



# Jump Shots

Adding another dimension to your game.

**While watching the** World 9 Ball Championships in Cardiff, Wales, one thing was clear: it would be hard to keep up without a pretty good jump shot. Among the final eight or so, the only one I didn't see jump was Steve Davis, and he had good control of his kick shots.

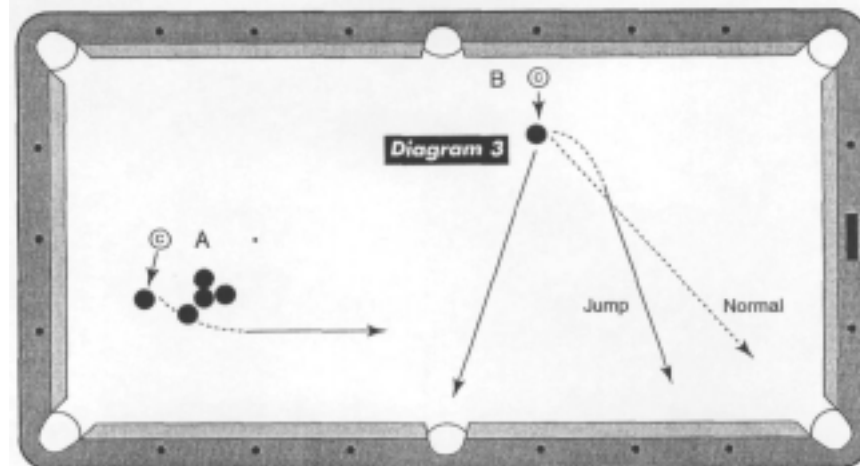
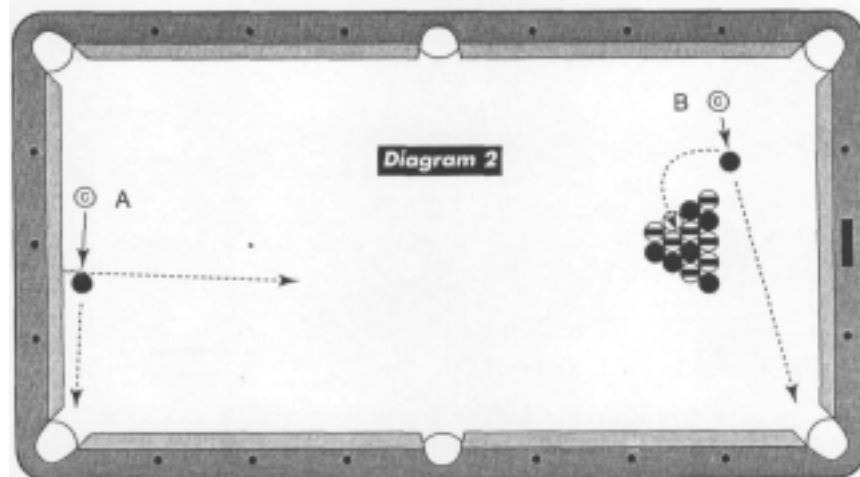
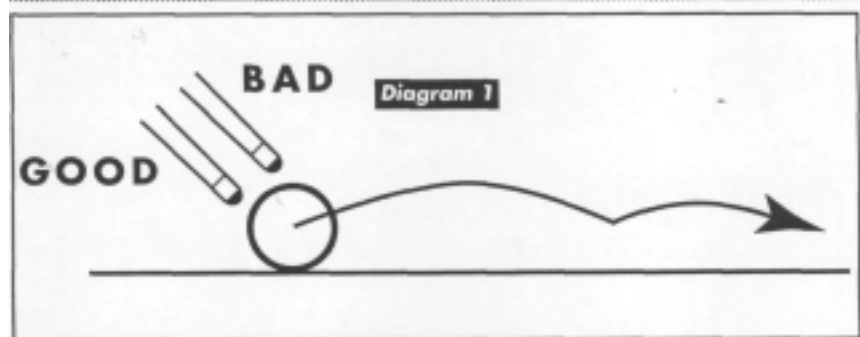
The rules today mandate a cue at least 40 inches long. This was a reaction to the "jump rods" that were popular in the early 90's. They were about 24 inches long, often equipped with a very hard plastic tip, and weighed not much more than the cue ball. With these characteristics, it was possible for a novice to loft the cue ball over an object ball only inches away. The damage to the tables and the traditions of the game was too much, and a ban on the rods went into effect in 1995. The Pro Billiard Tour banned jump cues entirely on the men's circuit.

A typical jump shot is shown in Diagram 1. The elevated cue stick drives the cue ball down into the cloth. The ball rebounds to leave the cloth, and continues to bounce down the table with progressively smaller hops. Each hop is about half the height of the previous one. The diagram shows that follow is not recommended. This will put the tip above the cue ball just as it wants to leave the cloth, and it will be trapped. Except for shallow elevations, you must avoid follow on jump shots.

This diagram also hints at why the jump rods were so effective. Since they were light, they would stop on impact with the ball, reducing the chance of interference. Also, the hard tip caused a very short contact time, further preventing trapping of the cue ball.

To be good at the tougher jump shots, you will need to get a jump cue. There are several brands on the market, including some that double as break cues when a third section is screwed on the end. Some players try to jump with just the cue shaft, but very few shafts are long enough to be legal.

Diagram 1 also shows that the highest point off the table occurs halfway between the take-off and the first landing. When you are practicing for height, have a friend watch from the side, and notice where the ball is landing. It's best to do this part without an object ball on the table, so there will be fewer balls on the floor. If you do get a jump stick, try this practice: Put a ball in the jaws of a head pocket and the cue ball near the other head pocket where you can bridge up



on the rail. Practice first without an obstruction and with a spotter. Try increasing the elevation, but keep the speed down to keep both balls on the table. The challenge is to

get a good hop with only moderate speed. Some players use a normal pendulum stroke, but this requires longer legs than some of us have. Others use a dart grip and

a very quick stroke. Experiment. Can you use center-ball, or is draw required? Once you get good elevation, try an obstructing object ball directly in the path, and see how close you can move it to the cue ball.

If you are going to try this sort of practice for any length of time, please ask the owner of the table beforehand. He has a right to say no. A compromise is to wait until he is going to recover a table, and use it for jump (and masse) practice for the last week of the cloth's life.

Even without a special stick, there are lots of three-dimensional shots that are useful and not too difficult. Shot A in **Diagram 2** is an interesting way to move the cue ball. The problem is that you are nearly straight in on the ball and you have to get to the other end of the table. A monster spin shot is a possibility, but either follow or draw may scratch. Instead, elevate a little and let the cue ball jump up after it hits the object ball. If you have the cut right, it will land on the nose of the cushion and scoot up the table. With five minutes of practice, this shot will be yours.

Shot B in **Diagram 2** is a situation from 14.1. The break shot is nearly straight — in, which leaves only a follow shot to break. Instead, elevate a little more than on A, and jump the cue ball onto the top of the rack. Note how far forward the cue ball moves. If

you aren't getting as far as the rack, you need to reposition the balls or shoot a little harder, but not so hard that the object ball leaves the table. This shot takes less elevation than you might think.

Another thing to notice on this shot is that you will need to aim fuller than for a normal stroke. This is because the cue ball will cut the object ball more in the air. There are reports of cutting the object ball backwards on some jump shots — the cue ball comes down on the far side of the object ball.

In **Diagram 3**, A is a good shot, but for positional play you don't want to disturb the two object balls that are a throwable combination to that same pocket. The idea is to jump over the dead pair with draw, and move the cue ball up the table. This is also useful if you just need to be up the table and you want to avoid the carom off the near balls. Experiment to see how softly you can shoot and still hurdle the obstruction.

Shot B in **Diagram 3** shows a final use of the jump shot. Place the cue ball just off the diamond as shown, and the object ball about eight inches away, straight across the table. Adjust the position so that the "normal" line of the shot with follow is a certain scratch. Jack up about 20 degrees, aim a little fuller, and shoot firmly. The cue ball will jump forward and land on the long rail, well away

from the scratch.

There is a rule you need to know if you are going to use these shots in competition. Any miscue on a jump shot is a foul. This rule is to prevent intentional miscues, which is the way most beginners try to get over blockers. I was surprised to learn recently that a jump-cue vendor was recommending not to use chalk on his tip. I'd hate to be the referee called over to watch such shots.

A final note about equipment: the cloth, and, to a lesser extent, the bed of the table, can make a difference in how well the ball jumps. I used to play in pool halls that used rubber-backed cloth, and it was easy to clear a full ball that was only a diamond away with a regular stick. With the thinner, finer cloths that are common today, it is much harder to get up so quickly with a normal cue stick.

Good luck with these shots, and please remember to talk to the proprietor before any serious practice.

If you want to try out some other fun jump shots, ranging from the easy to the impossible, three dozen of them are diagrammed in Robert Byrne's *Treasury of Trick Shots in Pool and Billiards*, along with hundreds of other shots, all for less than \$20.

*Bob Jewett is a BCA — certified Advanced Level instructor.*