



# To Kiss Or Not To Kiss

A system to help players avoid the pucker.

**Is there a kiss in the cross-corner bank to pocket A in Diagram 1?**

One of the most difficult skills to learn in pool is to know when a bank shot will kiss out. This knowledge is essential at one-pocket and bank pool, and useful at 8-ball when a crowded table may leave you no other choice. At one-pocket, the possible kiss-out in Diagram 1 can prove costly if the object ball stops right in front of your opponent's pocket. Only by luck could the cue ball end up safe.

There is a rule of thumb for the shot shown, but I've heard two different versions. One says that if the cue ball can be shot past the object ball into the other corner pocket (B), there is no kiss. The other says that if the shot is lined up straight into pocket B, there is no kiss. Major conflict! I have seen both rules demonstrated, but never tried to study this myself. Here are some preliminary test results.

All of the tests were made with no side spin on the cue ball and just enough speed to get the object-ball to pocket A. The object ball and cue ball were positioned exactly by self-adhesive paper reinforcements. For a given object ball starting position — in this case, exactly one diamond from each cushion — the shot was tried for various cue-ball positions up and down the table.

If the cue ball is up the table, say by position C, there is no problem because the cue ball goes to the end rail and back quickly compared to the slower travel of the thinly-hit object ball. As the cue ball gets closer to the shot shown, the speeds of the two balls are better matched, and at some point they will collide around the question mark. I gradually moved the cue ball down the table until it no longer passed out of the way before the object ball crossed its path. The position shown is about the last position where that bank works.

If the cue ball is closer still to the end rail (at D), the bank is hit fuller, and the object ball will travel faster than the cue ball, passing the danger zone before the cue ball returns from the end rail. I tried various banks on this side, and marked the highest position that didn't have a kiss.

A second kind of kiss happens when the bank is almost a straight shot, say from E. If the cue ball hits the object ball just a little on the left side, it will travel very slowly down the table and meet the object ball at the kiss

zone without having hit the cushion. While this kiss is good to know about, it is not covered by either rule of thumb.

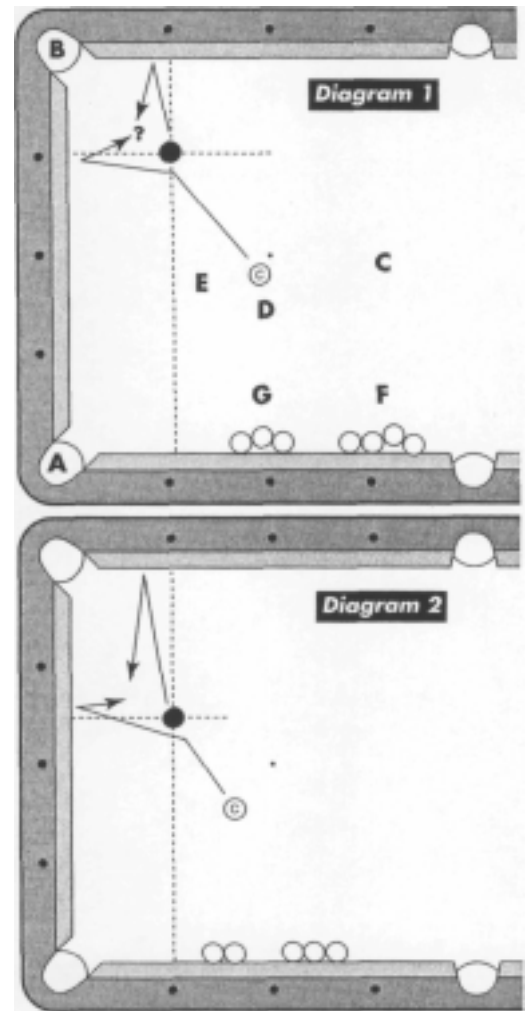
Shown on the rail are two clusters of balls at F and G. These show the "origin" of the cue ball for the banks that kiss out. If you are shooting the bank with your cue stick passing over the middle of the F group, you will need to do something special to avoid the kiss. If you are shooting from the ball at either edge of the group, you may miss the kiss by a whisker or maybe not. Since the cue ball is shown with an origin above the cluster, there is no kiss if the shot is hit well.

Similarly, if the origin of the cue ball is from cluster G — such as from E — there will be a kiss unless you do something to change the timing or angle of the shot.

One way to avoid the kiss is with side spin. The usual way to hit a shot from F is to apply right follow so when the cue ball comes off the end cushion, it is bent behind the object ball. I tried left spin, and it also seemed to work. I had to hit the object ball fuller to compensate for the angle change from the transferred spin, and again the object ball passed before the cue ball got back from the rail. For the second kind of kiss, it usually works to shoot straight at the object ball and use a little "hold-up" English, in this case left side. Another possibility is to use draw to slow the cue ball down after the collision. Of course, speed can seriously change the result, but for one-pocket, you want to leave any missed ball close to your hole.

What do these results say about the rules of thumb above? It seems to say that they both are partly true. If the shot is straight — in, the cue ball origin will be about the side pocket, and there will be no kiss. On the other hand, the kisses occur only for shots where the cue ball cannot be shot by the object ball. If the cue ball has a clear path to the pocket, there will be no kiss. Neither rule of thumb really covers all the cases. What the rule does do is let you check fairly quickly for a potential kiss, then it is up to you to decide if there is a real problem that needs evasive action.

In **Diagram 2** is a second shot that's a lit-



tle different from the first. The object ball is now a diamond and a half from the side rail. The measured "bad" starting points are again shown by balls on the cushion. The shot diagrammed is barely outside of the danger zone. If you want to extend the tests, there are lots of other positions for the object ball.

It's important to note that the exact locations of the "clusters of death" will change depending on the balls, cushions and cloth. I did the experiment with relatively new cushions and clean cloth that is about a year old. Your mileage may vary.

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