



Bob Jewett



The New Frontiers

Expanding your shot-making repertoire can improve your win-loss record.

One way to think of your game is as a partially explored country. Some parts are familiar to you, while there are other, wilder, unexplored parts that you would really rather avoid. Although part of your game's development is the cultivation of this easier territory, you should spend some of your practice time extending your frontiers and taking control of new or harder shots as part of your repertoire.

Of course, there are players who will never attempt any shot that has much chance of failure — even during practice sessions — but you're not one of those. Get some extra chalk and warm up your arm, and let's move into uncharted territory and stake some claims.

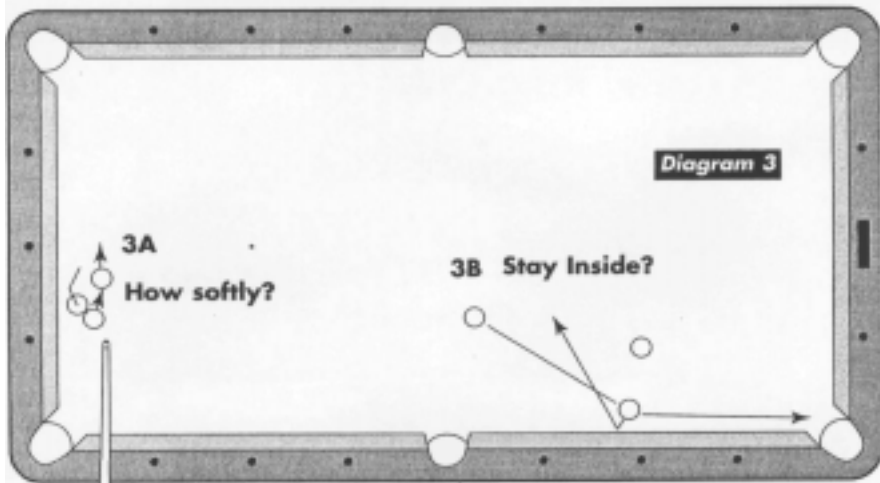
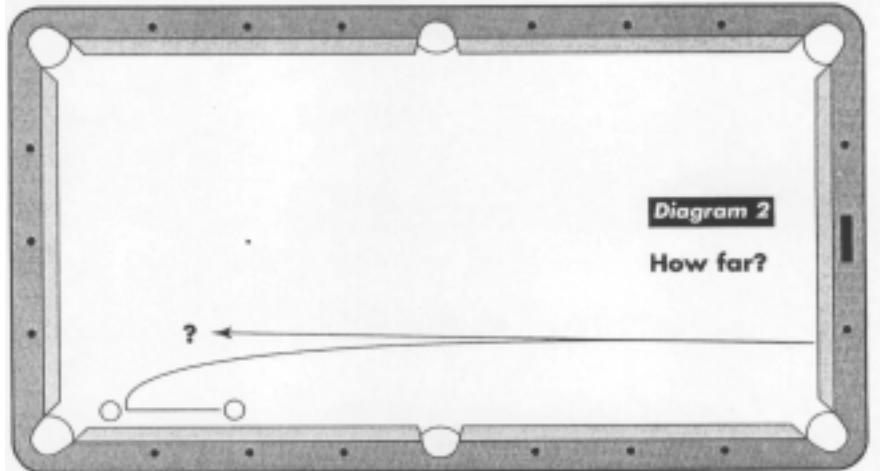
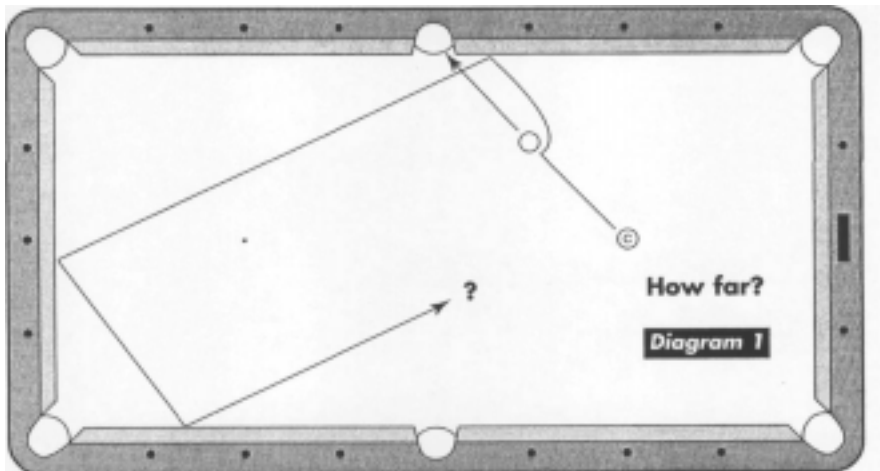
The shot in **Diagram 1** is easy to set up but not so easy to do. The cue ball is on the spot and the object ball is about half way between it and the side pocket. There is just a little cut angle, so the cue ball will follow to the side cushion on the near side of the side pocket. The drill is to shoot with follow and see if you can spin the cue ball around the table. You need plenty of follow, but left english is the key to getting distance on this shot.

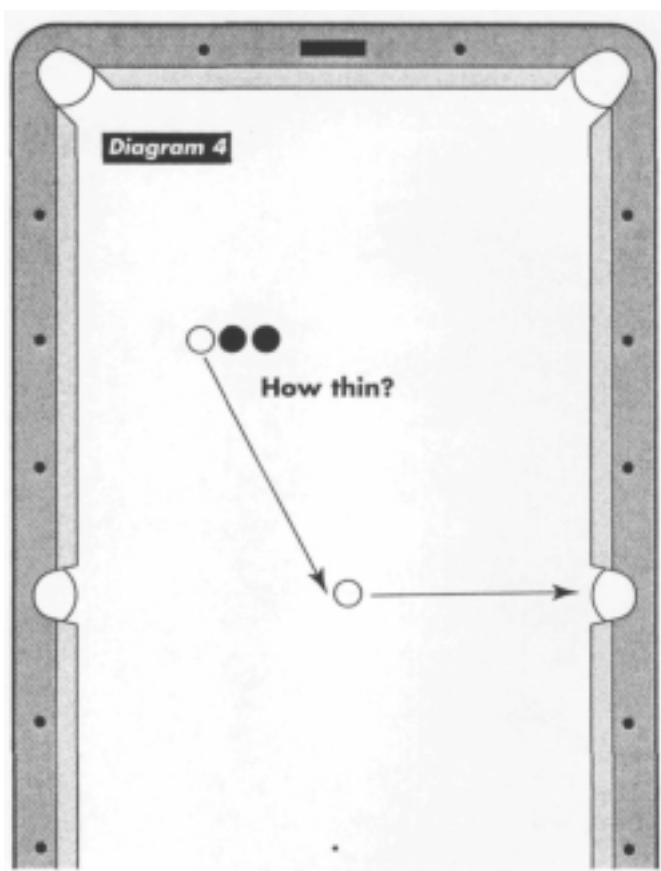
Try progressively longer runs on the cue ball. If you are not yet comfortable with side spin, just try to take the cue ball to the end rail. As you build up strength and confidence, see if you can contact five cushions.

In **Diagram 2**, you are going for maximum distance on the draw shot. Position the balls a little differently if it makes the shot more comfortable for you, but the goal is to draw the cue ball as far as possible. Two full lengths is good. Again, you may want to start with an easier goal, but make sure it stretches your present comfort zone.

To protect the table from miscues and chalk build-up, put a piece of notebook paper or thin plastic under the cue ball.

Diagram 3A is territory most pool players never visit. The shot shown is from carom billiards, or straight-rail. The cue ball must hit both the other balls, but no cushion is required. From the position shown, shoot softly enough that the same position is left after the shot. Some things that will help to master these very soft shots: Get *Daly's Billiard Book*, which describes lots of techniques for these close shots. Try it on a carom table, where the





larger balls will allow easier control. Try a lighter cue until you are used to hitting the cue ball very softly. If you master this speed, a lot of "small" safeties will suddenly be easy.

Diagram 3B shows a shot that is common at straight pool, one-pocket, and 8-ball. You have two object balls near the same cushion, and you need to stay inside the second one while shooting the first one. That is, you want the cue ball to bounce only a little off the cushion so that the second ball will be a cut to the right.

When you first start shooting these shots, you will say to yourself, "No way can I stop the cue ball. I need to use more rails." Often you can't arrange to use more cushions because other balls block the longer path to position.

With practice, you will soon find the right combination of draw and side-spin — in this case-right — to make the cue ball die on the cushion.

Try a little more draw than right for your first tries. Gradually move the cue ball farther off the cushion, so you will learn your limit for various angles.

Diagram 4 will exercise your thin shots. The object ball is on the center spot — in which games is the center spot used? — and the cue ball is on the head string. See how close to the head spot you can bring the cue ball and still make the object ball. This is a good shot to try left and right English to see if either one helps you on such thin cuts.

I'll guess that the problems caused by side-spin — squirt, swerve and throw — make the no-spin shot more effective. That doesn't mean you shouldn't also practice the shot with spin, as you will usually need some spin when the cue ball gets to the far rail in order to get position on the following ball.

Besides the above suggested expeditions into *terra incognita*, you can plan your own. During a match, whenever you come up against a shot you're uncomfortable with, make a note of it, and include it in your next practice session. Soon, it will become a familiar part of your game.

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