

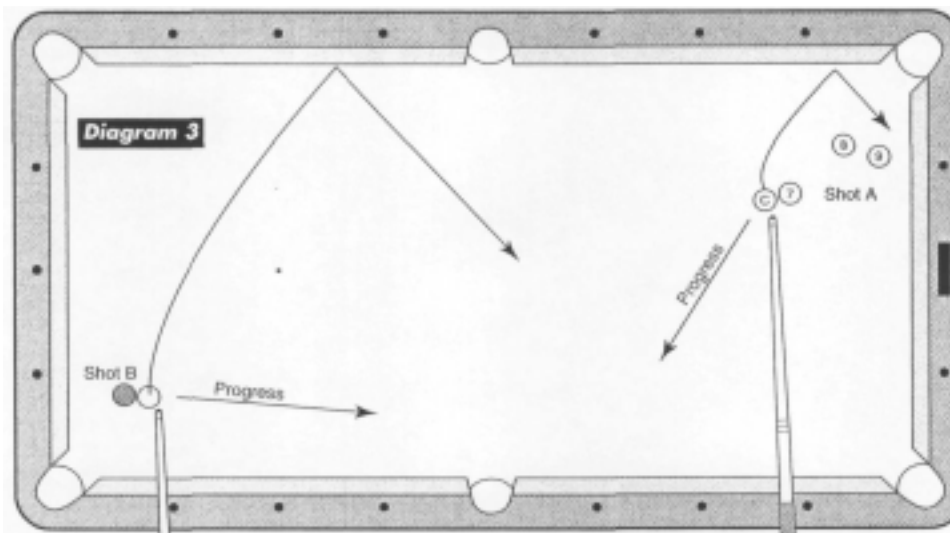
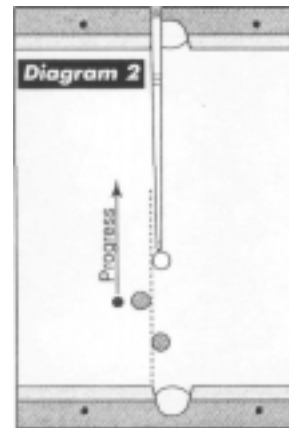
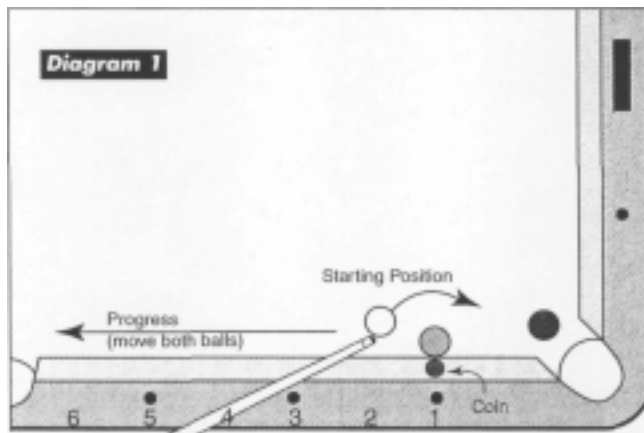


# Progressive Masse

Learn to swerve.

**Masse shots** are a delight to play and see, provided that you're not the owner of the table. Here are some useful and fairly gentle masse shots to practice and have ready for play. A good way to avoid irritating the owner is to find out when a table is going to be recovered, and arrange time on the table the week before.

**Diagram 1** shows one of my favorite drills. It is set up as a progressive practice, which means that the difficulty is automatically adjusted depending on your progress. The object ball is in the jaws of the pocket, the blocker ball is on the cushion at a location marked by a coin, and the cue ball is half a ball off the cushion and about a ball from the blocker. The goal of the shot is to make the object ball with a masse, but you should also be working on two other aspects of the shot. Try to use as little speed as possible; making the ball just roll over the brink without the cue ball touching any cushion is ideal. At the same time, try to use as little elevation as possible — I think you'll be surprised at how shallow an angle will work for this relatively moderate curve, if you combine a little draw with the side spin. Do not attack this shot like some yahoo killing snakes; easy does it.



The progressive part comes after each attempt. If you make the shot, move the coin a little farther from the pocket, perhaps half a diamond, and move the blocker ball to match. If you miss, move the marker closer. You could just use the blocker ball to keep track of your progress if you don't hit it very often. This method will automatically adjust the shot to the distance where you can make it about half the time, which is not too hard or too easy. At the end of each set of 15 shots or so, you can record the location of the coin as your score and measure your progress.

If you find that you can make the shot most of the time from eight diamonds away, it's time to move the cue ball farther behind the blocker ball, so that it is fully eclipsed. If you can do *that* shot from eight diamonds away half the time, let's go on

the road. Practice curving in both directions so your game doesn't get lopsided.

If you find you do occasionally hit the table with your tip, get additional protection for the table by placing a piece of leather or thick cloth on the table under the "corner" of the cue ball where the tip hits. On this shot, the tip's landing spot should be out the path of the cue ball.

Another very common situation in play is when you are only slightly blocked by a ball, and a combination of a little bit of swerve and throw will move the ball over enough. In **Diagram 2** is such a shot. There is a straight line between the edges of the cue-ball, blocker ball, object ball and corner of the side pocket. It might help to stretch a

thread on the cloth for quick alignment.

The shot is shown in the easiest position. It is made progressively harder by moving the cue ball and blocker farther from the pocket. In this drill, you can again hold your place with a coin. A slightly harder version is to move the object ball with the others. For still more challenge, move the cue ball so that its edge is slightly over the thread, so that you need more curve.

Because the object ball is farther away from the pocket, this shot requires quite a bit more precision than the first one. You will find that if you use minimum speed, spin and elevation, your job will be easier.

A use for masse that many players overlook is to move the cue ball after contact

Expo

# Bob Jewett

with a close-by object ball. Often some kind of safety is involved. In **Diagram 3**, Shot A shows a situation from 9-ball that needs a safety, but how? The angle doesn't quite allow hiding the cue ball behind the 8-9 with just side spin. Elevate a little and use right draw to get the cue ball to curve just after leaving the 7. The shot progresses by moving the pair of balls back along the arrow shown.

Shot B shows a similar safety situation without any hidere handy. On this shot, the goal is to leave the cue ball at the other end of the table, and the object ball close to the end rail — let's say less than a hand-span. In this case, "outside" English is needed along with draw. Progress is made by moving the pair of balls farther up the table. This shot is not dangerous to the table if hit properly, but at first you might want a landing pad. One thing to note while playing this shot is how little the object ball moves for the strength of the hit. As you elevate the stick, more of

the shot's energy goes into the slate and less into moving the cue ball.

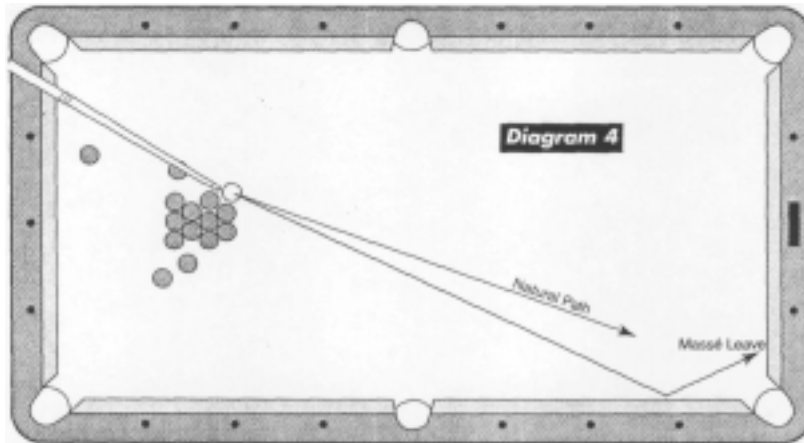
Shots like A and B come up frequently in one-pocket and straight pool. In either, you

pocket) and requires excellent speed control if the cue ball is to touch the rail but still be left close.

The masse solution is to elevate just a little to curve the cue ball after contact, so that it first hits the side cushion. Now if the cue ball stops a millimeter short of the end rail, you haven't fouled, and the safety is very tough to escape from.

If the cloth is sticky and the cue ball is old and worn, good masse action is much harder to obtain. A silicone lubricant like ArmorAll on the cue ball will help make the cloth play like new, and is much less expensive. Unfortunately, it is only a temporary solution, as it wears off.

For further study, check out Robert Byrne's "Advanced Technique in Pool and Billiards," which covers the standard way to aim masse shots. If you have back issues of this magazine, check in February of 1998 for some other suggestions.



will find yourself stuck to a ball or most of the rack, and any normal angle to a cushion for a safe is not safe. Often, a little curve on the cue ball solves the problem. A particularly useful example is when the cue ball is on the side of the rack, as in **Diagram 4**. You want to freeze the cue ball on the far end cushion. The normal kiss angle off the rack goes to the end cushion (or maybe the