



Odds and Ends

Take the \$200 challenge.

This month, I'll wrap up a few loose ends from previous columns, and repeat some things which seem not to have been understood by all.

Last month, I covered a handicapping method for a straight pool (14.1) league. Recently, that scheme has been put into operation at a local pool hall in Dublin, Calif., with a twist that you might find useful. Instead of the usual round-robin format for teams, it is what you might call a "drop-in" format. Whoever shows up each week gets to play, with a random draw. Since the matches are handicapped, it doesn't make much difference who you draw each week, but the draw could be adjusted to match up more pairs who haven't played before in the season. If an odd number of people show up, the League Operator sits out that time.

At the end of the season, the top finishers are decided by most games won, with losses used only for tie breaks. Half of the weekly \$10 entry fee goes towards cash prizes at the end of the season, with the other half to the house. This format could be used for 9-ball as well, and gives players a reason to return to the pool room at least once each week.

In my June 1992 column, I proposed the experiment in curve shown in **Diagram 1**. Some people claim to be able to make an object ball curve. I don't believe them. Unlike some non-believers, I'm willing to put my money where my mouth is and pay \$200 to anyone who can teach me how to make the ball curve. So far, I've had no takers. The balls are as shown, with the object ball in question exactly a ball off the cushion. Can it be made to curve into the far pocket? The shot must be legal to collect on my offer. Since it is impossible to prove an impossibility, I can't say that the shot absolutely can't be done, but until I see it, I'm a skeptic, and will put the "object ball curvers" in the same camp as the Chalk Borers.

In my first column for this magazine, I proposed an experiment to determine the best way to cut a ball that was frozen to the

Here is a quick test you can do to convince yourself of the error in that idea. Suppose you are cutting a frozen ball down the rail at 45 degrees as shown in **Diagram 2**. The problem in doing the test is to be sure that the cue ball touches the object ball and cushion simultaneously. The trick is to use the cue ball as a combo ball so that we can set precisely where it hits the object ball and cushion. Place the cue ball frozen to the object ball where some say it must land to make the shot. Now very carefully move the cue ball one millimeter away from the object ball and one millimeter away from the cushion. You could use a coin as a gauge. Note that you have moved the cue ball at 45 degrees away from the object ball. If you now send the cue ball back along that 45-degree line, the cue ball will hit the cushion and ball simultaneously.

Now, using an object ball as the cue ball, set the shot up at 45 degrees so that a full hit on the object ball will drive the cue ball back to its starting position.

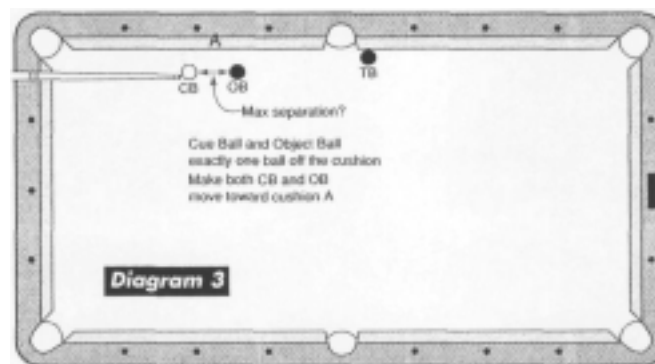
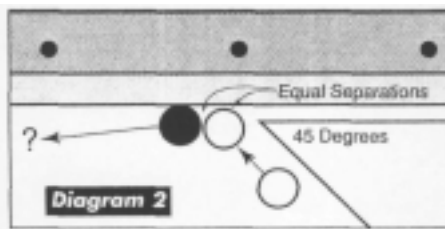
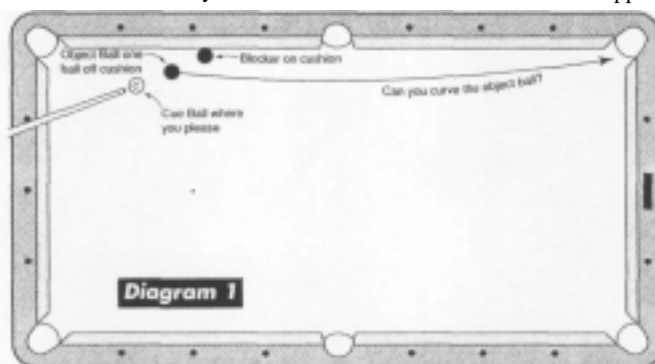
The reason for the 1mm separation is so that the cue ball will have left its contact with the "object cue ball" before contact on the frozen ball is made, and avoids any complication of all three balls touching at the same instant.

If you want to repeat the original experiment, set up the shot as above, but then move the frozen ball down the rail a little

until it starts going into the pocket. It is possible to move it nearly the width of a chalk down the rail and still make it if you shoot hard.

Perhaps the best advice for shooting this shot is from Steve Mizerak, who advises ignoring the cushion, and just shooting the ball into the pocket with the same aiming method you use for all other shots.

In several recent issues, there was a lively discussion of the existence of throw. *BD's* readers conclusively showed — if anyone really needed proof — that throw does



cushion straight down the rail. Some books, like Mosconi's "Winning Pocket Billiards," get it horribly wrong when they say to hit the ball and the cushion at the same time. In response to my column, *BD's* readers (and, separately, Jack Koehler, in his detailed study of the problem) showed that you almost always need to hit the cushion first, typically a quarter-inch from the object ball.

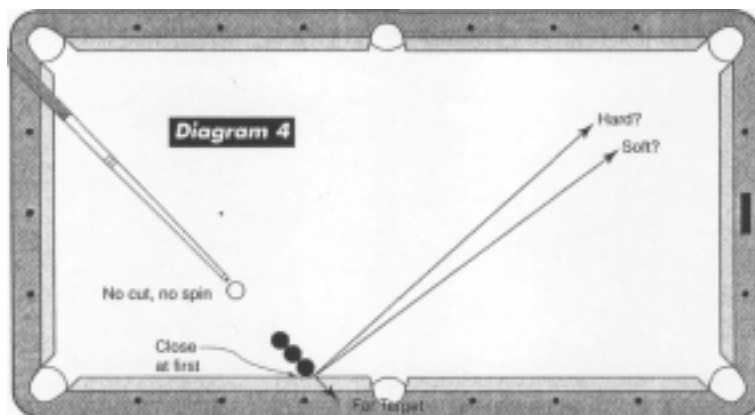
Sadly, some authors continue to push the myth of "ball and cushion at the same time."

Bob Jewett

exist: sidespin on the cue ball can alter the path of the object ball from the line of centers at the instant of contact. One author who has shown the utility of throwing rather than cutting an object ball into the pocket is Ray Martin in "The 99 Critical Shots in Pool." He shows a typical situation in 14.1 (though it also shows up in 9-ball) in which the shot is almost but not quite straight in (shot 16, page 50). The goal is to minimize the sideways movement of the cue ball but still get the cut angle.

A recent discussion on the Internet put this shot into question. **Diagram 3** shows another quick test you can do to see how well the shot works with your equipment. The goal on this shot is to get both the cue ball and the object ball to move toward cushion A. For the object ball, try to hit the target ball (TB) on the cushion. For the cue ball, you measure success by seeing whether the cue ball ends closer to the cushion than it started. The measurement — I hope you remember Lord Kelvin's admonition about numbers — is to see how

far apart the balls can be started before the two goals cannot be met. I hope you quickly see that if the balls are an inch apart, both can be moved easily towards the cushion. This alone proves the existence of throw.



Now, what is the distance at which you can no longer meet the goals?

A final item is a major misconception about how cushions work. Some instructors say that when you bank the ball hard there is some kind of cushion compression and the ball is returned on a more perpendicular path to the cushion than it is for softer shots. There seems to be no truth to this

idea (and I have to plead guilty to teaching this bogosity before I did learn the truth).

The test shown in **Diagram 4** has been previously covered a couple of times in this magazine, and in Bob Byrne's "Advanced Technique" book, as well as countless times in Internet discussions, but there are still many players who remain uninformed, but perhaps not uninformable. Set up a three-ball combo on the cushion and close to the cushion — as close as you can put them without the last ball being interfered with as it exits the rubber. For repeatability, aim them at a far target — a spot on the wall — or tap them into place. Try hard and soft shots. Move them back from the cushion a diamond, and try again. Move them back two diamonds and try again. It is follow on the banking ball and not cushion compression that explains the results that I think you'll observe.

Have you encountered a loose end or an idiocy that you would like illuminated? Send it in as grist for a future column.