

Bob Jewett



Three Draw Drills

Something old and something new.

How's your draw? I recently was working on mine to improve my finesse position for one-pocket and 14.1. The following drills have something new and challenging even for the old hands.

I saw the first drill nearly 40 years ago in Willie Mosconi's *Winning Pocket Billiards*. Place a number of balls in a semi-circle around the side pocket and shoot them in order. Where the balls start is up to you; I find it's best to put the balls as close to the pocket as possible without blocking a shot. You are not allowed to touch any cushion with the cue ball or to bank an object ball. Reset all the balls as soon as you have missed a shot.

Diagram 1A shows how the start of a perfect run looks. The cue ball follows a zig-zag path; after each shot it comes to rest about eight inches from the next ball, and lined up so that a shot to the center of the pocket gives just enough angle to get to the next ball. You will quickly learn what that angle is, but a good rule-of-thumb is to leave the cue ball so that shooting full at the object ball will barely put the ball in on the right side of the pocket.

Now for a new wrinkle on this old drill: if you make all the balls without a miss, add one ball to the semi-circle for the next run, but if you fail, subtract one ball from the next set. This is now a form of "progressive practice" and you can keep track of how you are doing by simply noting how many balls are in the present semi-circle. If you need a grade for motivation, three is a C, six is a B, and nine is an A.

Diagram 1B shows a problem you will likely encounter. The cue ball stopped too soon for a good shot on the 3 ball as shown by the dashed line, which points down the rail several inches past the pocket. If you have perfect soft draw and cheat the pocket to the verge of missing, you may be able to keep the cue ball from going past position for the 4 ball. In this situation, try using as level a cue as possible and right English with the draw. The idea is that the side spin

will throw the object ball into the pocket so that not as much cut angle is needed. It will take you a while to get the feel for this. Accurate aim is mandatory, since you will still have to cheat the pocket.

Diagram 1C shows the opposite problem; the cue ball has wandered too far and is on the wrong side of the 3 ball. You need

you place the cue ball on the A side for draw or the B side for follow? Try each way 10 times to see which works best for you. If you have trouble with the follow shot, the most likely problem is failure to hit high enough on the cue ball; the higher you hit, the less speed is needed for the position. Next try placing the 1 ball at A. Is draw better

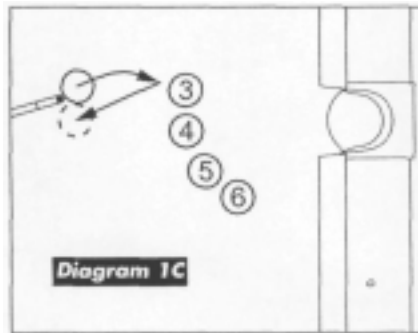
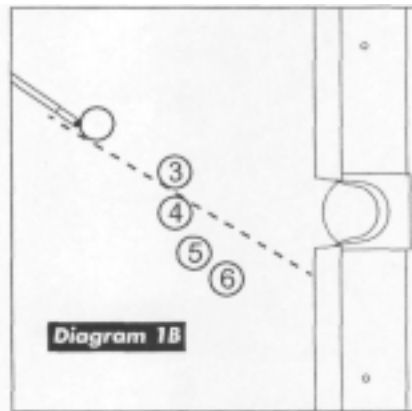
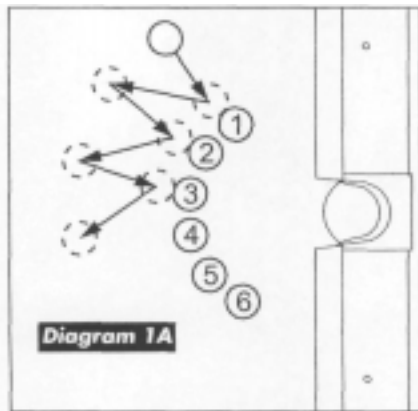
than follow now? Finally, place the one ball at B. There is a rule-of-thumb that says with ball in hand, you should never place the cue ball for a draw shot. Is any of these shots an exception for you?

Finally, Diagram 3 is an interesting draw drill that can be used as a challenge. The goal is to pocket the 9 ball in Pocket X with a draw-carom after

pocketing the 3 ball. You don't have to get the 9 all the way there in one shot, though; leave it where it rolls to and try again. The 3 ball comes back up to the same position, and the cue ball is in hand for each try. The positions A, B and C show possible successive positions of the 9 if you shoot softly. And it is good to land softly on the 9, since this will teach you precise finesse position. Softer shots also tend to keep the 9 near the cushion where it is easy to get to. If you fail to touch the 9, start the drill over.

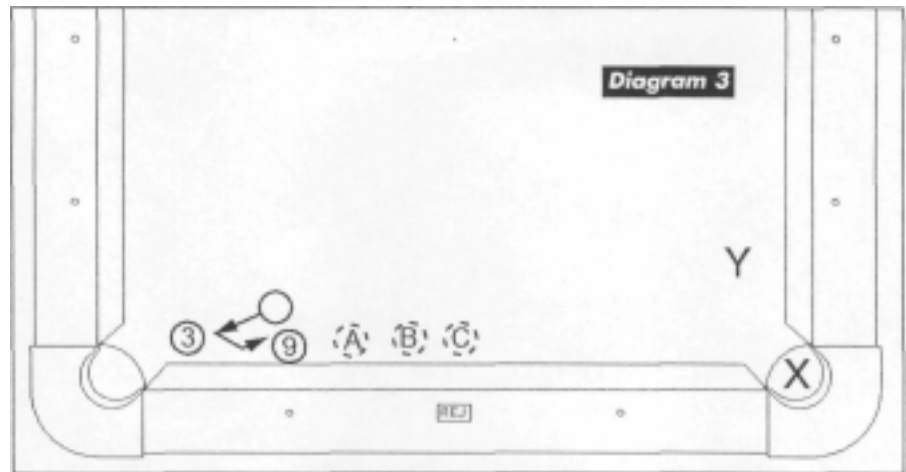
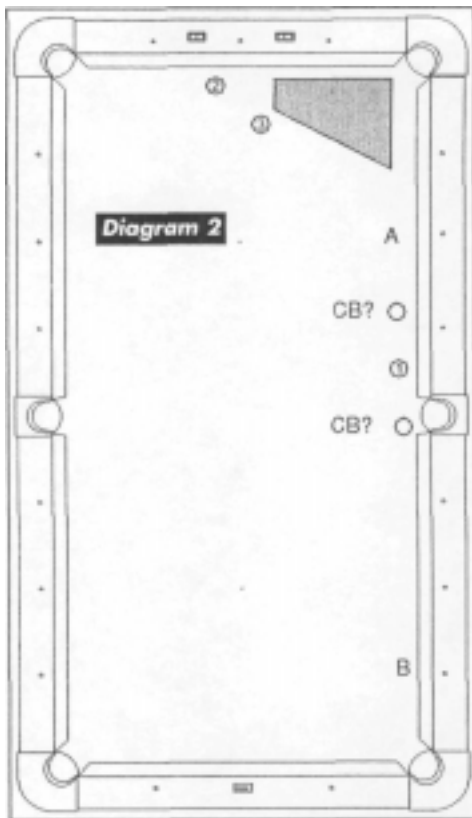
While you work on this drill, try to get a feel for the angle the cue ball draws to for a particular cut angle on the 3 ball. With a little practice, you'll be able to pull the cue ball right along the end rail even with a starting angle over 30 degrees. For this drill, you will probably want the tip as low as possible on all shots to minimize the cue-ball speed. In the first drill in Diagram 1, it is often useful to take a little draw off the ball to keep from pulling back to far.

One variation is to go for as many contacts as possible. For this, soft shots are mandatory, and hitting the cushion with left side spin seems to keep better control of the cue ball. My record is about 18 shots before pocketing the stripe. Another variation is to go for the fewest shots, but you'll see that much better accuracy is required.



to hit the object ball on the left side and get the cue ball to come to the right. Amazingly, the answer is once again right side-spin. The trick is to elevate to about 45 degrees and play a half — masse shot. The cue ball will curve before and/or after hitting the 3 ball, and with the right touch will get back in line for the 4 ball. This shot calls for a solid raised V — bridge and finesse. Don't shoot it like you're killing snakes; instead, it should be more like kissing your Grandma.

In Diagram 2 is a chance for you to test the idea that follow is better than draw for position. You have ball in hand on the 1 ball at a game of 9-ball, and need to get to the shaded area for a shot on the 2 ball. Should



One last word on this drill. If you over-do it and run the 9 ball to Y, not all is lost. Very carefully line the cue ball up between the 3 and the upper edge of the 9, and then do your best to draw the cue ball perfectly straight back to hit the 9 on the upper edge. This shot is worth a couple of tries even if you miss the first time, just to get a feel for this very precise skill.

For all of these drills, remember to change sides. The shot may look a lot

different to you when it's reversed. Of course, the shots in Diagram 2 may need a bridge on one side for players who don't switch hands. Draw is always a good skill to have ready for position play. Finesse-draw is even better.

Bob Jewett is an Advanced-level Billiard Congress of America-certified instructor and partner in the San Francisco Billiard Academy, which is BCA-certified for instructor training.