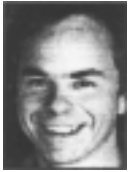


Bob Jewett



# Side Spin With a Kick

Learn this type of applied English for when you need to use it.

A common piece of advice heard around the pool hall is, "Over 80 percent of all shots can be played without side spin." While this may be true, some players take it to mean that they should avoid English as much as possible and, consequently, avoid learning how to spin the ball.

The flip side is that 20 percent of shots should be played with English, and you better be ready when they come up. This column simplifies the problem by mostly eliminating the object ball; the subject is kick shots. (Notes on word usage: "English," for purposes of this column, means side spin — left or right — and is separate from follow and draw, and a "kick shot" is any shot where the cue ball needs to go to a rail before hitting the object ball.)

**Diagram 1** shows a progressive practice drill that looks easy but is tough to master. The cue ball is shot straight across the table to contact each of the target balls. If the shot is successful, try for the next harder target, but if the shot fails, go for the next easier target on the next shot; you never try for the same target twice in a row. Mark your target with a coin to remember.

The shot in **Diagram 2** is about the same idea but the long way. This was first shown

to me by Jimmy Lee — a great carom player and instructor — at Palace Billiards in San Francisco. Each diamond that the cue ball comes over in a table length is a "unit" of English. With practice, you will be able to dial in the exact spin you need to make a hit. Again, play the drill as progressive practice. Can you get to the side pocket? Be sure not to cheat by hitting over to the left on the far rail: maybe you will need to put an obstacle ball there.

There are many variations on these two simple drills. Try playing the shots with just enough speed to reach the target, then shoot with force to separate balls by at least three diamonds at the end of the shot (similar to an attempted safety kick at 9-ball). For the softer shot, you will need to start with more spin since a larger fraction will be lost on the way to the rail. Don't neglect the other side spin — left or right. Both drills can be made easier by placing two or three balls on the rail as the target.

**Diagram 3** shows two additional variations. In shot A, the goal is to bring the cue ball nearly straight off the rail to pocket the duck, and to play from progressively farther up the table. This shot is a favorite demo of Grady Mathews, and is a surpris-

ingly consistent way to kick, once you get the hang of it. Some draw gives a helpful curve off the rail. This shot can be varied by choosing a rail contact point farther up the table, but still with the goal of pocketing the duck. In Shot B, the idea is to shoot from a corner pocket to the far end rail and come back to that same corner pocket. How far out can you shoot and still get the cue ball to come back to the starting point? Experiment with center side spin, some draw or follow with the side spin and different speeds to find what works best.

One remarkable result you may notice for the maximum English cases of these last two shots is that they can be a lot more consistent than the "easier" shots that require only a little side spin. This concept — that maximum english gives consistent results — is the basis of several banking systems. Of course, to succeed at these drills, you must first have the fundamentals of chalking, tip-to-ball contact and bridge down pat.

If you have any best-loved banking drills, please send them in for possible inclusion in a future column.

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