possible that future progress in consumer technology might open up quiet eye training for everyone. "The merge of VR and eye tracking could be a game changer," he says.

In the meantime, many of the scientists are aiming to build their theoretical understanding of the phenomenon, which remains somewhat hazy. This is partly due to the practical difficulties of looking deeper inside the athlete's brain as they practice their sport; we don't yet have accurate fMRI scanners portable enough to take to training sessions, for instance, that might help pinpoint neurological mechanisms.

Even so, the scientists broadly agree that it revolves around advanced intelligence gathering. As Sáenz-Moncaleano puts it, the quiet eye allows you to "soak in all the information from the object in question" which "helps you to produce the best motor response".

And the very latest research would suggest that this period of focus is especially crucial in high-stakes situations, **preventing the athlete from 'choking'**.

To induce anxiety in a group of basketball players practicing free throws, for instance, Vine told participants that their results would be actively compared to others and could be presented to other students. Adding to the stress, the team later offered some false feedback during the test, telling the participants that their last 40 shots were so bad they had landed them in the bottom 30% and that if they did not improve, they would have to be excluded from the study.

Most participants' accuracy dropped sharply after the poor feedback. But this was not true for the people who had previously undergone quiet eye training: they managed to set the negative thoughts to one side and maintain a high level of performance.

Even more intriguingly, the Exeter researchers have found that the quiet eye duration correlates with self-reported feelings of <u>'flow' or 'being in the zone'</u> – the sensation of effortless concentration, in which your mind is clear of everything except the task at hand. The quiet eye also seems to coincide to other physiological changes throughout the body. The heart rate temporarily decelerates, for instance, and the movement of the limbs themselves become smoother. All of this might seem to support the idea that the quiet eye filters distraction and calms the mind and the body at the critical moment, even under stress.

Vine cautions that we should be wary of assigning *too* much importance to the quiet eye; many other factors will contribute to sporting genius. But it would certainly seem to be a key component of the extreme focus that athletes such as Williams often describe. And these psychological factors are worth emphasising – particularly given that many commentators still focus on physical strength without acknowledging the incredible mental resilience of athletes such as Williams.

Williams herself is under no illusions about what is most important.

"I've won most of my matches – probably all of my grand slams – because of what's upstairs, not anything else," she told Sports Illustrated in 2015. A large part of that may be the kind of calm focus that comes from the quiet eye.

"If you are behind in a game, it's so important to relax, and that's what I do – when I'm behind in a game, that's when I become most relaxed," she added. "Just focus on one point at a time... just that sole point, and then the next one, and the next one."

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David Robson is a science writer based in London.

Playing the Rack

This will make or break you. You might think you have a bunch of easy shots and tons of options but this is where mistakes are made. Every ball is valuable and you need to squeeze every ounce of value from every shot and every position play. People think 14.1 is easy because of the multitude of options. Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, multiple options are many a players' down fall because they don't attach enough importance when evaluating and choosing what to do.

Rotation players fall prey to this. Because they don't normally have to choose their shots and have difficulty with this part of straight pool.

Anyway, just like you have to give every shot due care and attention so as not to miss it, your shot selection and position decisions must be greatly respected if you want to get that good break shot.

Every little thing you do has to be geared towards accomplishing your goal as efficiently as possible. Because we're human, the game is difficult and things go wrong. Using each ball to its best advantage increases our margin of error and at times allows us enough recovery options to keep the run alive whereas we'd be history if we wasted a ball four or five shots ago.

Information stolen from several places, If I knew I would give credit.

Stay Above the Balls

I mean that quite literally, and I really mean it. If there is any doubt at all, select the shot that will keep you above the balls. That's why clearing the pocket paths is so important as well as being sure to not break big secondaries from underneath. It will let you stay above trouble, allowing you to shoot shots that will return you to the safety of mid-table play.

(CAVEAT) Yes, going into the balls from underneath (secondary break) can be suicidal in many cases, and the temptation to break them up must be suppressed when an insurance ball is not there. But, if the insurance ball is there, take a good, hard look at doing it if leaving the CB with a clear path to the insurance ball looks likely, even if there is a way to break up the balls from the top side. The reason I say this is that breaking up a secondary pack or cluster from the top is not without its own pitfalls - specifically, it can drive too many (or even all, when the cluster is smaller in size) of the clustered balls below where they can serve as a break ball for the next rack, and, relatedly, the balls that are driven down toward or to the foot rail can become tied up and unplayable without being broken apart again. Breaking from underneath can be done. It's a very technical and controlled way to play the game. You'll need to accurately control the cue ball throughout the break (very tough) and then methodically pick the rack apart. It can be done, there is a chance of pushing balls up, also, which is bad for other reasons.

But with that caveat, playing from the top is the way to go.

Pushing the balls down is also a legitimate concern. Scratching can be to, when breaking from the top/sides. Big breaks are very hard to make without SOME risks. Some people say that there is only one correct way to play straight pool. I disagree, especially at the amateur level. Play to your strengths. That being said, I think at a lower than stellar level, staying above the balls will allow for bigger runs for the average player.

The reason good players run balls doesn't have a lot to do with how they shoot the last couple balls. In most cases lesser players also could execute those situations and have a good break shot.

One of the big problems is that many times those last couple balls are no longer on the table because you shot them in earlier. With good 14.1 it's often not which balls you shoot but which ones you don't shoot.

If you start to examine this, you'll find that it's often a matter of a players' comfort zone and their unwillingness to step slightly outside it when necessary.

I'm sure (ask yourself) there are many times when someone thinks " Oh, I should probably shoot this shot but then turns around and does something else because they think it's easier or are afraid, they might screw up position. Repeat after me--**Stop doing that**--**Stop doing that**--**Stop doing that**. Good players take the shot that's most productive, period.

I've been playing and watching pool for 50+ years and what I see over and over is players taking the easier shot and paying for it later whether it is 8-ball or straight pool.

I'm not talking about shooting a shot that's an 8 on a 1-10 degree of difficulty scale. I'm suggesting shooting a 5 instead of a 2. Or when shooting a 3 go off 2 rails between a couple balls to land with the perfect angle on a shot and deal with the last remaining problem in the rack. Good players routinely do these types of things.

So, it's not the last 5 or the last 2 balls that are important for 14.1 success. With low level players it's almost always things they do early and mid-rack that are their downfall.

From George Fels Book Mastering Pool

This following is excerpted from pages 22-24 (the Straight Pool section) . . .

I believe that the underlying concept of straight pool sequence is that *whenever possible* - and those are two terribly important words - you should strive to do whatever's easiest.

Now that in itself represents a gross over-simplification. So let's take a closer look at the statement as it applies to straight pool, and what it really means.

1) It means that you don't hit the cue ball hard when you can accomplish the same objectives hitting it soft. Most of what you've already read in these pages talks to that.

2) It means that you don't apply English to the cue ball when you can accomplish the same thing hitting center ball. Pete Margo of New Jersey, one of the game's premier players, even states the case geographically: "Out East, we play center ball, and leave all the fancy English to the Midwest players." I don't know how he documents that, but it's unarguable that the world's best straight pool is played in the East, so don't be a stubborn Midwesterner. I think the operative word in Margo's statement is *fancy*. English has its place in the game, but you employ it when it's *functional*, not because it's more aesthetically pleasing, or you're more comfortable hitting the ball that way, or (shudder) you took a guess.

3) It means that *whenever possible* (well, I told you they were important words), *you don't move a second object ball that is already pocketable, after sinking the one you called*. Think about that. It sounds elementary, but it has more to do with cutting the game's men from its boys than I could ever describe to you in words. Just watch the next pool game you see, and take note of how often the players scuttle their own ships by moving balls unnecessarily, even if accidentally. Master the knack of not doing that, and I guarantee you that you game will improve by a conservative guess of 50 percent, likely even more. *Please* learn this.

4) It means that *whenever possible* (w. p.), you don't choose cue ball routes that require your driving or *forcing* the cue ball, as opposed to rolling it, someplace.

5) It means that w. p., you don't drive the cue ball to a rail when you can get it to an advantageous place without using a rail.

6) It means that w. p., you don't employ two-rail routes where one-rail routes will get the job done.

7) It means that w. p., you don't employ three-rail routes where two-rail (or, sometimes one-rail) routes will do.

8) It means that w. p., you provide yourself with a second shot that you can count on as part of all your mid-rack break shots. This is the exact same principle as the Safety Valve pass in football. I'm not talking about the specific shots we just discussed, of course, but their smaller brothers and cousins that you use to separate (a good word) smaller-than-fourteen-ball clusters. We'll get back to this.

9) It means that w. p., we position ourselves to shoot at balls on or near the rails early in our sequence. I have to be out-front enough to credit all the pool authors who preceded me for this point, too; it's mentioned in just about all the beginners' books. This time around, I want to give you the *why* behind that tip, and show you where it fits in the scheme of things.

Balls on or near the rails represent two potential sources of trouble: They may block routes that you need to move your cue ball efficiently; and they may also occupy areas into which you may need to drive more object balls on your subsequent break shots. In that case, you only end up creating more nanoclusters along the rail, causing you to interrupt the sequence you originally planned and execute more break shots. Remember, the fewer times your cue ball is required to move secondary object balls, the better for you. Don't worry about remembering all of this. Nor will you have to carry my book around the table with you as though it were some kind of pilots' checklist. Take my word for it, experience and confidence will eventually cause all these considerations to come to you spontaneously, and in milliseconds. While you're still learning to put these concepts to work, your play might slow up some; but once you see that these are really the things you need to know, they'll automatically become part of your game.

Now, as to all those "Whenever Possible": What makes the game of pool so intriguing and infinite is the frequency with which it will deny you the chance to

take those simplifying steps. You will be forced to violate every single one of w.p.'s 1 through 9, and plenty of times, too. When you are required to do that, your success will depend on how much *control* you can retain over all the variables that confront you at that point. What the very maximum in control will do for you is that it will let you resume your simplifying process at the earliest opportunity. What you never want to do, in this or any pool game, is guess. I've said it before: The player who obtains the most certainties for himself is the player who figures to win.

PERFECT IS THE ENEMY OF GOOD

As a general rule, once every ball has a clear path to a pocket, you can start to select a key ball. Steve Mizerak used to advocate this principle, Ray Martin also was quick to use up balls that might make break shots or key balls if the balls were still sitting off a bit.

They would save balls that are, by their positional nature, useful in any end pattern, and getting rid of those that do not meet those criteria.

Get the balls in the clear, like Mizerak and Martin advocate, save the balls that will be valuable in your end pattern and you are on your way to success.

I often tell my students not to "die with the perfect (insert: "break ball", "key ball", "end pattern"). You shouldn't ever feel "forced" to shoot a ball you doesn't feel comfortable with. The point is to solve problems with insurance balls so there's something to shoot next regardless of what happens, as well as opt for whatever gives the most options, so there is no fear of the outcome. It's easy really: as long as you feel there is only one correct thing to do, and that it's do or die ("if I make this, I can only hope I get another shot, and if I don't make it, I'll probably lose"), it can't be the right shot. It should feel like you have a whole lot of choice, and that the perfect pattern incidentally starts/continues with the simplest shot currently on the table, it's not about becoming immune to risk or fear. Great shooting is about seeing solutions, not problems!

I have already pointed out when to choose one's key and break balls: as early as possible, which is different in each rack. As well as, perhaps, as late as possible: Steve Mizerak used to say that he won't think about an end pattern until there are only 5-6 balls left on the table, by which he didn't mean to say that he wouldn't think about *which* 5-6 balls to leave, but that until there, he would proceed with a certain flexibility of mind. Although ideally, the K2K and the key ball should form a stop-shot triangle with the break ball. Watching videos of pros playing Straight Pool you don't see that stop, stop, end pattern all that often. Even if a stop shot pattern would be the ultimate in repeatability.

WHEN TO QUIT THINKING

Thinking & shooting are two separate entities & any mixing between the two will cause problems. Once you're down on a shot if you're still thinking or unsure about anything then stand up & start over. It helps to have something to use as a transition between thinking & shooting. Some use the chalk. Between shots, when thinking/evaluating, etc. the chalk is always in hand. Once decided what to do, chalk the tip & place it on the rail. When the chalk is gone so are any other thoughts. All focus is on the shot.

There is a philosophy of: "This is a lot to think about while shooting. With all of this going on in your head it is best to always take the low risk shot. I can't run 14 balls if I am thinking about the key and break balls from the beginning."

Always taking the low risk shot may lead to a lot of 14 ball runs but it's unlikely to lead to many multi-rack runs. It will keep you stuck at the same level for long periods of time. It hurts creativity & expansion of your knowledge & skills.

Here are some basic Straight Pool Pointers:

* Practice your break shots. A good video for this is Pat Fleming's "Creative Edge" series on YouTube, that demonstrates the various straight pool breakshot, and variations that people overlook but that still offer a good yield:

http://youtube.com/watch?v=2iaEWtZOPSY

* Try to clear pathways to pockets by getting rid of balls "sitting" in those pockets. In other words, get rid of balls close to the pocket early, if there are other free balls on the table that have a pocket. Those "ducks" block the pocket for other balls, and this may kill you if you leave them there and find yourself wanting to shoot a ball in that pocket (which means, you now have a difficult combo).

* Try to leave yourself a stop-shot pattern on the last two balls prior to the break ball -- the "triangle" if you will.

* You don't have to blast break shots, although in practice, you might want to get used to hitting them hard, so that you have this skill when you need it. Try (and get used to) break shots at various speeds.

* Pick up any of Phil Capelles or George Fels' works on straight pool. For example, George's "Mastering Pool" has an entire section of the book dedicated to 14.1 it is an EXCELLENT book!

* Clear your rails early as these balls often make end patterns more difficult.

* On average, you should solve your problems as early as possible, as the number of solutions will tend to diminish as the rack proceeds.

* Most of all, though, develop your instincts in breaking out clusters. The textbooks may tell you how to hit the break shot that begins each rack, but once the rack is started the variety of shots you will face in which you must break out a cluster is almost infinite. Learn to be choosy about your attack angles. Most inexperienced, and more than a few experienced, straight poolers, think that how well you spread the balls is chiefly about cue ball speed. Learn to identify the sweet spots in the clusters, the places where your prospects for a good spread are best.

* Set up a cluster and hit it from different angles, different speeds different spins of the cue ball. Find what works best. Stick that knowledge in your bag-o-shots.

* Finally, don't fixate on a specific ball. Look the table over, after each shot and whenever a cluster gets bumped. Look to see how that has changed how the balls will move if you hit the cluster.

BY Bob Jewett PRECISION SAFETY

I HAD the great privilege of playing in the Predator World 14.1 Straight Pool Championships at Comet Billiards in Parsippany, NJ., this past August, and the experience gave my safety game very good exercise. A part of straight pool that many haven't caught onto yet is the tremendous value of precise defense. At the top level of competition — and there were several 300-ball runners at the event — leaving your opponent even an inch of slack may also leave him a 50-ball run. Here are some safety plays that are heavily dependent upon accuracy. The more precise the shot, the more effective the safety.

Diagram 1 shows a shot from the start of a rack in straight pool. Either the player did not leave himself a very good shot on the break ball, or the player's opponent played a mediocre safe. A champion might power the 1 into the corner and come off the cushion for a break, but for many of us, that would be a low-percentage play, especially on a tight table. Rather than fall into the trap of playing the break shot, set

a trap for your opponent.

There are four main safe principles that apply to the shot shown: 1) leave as long a shot as possible, 2) make the reward for this shot as small as possible, 3) force an awkward stance and/ or bridge, and 4) make the penalty for a failed response large. The goal is to leave both the



object ball and the cue ball on the centerline of the table. You are also trying to freeze the cue ball to the middle of the cushion on the head rail. The object ball wants to end up close to the exact middle of the table, right between the side pockets.

For the four principles, this is about as tough a shot you can leave due to its length. If your opponent does make the ball, he is unlikely to break up the rack. No one likes to bridge from the cushion. Finally, if he makes the mistake of missing a shot that is powerful enough, the object ball has a good chance to go two cushions into the rack, and break it up even if the cue ball doesn't. If your opponent tries to slow-roll the object ball into a pocket so he can play safe on his next shot, the object ball has a good chance of hanging in the jaws, leaving you a pretty good break shot.

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