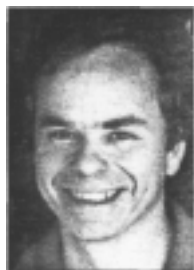


# A Basic Skill Test

by BOB JEWETT



IN MY DECEMBER 1992 column I described a way to sharpen your skills called "progressive practice." Since then, a set of drills based on those ideas has been developed by my fellow instructors at the San Francisco

Billiard Academy, Eric Harada and Joseph Mejia, and me. It is easy to use these drills to measure your present skill level and keep track of your improvement.

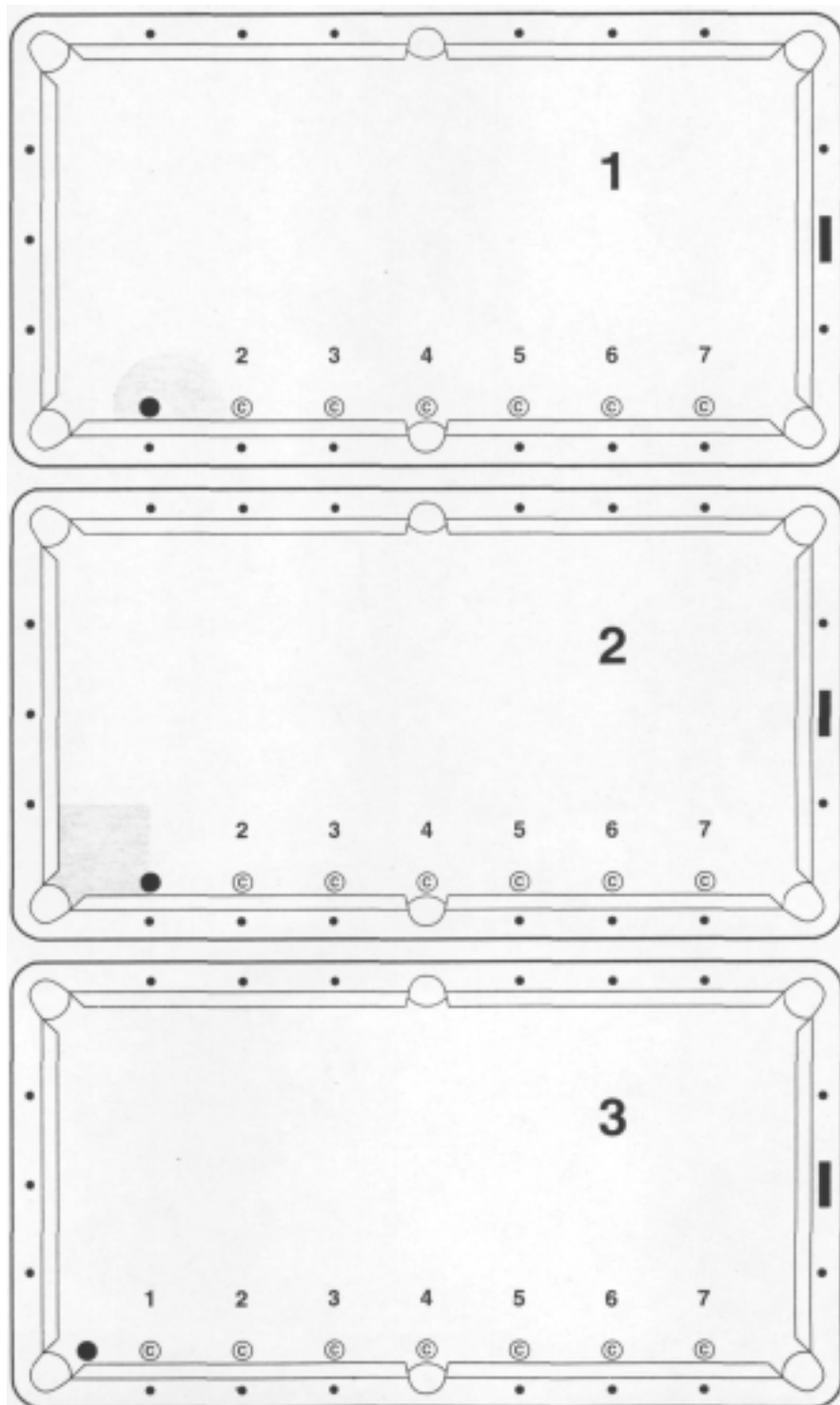
In Diagram 1, the goal is to pocket the object ball with a stop shot that leaves the cue ball within nine inches of the "phantom" cue ball (the cue ball at the instant it contacts the object ball). Start with the cue ball by the diamond marked 2; this will be an easy shot for most players. If you make the required shot, move the cue ball farther away, and try again. If you miss a shot, move the cue ball closer. So that you don't have to remember the last location of the cue ball, mark it with a coin on the rail.

The goal is to work your way up to as high a number as possible. Remember to reduce the distance when you miss; that's the penalty for missing. When you are first trying the shot, you may want to move the cue ball one diamond at a time, but after one or two misses, use a half-diamond adjustment after each shot.

After you have shot 10 or 15 shots for the first diagram, note your distance, and go on to Diagram 2. This is a follow shot, with the goal of leaving the cue ball in the shaded area while pocketing the object ball. As before, if you meet the goals on a shot, move the coin and the cue ball back, but on this drill you also move the object ball back so that it remains one diamond from the cue ball. After a rack of shots, note your distance.

Diagram 3 is a draw shot. The object ball stays put again, and the cue ball is moved to change the difficulty. The goal, besides pocketing the object ball, is to draw the cue ball back at least as far as your starting point. For this drill, the coin on the rail is especially important since it gives you a target for your draw.

Diagram 4 is a cut shot. The object ball is always placed a diamond from the corner pocket and a ball off the rail. The cue



# T E C H T A L K

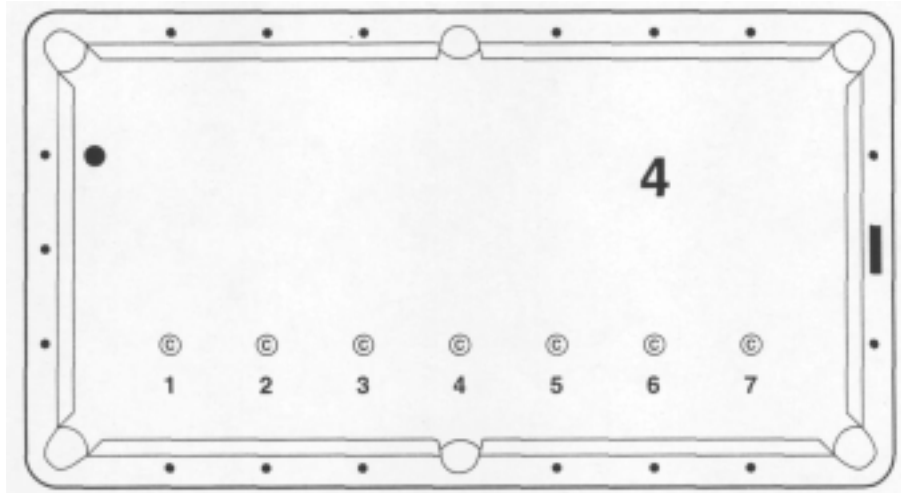
ball marches up the table always one diamond off the rail.

Once you have completed all four diagrams, add up the distances and multiply by two to find your total score. The factor of two comes from the fact that we have developed five increasingly difficult sets of drills, and this is the second set. If you include these shots as part of a regular practice routine, you can note your progress.

If you have a score of 40 or more, this set of drills is too easy for you. If you can't get over 15, you need an easier set. The point of these drills is to make the shots challenging but not impossible for your present level of play, whatever it is. With a score over 60, you may want to try turning pro; to score 60, you will be shooting most of your shots from the end rail.

Note whether your score on one diagram is considerably lower than the rest. If so, invest practice time there. For most players, scores are fairly even across the diagrams; if there is a low one, it is usually the draw shot.

Move the coin after each shot! Otherwise, you won't get a true indication of your average ability on the drill. If you



want a more accurate measure, take smaller steps in each direction — a quarter-diamond rather than a half or full diamond.

It is OK to move the balls slightly in and out from the rail on the first three diagrams. The important factor is the length of the shot, and you are free to make the angle as auspicious as you want. The fol-

low shot is impossible if you don't choose the right angle for the cue ball.

A full set of 20 progressive practice diagrams is included in the new BCA Instructor's Manual, which is available to any BCA member.

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