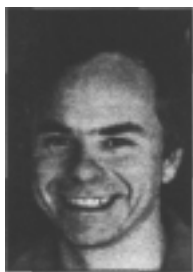


A SAFETY DANCE

When a delicate touch is required to hook your opponent, explore the options.

by BOB JEWETT



IT WAS MY own fault, really.

I had left myself on the last ball — it happened to be a nine ball game — as in **Diagram 1**. There was no good safety off either side of the ball, and no bank shot was available.

My choice was to play a soft shot directly towards the ball, leaving the same position but with even less space between the balls and the object ball nearly frozen to the rail. My opponent was unlikely to have the delicacy of touch to play a safety without double-hitting the cue ball, or so I smugly thought as I left the table.

His surprising play was to lay his stick on the table as in position A, with the tip slightly under the edge of the cue ball. With one hand, he lifted the shaft end of the cue straight up to position B in **Diagram 2**, hitting the cue ball a light, glancing blow that was just hard enough to get the object ball to the rail and leave everything even tighter. This shot, which I had never seen before, brings up a question: Can he do that?

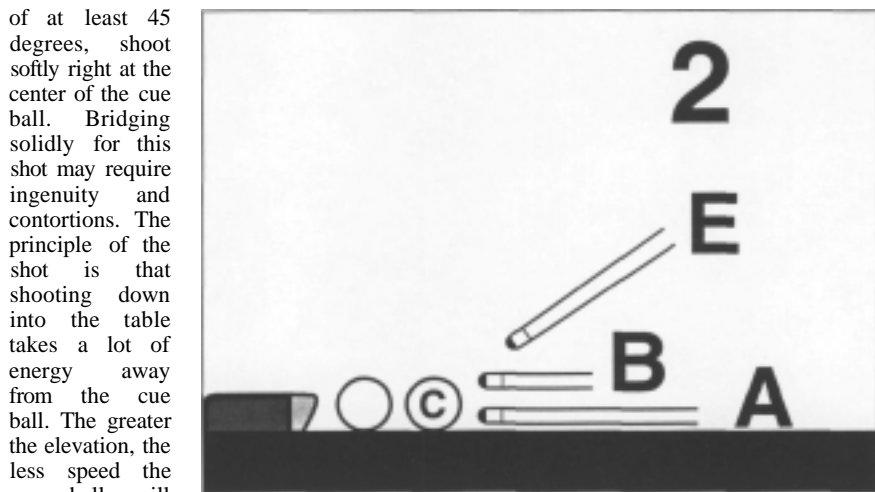
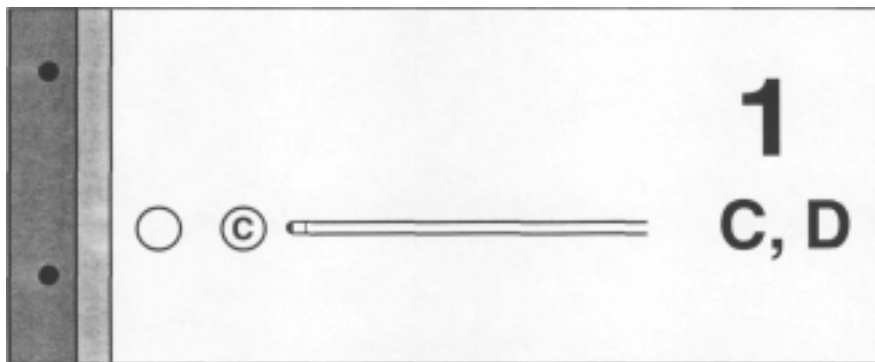
Before we start on an answer, let's look at some other ways to play the shot.

B. The Drop. Hold the stick by the ferrule in position B and drop it. Be careful not to take too much cue ball or it may roll back for a foul.

C. The Waggle. This is the same idea but sideways. With a normal bridge in position C, slowly bring the stick forward and to one side of the cue ball. Now move your grip hand not forward but sideways, keeping your bridge hand locked tightly on the shaft to prevent and forward/backward motion.

D. The *Hara-kiri*. This method was shown to me by two different players. Stand right by and facing the object ball. Hold the shaft in the fingers of both hands and jab the cue ball lightly. A little practice yields surprisingly good control.

E. The Dead Masse. Using an elevation



of at least 45 degrees, shoot softly right at the center of the cue ball. Bridging solidly for this shot may require ingenuity and contortions. The principle of the shot is that shooting down into the table takes a lot of energy away from the cue ball. The greater the elevation, the less speed the cue ball will

have. Using a dart-throwing grip for the back hand gives better control than a standard grip. I feel this technique gives the best control, but needs a little more practice than some of the others. It is useful for a range of situations whereas the first four work only for the single, rare situation.

Which of these techniques is legal? Under current rules, they all are. For Methods A, B, and D, the player should note that it is a foul to lay the stick on the table and release it while lining up a shot.

Which of these techniques should be legal? Should the player be required to

hold the stick when it hits the ball (B)? Should a hand on the back half of the stick be required (A,B,D)? Should a generally forward motion of the stick be required (A,B,C)?

Please send me your opinions on this shot in care of this magazine or by email to: Jewett@netcom.com, and I'll summarize the feedback in a future column.

Bob Jewett is now the Secretary of the USBA (carom association) and is an Instructor in the San Francisco Billiard Academy.