

THE 8-BALL BOOK
By
The Monk

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THE 8-BALL BOOK:

Written by The Monk

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I would like to dedicate this book to my brother
Jeff Miller
for his unconditional love and one hundred percent
support. At each milestone in my journey, Jeff Miller
has been there to show me the way.

I cannot deliver this book without thanking the following friends who helped make it all possible.

- Heidi Pierce* – Who assessed my work and delivered the perfect vision.
Glen Gekow – His advise keeps me focused.
Faye Kerr – Her tireless efforts make my business happen.
Debbie Curtis – My graphic designer who always does a great job.
Tom Ross – One of the finest teachers in the country.
Jeremy Kerr – He runs my shipping and manages the business.
Marcia Mallard – She edits my manuscripts – I owe her so much.
Faith Pace – She keeps my going. A great sister and friend.
Tom Rossman – Pools greatest ambassador.
Marty Rossman – She has the patience to help me make good decisions.
Bob Henning – A great writer. His input is invaluable.
Lydia Nenevale – My total inspiration. I love her.
Bobby Shultz – The finest cue maker in the world. A good friend.
Tom & Denise Kennedy – Great people who love this game.
Tom Blanchard – His Monk joint protector supports all my work. A good friend.
Steve Blanchard – The finest wood carver in the world.

There are others I may have overlooked. I have been helped by so many great people in this wonderful game. Thanks to you all. And may all the rolls go your way.

The Monk

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Foreword

In the game of Eight Ball you are faced with many challenges. You must be able to make decisions while in the heat of battle. The pressure of the match will call for one hundred percent concentration on the shot you are shooting, therefore you must be certain of what you decide to do. You can shoot one ball or another. And you need to know what pocket you will be shooting the ball into. In addition, you will have to avoid your opponents balls. Eight Ball calls for tighter position play. You must be able to move through the rack and keep your next shot in sight. Too often we make a great run only to be snookered behind our opponents ball. This game is about position play and strategy. Making decisions on how you will approach the rack. Making decisions on how you will approach the game. Will you go for the run out? Will you block you opponent's balls? Will you run a few balls and play safe? The game of Eight Ball is a chess match played by the masters.

You will need shotmaker skills to get out of a tough situation. You will need cue ball control to keep the next shot in line. You will need strategy skills to handle the challenges put forth by your opponent. And you will need patience. In this game you cannot rush things. You cannot be overcome with worry. You need to see your balls only. Do not be concerned with the score or whether you opponent will run out or not. Play your game and let the results fall where they will. Make sure you are willing to execute the shot at hand. The game of Eight Ball is about choices and we need the stroke that gives us the best advantage.

Work out your best break. Work out your best plan. You will reach the winners circle more often than your opponent because you have a clear understanding of what you want to accomplish.

May all the rolls go your way until we meet in the finals.

The Monk

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'The Monk', written in black ink.

Why 8-Ball?

The 8-Ball Book is a sequel to my popular book Point The Way. I wanted to concentrate on the wonderful game of 8-ball because so many players play this game as their game of choice. Most amateurs choose 8-ball. So when you think of the forty million pool players in this country, you realize why 8-ball is the most popular game in pool today. The advent of all the 8-ball leagues, it is no wonder. In a league setting, 8-ball is a much better game than 9-ball.

The pros play 9-ball because it lends itself to TV. In 9-ball, you can make one ball and win the game. If your opponent runs to the nine and misses, you have executed one shot and have one win. If you make a combination on the nine, you have delivered one shot for one win. If you accidentally make the nine, you have again used one shot to take the victory. You can also make the nine on the break and win the game with one shot.

Not so with 8-ball. You will need to pocket all your balls to secure a victory. Your opponent's performance has little to do with you. You need to run the table before you can take the crown. This way, a miss on the money ball is not so painful. Your opponent will still be required to finish out his balls. In your run, you will deliver a more complicated series of strokes and position shots as you move around between your opponent's balls. You are required to hit the position lanes in your runout. While you may change your mind during the runout from shot to shot, a position play in 8-ball is vital. This is why the mastering of all the strokes is so important. In addition, the game of 8-ball requires you to develop the skills of making decisions on your feet.

A Word About Affirmation . . .

Throughout this book, I have sprinkled affirmations which will help you become the player you want to be. Each affirmation must be believed. Memorize all of them and make them a part of your mental makeup. Say one out loud each day – with enthusiasm – and you will acquire a winning attitude.

You have more choices and must be skilled in making the right one before you can assume championship status. Making the right decision while under pressure is a great art. We will cover this in detail as we journey through the game of 8-ball.

Because the pros do not play our game, there is little instruction available to 8-ball. Without clear guidance, league players are left to their own resources. Believe me, 8-ball is vastly different from 9-ball and learning to master 9-ball with all the instruction available does not mean you will be a great 8-ball player. Many high-level 9-ball players come to my 8-ball tournaments and have difficulty. It is for these reasons that I decided to write this book.

This book will help you – keep it as your bible to a winning performance. Studying this book will improve your game dramatically. Your winning average will rise during the coming year. Share this with a friend and help your fellow player to love the game of pool. Together we will travel down the road to pooldom come. May all the rolls go your way.

Affirmation #1

“Winning is not a condition. It is who I am.”

Chapter 1

Be the Best You Can Be

To become a good 8-ball player, you will need 8-ball exposure. Go out and join a league today. There are many great leagues available from which to choose. You will have no problem finding the right one for you. Leagues are a great place to meet new people and experience the camaraderie of team play. Once you join a league, you may play this wonderful game for the next thirty years. It is fun to be with your friends, and now is the time to get yourself to do the right thing. Join a league and use this book to become the best that you can be.

The game of pocket billiards requires great timing. This is achieved with long hours of practice. For most of us who have jobs, finding this practice time is very difficult. Grady Mathews says you need only three things to be a great pool player, “A divorce, get fired from your job, and be willing to starve.” I tend to agree with him, but we can all be good players and enjoy the game. Enjoying the game is what is most important – enjoying your performance, even if we don’t get fired, divorced or starve. Doing the right thing is almost as rewarding as winning. As the saying goes, “it’s not the winning, it’s how you play the game.” Those are some accurate words of wisdom. Turning in a fine performance has its rewards. When you do this on a consistent basis, you have arrived as a pool player.

With a winning performance you will gain the respect of your peers. A good pool player is equal to anyone. I once had dinner with some very successful people whose lowest educational degree was a masters. Also present was a professional pool player who did not finish high school. Yet everyone turned to listen to *him*. He held everyone’s attention simply because he was a fine performer.

Affirmation #2

“I do not need to do something to be a winner.”

I gave lessons to a fellow who commanded a team of PhDs. One table in his house was worth more than my entire assets. He never asked any questions of me or my background. During the session he called me “Sir”. Doing well in pool makes you equal with anyone. Pool is a wonderful game. Let us do well with the time and opportunity we have.

Because of the demands of good position play, learning to master speed and stroke control is vital. Here, with this book, you will be instructed in the proper techniques of cue strokes of pool. You do not need to divorce your spouse, quit your job or starve. You can master these strokes in your spare time. Herein lie the keys to your success.

In order to reach your highest potential, however, you must let go of the things that hold you back. Be free. By giving up the old things, you can gain the new.

There is one more demand on you before we actually begin the journey. You must trust me, complete the series of exercises, and *then* make a judgement on your progress. No matter how boring it becomes, you must practice until you succeed with each exercise before you make your final judgement.

The first sections of this book are designed to build a good solid foundation to your game. You can do it. Have faith and we’ll meet in the finals.

Affirmation #3

“My whole life is a contest. Why should it be any different on tournament day?”

Affirmation #4

“I deliver a winning effort.”

Chapter 2

Laying Bricks

When an experienced bricklayer decides to build a wall, he has every reason to be discouraged. A huge pile of bricks lie before him. They do not have any shape or order. Each brick is tiny compared to the wall he intends to build. This is enough to make an average person quit before he even gets started. But the experienced bricklayer begins with one brick at a time. He knows if he persists in this task, the wall will take shape.

Time after time, he hauls bricks from his huge pile. After all this work, he still only has half of a wall to show for his efforts. At this point in time, he could walk away and end up with half of a wall. Many do this – they get impatient and quit before they have completed their task. Then they feel they did not benefit from all they work they put into it.

As a pool player, you will always be rewarded by putting bricks on the wall. Think of your game as the sturdy wall you want to build. Each time you practice, *you are putting another brick in the wall.* Every tournament, every league encounter and every lesson is *putting bricks in the wall.* You gain from every experience. Each brick is necessary., If you leave one brick out, the wall is not a wall. You must learn to stick to it until you have laced all the bricks into place – then you will be blessed with a fine sturdy wall.

During a match one time, a fan asked me what I was playing for. I simply told him I was “putting bricks in the wall.” Every effort is adding another brick to your wall. Build a great one. Put lots of bricks on. Each time you play, every time you read this book, watch a pool tape, take a lesson, or do one of the exercises in this book, you’re putting bricks on the wall. All these tiny bricks add up to a sturdy wall.

Affirmation #5

“My performance is at the peak of my ability.”

Believe that you will gain something from all of your pool experiences and you will. Expect results and you will get them. That which I conceive will come to pass. Try to put some bricks on your wall every day.

Chapter 3

Getting Off to a Right Start

Before you can begin our journey through the world of pocket billiards and arrive at a state of excellence, you must secure a solid foundation to your game. This begins with the stroke. The stroke demands a good grip, the bridge needs to be firm, and above all else, a solid stance must be relative to sighting and delivery. A lot has been said in this first paragraph. A lot is required before we begin our journey, and it is the beginning that is so important. We must get off to the right start.

If you are an advanced player, don't skip over this very important chapter. During a beginner's class I am reminded of some basic material, and this helps my game. Check to see if you are on solid ground with your game. Go through this material from time to time and refresh your skill level.

Your stance is the most important element to good shotmaking. If you are not aligned, you will miss-hit your shot. Therefore, it is imperative that you develop a good stance. As a right-handed player, you will do well if you line up your right inner thigh to the spot on the object ball. Draw a line from your target to the inner portion of your right thigh and plant your leg. Set you left leg and you are in position. Lay the cue down so that the tip goes slightly beyond the cue ball. You are now standing the proper distance from the cue ball. Your hit will be at the bottom of the pendulum, giving you a smoother stroke through the ball. During stressful times, such as the money ball or the key ball in your run, you will want to have a solid stance and a point of reference in your sighting. This will do it for you. You should be able to shoot shots with your eyes closed once you are in your stance, How could you miss? If you have done all the proper work before the shot, all that is left is to deliver the stroke.

Affirmation #6

"During the contest, I always make the right choice."

Your grip should be comfortable. Your bridge should be solid. A helpful hint here – use the closed bridge. It will take you a long way. If you have trouble, see your local house pro. The bridge is difficult to explain in writing, and you will need to make some adjustments before you are on solid ground.

With regards to the stance, there is no universal position cast in stone for all to use. You must be comfortable and be able to swing through with your stroke. Use what is best for you. There are no two baseball hitters alike. Still, we need to be in line with the shot. Many baseball pros follow the coach's advice and adjust their batting stance. You should strive to achieve balance and alignment with the shot.

Left handers shoot across their bodies. I have had many left-handed students and found no need to change their across-the-body stance. They site with their dominant eye and this necessitates their different stance. Again, if you are having trouble in this area, a visit to your house pro would be of great help.

Once you have aligned your stance with the target and have set yourself the proper distance to the cue ball, you are almost ready to shoot. You must make a decision on the shot you will be attempting. Never lean into your professional stance *before* any decision is made. Decide on the exact nature of your shot and then get into the proper set up. Already you have taken on the air of a professional. Be sure of what you are trying to do on all shots, and make a clear, conscious effort to carry out that decision.

Affirmation #7

"I always have the advantage."

Affirmation #8

"I expect good rolls all during the tournament."

Chapter 4

The Punch Stroke - Don't Leave Home Without It!

Repeat after me: “I am aware that there are four strokes in this game of pool. In order to reach pooldom come, I must master all four of them. This will be easy to do because I have The 8-Ball Book.”

You will begin your journey with the most popular stroke of all time – the punch stroke – otherwise known as the stick shot or the stop shot. Follow the illustrations until you master this series of shots. *Just do it*. You will understand the reason for this when your skill level develops. The punch stroke is used over seventy percent of the time when pros are playing the game of straight pool. Willie Mosconi used it one hundred and ten times during his one hundred and fifty and out performance.

Many years ago an aspiring young player wanted lessons from one of the great players of all time. This young player wanted to be the best. His father paid fifty thousand dollars for lessons and the young player came away with the skills to execute the stop shot, or punch stroke. He went on to win many titles in straight pool, and he established himself as an all-time great. In fact, the punch stroke took him to the Hall of Fame.

Position play is the key to successful runouts. And for position play, the punch stroke is the most reliable. We all know we must play good position to keep our turn at the table and keep “what’s his name” in the chair where he belongs.

All great players know where the cue ball is going. The *track line* is the line that the cue ball travels along after it has made contact with the object ball. The ability to read the track line is the gift of the greats. You are one of these greats. If you were not a great player, you would not have this book.

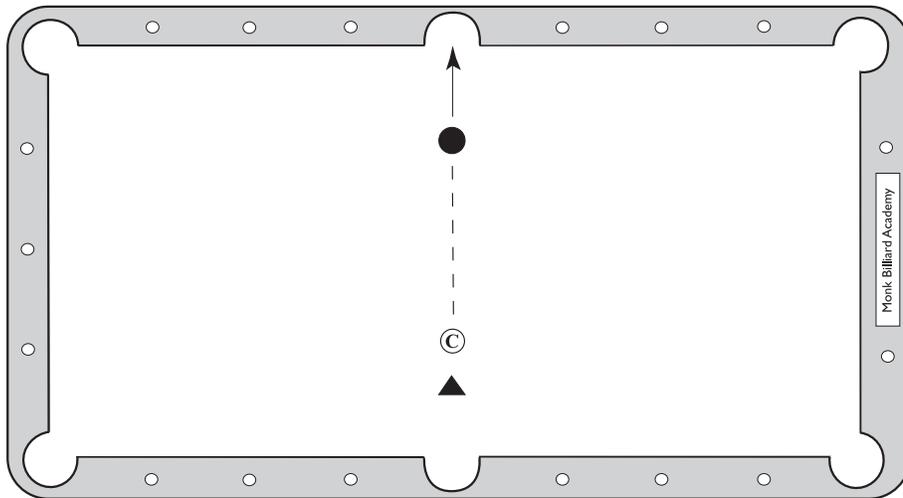
Affirmation #9

“The rolls will go my way and I take advantage of it.”

The desire to learn is our greatest gift. You will go as far as you desire with these illustrations. I am rooting for you to experience all the happiness this game has to offer.

Begin with the illustration below. (See Fig. 4:1) Repeat this until you can stop the cue ball from various distances. Practice until you can use a center ball hit to achieve a stop shot. Do not allow the cue ball to slip sideways on this shot. It must come to a direct stop for it to be successful. If you are having trouble stopping the cue ball, get some help. You will need this skill. Sometimes we are hitting the cue ball either left or right of center, and this spin will affect the shot. Also, we have a tendency to hit down on the ball. The skidding motion will affect the cue ball. You will need to have a dead-level stroke to achieve this shot.

Fig. 4:1 Basic punch in side pocket.

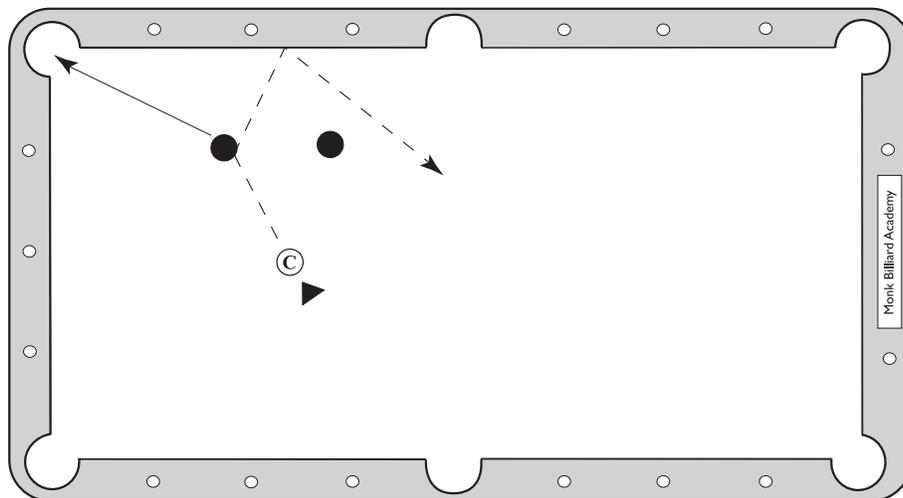


In the second illustration you will use a stop shot to bring the cue ball around the second ball for position in the same corner pocket. If the cue ball is not doing this, your punch stroke is improper. (See Fig. 4:2)

Affirmation #10

"I accept the things I have no control over."

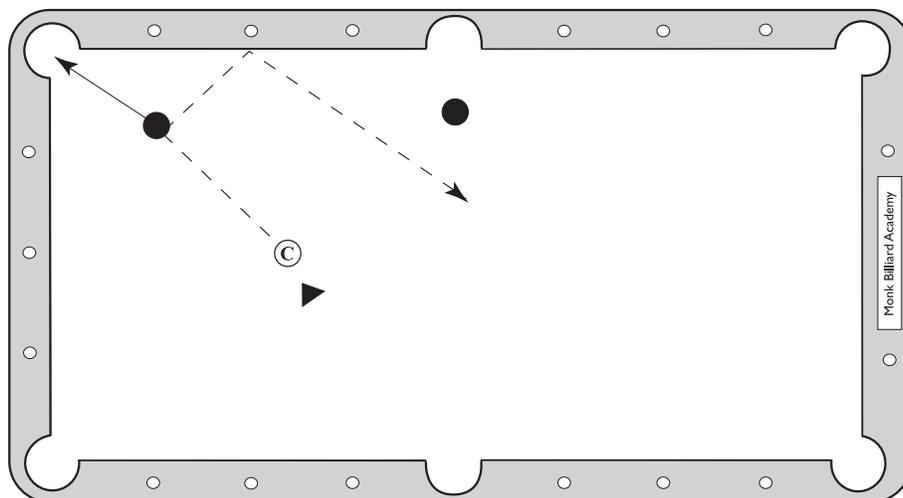
Fig. 4:2 Position for object ball in same pocket.



The genius of these illustrations is that you must deliver an honest stroke to get the desired results. Here you are given vital information on your stroke. Be sure to succeed with these illustrations before you go on to the next one.

In the third example, you will use a stop shot to bring the cue ball back for a shot into the side pocket on the second ball. (See Fig. 4:3) This is done in much the same way.

Fig. 4:3 Position for object ball in side pocket.

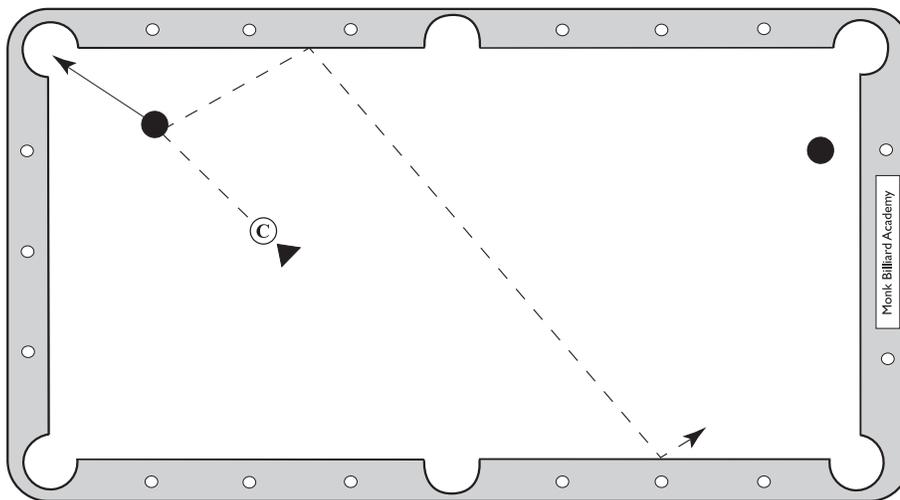


Affirmation #11

"I am comfortable with the results, no matter what they are."

The last illustration asks you to bring the cue ball all the way down table for a shot at the ball in the corner pocket. (See Fig 4:4) This is done with a center ball hit and not english. When you avoid using english, you will find yourself missing fewer shots – winning more games. Do not be tempted to use low right with draw. Learn to do this with a center stop shot. A simple punch stroke will give you the desired results.

Fig. 4:4 *Position for object ball in far corner pocket.*



A PATTERN HAS REVEALED ITSELF IN THESE SHOTS. THE PUNCH STROKE IS GIVING US A CONSISTENT TRACK LINE.

Here lies the importance of the punch stroke: You will be able to read the track line of the cue ball because it comes off the object ball on a consistent angle. (See Fig. 4:5) This is a great exercise because it will show you how you are doing with the punch stroke. If you are off line, the cue ball will not react as expected. You need to stay with this until you succeed. Mastering this skill is paramount to your success.

Affirmation #12

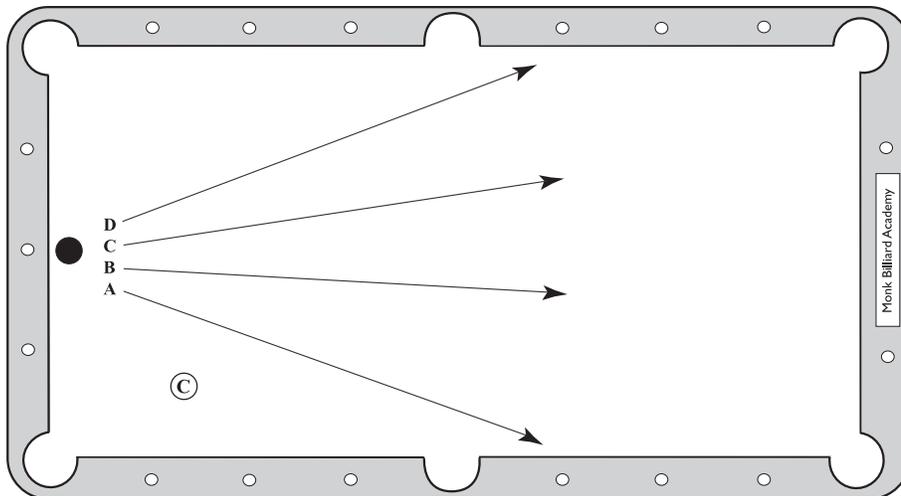
“Today, I play a great game.”

The punch to the eight ball is an excellent program. Use it until you succeed in the cue ball control. Remember to come into your target zone slowly. This is true of any position shot. Use the punch stroke exclusively. The track lines will remain the same provided you deliver a stop shot. One student scratched in the side pocket while doing the illustration in Fig. 4:6 in this series. While he was hitting the target in the proper sight, his punch stroke had degenerated to a follow stroke. We needed to do a quick review to get him back in line. The track lines will remain true if you deliver the proper stroke. Remembering that the stroke can alter the track line will win you a pile of trophies.

Your goal is to deliver a specific stroke on demand. Many times you will deliver a punch when you intended to use the force follow. In this instance, you will not get the desired results. Punching instead of following will actually prohibit the speed. I have a series of shots that illustrates this principal very well. In the first one, punch the ball to your side of the table. In the second one, use a follow stroke to reach the other side of the table. The third requires you to use a follow stroke to stay below diamond number one on the long rail. See Fig. 4:7)

Fig. 4:7

- A – Punch/center ball*
- B – Punch/one cue tip high*
- C – Follow/center ball*
- D – Follow/one cue tip high*



Affirmation #13

“Today, I deliver a straight, smooth, solid stroke on all winning shots.”

The ability to call upon any particular stroke on demand will take you to the top in your league. The punch stroke, however, is the primary stroke in pocket billiards. As you can see by the reaction of the cue ball, the punch stroke will give you reliable track lines – lines you can anticipate.

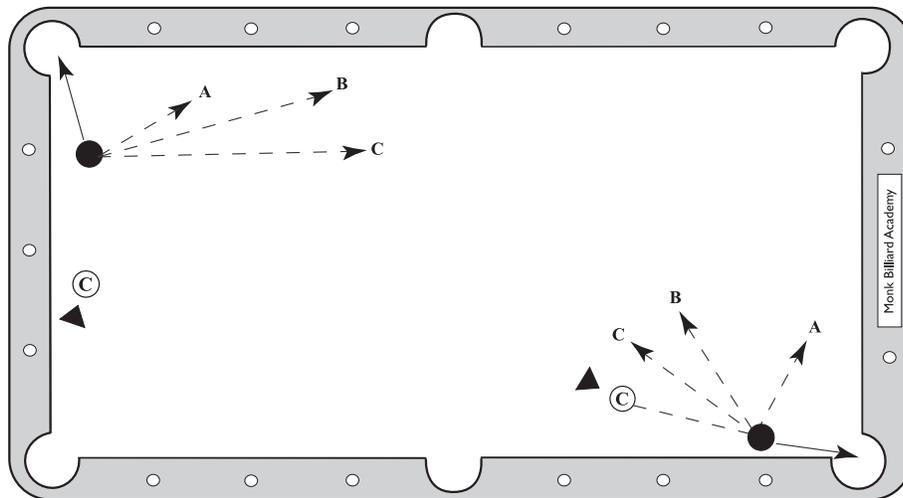
Before you can alter your track lines, you must first know what the natural line is. This is the line you want to alter. Here are two examples. (See Fig. 4:8) Line A is a follow stroke, line B is a punch stroke and C is a draw stroke. Note the difference in track line from each stroke. Knowing what the natural line is helps us in our choice to alter it.

Fig. 4:8

A – Follow stroke

B – Punch stroke

C – Draw stroke



An excellent exercise in the use of the punch stroke is called punching out the rack. Scatter a rack of balls around the table with all balls at least five inches from any rail. Shoot them in any order and do not allow the cue ball to touch a rail. To succeed with this program, you will need to use a lot of stop shots. *Please do this exercise!* Make this challenge a part of your entire journey. This is a tradition in my billiard experience.

Affirmation #14

"On every shot, I am relaxed."

If you are having problems with your game, do this for one week straight. You will be amazed. Your stroke goes through a brainwashing effect. After a few racks, difficult shots become routine – and long, tough stick shots become automatic.

The punch stroke is the foundation to your pocket billiards experience. Master this wonderful weapon and your improvement will be dramatic. If you are having a difficult time, call the Monk Billiard Academy and we will help you with this great skill. We have a special rate for punch stroke students.

May you punch your way to the top of the league. At the top we will play the great game.

Affirmation #15

“I am not preoccupied with results.”

Chapter 5

The Reliable Follow Stroke

The second most popular stroke in pool is the follow stroke. There are players who use this stroke exclusively. It helps you pocket balls more consistently. A soft roller very seldom alters the object ball. In the game of 8-ball, a miss is usually the reason we leave the table. One of our top league players uses the follow on everything. He rarely misses an open shot, and therefore has a lot of wins to his average. We have another player who barely gets the object ball to the hole. He delivers the soft follow on all shots. He has no regard for position play, but makes everything he shoots. In league play you understand, there are not that many runouts. A player who does not miss open shots will usually have a very high average. I use the follow stroke for all money balls. When position play is not required, I use the reliable follow stroke.

The delivery of the honest follow stroke is to allow the cue to slip through your grip – limp, loose and fluid. The muscles used in a follow stroke are quite different from those used in a punch stroke. With the follow shot, you are allowing the fluid motion to roll the cue ball forward towards the target. Shoot a ball into the side pocket with a center ball hit using the follow stroke and you will see the difference. You can sense the different hit. Absorb this valuable information and master the follow stroke. It will serve you well.

Affirmation #16

“My cue glides through the cue ball as if it were not there.”

In the following illustration, hit low left on the cue ball with a follow stroke. The follow stroke will bring you right around the opponent's ball.

(See Figs. 5:1 and 5:2)

Fig. 5:1 *The punch stroke is wrong for this shot. It brings you right into the opponent's ball.*

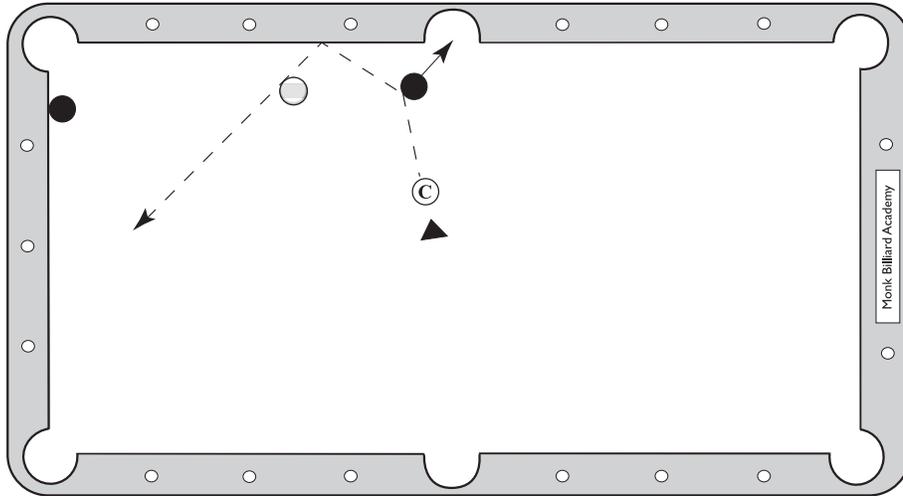
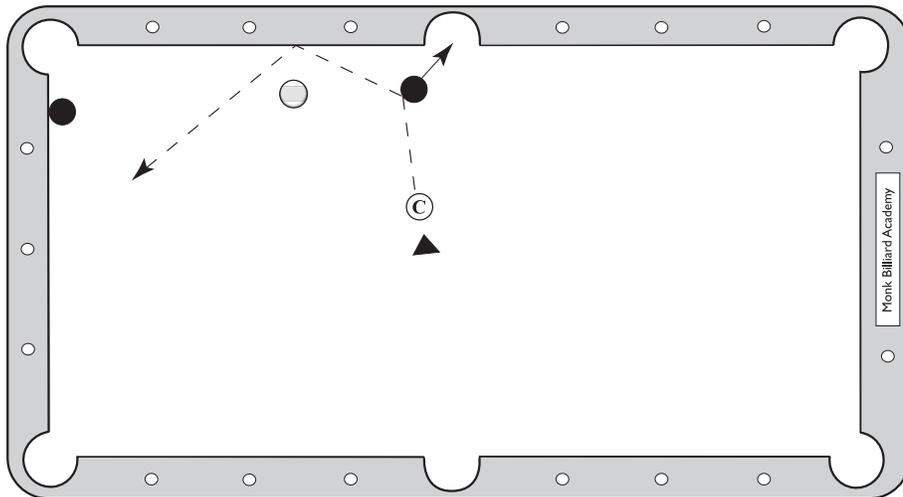
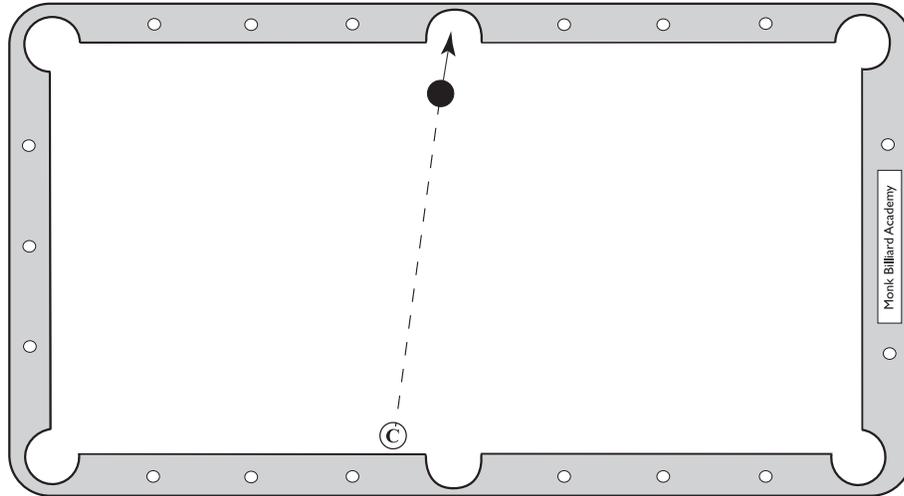


Fig. 5:2 *Low left with a follow stroke brings you right around the opponent's ball for position on your other object ball.*



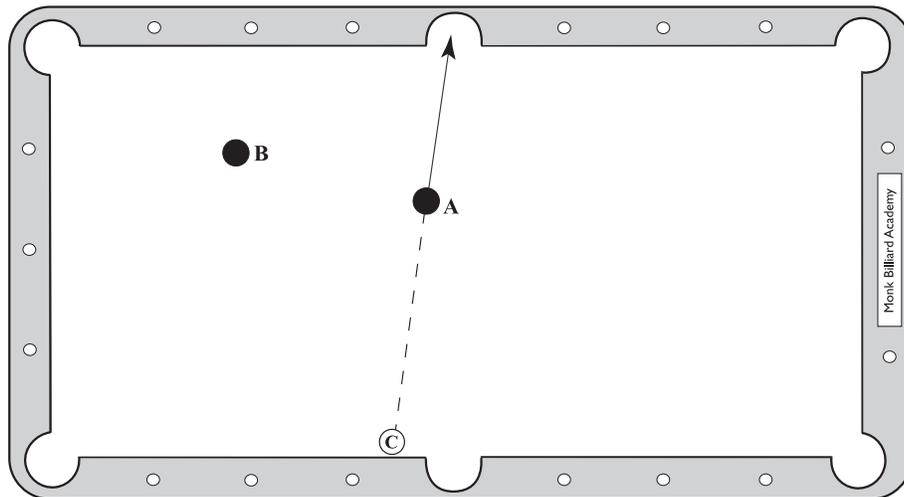
With the mastery of the follow stroke, you will be able to use the bunt shot. Roll the cue ball to the object ball in the side pocket and bunt it. (See Fig. 5:3)

Fig. 5:3 Bunt this ball – do not scratch or contact a rail with the cue ball.



Set up another shot in the middle of the table. You must pocket ball A and get position on ball B. Bunt it in.
(See Fig. 5:4)

Fig. 5:4 Since the cue ball is on the rail, you cannot shoot a middle ball punch to stop for position on ball B. Use the bunt to pocket ball A for position on ball B.



You will use the bunt shot many times when you are *punching out the rack*. Soft rollers are the most accurate shots in pool. Learn to roll that cue ball in a straight line.

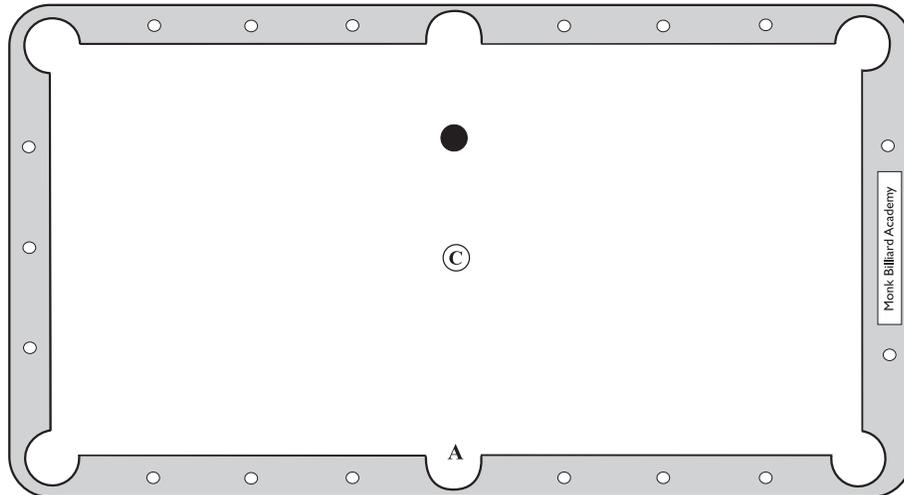
Chapter 6

The Draw Stroke Your Secret Weapon

You use a different set of muscles with each stroke, and the draw stroke brings this truth home. Here we are using an entirely different set of muscles. When you enter a pool hall anywhere, at anytime, you will meet good players who cannot deliver a draw stroke. Actually, very few players use this secret weapon. You will need command of the draw to reach the top. Let's get to the drawing board.

Set up straight to side pocket, snap the cue ball to the target, and allow the return of the cue ball. (See Fig. 6:1)

Fig. 6:1 Draw cue ball back into pocket A.



Let it happen. Loosen up. Let this shot take care of itself. Once you try too hard, you will experience the *dull thud syndrome*. The cue ball thuds to a stop and a wise guy says, "Nice draw." You must be free for the shot. Allow it to happen.

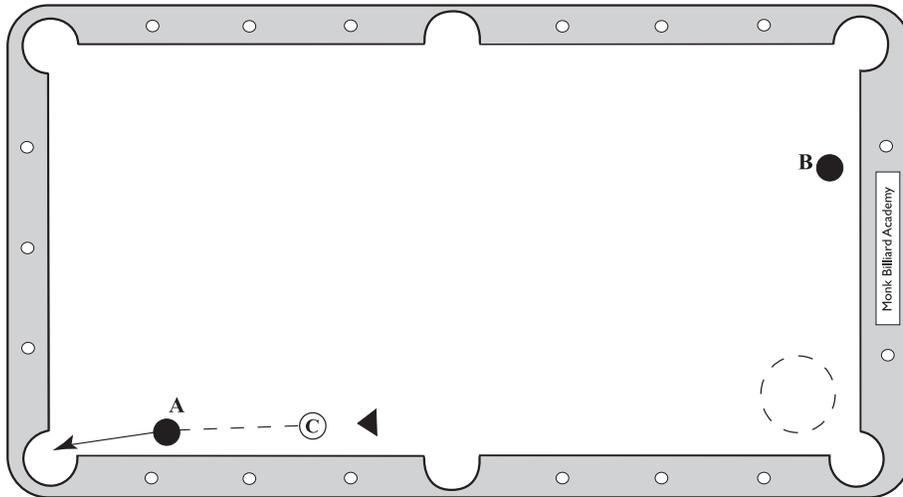
Affirmation #17

"There is no resistance to my hit and it sounds like a sweet click."

For the first set of exercises, I want you to step to the shot and shoot. Do not hang around. Sight and shoot. Shoot right away – before that brain starts interfering. Develop the instinct of a good draw stroke. Build your confidence until you can back the cue ball up on all draw shots. Then begin to develop the speed necessary for good position play. You can do this, but you’ll need to practice a lot. If you are not able to use the practice table, you’ll have to rely on your instincts. This is okay, as you always get good rolls. I draw shots perfectly with really no intellectual awareness of how I do it. I use instinct. Also, I expect good rolls and I get them. From now on your focus will be to expect good rolls.

Now set up ball A in the corner pocket and draw back for position on ball B. Use a nice, fluid stroke. (See Fig. 6:2)

Fig. 6:2 Shoot object ball A into pocket – draw back for position on ball B.



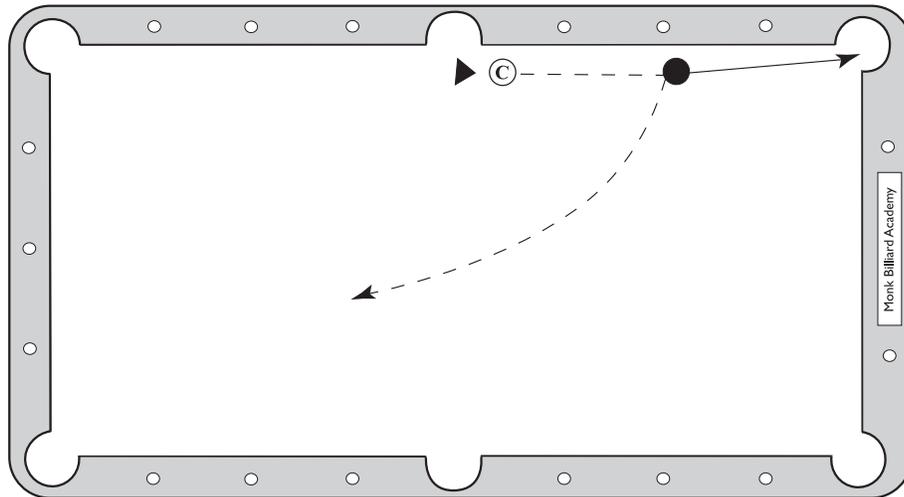
There are several types of draw strokes. Each has a distinct purpose in gaining favorable position. Set up the following shot and try these exercises.

Affirmation #18

“My body glides across the floor on the winds of winning.”

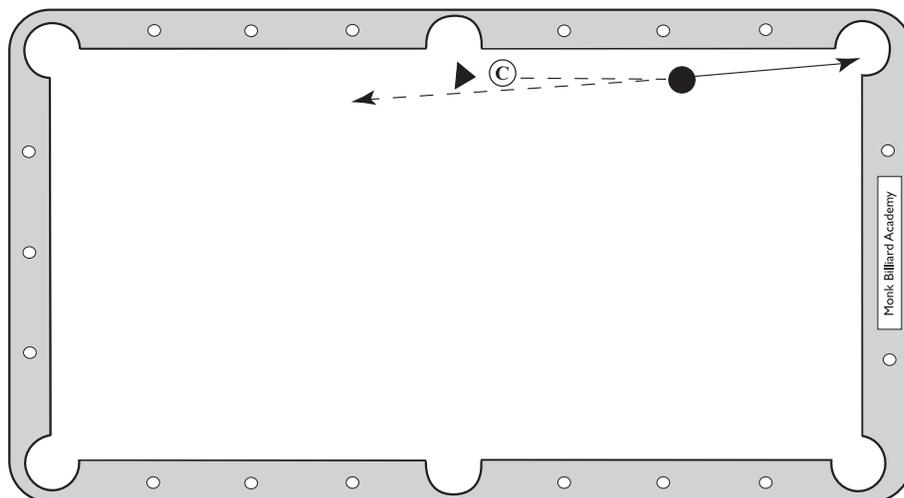
With the *follow through draw*, you draw the cue ball back with a long forceful follow through and achieve a “C” with the cue ball as it bends across to the other rail and back towards you. (See Fig. 6:3)

Fig. 6:3 A follow through draw accentuates the angle of the shot.



Now shoot the same shot with a *snap back draw stroke*. You will note the sharper angle and the whiplike motion as the cue ball comes directly back. (See Fig. 6:4)

Fig. 6:4 The snap back draw cuts down the angle of the shot.

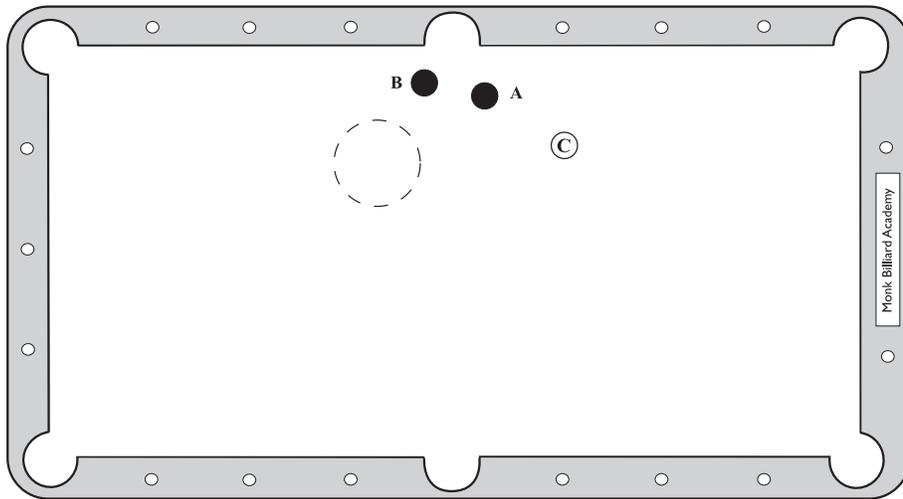


Use the snap back when you want to straighten out the angle. The lone follow through slides the cue ball away from the object ball and then brings it back towards you.

The snap back whips it straight back. You must master both draw strokes as you will need them to lay a good game of 8-ball.

Another form of the draw stroke is the *bounce back draw*. This stroke causes the cue ball to drift back a ball or two. This is a wonderful weapon, and it's easy to perform. Note the illustration and bounce on the cue ball off the object ball A for position on object ball B. (See Fig. 6:5)

Fig. 6:5 Shoot object ball A into side for position on object ball B. Use the bounce back shot (punch/draw).



The bounce back draw stroke is a very accurate draw stroke. When you need to bring the cue ball back one foot, you may visualize the bounce back to four inches and add enough spin to get you the remaining eight inches. This visualization process helps you to achieve the desired results. At The Monk Billiard Academy, we work very hard on this fine art.

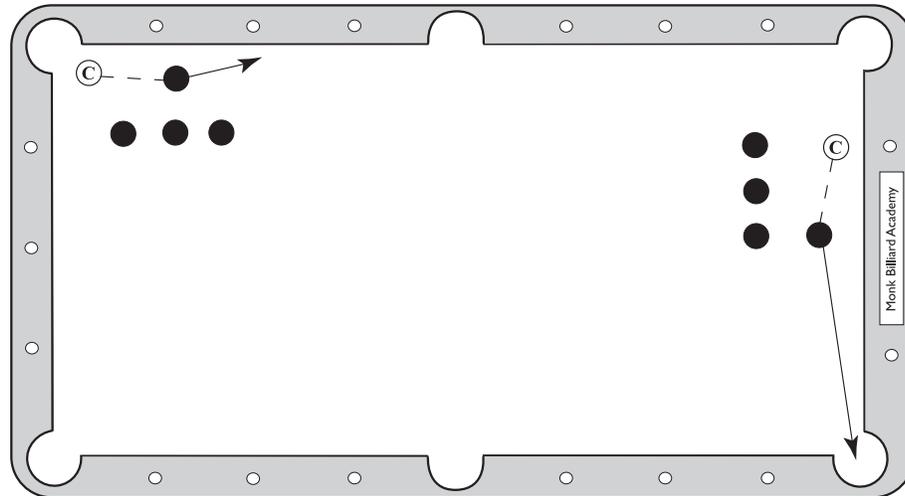
The *snip draw* is another handy weapon. This wonderful shot not only helps you return the cue ball, it also enables you to kill the cue ball. It causes an exact hit on the object ball. The object ball leaps away at a true angle when the snip draw stroke is involved. I use this when I want to cinch a ball. Just snip it into the pocket.

Affirmation #19

“My stance is always solid, balanced and ready to serve me.”

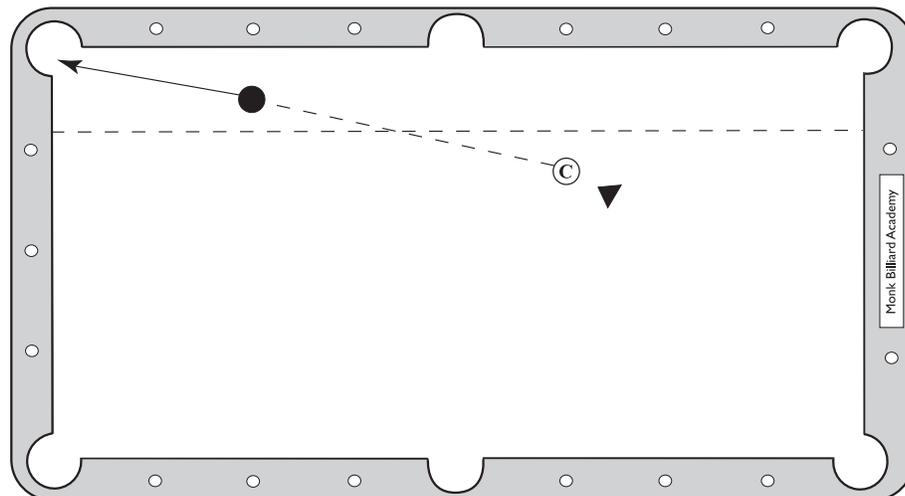
Here we are using a short, choppy stroke. Our cue tip position is low enough to enable us to shoot softly. The key to the snip stroke is to shoot softly. It's a snap . . . but soft. (See Fig. 6:6)

Fig. 6:6 Cut the object ball into corner pocket with a snip draw. Do not touch the other ball with the cue ball.



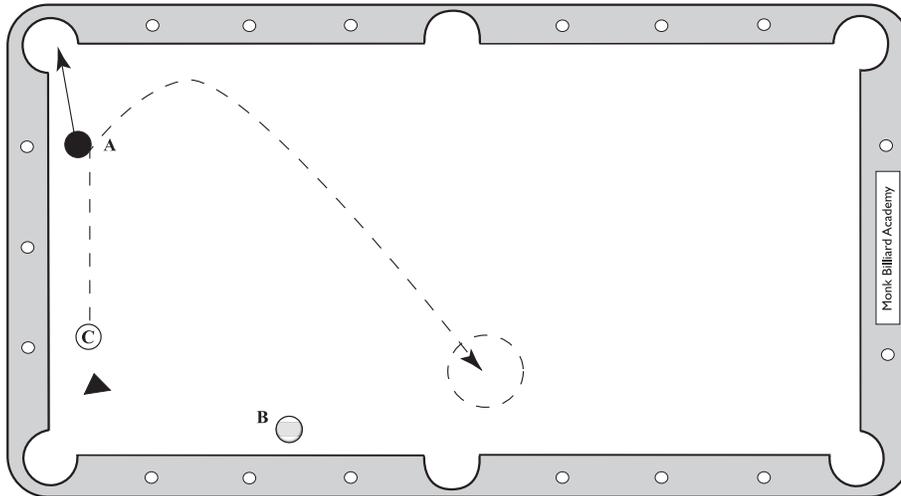
The draw stroke can be used to kill the cue ball when you want to remain down table or to stop the cue ball on a cut shot. (See Fig. 6:7)

Fig. 6:7 Kill the cue ball – keep the cue ball inside the dotted line.



Here is a necessary draw stroke shot. (See Fig. 6:8) There is no other way to get the desired position on the winning eight ball.

Fig. 6:8 Force follow to get position on object ball B.



Use one cue tip above center, one cue tip right and deliver a draw stroke. The ball will leap forward to the far rail and drift into the position zone. Force follow shots are really draw strokes. When you are able to embrace this concept, you will be well on your way to the finals.

Note the understanding we have of the use of muscles for each stroke. We cannot debate the extreme difference between a draw stroke and a follow stroke. They are like night and day – on opposite ends of the spectrum.

I have introduced you to this vital material. Take the time to master it. If you have any trouble, write me and I'll expand on it for you. Mastering all of these shots will significantly improve your position capabilities.

Affirmation #20

“My eyes are perfectly aligned to the shot.”

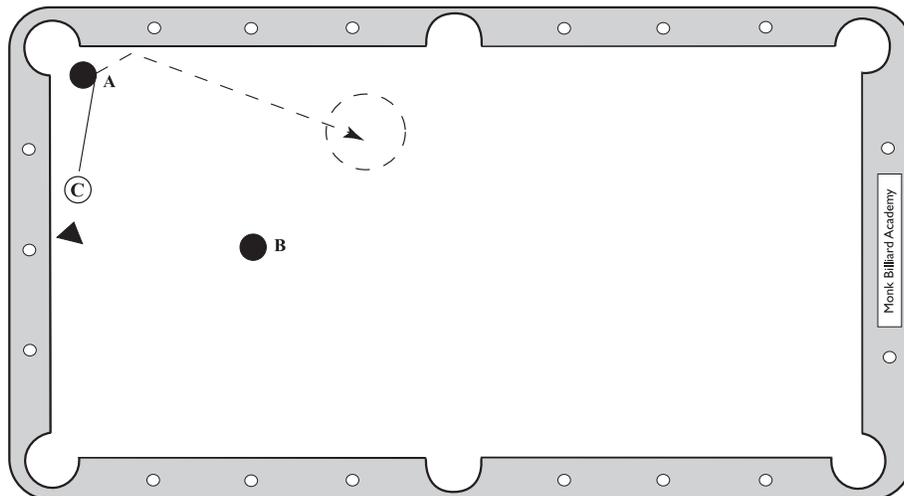
Chapter 7

The Spin Stroke

The fourth and final stroke is the spin stroke. With this stroke you simply flick the cue stick into the cue ball to impart spin. The purpose of this is to anticipate the spinning of the cue ball off the rail to desired position. You will gain an advantage with this weapon, and there are times when it is essential. Complete the following exercises.

In this shot, shoot object ball A into corner with a spin stroke for position on ball B. (See Fig. 7:1)

Fig. 7:1 Use a spin stroke for position on object ball B.



Use the spin shot for position on ball B. (See Fig. 7:2, next page)
Your target is to hit the long rail and spin into position.

Shoot object ball A with a spin stroke for position on object ball B. Bring cue ball back into center of table. Shoot object ball B with the same stroke and get position on ball A in the same spot. (See Fig. 7:3)

Fig. 7:2 Use the spin stroke – develop the track line to control the cue ball.

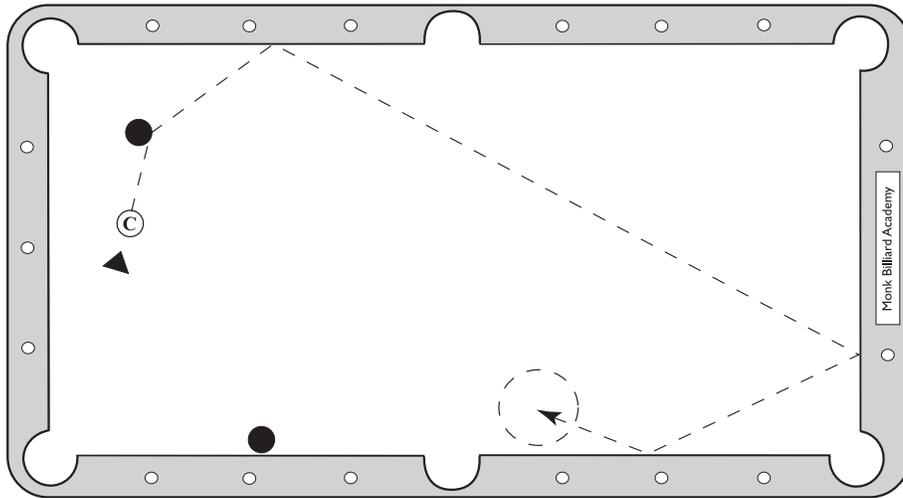
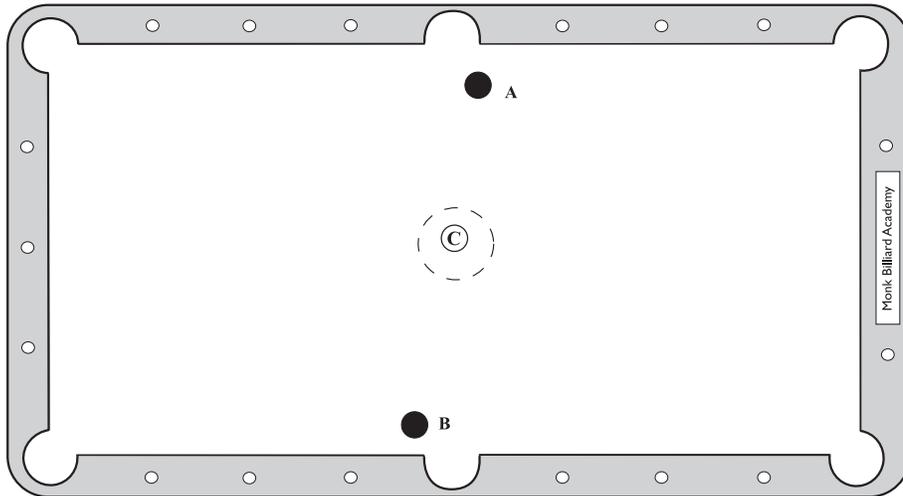


Fig. 7:3 Shoot object ball A with a spin stroke for position on object ball B. Get cue ball to center of table. Shoot object ball B and get position on object ball A in same spot,



The spin stroke is excellent for the kicking system.

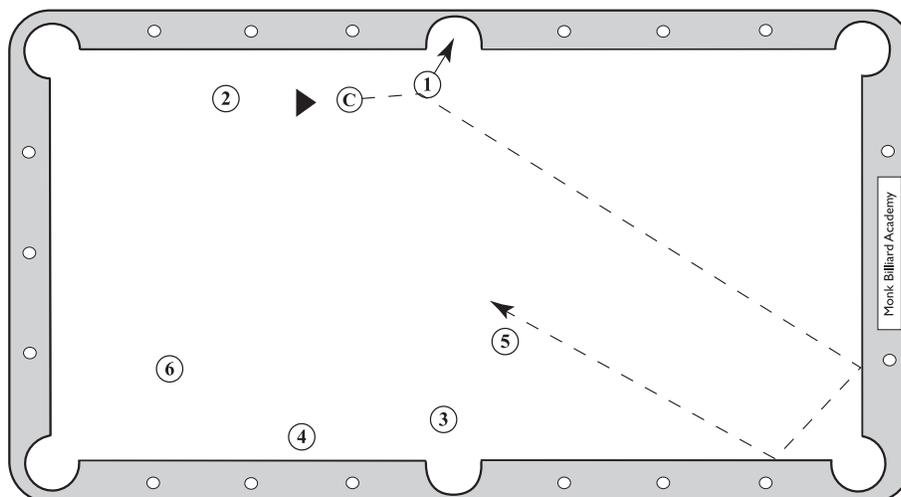
Chapter 8

Final Exam: The Four Strokes of Pool

Master the four strokes and you are well on your way to the advanced level. In order to reach the top, you will need to develop all the skills of the great players. Now you have the opportunity to do just this. Here is the way to become an advanced pool player. Your league average will reflect your new skills. Believe me, your game will improve if you take the time to master the four strokes of pocket billiards.

Here is your final exam on the four strokes of pool. Complete this pattern using first a punch stroke with one cue tip center right and pinch the corner coming back towards the two ball. (See Fig. 8:1)

Fig. 8:1

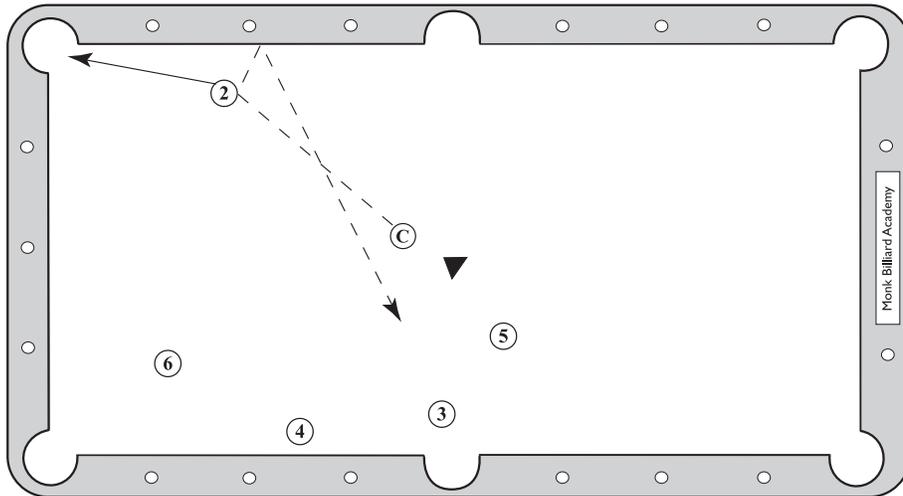


Affirmation #21

"I never shoot until I am ready."

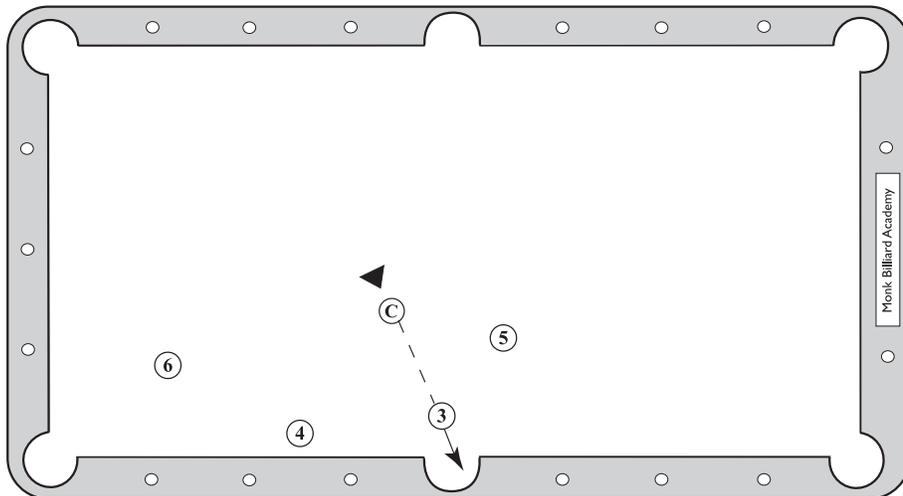
Next, punch the two and line up on the three. (See Fig. 8:2)

Fig. 8:2



Stop the cue ball and line up on the four. (See Fig. 8:3)

Fig. 8:3

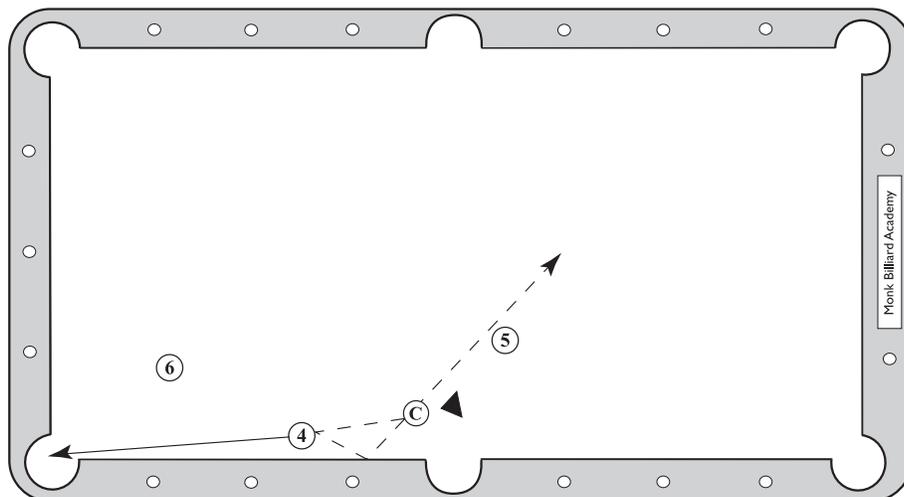


Affirmation #22

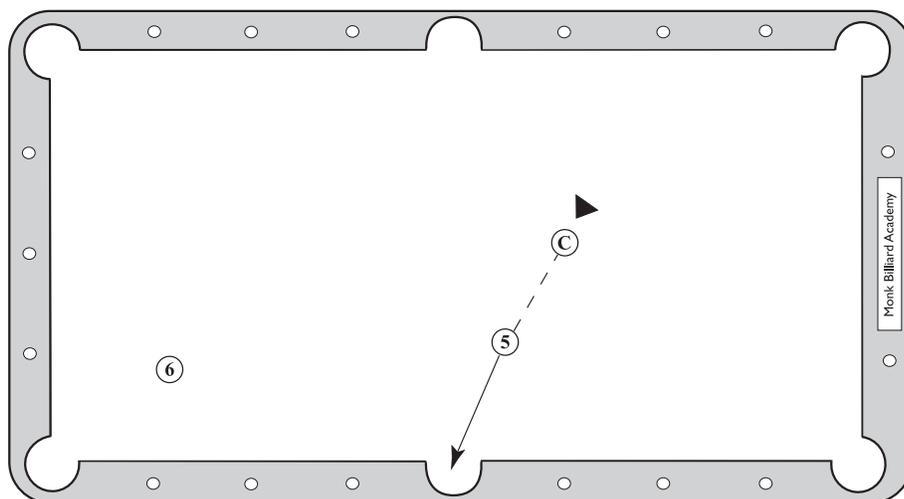
"I see the spot on the object ball and deliver the winning stroke."

Draw this one and end up on the other side of the side pocket for position on the five ball. (See Fig. 8:4)

Fig. 8:4



Use your famous stop shot for position on the six. This is a punching exercise. (See Fig. 8:5, below)



Just one word of caution – the one ball may be difficult. When you are using off center hit, you will deflect the cue ball. A right center hit will deflect the cue ball to the left. While this may be slight, it is enough to throw the shot off line. Remember, we are required to hit a very small target, and anything off center will result in a miss. You must learn to adjust your aim to compensate for deflection.

Affirmation #23

“The right knowledge comes to me at all times.”

Chapter 9

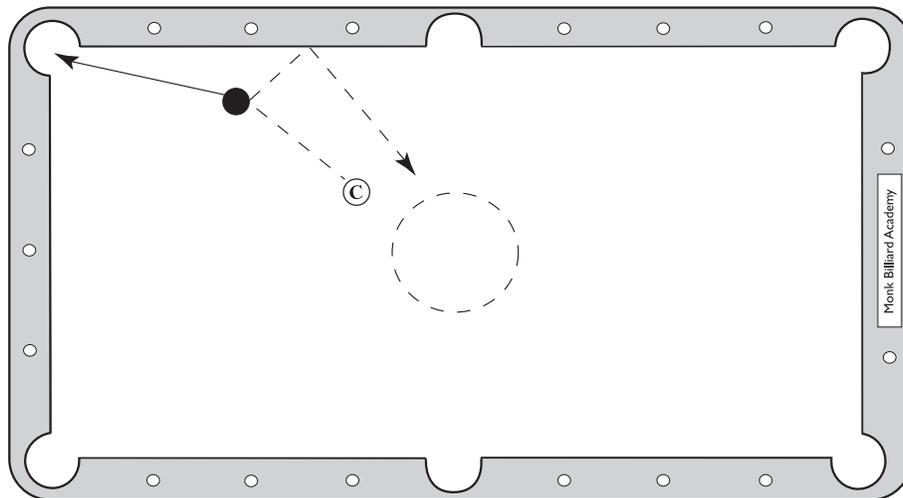
Beware of Deflection

According to Jim Rempe, the pros miss more shots because of deflection than for any other reason. When you shoot one cue tip right of center, the cue ball will deflect to the left. If you don't compensate for this deflection, you will miss the shot. When you are using an off center hit, you'll have to adjust your aim. I've watched players aim at a shot and I know they have no chance to make the shot. They are aiming too far left. Yet when they deliver the stroke, the object ball goes into the pocket. This *aiming to miss* was necessary to compensate for deflection from an off center hit. With this in mind, it seems well worth our while to spend time discussing deflection.

The following illustration is an example of a deflection shot. Shoot the object ball into the corner pocket with one cue tip low right and bring the cue ball back to the center of the table. (See Fig. 9:1)

Fig. 9:1

This series of shots will do wonders for your game. Stay with this for the rest of your career.



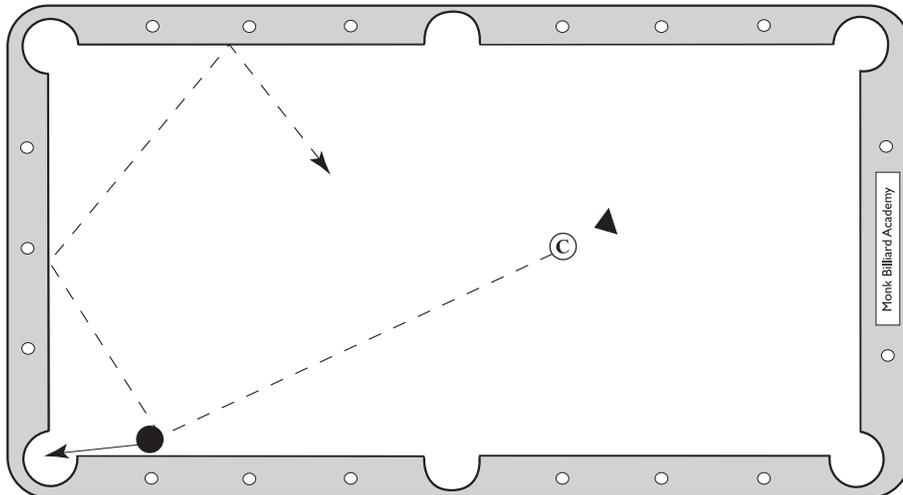
Affirmation #24

"I shoot each shot with 100% conviction that it is the right one."

This will help your stroke immensely. I use this each time I enter my practice session. There is something about this shot that helps me hit other balls better. Stay with it until you have mastered it. If you have any problem with deflection, see your house pro. The force follow stroke with running english includes a degree of deflection, and you will have to compensate for this in your aiming.

Here is an example of deflection using force follow. Shoot the object ball into corner with high right running english and bring the cue ball back to your end of the table. You will find yourself aiming very thick on the object ball in order to make this shot. (See Fig. 9:2)

Fig. 9:2 *This shot comes up many times.*

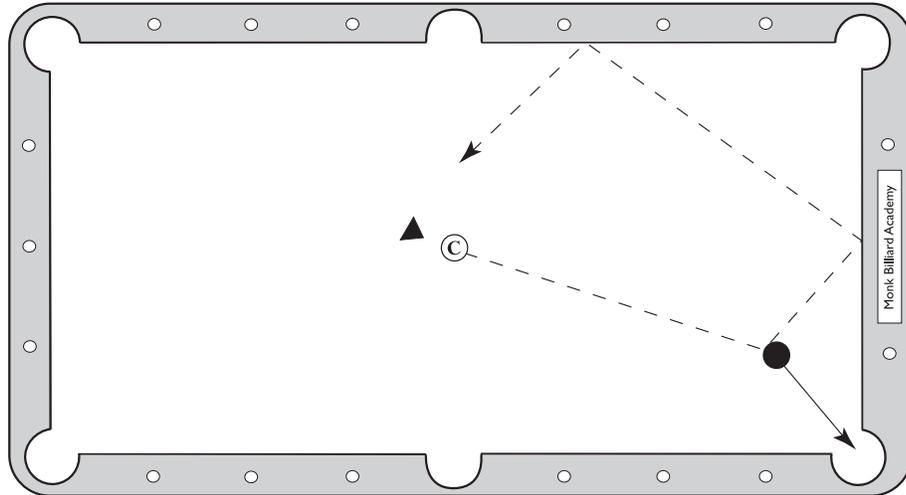


Here is another example of deflection. (See Fig. 9:3) Use just a little below center with one cue tip left and bring the cue ball to the center of the table. You will find that you are actually aiming to miss the shot. However, the deflection brings the cue ball in line and you succeed with the shot.

Affirmation #25

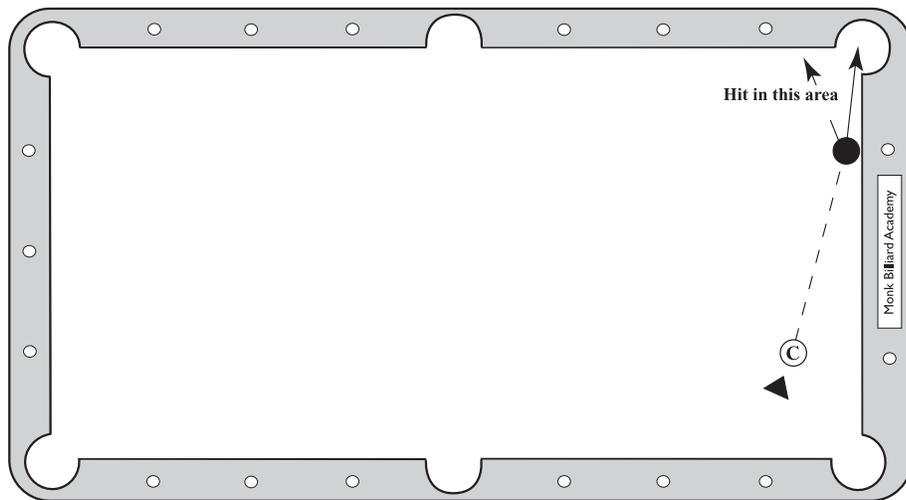
"I have a perfect follow through on all shots."

Fig. 9:3



One more deflection shot. This ball needs to be pocketed with a high left hit on the cue ball. You will want the cue ball to contact the rail below the number one diamond. You will need a pure follow stroke on this shot. (See Fig. 9:4)

Fig. 9:4

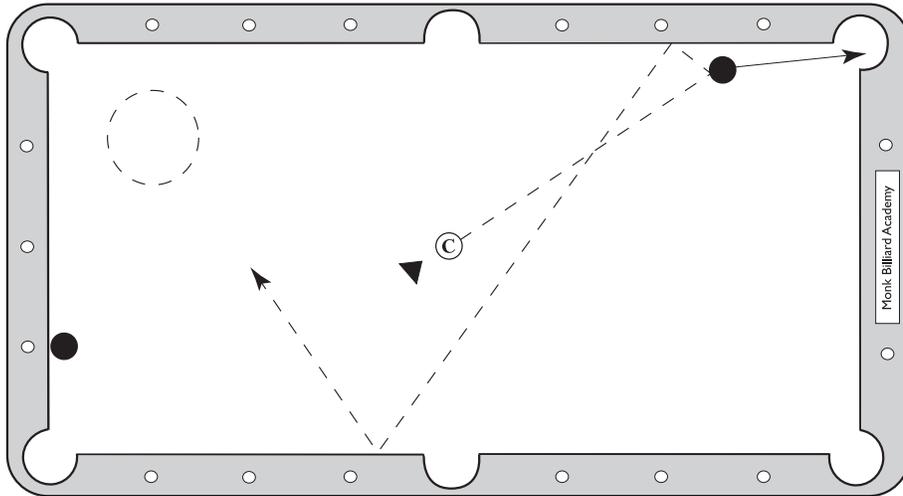


You must understand the subtle difference between the strokes. If you use a punch stroke, you will not stay under the number one diamond. Here you will understand how the track line is affected by your selection of the stroke. Master each of the illustrations and see your game develop.

This shot has serious deflection built in. Snap the cue ball with low left english and bring it back two rails as indicated. You must be skilled at these two rail shots.

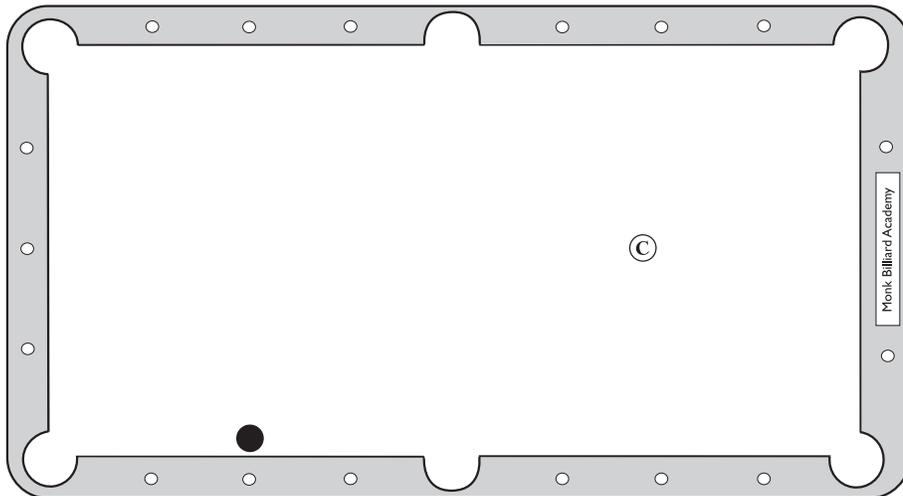
(See Fig. 9:5)

Fig. 9:5 You need a snap back draw stroke here. Sometimes it is harder to pocket the object ball with this stroke. But stay with it as it comes up many times.



Likewise with the following shot into the corner pocket. You will be using right center english follow stroke and will have to aim thick to compensate for the deflection. (See Fig. 9:6)

Fig. 9:6



How much should you adjust for deflection? I don't know. This is completely instinctual. Before I understood the evils of deflection I handled this problem automatically. Now that I know too much, I need to make a conscious adjustment – and sometimes it is not always right. I adjust, and the cue ball does not deflect. I don't adjust, and the cue ball deflects. Just as Jim Rempe said, “We miss more shots because of deflection than for any other reason.”

Deflection is relative. It depends upon how much right or left you will be using. It depends on how hard you hit it. It depends on your choice of stroke and it depends on how much chalk is on the tip. It depends on your cue. It depends on your mood. It depends on what you mate said to you three nights before the shot.

Certain shots will deflect the cue ball more than others. On power shots you must compensate for the deflection, while a soft stroke throws the object ball. What a mess! When you use right-hand english, you will spin the object ball to the left. This is called *throw*. There is a difference between throw and deflection. Sometimes we will have to compensate for deflection by aiming full. At the same time we need to compensate for throw by aiming thin. All on the same shot!

I wish I didn't have to write this chapter. In fact, the book was at the publisher's when I added this. I felt guilty. My associates said, “You have to tell them about deflection. You can't just let them flounder.” So here it is. I've done my duty. Deflection is relative to many variables and has throw dynamics built into the shot. The best way to overcome this obstacle is to use as little english as possible. Practice, practice, practice. The more you shoot, the more you'll discover about your own stroke and deflection.

Affirmation #26

“I stay to watch the object ball disappear into the pocket.”

Chapter 10

How To Be A True Champion

You are well on your way to developing a consistent stroke. The ground work has been laid for a great game. You will win more games with this skill than with any other. During the season in your league, remember how many times a punch stroke has taken you to favorable position, and how many times it has put you in the win column. Take note of the times your selection of a particular stroke has saved the day for you. You are well on your way to becoming a great league player.

The accumulation of a skill is often enhanced by our willingness to share our experience with others. Work with your friends. Order this book today for thirty of your closest friends. I will sign them from you and me. While you work on this valuable material together, you will grow and experience the real joy of competition.

The joy of competition is often missed by insecure players. When I enter a tournament I do not concern myself with whom I will be playing. It does not matter, I have no control over it anyway. As I'm introduced to my opponent, I thank him for being there. I explain how much I appreciate this opportunity to play pool with another who loves the game as much as I do. Usually my opponent thinks I'm crazy. Pool players seem to think we should hate our opponents and drive them into the sea. I don't see it that way. Without our opponent we have no one to play. We should appreciate all his efforts to get where he is, and be glad his there. Win or lose, this is a good match. I treat my opponent with respect. I wish him good luck and may all the skill he has worked on come to the front and serve him well. I reassure him that I will not interfere with his right to execute the shot, and I ask for the same courtesy. I am the silent type who likes to go within. I seek serenity and peace and enjoy this feeling – win, lose or draw. I do not like to be disturbed by hostility. Performance is my right. With my entry fee paid, I insist on that right.

Affirmation #27

"I do not get ahead of myself."

One of the great philosophers, Jesus once said, “Pray for your enemies.” He was not necessarily telling you to improve your enemy’s lot through prayer and meditation. He was guiding you toward improving *your own* lot. Don’t let your enemy do damage to your peace of mind. Once I prayed that my enemy would lose some weight so he wouldn’t look so ridiculous, and maybe someone would like him other than his mother. This calmed me down long enough to win the game. Jesus went on to say, “Bless those who spitefully use you.” An enemy played in one of my favorite tournaments. I did not want to lose to this player. The ribbing was too painful. I practiced hard and soon he was not threat. Little did he know that it was he who improved my game. He gave me the desire to improve and the willingness to practice. Still, a loss will come to one of these players. Smile and be glad you are who your are. A loss does not make a person.

I lost to a player who was beneath my skill level. He talked, badgered and harassed me through the entire match and I did not play well. In fact I was embarrassed by my performance. I choked, missed key balls, and could not finish my runouts. I lost eleven to five. And to my own mortification, he videotaped the entire fiasco and showed all his friends. Remember, a match does not make a man. You are not the match. I knew who I was, and the experience did not rattle me. In fact, many people saw through the match and lost respect for him. I gained friends and he made enemies. Always be true to yourself and you will not be hurt by losing. You will gain.

Pool is like coming to the plate in the majors. You will lose more tournaments than you will ever win. A professional baseball player will be out seventy percent of the time. Still, he performs with dignity each

Affirmation #28

“I shoot one shot at a time.”

time at the plate. Knowing full well he will probably lose to the pitcher, he walks to the plate with confidence. When you enter a tournament, do so with dignity. Turn in the performance you turn in and let it be just that.

If your team is facing a particularly tough team, go there with the confidence you are going to turn in your best performance and let it be. There are three guaranteed benefits of a league match, and this should be your focus. First, you will spend time with your fellow teammates, and fellowship builds memories. Second, you will perform. Third, you will learn something about this game we all love.

This is your heritage for joining the league. Long after the dust settles on the cloth, the camaraderie of team play lingers in our minds. The faces of our fellow teammates comfort us with the knowledge we have been with friends, and it has been good.

Spend some time putting your team together. Join with those of like purpose and make league night your night out. The bonds this game creates are wonderful. I've made friends all across this country because we have something in common. I can remember shots my teammates made ten years ago to win a match. The good times become a part of our smile. Go for the gold. You will win it sooner or later. Do not let the losses get you down. Remember the three promises of pocket billiards – you will find fellowship, you will perform, and you will learn something every time out. This experience shapes your character. Come full circle to the championship. A champion does not always take first place. The match does not make a man.

Affirmation #29

"I am an integral part of the shot at hand."

I remember one time I was in a tournament and had some time between matches, so I challenged the money table. They were playing for ten dollars a game and I thought it would be a nice experience. After all, I wasn't going to lose every game. As we were playing, the ten dollar bill was going back and forth so no one was getting hurt. Then this handsome, well dressed fellow headed towards our table. My opponent cautions, "Watch out! This guy is a champion." Much to my dismay, he put his money up and then everyone quit. I ended up face to face with this champion. So I decided if I lost fifty dollars it could be considered an investment in lessons.

We played for over an hour and I won. What made this gentleman a champion was his manners. True, he could play very well and I considered it my best outing to come out on top. But even in losing, he was a champion. This is what I strive for. To be a champion – win or lose. You are a champion when you are a gentleman and a good sport. If you can be graceful in a tough loss, you will be considered a champion. The respect of our peers is worth as much as the championship. There are those who win and are not respected. While those who perform with good manners and grace are respected for both their ability and their attitude. Strive for this championship quality. Especially in the league where your actions set an example for the up and coming player. You are a champion.

Affirmation #30

"I enjoy my performance and want to be a part of all shots."

Affirmation #31

"I am part of the set up."

Chapter 11

What Should I Practice?

Everyone has asked at one time or another, “What should I practice?” So I worked to find the answer to this question. Follow these practice sessions, and you will see dramatic improvement.

I envy you. I wish I had these exercise programs while was early in my journey. Instead, I plodded along in the dark, wondering what to do. Finally, as a matter of attrition, I stumbled on the right approach to skill development.

I spent four years in my basement. My friends called it *the monastery*. For me it was a seminar of studying. I worked nine hours every day – seven days a week. There was not one day during that four-year span that I did not hit balls. I was alone with no direction. I lived in the northern wilderness of upper Michigan. There were no pool halls, no books, no tapes, no magazines. I was on my own. However, I do not regret this. I discovered some very exciting principles about this game during that time. I don’t think I could have stumbled upon these truths any other way.

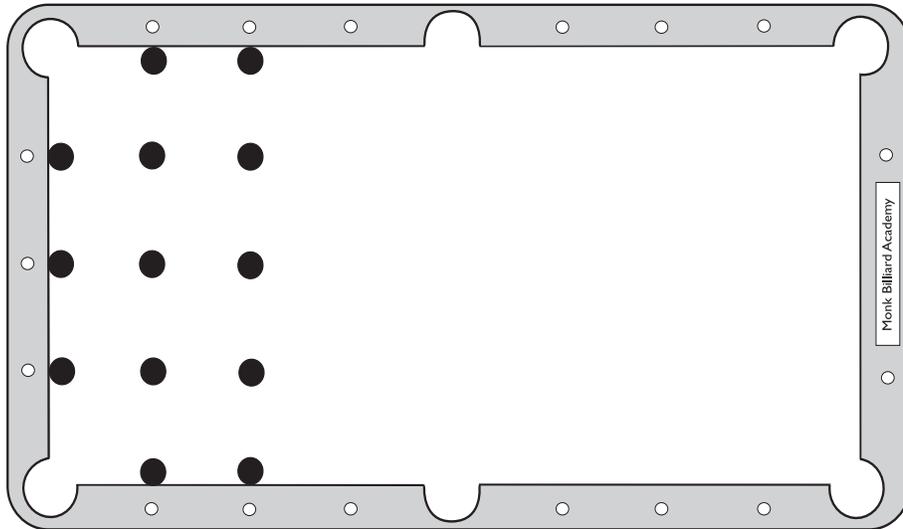
So to answer the question, “What do I practice?”, I will share with you some great sessions guaranteed to help you. First of all understand that you must have the strokes to achieve greatness in this game. You must be able to deliver the proper stroke for each shot. I missed my hundred-ball run many times because I used the wrong stroke on one shot. This was how I designed the following exercises. They will help you master the almighty – the stroke.

Affirmation #32

“I am part of the delivery of the cue.”

The first one is *the nitro*. Here we have thirteen balls lined up on the diamonds. (See Fig. 11:1) Each ball is filled with nitroglycerin. You need to avoid hitting any of them with the cue ball, except to pocket the object ball. If you pocket the object ball and the cue ball hits another ball, you will explode like an overfed puppy.

Fig. 11:1 *Balls on the rails should be frozen.*



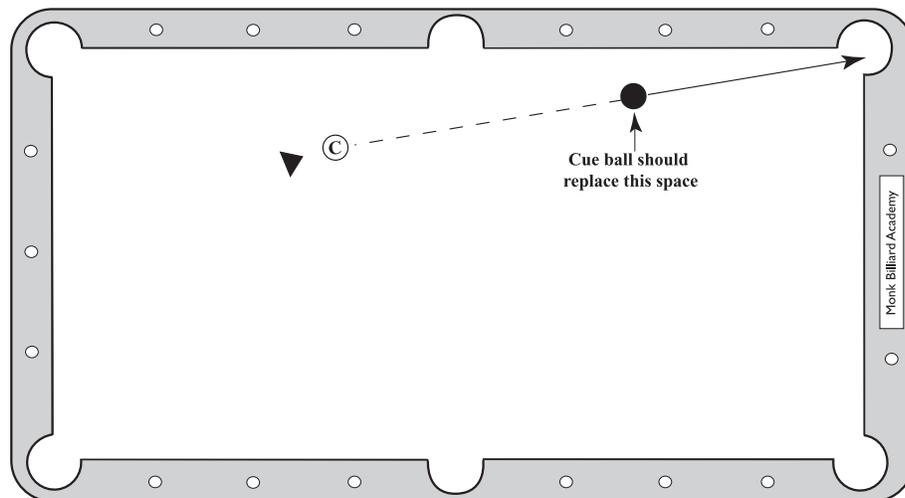
In this session you will be frequently using a soft punch stroke and moving the cue ball to a precise location. Shoot them in any order, but no banks or combinations. My record is four racks in a row. I've completed two racks many times but then got lazy on the next one. That's all it takes. You must pay attention to what you are doing and develop the skill necessary to succeed with this exercise. Write me a note when you break my record of four racks in a row, and I will go back to work.

Affirmation #33

"I am part of the end of the shot."

The next exercise is vital. You must do this over and over during all your pocket billiards journey. It is called *the stun*. Shoot the object ball in the corner pocket and cause the cue ball to roll over and take its place. (See Fig. 11:2) I can't emphasize the importance of this session. You should shoot this twenty times every day. Master the stun. It is a punch with a little finesse. Use the stun on your next 9-ball break and you'll be amazed with the results.

Fig. 11:2



Once you master the stun, you are ready for The Monk's famous *stick and stun* exercise. Place a ball on the rail next to diamond number two. Shoot a stick shot and allow the cue ball to bounce off the rail a couple of inches. Then set up the cue ball with an angle and shoot the ball with a stun stroke. Allow the object ball to settle next to the rail again. Use a stick shot bringing the next object ball off the rail. Stun the next to the rail. Stick it off the rail and stun back to the rail. This will take you along the road to pooldom come faster than any other exercise. Learn to shoot these shots softly.

In *punch out the rack* you have all the balls scattered around the table. Nothing near or on the rail. Like the nitro exercise, the rails are filled with nitro. You cannot allow the cue ball to touch a rail. If you do, the explosion will be heard all the way to The Monk Billiard Academy. My record is eight six balls in a row without touching a rail. I am striving for a hundred ball run. When you break my record, write to me and I'll enter you in The Monk Book of World Records.

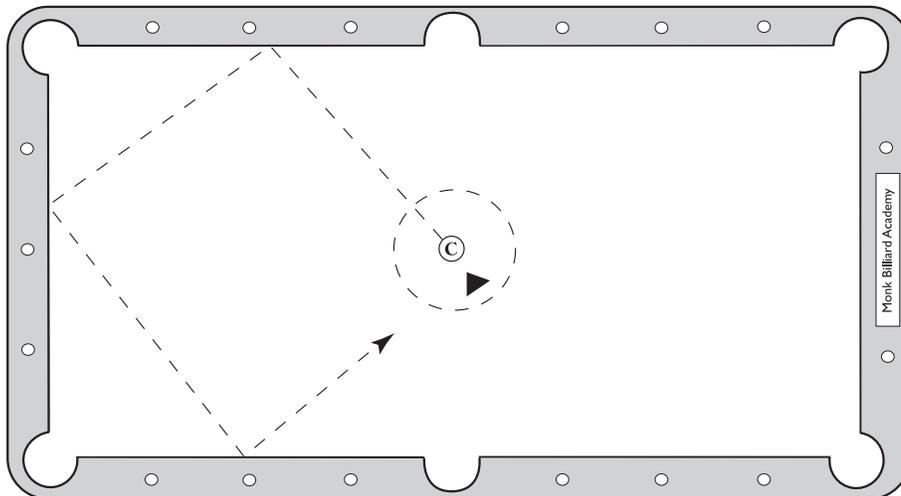
In the next exercise – running sevens – you run seven balls and finish with the eight ball. This is easy when you have mastered the four strokes of pocket billiards. The object of this session is to be prepared to run out should your opponent run off all his balls and miss or get hooked on the eight ball.

I like to think that if my opponent does not run out, he will lose. I have trained myself for this possibility. Many time I will allow my opponent to go first on a tough rack of eight ball. Remember, a break and run is not common.

Train to handle running sevens. Raise your average to about 80%. A good player will break and run around 30% of the time. If you are the same kind of shooter, you will want your opponent to take the 30% route. I've won many 8-ball tournaments using this principle. Never attempt to run a tough rack of eight balls.

Another must-do exercise is the 2-7-2. In this exercise, you place the cue ball in the center of the table and shoot through the number two diamond on the long rail. The cue ball will travel to the number seven diamond, then to the number two diamond and return to the center of the table. (See Fig. 11:3)

Fig. 11:3



Affirmation #34

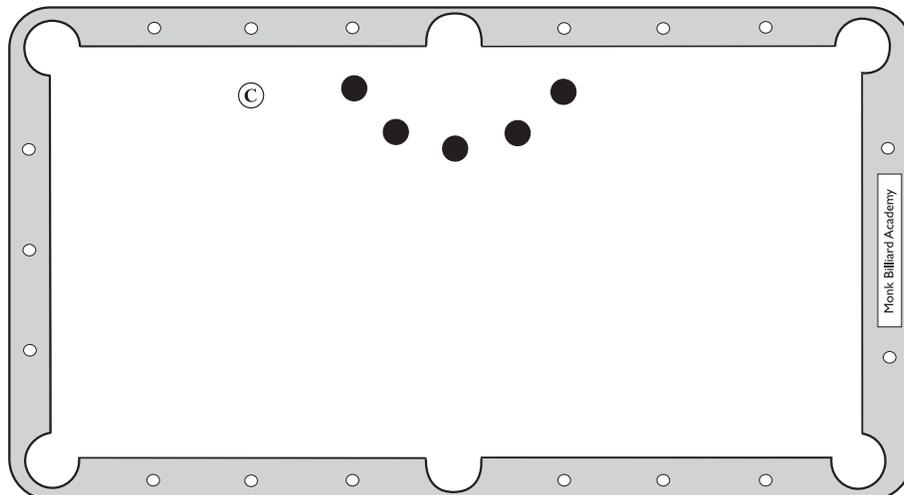
"I am free from expectations."

Use one-half cue tip inside to achieve running english. Always use running english when kicking balls. Your track line will not be affected by the rail. The running english will enable the cue ball to roll off the rail in its truest form.

To develop my stroke I've used the 2-7-2 over two hundred thousand times! I owe my cue ball speed to this exercise. In the center of my table I have a circle about the size of a one-pound can of coffee. My object is to send the cue ball on a 2-7-2 path and end up in the circle. I cannot over emphasize the value of this exercise. My record is eleven into the center of the circle. Write to me when you surpass that record and I'll work harder.

Now place five balls in a semicircle around the side pocket. (See Fig. 11:4) Use your best punch stroke and shoot the first ball setting up for the next until you have worked your way around the circle of balls. This illustrates the slide shot. You must have possession of this skill. To be able to slide the cue ball using a punch stroke will help you immensely.

Fig. 11:4

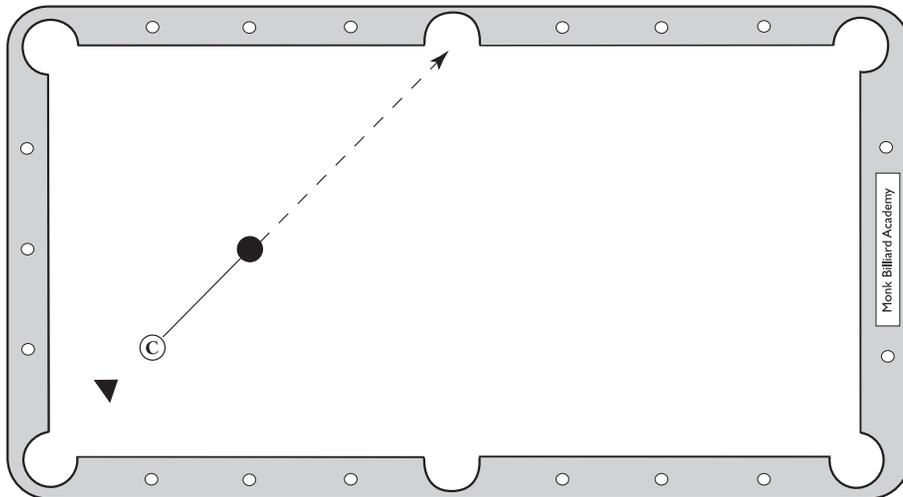


Affirmation #35

"I am free to shoot each shot."

Exercise One: Side pocket slam.

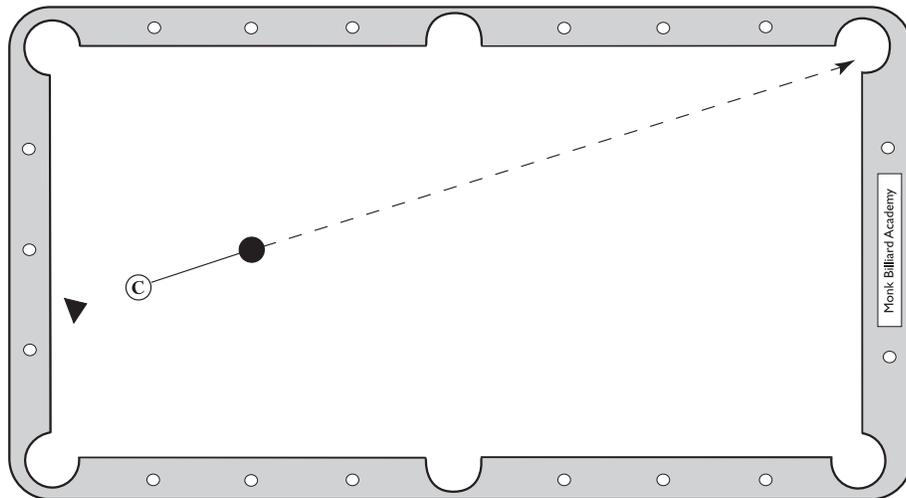
Place an object ball on the spot. Line up your cue ball for a straight in shot in the side pocket. Shoot the object ball and draw back. Leave the cue ball right where it ends up. Replace the object ball and see how far you can go. You are not allowed to touch the cue ball. This is a great exercise in cue ball control. You will find yourself going three rails to regain position on the next shot. You will be amazed by how many shots you can force into the side pocket when you are left with no choice. I want you to be able to shoot six consecutive object balls into the side pocket. That is the standard we have set for ourselves.



Exercise Two: Corner pocket heaven.

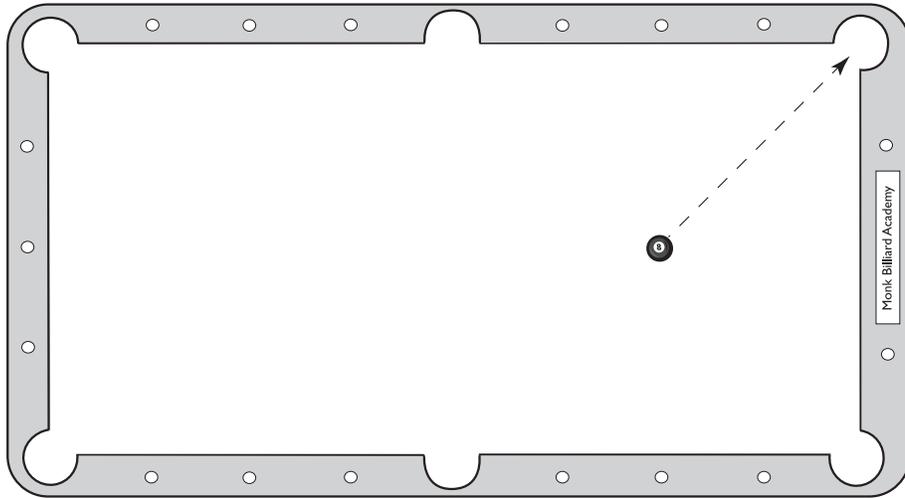
Place an object ball on the spot. Line up your cue ball for a straight in shot down in the corner pocket. Shoot the object ball and draw back and replace the object ball. Shoot again and try to reach six in a row with this exercise. You will improve your cue ball control and develop some great eight ball skills with this exercise.

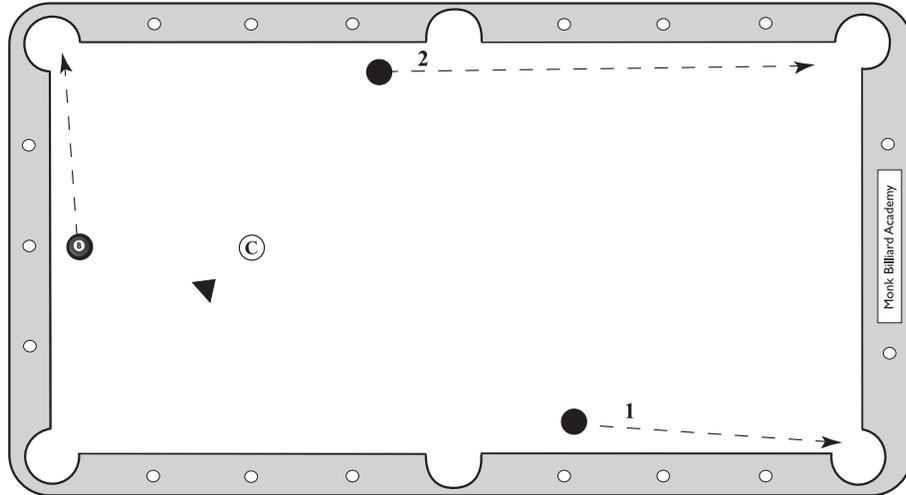
In the game of eight ball we need the ability to shoot balls back into the corner pocket. This allows us to move around in clusters and open up the rack. In most racks, you will face a shot like this. Make sure you master the down table corner pocket shot and you will be the master.



Exercise Three: Six ball one pocket.

Place the eight ball on the spot. Throw six balls on the table. Take ball in hand and shoot the first ball, setting up for a corner pocket shot on the eight ball. After you pocket the eight ball, reset it on the spot. Now you need to shoot another ball and set up for a corner pocket shot on the eight ball. After you pocket the eight ball, reset it on the spot. Pick out another shot and play position for the eight ball in the corner pocket. Pocket the eight ball and reset it on the spot. Try to run off the six balls, getting position on the eight ball for the same corner pocket each time. You can compete with this game. Find an opponent and see who can make the most eight balls. Add up your score. You will be amazed by how much this helps your game. This is a wonderful exercise. You will be building the skills of a true champion.

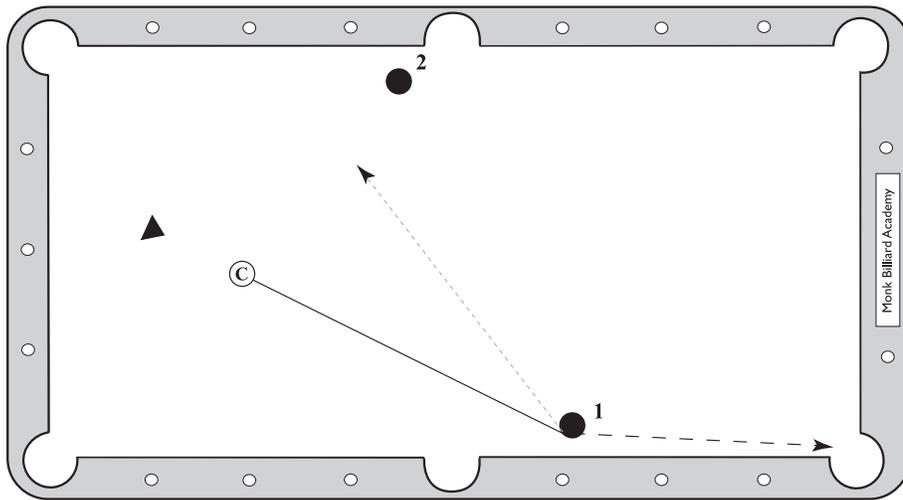




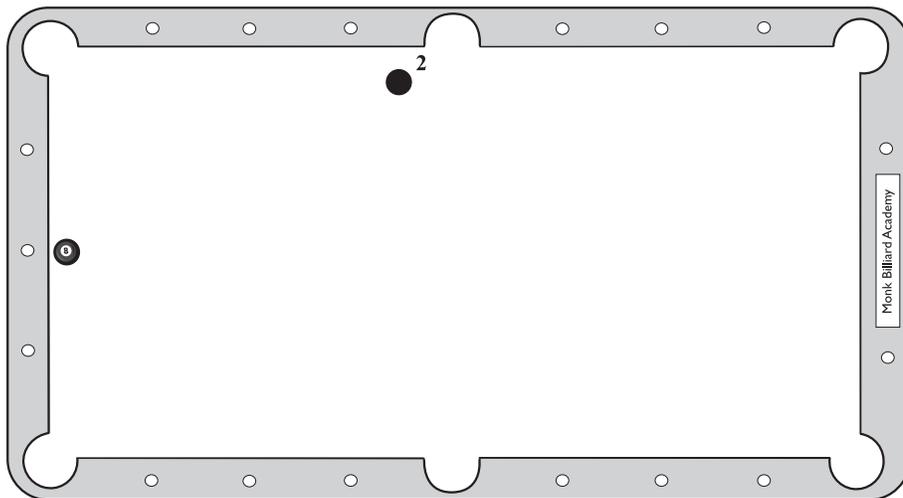
Exercise Four

Shoot this pattern off the table. In the game of 8-ball you must be able to use all six pockets. With the first shot, you are building a fine stroke. You are controlling the cue ball with all your skills. The second shot calls for the same high degree of excellence. You must adjust as you are playing position for the tough eight ball. With this exercise, you will improve your game and raise your winning average.

Shot on one ball. Soft, solid punch stroke brings the cue ball to the desired position on the two ball.



Shot on two ball. Here you may need to adjust to all kinds of shots, depending on where your first shot ended up. Set up for a nice, easy shot on the eight ball.

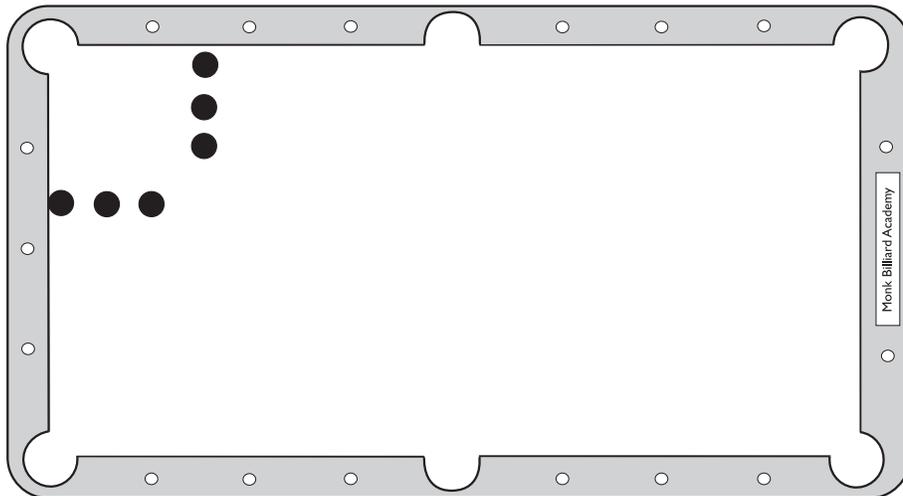


You will learn to make some tough shots with this exercise. Be strong. Don't give up on any shot. Give it your best. What you focus on is what you strengthen. If you try hard, you set the standard for how you play this game. If you give up, you set the same standard. Focus, and see how well you can do.

You will find many more exercises in my training manual called The Lesson. I wanted to include these here, as they will help you with the game of eight ball. When you master the little things, you become the master.

Another great exercise is to place six balls as illustrated and simply shoot them into the corner pocket. This is a great workout. (See Fig. 11:5)

Fig. 11:5



Complete all of these patterns and you will be ready for the finals. When you win the top shooter award, I'll be there in spirit. Mention me in your victory speech.

Chapter 12

Perfect Position

Getting to the center of the table is all the position you need to know. During my exile in Tibet, down in my cave, I searched for perfect position. I chased balls around the table. I played to set up the cue ball exactly near my next object ball.

There is nothing wrong with this. Still, it is difficult to master because you are always putting the cue ball in a different spot. Good habits are like classical conditioning. Our position play should be automatic – always going to the same point.

My kind of play made that impossible. After many years of precision, I learned an elementary lesson. If you can reach the center of the table, you'll have another shot. Especially in 8-ball. So I invented the *center of the table* exercise. This one exercise is worth the price of lessons. Master it and your winning average will soar.

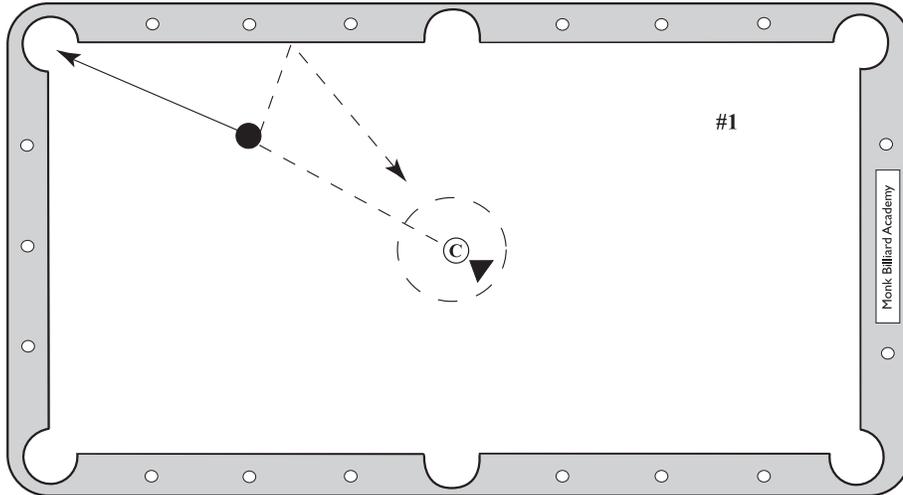
When we become indecisive and unsure, we are about to lose our turn at the table. We just don't know what is best for our next shot. When this happens, ask yourself, "What would happen if I brought the cue ball to the center of the table?" Since you are conditioned to do this, it will be easy. A sense of relief will come to you, and you will hit the winning shot.

Affirmation #36

"I make my decision, lean into my stance, sight down the shaft, and deliver the stroke."

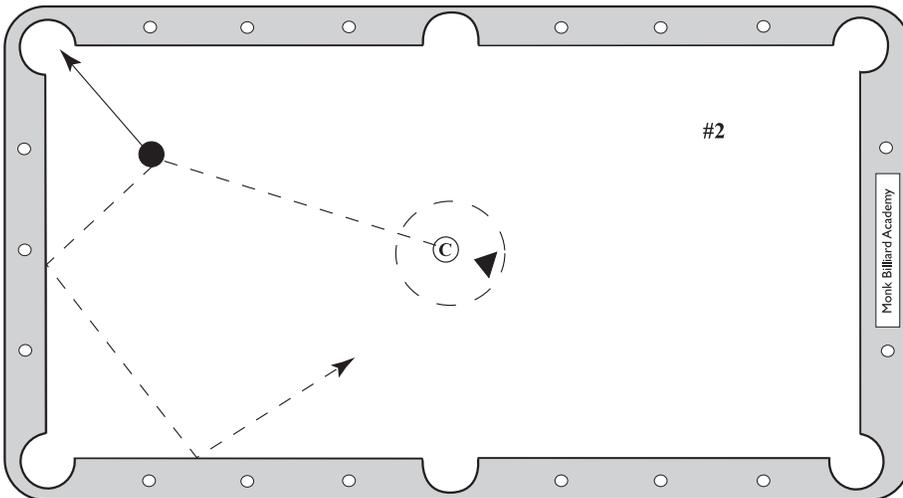
You are an expert at the 2-7-2 exercise and often can bring the cue ball to the center of the table with this stroke. This next exercise is the 2-7-2+5 exercise. First send the cue ball around the table in a 2-7-2 path. Then take a ball and place it as illustrated. Use a punch stroke to bring the cue ball to the rail and back to the center of the table. (See Fig. 12:1)

Fig. 12:1



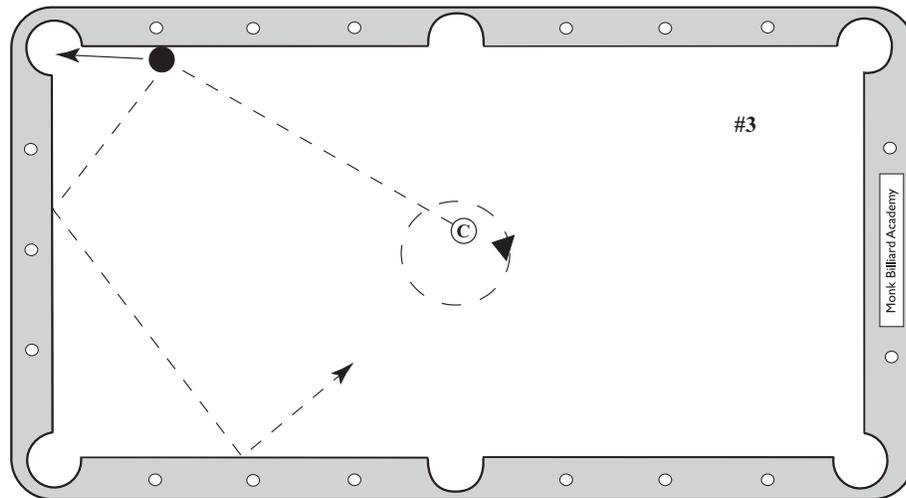
Then shoot another 2-7-2 shot. Take shot number two and place it as illustrated. (See Fig. 12:2) Using a punch stroke and a millimeter of running english, go through the seven and two diamonds and back to the center of the table.

Fig. 12:2



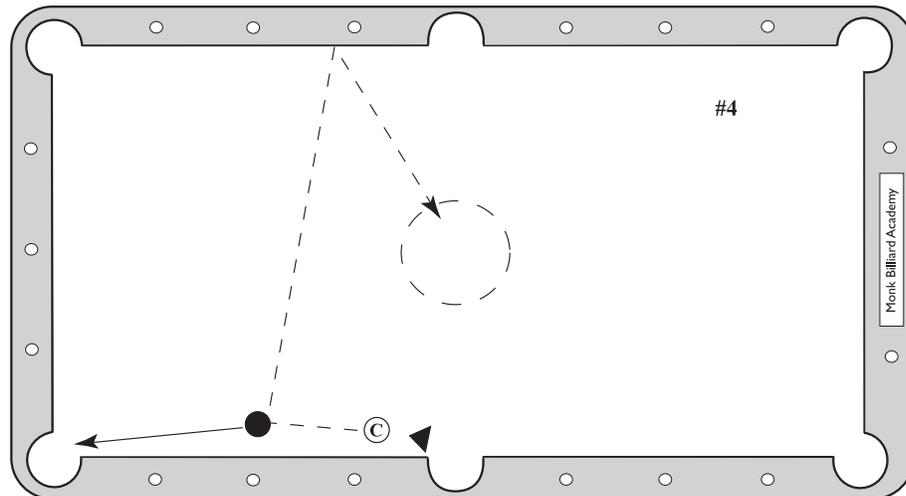
Shoot another 2-7-2. The third shot is the most fun. Place an object ball as illustrated and use inside running english to bring the cue ball along its designated path to the center of the table. (See Fig. 12:3)

Fig. 12:3



In the fourth shot, you will use a punch stroke and a little right-hand english. Send the cue ball to the opposite rail and back to the center of the table. (See Fig. 12:4)

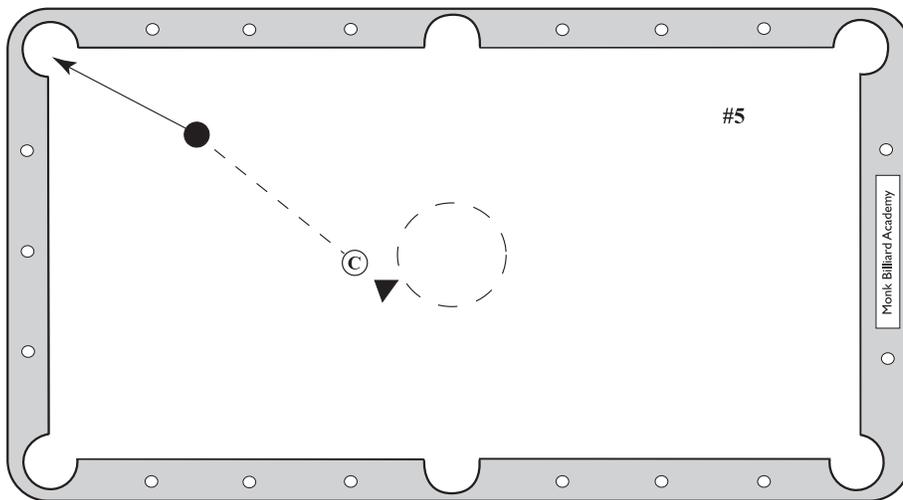
Fig. 12:4



Do not use a draw stroke here. Punch the cue ball directly to the rail, and the natural spin will take it to our target area.

The fifth shot is just a simple draw shot. Set the cue ball with a slight angle and bring it back to the center of the table.

Fig. 12:5



Imprint this exercise in your mind and see how many times you are faced with the prospects of getting to the center of the table from all different places. You will have the skills to achieve this once you master the 2-7-2+5. This is the greatest practice tool known in the world of pocket billiards. You will thank me many times once you master it. If you cannot get the benefits of the 2-7-2+5 exercise, call the Monk Billiard Academy – it’s *that* important!

I envy you. There were no Monks teaching me these wonderful shots when I was lost in the frozen wilderness of Michigan.

Affirmation #37

“I see good things for me in this contest.”

Chapter 13

Concentration

Once you have mastered the four strokes of pool and can deliver them on demand, you will need to develop the fine art of *concentration*. At the class A level, it is concentration (or lack thereof) that causes us to fail at runouts and lose games.

In my book, Point the Way, I state that there are four points of concentration you must master. These four points are as follows _ point of contact with cue tip and ball, the spot to hit on the object ball, the stroke you will use, and the speed which will help you succeed with the shot.

First, is the exact location of cue tip on cue ball. You must be aware of this on every shot. Find a way to develop this discipline.

Second, you must burn a hole on the spot on the object ball. Know exactly where you are hitting the target. This type of concentration can be improved. The mind is like a muscle. With proper exercise you can increase your mind's ability.

Third, you must be aware of the type of stroke you are using and what it will do. You must flash the stroke across your mind as you lean into the shot. When I am ready to deliver the winning shot, I begin to count in my mind *one, two, three, and shoot*. This helps to quell the doubts and fears the impede the shot.

The fourth consideration is the speed with which you hit the cue ball. This is vitally important if you intend to get another shot. It also helps you to avoid a costly scratch in certain situations.

Affirmation #38

"My hit always has a fine sound."

Any time you are having trouble with your game, it can usually be traced back to a lack of concentration. While we may be proficient at all shots, remember it is the brain that moves the hand that wins the game. Eye and hand coordination go together. When this process breaks down, the game is usually lost. If you are a doubter, try winning a big match hours after your wife has asked for a divorce. When the concentration is under attack, you are going to have a tough time. It would be far better to postpone the match until you are thinking more clearly.

To tune up your ability to concentrate, you must be willing to work at it. *The stroke, minus the interference, equals the shot.* Any interference – such as fear of losing, anxiety toward winning, personal problems, etc. – will affect how you deliver the stroke. This will, of course, have an effect on the outcome of your shot. You must strive to reduce the interference.

Any time you are not ready to deliver the stroke, pull away and reset yourself. A deadly form of interference on my stroke is thinking I can run the rack when they are all scattered about like a road map. Once the *run the rack* thought comes into my mind, I almost always fail. Somewhere along the run, I get out of line or simply miss an easy shot. I think the Pool Gods are telling me to keep in the *one-shot-at-a-time* mode.

Shoot the shot with all the concentration you can muster, and then go on to the next shot. Whenever you have several shots on your mind, you are hard pressed to handle the ones at hand.

Another interference factor is my choices on each shot. Now that we are in command of all the strokes, we have increased our weapons arsenal and therefore are able to shoot the shot several different ways with positive results.

Affirmation #39

“I never give up and always put forth my best effort.”

Which is the best shot to choose? If I don't make a clear decision, and shoot the shot with less than one hundred percent commitment, the shot is weakened. Either I miss or come up half way between my position target. Half measures avail us nothing. Be sure of your intentions. Allow all the other choices to leave you mind until you have just one decision left. If you try to force the other choice from your mind, you will be paying too much attention to them – thus giving them strength. (I deal with this subject in Point the Way.) We need to reduce the interference and find our freedom. Freedom to deliver the winning shot with a clear sense of purity. Oh, what joy!

Second guessing yourself is another deadly form of interference. On every shot, one of my students would always ask herself, "What would The Monk do?" This is interference. We must shoot the way we think we must. Remember, your choice comes from you own understanding of *your* ability.

There are many personal variables. I use a follow stroke when I'm on the left side of the table. I use a punch when I have the identical shot on the right side of the table. You must develop your own strategy and perfect it one hundred percent. One hundred percent of *your* shot is better than fifty percent of the so called *right* shot.

Reduce the interference and you will make more shots. Often we make the winning bank shot because we don't think we will anyway. We shoot the shot with a nice, free stroke and it splits the pocket. Let go – and the shot will shoot itself.

Affirmation #40

"The score has nothing to do with the sound of my hit."

Chapter 14

The Road Warrior

The gambler thrives on accurate information. He must know who he is playing. It is important for the gambler to know what is going on at all times. He must have a sense of the pool hall. In fact, this is his pay off. He spends his time in the *present moment awareness* mode, the Zen world of pocket billiards. This is what pumps blood through his veins. The here and now. His focus in on the shot in front of him. He seeks the shot at hand and to be one with his game. His preparation for an upcoming match involves staying in the present. He determines what his chances of winning are, evaluates his risk, makes his decision, and lays his money on the line. It can be said that the road warrior is the most focused player in the house.

After a while however, the gambler's vision begins to cloud. A string of unending matches turns the picture into one big montage of confusion. The sins of past matches weigh heavily on his mind. He loses sight of the specific things he must do and can no longer focus on the present. He loses sight of his own identity. And when this happens he loses sight of his money. Once again, he is broke, penniless in a strange room.

These vagabond risk-takers always have a way out. They may be down, but they are not out. They can go to a room owner for help. As long as they are honest and explain their situation clearly, the room owner will give them work. They can re-cover tables, give lessons, or clean bathrooms and in a short while, they will rebuild their stake and be on their way.

In the quiet evening when they contemplate on the reasons for their misfortune, they can see clearly that they lost their way. They lost their focus. For a brief time, they forgot who they were. With a new stake, a new determination, and a clear vision they move on to victory after victory only to lose out in the end when things become muddled by too many miles on the road. For most road players, the story is the same. They win, win, win, only to lose, lose, lose.

It is almost like they wrote the script some lonely night in their motel room. But this is not the case at all. The story has an ending they did not count on. For they did not know they would eventually run into the player who specializes in the gamblers demise. There comes a time when the gambler is not comfortable with the money he has won. It weighs on his mind – it chips away at his nerves. The past victories are always there, like a string of conflicts that can only be resolved by a huge loss. In losing he gains his freedom from the ghost of the past. A broken heart calls for justice. What we set into motion will come back to us and with our own destruction the slate is wiped clean. If the gambler has not learned this principle he will head out to a new beginning.

There is a band of bettors that know when the gambler needs to lose. These groups of players are not gamblers, for they stack the odds so much in their favor you cannot call it gambling. They understand the destructive nature in a gambler's heart and they lay in wait for that moment. They lay like predators, waiting in the weeds for the right time to strike. The bookies operate on the principle that sooner or later the gambler will lose all the money he has won. Las Vegas was built on this concept. The victorious gambler will be back to pay the fiddler. It is his nature.

The gambler has drifted away from his shore. He is out in the deep, with nothing to hold on to. What he seeks is not the money, but the bliss of present moment of awareness. The total focus on what is going on at the moment. For this life, when you can measure your life by the breath you just took, your life knows no limits. You are in a boundless realm with unlimited possibilities. When you carry the past string of broken hearts in your mind, your present moment awareness gets muddied and you are ready for the big fall of your own.

The circle keeps rolling around. It is not just movie time. It's real time. Sooner or later the fiddler will come calling. He's got a song for you.

Chapter 15

Dreamland Becomes A Nightmare

Beware of the gambler! He will make you do things you never intended to do. Don't allow yourself to be swept in by the mistress of deception. Be more interested in the fine art of pocket billiards. Unlike the gambler, you can appreciate a fine performance, even if it does not come from you. It is always nice to play a Monk Billiard Academy player. Playing a "road player" is quite a different story.

The gambler comes at you with a small wager. A five-dollar game does not scare you. It is in your comfort zone. Anything more than five dollars would take the fun out of it. If the gambler is going to make money off you, he cannot do it at five dollars a game. So he loses a few games and spreads some seed money around. You get a good feeling about the match. The road player will only win when you make a big mistake and then he will rub it in. He needs to make it personal and take you away from the fine art of pocket billiards. Once he does that you will lose your focus.

When your pockets are full of his money, he will lose his temper and ask you to play for ten dollars a game. You are feeling fine and agree to play. He purposely loses more money to you. You are now playing for ten dollars a game and doing all right. After you have a hundred plus of his money in your pocket, he will ask you to play for half of it. He wants a chance to win some of his money back. By this time the gambling mistress mesmerizes you. Your thoughts are now on money. You hear yourself say, "I'll play for twenty five dollars a game." You voice these words and you almost can't believe it.

In spite of your nervousness, you win two more games. He counts out his money from a thick wad of twenties. You think you have a chance to make some real money playing this game. You are intoxicated by this thought. You have left the "*performance zone*" and entered into dreamland. Now he asks to play for a hundred dollars a game. You have a couple hundred of his money in your pocket. He can't beat you. He is a loser. You don't really like him anyway. Why not

take this sucker's money? You see yourself counting out four or five or six hundred dollars of his money. This is your biggest day playing pool.

The "road player" seeks to give you the vision of winning a lot of money. Once you see yourself winning a lot of money, he will go into action. At a hundred dollars a game, you lose four hundred dollars! Now you are down two hundred. You are out two hundred dollars of your own money. You can't believe it. Your dream has turned into a nightmare. You lose two more hundred and you are out four hundred dollars. What started out as a five dollar game has blown itself completely out of control. You hang your head and utter two precious words a "road player" lives to hear, "I'm broke." It's over. It's not just movie time. It's real time. You are left empty and alone.

The gambling mistress has made another score.

When you say those magic words to your opponent, “I’m broke” and walk away, you find yourself totally alone. This is a place reserved for victims whose heart is breaking with disappointment. Your head is split in two. You cannot process thought. You are stunned into silence.

You could take five hundred dollars out of your savings account and toss it into the muddy waters of the Mississippi and not feel half as bad as you do when you lose this money to a road player. To be victimized by the gambling mistress is to sink to your lowest point. I have thought about developing a victim’s room in my pool hall. A place for suckers to go and listen to gospel music. I’d put a big sign over the door VICTIM’S ROOM. And then I’d put in a neon sign that says, starring, whoever ended up in such a place. Let the billiard world see the fool who lost it all. Everyone could look through a one way mirror and observe the victim. We could say, “There but for my chicken heart, go I.” We would marvel at the look of bewildered indignity on his face. The words, “I lost all my money,” would be flashing on the wall.

The painful experience is not because of the money we have lost. Money lost can be replaced. The pain comes from losing complete control of yourself. When you lose control, you experience the absence of a higher power. At no point in your life are you more utterly alone. Once the part of you that controls your actions is gone, you are left to the mercy of the winds. You do not know where you are going. You have no control.

This is a critical time for the victim. If he accepts this loneliness as part of his penance, He may very well get hooked on the loser mentality and seek to repeat this experience again and again. There are players in the game more famous for the money they have lost than the money they have won.

It is only the losing gambler who ends up in those meetings. They seek help because they have lost control and cannot live productive lives. If they are not helped back, they will continue to lose again and again until they are completely broke. Then they lose money they borrow. They ride this road to destruction until they have become consumed by their own actions. Like the fire that consumes its own fuel for life, the gambler will soon burn out and wither like the smoldering ashes of a dying flame. A sad sight to see because there is no fuel left to restart the fire. If a gambler goes too far he will never be able to get back. Once he crosses that line he is on his way to the Wayside. You can read about the Wayside in my book, [I Came To Win](#).

Most losers get mixed up with the elements of winning. They get their values backwards. In one part of their mind, they find winning to be a source of stress. Somewhere they have experienced a bad reaction to winning. It could be embarrassment from all the attention, or they faced the hostility of beating a sore loser, or they simply don't like the added pressure of winning. So when the victory is at hand they pull the pin and lose. I give an hour long talk about this in my audiobook, [I Came To Win](#). If you are headed towards the VICTIM'S ROOM, you might want to order that tape. For you, it is just a ten dollar bill. You save five dollars and if you mention this article, I will even cover the shipping for you. I don't want you to lose.

Chapter 16

Your Face In The Fan

You are in control. A man with a plan. Believing that your game is a neat little package you hold in your hand. For you can determine with pin point accuracy exactly what you want to accomplish. You have it together. You know just what to do. But when you finally face the match that exposes who you are, you are just another fool. You are weak, a feather in the wind because you cannot wait to get back to the match that has destroyed everything you worked for.

You strut your stuff in the pool hall until it all comes undone with your own lack of control. Sometimes you get that feeling that makes you tremble like a child. It comes from somewhere in your mind. You do not know where it comes from. The trembling comes on suddenly. Most of the time you can rise above it and move on with the hopes that it will never return. But you know it has not left you. It remains. It will return. It is only a matter of time and time won't heal a man who is out of control.

Every game is just the same. Different players, different names. But it all comes out the same. You feel yourself being drawn into something that has an ending you may not like. And still you move forward and agree to the terms that spell your own demise.

Yes there are winners and losers in this grand game of pocket billiards. The winners stand alone, in that they have risen to the top. The losers go to the wayside only to try again with the same results.

The game of pocket billiards has terms of it's own. Yes, it needs you. It can lift you up and hold you high. It can take you to places reserved for the chosen few who hear the call. Those who can really hear the sweet sound of a ball dropping into the leather pockets will be charmed by the mistress of pocket billiards. You must stoke the coals of your own game until it grows red hot.

In your own confusion, the game can clear your mind. When it is lost, the game of pool can bring you home. I faced the world on my

own because of this great game. I stood on the pedestal and looked at forever because this game needs me. But I needed pocket billiards as much as it needed me. The game made me face my own uncertainties and turned my life and into truth, for you cannot experience pocket billiard excellence without the honesty of a clear self-evaluation. This is what gave you the ultimate freedom from things that hold you back.

You will never spend a long night with dinner for one as long as you are the lover of pocket billiards, for there is a family of friends out there in you own local pool room waiting to play the game that makes us believers in ourselves. This game may demand a lot from you, but it will never let you down.

You will swim in the muddy waters of the Mississippi and be swept away if you use pocket billiards to destroy others. You will have dinner alone. You will be alone. For the game of pocket billiards has terms of it's own.

I will look for you in the finals and we will play a great game.

Chapter 17

Your Name Is On My Cue

You must beware of the professional gambler, for he knows who you are. He knows how to get to you. It is his business to know your weakness. The gambler comes across as a harmless pool player, social in every respect and catches you unaware. He is the master of taking you outside your own self image.

The gambler sustains himself on the total destruction of his opponent. The ultimate total destruction is his key to victory. Money won is only a mid-term exam on his test in life. Money is simply a measurement on his own success or failure. He lives to hear two very precious words. He does not want to see how you bow your head and say, "I quit." Nor does he want to hear you say, "I can't beat you." The only words that mean he claims final victory is when you say, "I'm broke." That is his goal. To take all your money is his final exam. The contest is not fought out in one match or two matches. The battle is over all the money you have in your pocket. Seek out the match, destroy the player, and take all the money is what the road player lives by.

I played in a tournament in Milwaukee where I ended up in second place. The Calcutta money only went to first and second. So I was happy to get into that Calcutta money. The guy I beat for second place was a partner of the first place winner.

"Damn Monk" he said, "You mess everything up. We came here to get all the money. We wanted all the money and now you messed it all up." I said I was sorry about their loss. I was sorry I got in the middle of their plan to take all the money. "Let's play for it all", they suggested. They would put up first place money, plus Calcutta and third place money against my second place money and Calcutta. All I had to do was beat both of them in a race to five. They were eager, which I sensed was a good thing for me. This was not sound reasoning, which was a good thing for them. They needed all the money to justify their own efforts, a rather shallow way of looking at your own

ability. They looked like two dummies. I agreed. You see they were giving me a chance to take all the money as well. I played like I came to win and this was all that mattered. So I was happy with my second place money. Part of the prize was not good enough for them. They needed to lose everything or win everything. So we played. I beat them both and took first, second and third. Calcutta for the first and second and went away with all the money. Which is what I wanted to do in the first place.

To be honest with you, I have seen the light and changed my ways. My focus is more on the art of pocket billiards than on the total destruction of my opponent. I get more excited about seeing a game well played than watching a match between one superior player and a sucker. I gain more pleasure by playing a great game. That is my focus now and it gives me great joy. The art of pocket billiards excellence is getting the most out of your talent. May you play like a winner in every game and therefore become a winner.

Chapter 18



May All The Rolls Go My Way

I developed a habit of signing Point The Way with “*May all the rolls go your way.*” It was my hope that you would begin to expect good rolls. How we feel about the chance elements of this game determines our good or bad rolls. We expect good roll, we will get good rolls. Luck is there for the one who expects it. Good rolls do not come to those with negative attitude. If you are

waiting to lose, you won’t have to wait too long. If you are waiting to win, your time is at hand. If you are waiting to blow a shot, you will surely bring it upon yourself. And by the same token, if you are waiting for a break in this game, it will come to you. Expect good rolls and you will get them.

Sue and I were traveling up to Maine for a nine-ball tournament. She asked me what the affirmation was for this event. I said, “We expect the rolls to go our way.” All the way up there she repeated this in her mind, “The rolls go my way. I get good rolls.” Sue was new at the tournament scene. This was her first nine-ball tournament. She had the game to compete, so I was not worried. She will do well, I thought.

All during her match, the rolls went her way. When she least expected it, her opponent missed and left her a road map. She stood at the table with a clear path to victory. Every time the rolls went her way, she gave it right back to her opponent. She missed the run outs! She was not able to take advantage of her good breaks.

Sue has a very serious problem with losing. She hates to lose. It was even more painful when she had a clear path to victory. After she was knocked out, I didn't know what to say to her. I feared for my life. I couldn't tell her she blew it even though it was true and I had no words of comfort for her. She would just have to steam all the way home. The thought of traveling home with her was not fun. So I decided to drive up to Canada and do some camping. This would help her take her mind off the disappointment of losing. Perhaps we could confront a bear and she could let it all out. We didn't see a bear but we did run into an angry moose. As we floated down the river, we came upon a young moose feeding near the shore. I mentioned to the moose that he was not the brightest animal in the forest and he began to run towards us. We were sitting down in this rubber raft and the thing was seven feet tall. We paddled frantically but the current continued to sweep us towards the mentally challenged moose. "Sue," I said, "are these things dangerous?" She uttered something to the effect that I had gotten us into this mess and I better get us out. Meanwhile the moose continued to bear down on us. We were victims. I was beginning to hope that the moose would like Suzanne more than me. The huge, towering beast passed by close enough to splash us as he lumbered along and disappeared through the trees. I noticed that this was his only way out of the river as the forest was thick with underbrush.

After surviving this encounter, we sat on a rock in the middle of the river to share a cup of coffee. It was at this time that I experienced an awakening. I knew why Sue had lost. It came to me in a sudden burst like the great dawn of a new day. She had not completed her affirmation! She ingrained the promise of good rolls into her mind, but she did not finish the line. She needed to say, "I get good rolls and take advantage of them." It was my fault she lost. This awakening would

make the rest of the trip more enjoyable. It was my fault because I did not give her the complete line. She was pleased when I shared this revelation with her. From that point on, she always finished her line on getting good rolls and taking advantage of them. The moose was happy, I was happy and most importantly, Sue was happy.

You can affect the rolls other players get. There are times when you can zero in with your mind on your opponents shooting and determine which ball will be missed. I sometimes send shock waves through the air. I think in my mind, “over cut, over cut, over cut”, and watch as my bewildered opponent over cuts the ball. Or I call out to God, “I need a break”, and I sit back waiting for my opponent to miss and give me a road map. I can zap an unsuspecting player with energy. Once he feels these bursts of energy invading his brain he becomes confused and misses. The best zap to use is the “over cut, over cut”. Sometimes I will make him push the ball thick. I can see that the object ball is going to hit near the pocket. Once his brain is full of my shock waves, he has no chance.

How do you counteract this sabotage from outside? You set up a force field around you. You surround yourself with a force field to shield off the onslaught of negative vibrations. You bounce it right back at your opponent.

Know you get good rolls. Expect them. In one match, I tried a difficult shot. I winged away at a clump to see if I could get lucky. When the ball did not go in, my opponent said, “Trying to see if your luck is with you today?” I told him I knew I was lucky. I just wanted to see if he was lucky. We watched intently as the cue ball rolled behind another ball leaving him no shot at all.

Chapter 19



I Do Not See The Mountain

Many times a player will tell me they are ready for the tournament. They are in dead stroke and ready to play. Sometimes he makes the following statements and I know.

He is looking at the mountain.
"I am ready to run racks."

He is looking at the mountain.
"I am going to be aggressive."

He is looking at the mountain.
"My opponent better be running out because if he misses, it is over."

He is looking at the mountain.
"I only have to win six matches."

He is looking at the mountain.
"I'm prepared and I'm ready."

He is looking at the mountain.
"I've done the work and I deserve to win."

He is looking at the mountain.

All these statements blur the reality that when the tournament director calls your name, you will be at the table facing one shot and one shot only. You will never have more than one shot and even if you go through the entire tournament, without a loss, undefeated, and face the final shot for the ultimate victory, you will have only one shot. When you see the big picture you have trouble seeing the real picture. If you shine your light at the end of your path, you may trip on the stone in front of your feet.

Chapter 20



I Never Shoot Until I Am Ready

There was an old guy in Reno who would shoot a shot and then stand up straight and freeze. His eyes would glass over as he stared off into space. It was as if he sought some kind of mystical sign that what he had done was the right thing to do.

He needed assurance that this shot was the right shot. He then shot the next one and froze in his tracks, staring off into space.

His face would tilt one way to hear the sounds of some Pool God giving him instructions. Then he would lean into a shot and deliver the perfect stroke, only to stand erect and stare off into the giant nothingness of pocket billiards. In one match he drove his opponent crazy. After a tough loss to the trance like figure he yelled out, "Why don't you stare at some money and we can play." The man in the trance came to life. "Okay, we can play for money." They bantered back and forth until neither of them could come up with a time and place.

We cannot allow ourselves to be involved in another person's rhythm. We cannot allow ourselves to take on the pace of our opponents. We must stay within our own sense of timing. There is no other way to shoot this game. I spent years losing to fast players because I was uncomfortable with their frantic style of play. I spent years losing to slow players because I was itching to get to the table and shoot my shots. After many losses, I finally realized that I have my own style of play and this is that. If I am not allowed to use my style, I will lose. I will miss shots. I will fail. I will not be the player I am

supposed to be. Once you take me out of my game, I am lost. How could we expect anything less than to lose when we do not concentrate the way we have trained ourselves? Do not watch you opponent. Do not copy him. Stay with your own timing. There is no other way to play this game. Your way *is* the right way.

Every player has a style of play. This pace fits with their way of thinking. For instance, I'm an aggressive player. That is my nature. I hate to back off and play a safety. At the same time I don't like to lose, so I won't do anything foolish. But my nature is to attack. I love to play that way and when I am thinking aggression, my overall performance is at a much high level.

In one game, I came to the table following a miss by my opponent and found that I have a clear path to victory provided I could make a tough opening shot. By the same token, since he only had the eight ball left on the table I could play a safety and perhaps get ball in hand to start my run. I decided to take the safe route, forgo the possible run out. My safety was a good one, but I failed to run the table. I found myself unable to really play my game the rest of the way. My shots were timid, conservative and my personal timing was way off. I was out of rhythm. I had chosen the safe route when that is not my style of play. Once I got outside my mode of playing, I was not the same player and therefore could not call upon my aggressive style of play.

Have you ever gone back and forth with safeties only to miss the shot when it came up? It is very difficult to switch from one frame of mind to the next. Go from defense to offense. Both styles of play are unique and call for specially developed skills. To be able to switch back and forth is very difficult.

I came to win. That is my mission statement. I wrote a book about that. It is called I Came To Win. I really hope you have this book, as it will help you alot. It will enable you to visit the winners' circle more often. This mind set gives you the spark to pull off the victory and win the prize.

There are times when I have to pull out a *ripper*. A ripper is when you rip the game away from your opponent by shooting a spectacular shot and running out. When I am left a very tough shot, I relish the chance to rip the game away. Time for a ripper and I shoot the tough shot with all the confidence in the world. By using the ***Dr. Cue– Monk 202 Kicking and Banking*** techniques I am able to kick shots more consistently. Nothing demoralizes an opponent like a ripper. They play a great safe, and you win from there.

I also shoot hopeless shots. My opponent has left me tough. He is full of hope. I tell him, "This is a hopeless shot." He nods his head. I say, "You have hope now, and when I shoot it you will have less hope, so I call this a hopeless shot."

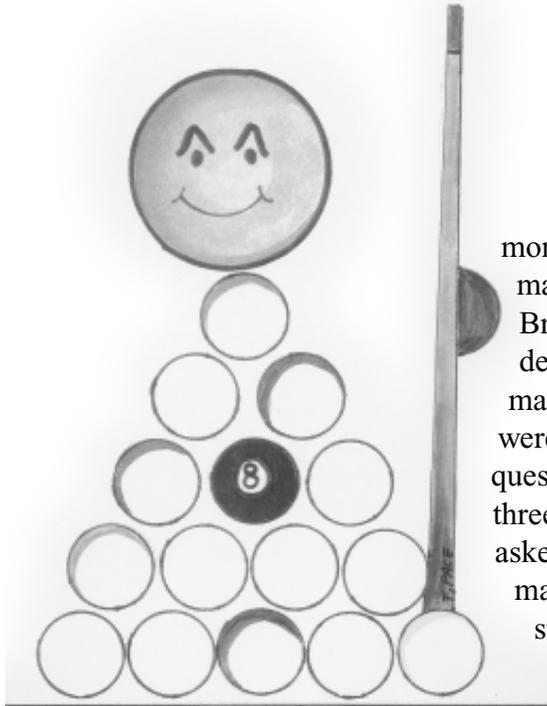
I play to win and I play to have fun. I do not get excited over playing safe. I love to run out. You will never, ever run out when you play a safe. Go for the fun of it. Rip the game away. Shoot the hopeless shot and watch your opponent squirm. I never shoot until I am ready. That's the way I play this game.

This game is about personal rhythm. Develop a sense for good timing. We take in the information our minds need to execute a fine shot. We can only hold it for as long as our concentration skills will allow us to. If we take too long, the decision we make will not be positive. "Too long in the huddle," I would say when I went past my concentration ability. The chance for a one hundred percent smooth stroke will have been long gone. We will miss the shot. If we shoot before we have fully processed the shot, we will not be able to deliver the smooth stroke the shot requires. The interference of a partial shot will cost us the game. This game is about personal rhythm. Our own rhythm is vital to success.

“Slow Rollin” Keith was a deliberate player. He took a very long time between each shot. An easy shot took him forever to shoot. A hard shot took just as long. This was the way “Slow Rollin” shot the game of pool.

Suzanne was also a slow player. Her engineering background would not allow her to shoot until she had fully processed the shot. It was her nature to play pool in a slow, deliberate manner. I like to shoot when I can feel the shot. I am a medium speed player. There are players who cannot shoot with any thoughts in their mind. They need to run around the table and fire away. Whatever type of player you meet, try not to copy them. We sometimes get into their personal rhythm and this causes us to miss many shots. If I come up against a slow player, I won’t watch them. I will focus on something else while they agonize over each and every shot. Likewise with a fast player. I sometimes speed up my own game with disastrous results. Find your rhythm and stay in the game.

Chapter 21



I Deserve To Win

I want you to take a moment to think about the last match you played and you lost. Bring that to your mind and determine why you lost that match. What was the reason you were defeated? I ask this question when I open most of my three-day workshops. When asked why they lost the last match they played, most of my students report that they “blew it” somewhere during the match. They lost their concentration. They did not

focus on the winning shot. They got distracted and made the wrong decision. Very few, if any, tell me they were out-played or went up against someone who was far superior to them. They put the blame squarely upon themselves. Does that sound like you? Do you blame yourself for every loss?

Have you ever lost to someone who was not even in your class? You shot poorly and your opponent beat you. Afterwards he extends his hand with a smile and says, “Nice game!” If you had a bazooka, you would point it at him and wipe the smile off his face. You could beat him with your eyes closed. You stunk up the place and he says, “Nice game!”

I have played many matches where my opponent should not even win one game, let alone the match! In one game the chalk was damp and I could not get a feel for the speed of the cue ball. Everything was off. My shot came up too short or too long. I was reduced to a shot

maker. Since my opponent was a shot maker with no position skills, he thought this was a great game. Two dumb shot makers firing away. I was frustrated by my loss of instincts. His great shots thrilled him. After I made a complete fool of myself, playing like a beginner, he extended his hand and said, "Nice game." If ever a lie was told, this was it! All I could do was smile back and nod.

"I was a little off." I remarked.

"I thought you shot great," he replied.

"Would you like to meet later for some real games?" I asked.

"You better hang on to your money," he boasted.

The guy can't run three balls!

"I don't want to hang on to my money," I retort.

"Don't say I didn't warn you," he said with a smug look on his face.

We meet in the practice room and he wants to play for a dollar a game. That is okay. I will crush him completely. And that I do. I find my speed and win twenty seven games in a row! He extends his hand and says, "I am not having any luck today. I think I will quit." He says nothing about how he should take up needlepoint or synchronized artistic swimming. He says nothing about how really bad he is at this game. And yet he goes back to the tournament, while I am forced to read Point The Way for the tenth time!

It is a matter of losing my speed. That happens to everyone. I should not take it personally. Let him have his moment in the sun. He deserves it. He has won the match and that is the way it is. I should be as graceful in losing as I am in winning. As soon as I stop taking this game personally, I will win. That is when I deserve to win.

Sometimes I play a friend of mine for money. Actually, we play for dinner. We eat at the finest restaurants in the area, so dinner is around a hundred dollars. He has never played a match with me and won. And his is as good as I am! There is one thing missing in his game. He thinks he does not deserve to win. If he is sailing along with a great

game, I ask him how his kids are. He loves his three children very much and has never really gotten over his divorce. So he harbors a lot of guilt. Pool was to blame for the divorce, which adds fuel to the fire. If he thinks of his kids while he is playing pool, he will surely lose because his guilt convinces him that he does not deserve to win. I tell him this story every time I order prime rib and shrimp. And tell him he is the easiest chump I ever encountered. I think buying me dinner is some kind of penance for his past sins. So, who am I to deny him his moment in the confession booth?

He really does not deserve to win. I have proof. In a race to six, he had me five to one. He missed an easy nine ball that would have had me reaching for the check. I won and then broke and made the nine ball four straight times! This is my record and it came against Bobby “Lucky Roll” Lucas. I gave him that name hoping to change his mind set.

I haven’t seen “Lucky Roll” for a while. I heard he met his dream girl and opened up a restaurant down by the Cape. His kids are in college. Not long ago he called my answering service while I was on the road. Maybe he has figured out that he deserves to win, or that dinner won’t cost so much since he owns the restaurant. I’ll return the call when I’m in dead stroke. Since his kids are doing so well, and love their daddy, I’ll need a good game.

I don’t think “Lucky Roll” will be so easy this time. And he does have a lot of incentive to win. And he could be in dead stroke. He may have improved. Oh well, I will go down to the Cape and shoot one shot at a time. Maybe I’ll just ask him if he is still paying alimony or if his ex-wife is available. Who know with the “Lucky Roll”? He may harbor some guilt about his divorce. Since he owns the restaurant he is liable to pad the tab if he wins. So I need to be ready for “Lucky Roll”.

Chapter 22

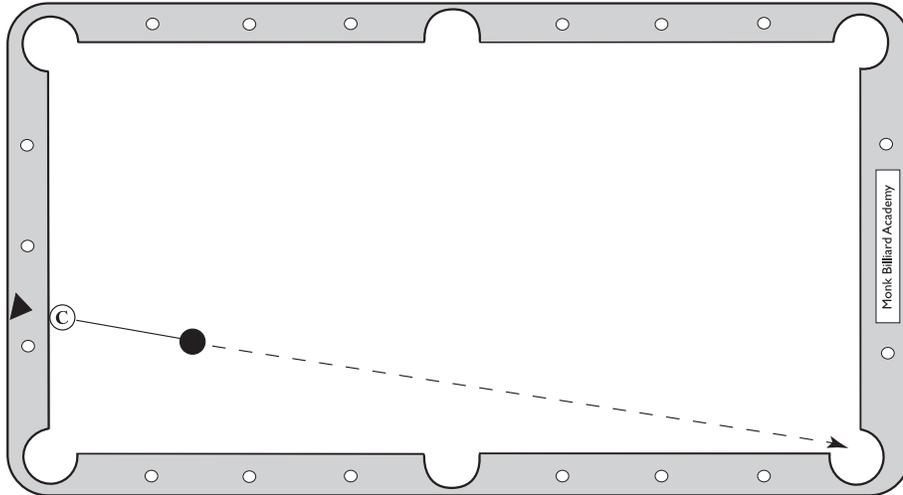


My Grip Is Always Professional

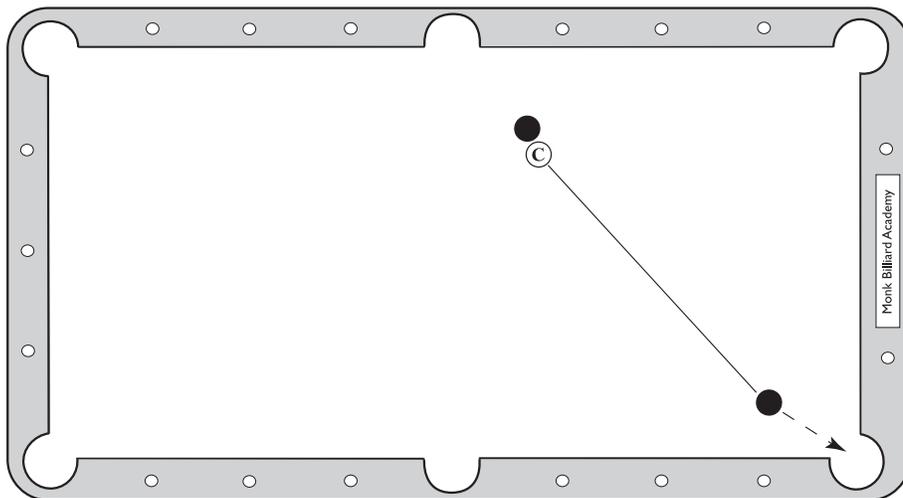
The four-ball exercise calls for a smooth crisp hit on the cue ball. If you are tentative, you will miss the shot. So it is a great way to develop good feeling techniques within your grip. We do not only hold the cue, our grip has a lot to do with the quality of our shot. You will not get a good smooth hit on the cue ball if you have a weak grip. Develop your feeling

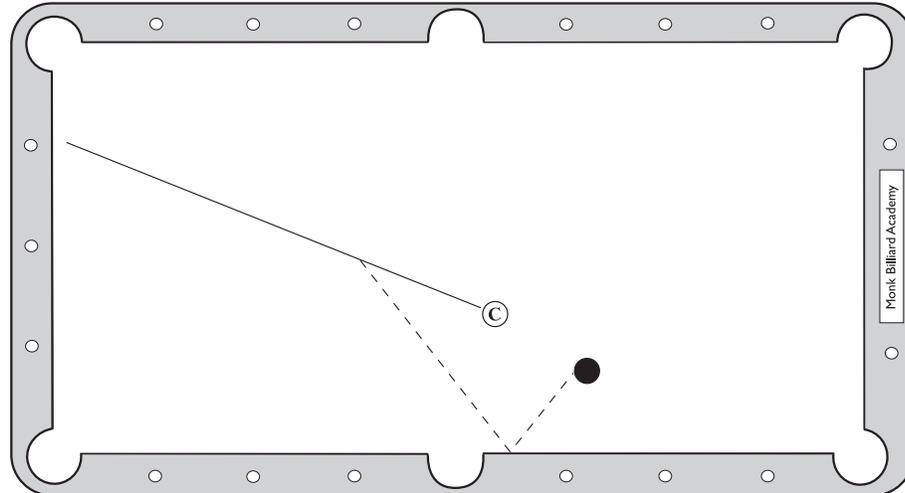
skills and feel within your fingers the quality of the stroke. Feel the cue tip go through the cue ball. Be there at the moment of impact. Feel the collision and determine, before the cue ball leaps away if you have delivered a quality hit. Often times you know whether you made the shot or not long before the object ball is contacted. You know it because your “hand eye” did not feel the quality necessary to complete the shot. We have eyes in our hands. They see what we are doing. Our “hand eye” and our “feel eye” are skills. How have you developed your “hand eye” skills? How have you developed you “hand sense” skills? We need to put in some time working on our grip skills. As in all skills, practice is vital.

Here is a shot for you. You will need to develop great grip skill in order to make this shot consistently. (Offer the shot off the rail down into the corner.) Lay the cue on the rail and rock back and forth. At the exact moment of impact, squeeze the butt end tight. Squeeze it tightly as the cue tip goes through the cue ball. Feel the quality of your hit. Use this exercise to strengthen your grip techniques.



(Shoot over a ball) In this shot, you need to squeeze tight on the cue to keep it steady. Once again, your grip hand is vital to the success of the shot. (Shoot a smoother follow stroke) On this shot, you will be delivering a nice smooth, loose grip and allowing the cue tip to float through the cue ball. It is vital that you let it happen. You use your grip to create the letting go concept in your eyes. Visualize the smooth flow, feel the letting go, and coast the cue through the cue ball. You will get in touch with this feeling within the intimate parts of your grip hand.





From time to time you need to move your grip hand around so you can increase the quality of your hit. For instance on a 2-7-2+1. You will need to slide your grip hand back a few inches so you can drive through the cue ball. In this shot, if you leave your hand four inches from the balance point, you will not be able to deliver the drive through effect. You will come up short and hit the cue ball at the end of your stroke. The result will not be good. So you need to know when to move your grip hand around. Slide it backwards. Slide it forward as you practice, listen to the quality of the hit and be one with your “eye hand” connection. You will soon develop great grip skills.

The following exercise will help you develop these skills. Relax for a moment. Look up at your forehead and see your grip hand. Look down to your left and hear your grip hand. Look down to your right and feel your grip hand. Look up and see. Look down and hear. Look down right and feel. Do this exercise twenty or thirty times per day. As in all exercises, don't worry about results. Train to gain. Let it happen. Results take care of themselves. They come to us when we least expect them. When it comes to a sense of feel and touch, results have their own schedule.

In any aspect of your game you can use the look up and see, look down left and hear, look down right and feel exercise. This will help

you. I use it with the four-ball exercise. I use it with my stance as well. I use it to create serenity within myself. I look up and see a peaceful waterfall. I look down left and hear the soft air, and I look down right to feel the sounds of summer. I do this all day long. I try to be in a private place, not in a shopping center or any public place. I don't want them to take me away just yet.

In all areas of this great game, we are in training. Always in training. We can train anywhere. We can work on an aspect of this game in almost any setting. Breathing, meditation, quiet times and visualization are all exercises you can practice. You can hold the cue in your hand and feel texture of the material used to make your winning cue. Get a sense of how it feels in your hand and see yourself making great shots. The grip is important. It is vital. My grip is always professional on all shots.

Chapter 23

Strive For Excellence

Winning is sweet, like a warm breeze across our face. The breeze will pass by and soon be gone. Our memory of the breeze is fleeting. We can only recall that it was nice. We cannot really call up the breeze again. Likewise with the winning experience, it will soon be over. We close our eyes and remember the exhilarating experience, but we cannot bring it back to reality. It is something that happened in the past. It is no longer ours, it is only a memory. Thinking about past victories will never get you a trophy. It will never get you the first place prize money you have already spent. It is only a pleasant thought. No one can take away your memories, but your memories are not what is real, here and now.

Winning is not the end results of our league experience. Of course we play to win. Everyone wants to win. This is why I wrote the book I Came To Win. League play encourages moving to the next level. We want the respect from our peers. We want to know that not only do we win, we are winners. Our opponents talk about us with great appreciation for what we have accomplished. At this level, winning brings us a complete reward. It is a reminder of whom we have become. We are willing to take on the best of the best and come out on top. We do not shy away from anyone. It is a feeling of complete freedom. The feeling of knowing you are truly a winner comes to only a few. It is an experience only they can share. Knowing you will be victorious in most matches makes it worth all the practice. When I am playing well, I know I will win most matches. This knowledge makes my pocket billiards journey all that sweeter.

I can walk into any pool hall in any part of the country and beat most of the players there. I have no problem accepting a match when it is offered. I don't check my opponent out or ask questions about him. I simply agree to play. I do this because I know I am a winner. I have put in my time and focused on becoming excellent in the game of pocket billiards.

In South Carolina, a man came over to me while I was working out and asked if I wanted to play his student – I agreed. A young man showed up with cue in hand, eager to take my money. In the first game, I could see I might be outclassed. This guy could shoot. He had all the moves, a dead stroke and a crystal clear eye. His backer told him to lay off a little to see if they could get the bet up higher. We agreed to a small gentlemanly match. One race. He was instructed to lose the first match and he did. I quit. “What do you mean, you quit?” He asked. I told him I agreed to a match and a match was all I was going to play. I left there feeling good. I just beat the best guy in the house. I won. It was as simple as that. Perhaps I would have lost had I hung around but that is not my style. I play a match and it is win or lose. I strive for excellence in every game I play. So I always win. Sometimes my score is not as good as my opponents, but I still feel like a winner because I play to win on every shot. When I run into a real gentleman, he appreciates what I stand for.

Pocket billiards excellence is not about laying down or holding back. It is about striving to be the best you can be. Some of us have jobs, families, and other interests, so we are not going to be world class players. We can only devote so much time to our development. If you use The Lesson and follow the I Came To Win principles you will go further than you ever thought simply because you will be getting the best out of your skills.

Those who sandbag and try to keep their handicap down are cheating themselves. They are cheating their opponent. When they shoot well, they are embarrassed and have to make excuses for doing something good. A sandbagger only hurts himself. If you think like a five, you will be a five. If you think like a three, you will be a three. To hold back so you can win a two hundred dollar Saturday afternoon tournament is selling yourself short. When you win, you actually feel bad. There is no moment of glory. There is no need to close your eyes and recall the victory. The victory means nothing. It only means you have deceived your friends.

Just after I wrote Point The Way, I was on the road traveling and stopped by a pool hall where they were just about to start a tournament. The director called for other interested players. I stepped up and paid my entry fee. My name was called for table seven. My opponent greeted me with a smile and showed me his new cue. He proudly told me that when he won a D tournament, his wife bought him a new cue for the C tournament.

It was then that I realized I had entered a C tournament. This could be an easy win for me. I was an A player. I wanted to confess, but I needed the money. No one knew me. It would be easy to simply win this tournament and leave. I would take the money and run. My opponent was a delightful old guy. He loved the game. He loved to play. I could not finish my run outs. I could not close him out. I could not beat him. I lost. I left. I thought like a C player and played like a C player. I was glad I learned this valuable lesson. I will never get in a handicapped tournament unless I am rated at the highest rating. I want to be free to shoot my best.

Level C players can shoot most of the shots that A players can. Their skill level is very similar, but the C player worries about things other than performance. In that tournament, I took the characteristics of a C player. Then I worried about my integrity. I worried about the fact that I did not belong in that event. I knew there would be no joy in winning it. I knew I would be a fraud, therefore, I played like a C player. I allowed the interference to creep into my game. I was distracted. I lacked the discipline an A player has. Let's face it, the victory would have been bitter. It would not have been sweet.

Do not hold back. Play the best you can on every turn. When you sandbag you only hurt yourself. You bring all sorts of evil things down on you. You limit the great potential you have. You limit the great joy you will experience down the road. Strive for excellence and you will have an excellent experience in the league. If your level is too high and

you need to break up your team, be a leader and develop a new team. Leaders don't create followers. They create more leaders. This is how the sport grows. The league system is a great thing. Don't worry about the sandbagger, he only cheats himself. You are the one who finds joy in this game. You are the one who gets respect. You are the one who is admired. Don't hold back your talent. Strive for excellence. Be the best pool player you can be.

Sometimes we are our own worst enemy. We are uncomfortable with winning. We hold back, not so we can sandbag, but so we don't have to deal with the responsibilities we think winning brings. Standing in the glow of the winner's circle can be disturbing. The spotlight and all the attention embarrass some players. Some truly don't think they deserve to win and others don't want to move up to the next level because they will be on unfamiliar ground or turf. Some simply don't want to hurt their opponent's feelings, so they lose. We pull the pin on ourselves when the run out is right in front of us. We miss shots that we should make. Then we wonder why.

Have you ever shot a shot you knew you were going to miss? You lined it up and then proceeded to do exactly what you thought you were going to do. You missed the shot. The reason you do this is because it is natural for you to miss at this point. All you have to do is figure out why you think this is a natural place to end your run and then change that value. You have developed a habitual response. Learn how to change it.

Chapter 24



Running A Rack

We see things differently when the key ball is involved. When the shot opens up the rack, it becomes more valuable. The value comes from our mind. As suggested in this book, the 8 ball does not know it is the 8 ball. The pockets do not know when the shot is for all the money. Our mind does know this and for that reason, our mind will not allow our arm to come

forward freely and send the ball into the pocket for the winning score.

It is our mind that causes us to miss shots we can make. Remember, a single thought will divert the arrow from its course. We miss because we place an added value on the shot.

There is an additional reason things become harder as we move through the rack. We have not fully developed our concentration skills, therefore we lose our ability to focus the more we are asked to do so. In other words, we may only be able to focus on three or four shots. If the run out requires six balls, we lose focus. Once we do that, things become a blur. We are not able to maintain that sharp concentration at the end of the run. We need a break, a little time to regroup and get things under control.

This is why I recommend “running sevens” in your basement or home poolroom. Train your mind to run seven balls. Train your mind to stay focused during a seven ball run. You can do this by working on it. Work on “running sevens” until it becomes automatic. Reinforce your concentration skills by practicing it. Every time you work on

focus shots, you strengthen this skill. When you allow your mind to wander, you weaken it. Run sevens until it becomes automatic. Then you will be able to finish your run outs.

I try to see each shot for what it is, a shot. I do not label anything. I do not give it additional value by naming it as a key ball or a money ball or the shot that opens up the rack. I never tell myself I am out until I have pocketed the final ball. I do not count my chickens before they hatch. When I fall victim to this temptation, I almost always fail. When you try to shoot three balls, you end up missing one. Stay in the “*one shot at a time*” mode. Stay with the shot that is in front of you. There is never more than one shot. You can’t catch a rabbit when you chase two of them. Look good shooting it. Look good missing it. Look good making it. Whatever happens, look good doing it. Be free to use the talent you have taken the time to develop. You deserve to shoot each shot like you have been shooting all your life. There is no run out. There is never a run out. There is only the shot you are facing. You will improve your winning percentage by a wide margin if you can learn to deal with one shot and only one shot.

When I break the rack, I try to decide if I am going to attempt a run out or not. If the rack has no C balls in it and only a few manageable B balls, I will make my decision. If I decide to run out, I will risk it all to accomplish that run. In other words, I will give all my attention to running out. I will be totally aggressive. I will not hold back. This aggressive mode is the direct reason for my success. To hold back is to interfere with my chances of a complete run out. Remember, the best safety in the world is a run out. The guy who is sitting in his chair cannot beat you. So if you make the decision to run, then go all the way.

Once I decide to go for it, I instill within my mind that the only way I can be me is to run this rack. That is the way I play the game. I pick out the balls I want as my opening shots and then imagine the table without these balls. How would it look? Are there trouble balls?

I will try to end up with a shot on the trouble ball somewhere within the first three ball run. Shoot the trouble ball with a back up ball in mind and look for the key ball. The key ball should be around the fourth or fifth ball and you should have a back up shot should you fail to get position. Sometimes your only shot is the back up shot. Shoot this ball if it is the only way to keep your run going. Do not be afraid to play for a bank shot if that is all the table is offering you.

Now you are in a risky mode. It is during the risky mode that you must make up your mind to look good on each shot whether you can make it or not. It is during this critical stage in your run that you establish neurological habits. You set the tone for how you will shoot the final shots that win the game. Here is where you set up the habits that carry you to the finals. This is what you become. You decide. You make the choice. If you want to be free when you shoot these final shots, than you should practice that. It is what you decide to practice. If you want to focus on how you miss key shots, then you will strengthen this experience. You make the decision. You are in control of how you see things. You set up the neurological habits and these become your personal rituals. Remember, these personal rituals will serve you one way or the other. Sometimes when I am nervous, I give my hip a light tap. Because of my anchor, I feel better after I tap my hip. I am ready to focus and shoot the shot. When I run out, I tap my hip as a reward.

The art of a run out is not found simply in the shots themselves. It is how you shoot those shots. Think about your failed run outs. When you run out, you are in an extreme state of mind. Your body chemistry is racing with each shot. Now is the time to anchor some habitual values. Remind yourself that this is exactly what you do. You run out. You shoot until you miss. You run all the balls off the table. When you run out in this neurological state of mind, make it a normal pattern. This is normal for you. I tell people when they ask what I do for a living, "I run racks."

Never apologize for shooting well. Never deny that you are shooting well and running out. Do not make excuses for your good shooting and never feel bad for your opponent. Shoot until you miss because this is a natural pattern for you. It is a habit to shoot all the shots in front of you. None of them have any value, so shoot them into the pocket. Once a shot takes on added value, stop what you are doing. Stop the shot right then and get up. Walk around the table and rest yourself. The ball has no mind. It does not know which ball it is in the run and if the value cannot be felt inside the ball, then there should be no reason for any value to take place on another level. Once we begin to see the shot as something other than a ball that needs to be pocketed, we have interfered with this pleasant neurological state of mind. We have broken our normal thought process. We see things other than what they are, therefore we are not free to perform. We take away our own ability to exercise exactly what we intend to do. There is no secret poser hanging over us. We are in control.

I want to shoot this shot, but I added that it is the key ball and will open up the run for me. What does that mean? Does that mean the ball is tougher to hit? What does it mean other than it is a shot we have experienced a thousand times? A shot can never have value. It is never anything other than a shot. Each shot is exactly like the shot you made to open up the run. Nothing changes the further along you go. There really is no money ball. The money ball is a clever piece of fiction running around in our heads.

When we pocket the key ball or the last ball, we should establish a reaction that becomes habit. I simply tap myself on my hip when I finish my run out. After so many taps, I find myself habitually waiting for the tap I know is sure to come. It is a habit with me because it reminds me I have done my job. It is never the score, or the key ball or the money ball that causes this reaction. It is my shot and nothing else. My focus is always the same on each shot.

Chapter 25



My Whole Life Is A Contest . . . Why Should It Be Any Different On Tournament Day!

Once we enter this fine game, we then become the game. Our life becomes a contest every day. We are in the tournament of life. That is who we are. We must think of ourselves as being in the game. We are part of the double elimination tournament. So when

tournament day rolls around, there is no difference in the way we feel about things. This is not a day to become anxious. It is a day like all the rest, like yesterday, the day before and tomorrow. My whole life is a contest. Why should it be any different on tournament day?

I have taught you to look at the key ball as just another shot. That is what it is. The key ball does not know it is the key ball. The eight ball does not know it is the eight ball. The pocket has no idea of the score. There is no relevance to tournament day. It is simply a day in which you perform. Once you can see it this way, your performance will improve. You will gain the freedom you need to shoot the shots that win games.

Develop the mental habits of thinking like a contestant every single day. Get used to it. Relax with the idea that you are a tournament player, a league player, so when the time comes for you to set up, you are not going to add pressure by thinking things are different. You will give no power to the idea that tournament day holds a different meaning. This is what you want. Make up your mind that you will enjoy your day at the tournament and be free to shoot the shots you have been trained to shoot. We can't all win the tournament. Leave the winning to the Pool Gods. Your job is to perform.

During the course of a tournament there are a lot of fine performances, but there is only one winner. You have it in your power to focus on playing your best game. When you can stand up and shoot the shots with the “*I came to win*” mind set, you are turning in a fine performance.

Develop a love of the game, a respect for your opponent. Be glad that you are a pool player and take every match seriously. Don’t waste time in matches that have no meaning, such as social games with friends who are not in training. Be the special person you are. The way you practice speaks volumes about who you are. Your performance expresses your real self. We come to the table as champions. The results do not define us. They are merely a consequence to our ongoing actions.

The way you practice is the way you will play. Be attentive in enterprise. Be focused on what you are doing. Be tranquil in all your efforts. Lean in and shoot the shot you are facing and move on from there. There are no results in something that is continuous. Your life is one continuous journey. Life is one joyous ongoing party! “God I love this game!”

Chapter 26

Find Your Way To The Top - Goal Setting

Finding your way to the top means you must master the fundamentals. Without sure footing, you will never reach the summit. All great champions are the masters of the little things. So often students will say, “Show me the advanced stuff,” but it’s the routine shots that get you to the finals. Unless you are willing to spend endless hours on the basics of pocket billiards, will find your chance to spend time in the winner’s circle very slim. As your mentor, I ask you to develop an intimate relationship with the remarkable 2-7-2 series along with the five shots. You must work on these basic shots over and over until they become ingrained within your automatic response system. You are very lucky to have this wonderful program.

I have had professional players tell me that they now have a straight shot to the top because of the 2-7-2 program. They have something that will give them the inner strength to survive the tough life of a professional pool player. When you ask me what to practice, I will always tell you to go back to the fundamentals. Go to the 2-7-2 and the five shots.

The reasons we set goals is to keep us focused on the task at hand. Whatever that task is, we must understand why we want this in the first place. What will this make of me? If I am successful with my goals, what will I become? The why is the energy that drives us toward our goals. We are pure potentiality. No matter what we become, we still have the potential to move on. The why of it all is the motivation that will carry us to the top. The thrill of winning is over within a short time. We are then focused on the next tournament with hardly any time to enjoy the so-called “fruits of victory”. You’ve heard the question, “What have you done for me lately?” The guy who hits the grand slam and then goes 0 for 20 is booed. A championship does not last. It is the “*what we become*” that lasts. Our goal should be about what we are to become when we reach that goal. What will it make of me? This is the payoff.

Be clear about why you want to reach this goal. What are you trying to become? When you set a goal, be sure to arrange milestones along the way so you can measure your progress. In order to reach the goal, you must become something. Observe your journey. Are you evolving towards your goals? Are your actions those of the person you want to become? If you desire to win a championship, then you should act like a champion today. If you aspire to become the best in your league, then you should act like the best in your league. You must become your goals in order to reach your goals.

If your goal is to become a winner, keep in mind that winners don't complain or moan about bad luck. Winners make their own breaks. If you become a winner, what will you be? That is where the joy comes from, not from the prize money or trophy. You are a champion, therefore you are the ultimate winner. Be strong in your desire to move to the top. Be strong in practice. Your method of practice tells us who you are.

I had a student rise to the level of world class. She has a room full of trophies. She told me to keep them. She viewed the trophies as something she had done. Trophies don't tell you who you are, they tell you what you have done. In 1995 she was the BCA Open Woman's Eight Ball Champion. She is an engineer today. Since the trophies do not tell her who she is, they have no real value to her today. She is a champion in the truest sense. She understood the *why* in her journey and her journey is ongoing. Life to her is a never-ending story. You can see Suzanne in my instructional videos. She turns in a remarkable performance in [The Monk 101 Volume One](#) video.

If you find yourself crying over missed opportunities, you are not becoming the goal you set up for yourself. If you whine about the playing conditions, you have strayed from the path. Champions do not complain. They face the task before them. They do not shy away from

the difficulties of the journey. A champion takes on one mountain at a time. A champion does not complain about how big the mountain is. He tells the mountain how big his heart is. Monitor yourself. Be sure you are what you say you are. Your goals are your best friends. What we become in this game gives us our greatest reward. Strive to reach the next level. Commit yourself to this task. Use the fundamentals to move towards that level you deserve so much, the level that best describes who you are. Leave the sandbagging to the losers. Let the losers live in the muck of mediocrity. Stand tall because you must. You would have it no other way.

Develop the personal integrity that will sustain you during a difficult challenge. Be true to yourself. Your integrity will not allow you to slack off during practice. Your integrity will force you to give one hundred percent in everything you do. You will never be a lazy player. You will never take a shortcut. You are tough. You are difficult to play because of your high degree of integrity. People know you and love you for your strength. It is not the trophies that make people love you. It is who you have become. What winning those trophies has turned you into creates the respect you now enjoy. When setting a goal, discover the why in it and then march towards victory with the same assurance you have always had. Be secure with the knowledge that this will turn you into the greatest player alive.

Put pressure on yourself when you set your goals. Demand of yourself that essence of what your goals are. If you are to be a winner, begin acting like one right now. Declare your goals. Live up to them. Try to imagine what these goals will bring you. Attach a reward to your goals. What does it mean to others that you become this person? Link this happiness and respect to each effort you give in the striving to reach your goals. Find value in this experience. How will you feel when you reach your goals? With each milestone reached, celebrate your success. Move to the level and celebrate.

And by all means, thank the league director for providing you with this wonderful format from which you can follow the path. It is important for you to be a great league member as well as a great league player. You must be able to measure your progress and playing in the league gives you that opportunity. Thank the league director and the owner of the place at which you play. Stand out as a true champion in everything you do. There are winners and losers in this game and the score does not determine which you are. Your conduct and actions do. This is the blueprint of you. Let those who know you tell others, "Here comes a champion." When you walk through the door, let others say, "This one does not throw games away." I want you to strive to be a seven. Enter the arena where you belong. Take your rightful place in this game. If you are not a seven right now, act like one. Learn to pace yourself and work for each and every shot. Develop a rhythm that allows you to focus on what you are doing. Strive for peak performance. Win and lose with the same grace. The winning and the losing are just part of the process. They do not define who you are. Our personal definition comes from what we think of ourselves. Remember, you cannot follow the path until you become the path and that starts today. Today you are a champion and a champion pays attention to the simple shots and strokes.

One evening I was at practice playing matches with fellow league members. One of the players pointed out a guy standing near the doorway and commented, "See him, he is a champion. If he comes over here get ready to lose." I was on a hot streak and hoped this great player would not challenge the table. After a while he walked over and put up his quarter. We played and had a great time. I lost but I got to spend time with a true gentleman. He was a real champion and I never forgot the lessons he taught me. He even took the time to show me a few things and help with a stance problem. The mark of a real

champion is not found in the amount of wins he has under his belt. It is found in his heart. You can begin your quest for that championship right now. You can begin by declaring – “I am a champion!” It is all in the heart.

Always believe that you deserve good breaks. Always believe that you take advantage of these fine opportunities. Hold your head high. Stand tall. Be strong. Take on the characteristics of a champion. These are your goals, therefore this is what you are.

Write a letter to the president of this wonderful association and tell them what a great format this is. Share your appreciation and by doing so you strengthen it. Don't complain about the league rules and regulations. Let the directors do their job. Remember they have years of experience.

Chapter 27

Know What You Want

Having set my emotional goal it was only natural that I set some material goals as well. I wanted to own a real nice cue. I wanted a nice car so I could travel to tournaments. I wanted to create a nice income for myself so I would not have to worry about money. I remember the days when if I did not make it to the money round, I did not eat on the way home. So I set some material goals and went into action. Along the way I stopped to measure how things were going to see if I needed to make some adjustments or change something that was not working. It takes courage to make adjustments. I've known people who remained in bad jobs all their lives because they lacked the courage to make an adjustment or change something that was not working.

Anytime you set a goal, regardless of how profound it is, you owe it to yourself to personally believe that it will happen. You must have the faith that no matter what the challenge is, you will succeed. You would not have the idea if you did not have the ability to make it happen. This ability is a state of mind. You must strive to reach that state of mind. Become a personal part of your dream.

Look around the pool hall and pick someone who is a winner. Observe his personality traits and determine why you think he is a winner. Then try to be like that person by developing the same characteristics. I follow Ewa Mataya / Lawrence and Tiger Woods. I admire these players for their competitive spirit and dedication to their game. They are both lovers of pocket billiards and both are fine people. They compete hard but are gracious in defeat. They are confident knowing that the outcome of a match does not determine who they are. So I set this as my emotional goal. I must demand of myself faithful practice and a commitment to the game. When I fall off the mark, I stop and get myself back in my program. It is when I am faithful to my goals that I experience the most joy and happiness.

Sometimes I sit on the beach and mentally picture my hero. I am relaxed. I can hear the sound of the ocean beating upon the sand. I imagine the best characteristic about my hero and ask myself – “Is this me?” I am satisfied that I am on the right road.

What will you be like after living your goals for one year?” Picture yourself as already reaching your goals. What will it be like? For me, I will enjoy my tournament experience. I won’t embarrass myself. I will perform at an acceptable level. I will meet old friends and make new ones. My book sales will be great. My workshops will help lots of players. I am committed to helping pool players all over the world. I am committed to bringing my game up to a world class level. I am committed to being the best selling author in the pocket billiard world, therefore I see myself in that role.

When you arrive at your goals there is a payoff. You become your goals. So it is important to create goals that will give you happiness and peace of mind. Close your eyes and take a moment to listen to what you want your opponents to say about you.

Along the way you will rub shoulders with some great teachers. These are players who can help you. They can teach you things that you would not ordinarily learn. Be aware of these mentors. They travel in our circle. And they are willing to share their strength, hope and experience. Treat these generous people with the respect they deserve. Open your mind to new things. You will be surprised with the way you learn very important concepts of this game. Learning is a gift and it comes to us when we least expect it.

It is vital that you are clear about what you want for yourself. You must be able to see the picture clearly and be unsatisfied with mediocre results. Along the way there will be milestones in your game. For instance, at one point you will be able to do the 2-7-2+5 ten times in a row. It may take awhile but this would be measurable progress. You

could shoot fifty balls in the “touch no rails” exercise found in The Lesson. I demand seventy plus balls without a miss in order to feel like I am clear about my goals. Why do I set this goal? So I can feel good about my game. In your league you have set a goal as to what level you want to achieve. You must check the milestones along the way to see that you are going in the right direction. I like to put double figures in the midterm exam. Why is that a personal goal? So I can feel good about my game. If I am turning in twelve or better, I will feel good about entering a tournament. There is joy in knowing you have a clear chance to win. I desire to play at world class because that makes me happy. If one can perform what one teaches, he would be a far better teacher.

I try not to measure my progress by how many racks I run. When I am focused on running racks, I sometimes make foolish decisions on how to play the game. I am more aware of the victories I get. I am aggressive player but not a stupid one. Running racks is way overrated. Winning the game has a higher value. *I came to win.*

Set your goals. Get started. Measure how you are doing and make adjustments along the way. When you establish your goals, determine the “Why?” in it all, and be sure to become what you desire.

Believe the things you say. A well spoken word is fruitful for the one who does it. Search your heart and declare your personal goals. Put them to the “Why?” test and take action. You will be well on your way to success. Your intentions will give you the desire to follow the tough road. Your desire will give you the energy to stay in the battle.

Along this wonderful journey we will face many defeats. We will surely encounter disappointment. It goes with the territory. In the field of competition, we face the agony of defeat far more often than the thrill of victory. So we need to be clear on how to handle these disappointments. In my case, I am glad my opponent gets to experience the thrill of victory. It is his turn and I don't want to say anything to take that special moment away from him. I will congratulate him and wish the best for the rest of the tournament. If it is my first loss, I always say, "I will meet you in the finals." A real winner is gracious, regardless of the outcome. I can be gracious as long as it does not happen too often.

In knowing what we want, we need also to know why we want it. In the chapter on goal setting, I cover this subject. Knowing why you want something gives you the energy to pursue it.

Make a list of the top five things you really want in life. Notice that the things you desire are in the order you desire them. For instance the most important thing you want is listed first. From there it goes to the next important thing and on down through the list. This is a valuable piece of writing. Keep it with you and refer to it from time to time.

I want confidence

I want purpose in what I do.

I want to focus on each and every shot like it was the key ball.

I want to enjoy my experience at the table.

I want to learn something in every match I play.

If you watch great players like Tiger Woods, you will see that he is crystal clear about what he wants. He does not let anything distract him. He stays focused on his task. He has purpose in what he does. He enjoys his experience and he learns.

So I guess you could say, "The Monk is just like Tiger Woods" – and I'd go along with that.

From time to time I pull out my list to see if I am still on-line with my personal goals regarding my efforts. If I have strayed away, I can then get myself back to who and what I would like to be. Knowing what you want goes a long way in helping you get it. Once you get it, no one can ever take it away.

I know what I want in this game. For instance, I want to be an aggressive player, make some tough shots, and rip off the victory from a tough place on the table. This would give me a lot of pleasure. I also want to express the *I came to win* attitude on each and every turn. It is important to me to honor what I have become. When I stray away from this, I become unhappy and we don't want that. Unhappiness is not allowed.

Knowing what you want should extend to other areas of your life. Your health is important. Pay attention to the kind of life-style you live and how it effects your personal health.

Your financial life. Be sure you are a blessed person who knows how to increase your financial position in this journey. Knowing what you want in this area can draw it to you. I am a little vague about this – but I do know I am not anxious to spend time worrying about money. I want to do whatever I want to do and not worry about paying for it. It has worked out for me on that level. I seem to be able to go anywhere I want to. I plan trips I cannot afford, and things just work out.

In this great game we are drawn to other benefits from being a pool player. It seems to be a good pool player, we must pay attention to all areas of our life. And this is a good thing. I am grateful to this game for what it has done for me. When I decided to become a top player, I found myself trying to become a top person as well. After all we want to enjoy our journey and if we are not honest, we will invite all sorts of anxieties into our lives. Being a good player has given me some peace of mind.

The game of eight ball forces up to perform both offense and defense and this come from our heart. From who we are.

Chapter 28

I Know What I Want

When you write down your list of things you want in this game, make sure you add a timeline to each of these goals. I set up my exercise goals such as the thirteen-ball exercise. I wanted to be able to run off the entire thirteen balls in six months. Then I wanted to do it back to back, and finally I wanted to do it four times in a row. I checked my progress from time to time and made a few adjustments along the way and finally arrived at my goals. It was a real nice experience to finally be able to accomplish this task.

I did this with other things as well. Like my health and my weight. I want to build endurance, so I exercised regularly and gained the benefits of this effort. My financial goals were met in this same way. I paid attention everyday. It became a habit and after a while my efforts became automatic. Build a habit and reap a character. Reap a character and fulfill your destiny.

We need to apply this principal in our run outs as well. Know what you want before you begin and finish the game. Know where you want to end up before you decide to play a safety. Know which ball you are playing to and how you want to end your turn at the table. To often we simply begin to pocket balls with no plan in sight. By taking the time to develop these skills, you will find yourself in the winners' circle more often. How many times have you walked back to your chair knowing you did the wrong thing? If you know you made a mistake than you had the skills and knowledge to avoid that mistake in the first place. You lacked the habitual ability to know what you want and were simply shooting balls off the table.

When we are unsure of what we want to do or how we want to run the table, we are out of stroke. In our minds we cannot anticipate our next shot. If you get in this situation where you are looking twice, three times at a shot, you are struggling with your stroke. You have lost that feeling. When this happens to me I go to the *sound-feeling* technique. I listen to the sound of my stroke and feel. If I shoot this shot and move the cue ball to such and such location, what will it sound like?

I visualize that sound, and then try to duplicate it. This helps me when I am tired from a full day of competition.

I lean into a shot, focus on my senses, listen to the sound of the hit, and deliver the stroke. This works well when I am tired and can't seem to concentrate. I use shots from The Lesson. I name them, visualize the stroke and results and repeat what is in my mind. I have managed to stagger through the finals this way.

Try to narrow your goals down to the top three. Write them down and repeat them everyday. Take action on what you want and measure your progress. You will need to make adjustments from time to time.

When I begin my practice I repeat my top three goals.

I want confidence.

I want purpose.

I focus on each and every shot.

When I begin the match, I do the same thing.

You will find that your league play improves dramatically when you begin to apply these principles. In my experience I have been able to beat many players who were more skilled than me. I have been able to beat them consistently over a long period of time. Even though they lost, they continued to play me because they knew they were better. But I was able to come out on top over and over. The reason was simply that I knew what I wanted and how to get it. I was not worried about winning or losing, missing or making shots. I just went about my business. That was the difference between winning and losing. I used my skills freely. My opponent was concerned about other things, while I was concerned about getting the most out of my ability. For the longest time I could not figure out why I was able to beat these players.

When I began to train Suzanne Bosselman, I understood these principles. Suzanne became “PLAYER OF THE YEAR” in the first year on the New England Nine-Ball Tour. She didn’t need to spend years on the tour developing her skills. Knowing what you want will unlock many doors for you. Knowing why you want it will allow you to walk right on in. Remember what I say in my I Came To Win tape. Right thinking, right action, right mind development will lead you to the finals.

Chapter 29



I Enjoy The Fruits Of Victory

Sue and I hiked a long and difficult trail in the wilderness of Canada. It was a grueling test of our will and stamina. When we came to the end, we both had tears in our eyes as we were so proud of finishing the journey. On a grassy hill overlooking a deserted lake, we stopped to

enjoy the fruits of our victory. We savored that wonderful moment knowing we had succeeded with our plan. These are the rewards of a job well done.

And so it is with a game well played or a match won with determination and strength of will. We need to take a moment to enjoy our time in the winner's circle. We need to relax and share this great feeling with those who are close to us. We need to enjoy the fruits of victory.

Develop a habit of taking time to feel the joy of finishing a race. Take some time to relax and savor a game well played. Train yourself to recognize when you have finished the run out and won the game. After a win, don't rush to the table to smash the rack. Let the victory linger in you mind. It is yours to enjoy. You will know when it is time to stand at the firing line and prepare to break open the rack for another run at the prize.

For many of us the match is a mid-term exam on our progress in this game. We are tested to see if we can pass the test. Have we made progress? Do we deserve to win?

When you become a winner, people treat you with respect. This respect is enjoyed long after the trophy has become dull with the passing of time. You walk into the room and you are greeted by players who respect you for who you are. People point you out to others. This is worth far more than the money you have won. To gain the respect of your colleagues is the dream of every competitor. When a winner walks in the room, there is always someone who announces it. You'll hear, "Tiger just came in." The fruit of all your hard work is to be pointed out by another player and to be noticed because you are a winner.

I was having dinner with some friends and a fine league player walked in the diner. I felt compelled to say, "See that guy over there, he is one of the best players in the area." We acknowledge those who have mastered this game because we respect them. Enjoy this recognition of your hard work. Be a fine player and by all means be generous with those who struggle with this game. Share your strength with others. You will never be forgotten.

Chapter 30



I Am Relaxed On Every Shot

Willie Mosconi had some advice for players who struggle with their game. Someone asked, “what should I do to become a great player?” Willie would answer, “Don’t miss.”

Willie was the greatest player of all time. His grand average in the game of straight pool was nineteen. In other words, during his career he averaged nineteen balls every time he walked to the table. The player who was second had an all time average of eight. That was the difference between Willie and the rest of the field. He holds the record for running one hundred and fifty and out. He did it three times in one tournament. There is no one who can compare with this legend. He had even more advice for a struggling player. When asked about shooting pool he said, “Shoot soft and then softer.”

In the game of eight ball we really need to make the shot we are shooting and shoot soft and softer. Eight ball is a game of control. We play position to zones. We play to break up small clusters. We play around other balls. We need to make decisions while in the heat of battle. We need to be confident in the choices we make. But most of all we need to shoot softly, and as Willie says, “Don’t miss.” Be willing to make the ball and end up with a bank shot if that is all you have on the table. In the game of eight ball you should be willing to shoot three different bank shots. The cross corner, the cross side, and the full table. These are bank shots you should not shy away from. You should be confident in these shots. Do not play position off bank shots. When you use english, you affect the object ball and give yourself too many chances to miss. I use the term “cinch the shot” every time I bank a ball.

Lean into a shot and let your muscles relax. Pay attention to your buttock muscles. Focus on the release of tension and feel the tightness drain from your body. When you reach a state of physical relaxation, deliver the winning shot. This is part of my anchoring program. I know when I am ready to shoot by the way the tenseness leaves my body. So I lean over and wait until I am ready. Because I have anchored the keys from so many hours of practice, I sometimes have to get back up and reset as I did not reach that state of readiness to deliver the stroke. Practice this each day. You must be aware of the state of your body when facing a difficult shot. Do not make it harder that it is by tensing up. Release your tension and then shoot the shot. Sometimes I tell myself – “Straight back and straight forward.” I use this on long difficult shots. Remember Willie’s advice – “Shoot soft, then softer,” and “Don’t miss.”

If you are missing shots I suggest you do the “pile rocks” exercise found in The Lesson. It will do wonders for your game. “Pile rocks” for a few weeks. Be faithful in your practice. It says alot about who you are.

From time to time you should take a moment to feel the desire you have in your soul. You are what you desire and herein is where you find your will. Your will leads you to your destiny.

We must set aside some time to work on these skills. They do not come to us automatically. Relaxation skills take a long time to perfect but it is worth the effort. Every time you tense up during a shot, you weaken your skills. When you relax during a shot, you strengthen them. So we must set up a program where we can work on our relaxation skills.

Run sets of three. Run them in order. See the pattern and make it a point to go through a specific relaxation ritual on each shot. Go through this procedure each and every time.

Walk around the table, see the shot you want to shoot. Lean into the shot with your perfect stance. Rock back and forth, relax your buttock muscles. Deliver the stroke. Stand up and rate yourself from one to ten. When you rate an eight or above, tap yourself on the hip and enjoy the moment. Stop! Become one with this experience. Strengthen it by thinking about how it feels to deliver a smooth relaxed stroke. Then move to the next shot. You are developing habits that will serve you for all time and help you win more games. Good habits are not acquired without effort. Develop this skill and I will see you in the finals.

On each shot, when you lean over and sight down the shaft, try to feel the connection with the target line. In other words, feel the line from your eyes to the target. This connects you. When the line is within your vision, say the words, "I'm connected," and then shoot the shot. Stand up and enjoy the moment.

If one acts with a tranquil mental state, ease follows him. We are in control of our thought. Thoughts form mental states. Control your thoughts and you control your mental states. Control your mental states and you control your destiny. Seek relaxation on every shot.

If you are totally relaxed, you will focus on every shot. If you experience any form of anxiety you will not be free to focus. You will be distracted and therefore, you will not be able to deliver the pure stroke that wins games. Focus is a skill we must all take the time to develop. We can do this by anchoring certain keys when we are successful with each shot. Knowing how to shoot a certain shot and knowing you can make the shot will give you the confidence to deliver that winning stroke. It is not about making the ball, it is about execution. If you can hit the cue ball with little or no interference you will have a better chance of success. I write in my book [Point The Way](#), "The stroke, minus the interference, equals the shot."

During my practice session I will tap my hip when I feel like I delivered a smooth relaxed stroke. In this way I am anchoring what it feels like to succeed. This is a personal reward for a job well done. It is also a reminder to stay focused. Practice is basically a reminder of good work. You are teaching your stroke muscles to remember certain keys. If you are inattentive in practice, you are anchoring polluted perceptions. When the time to deliver the winning stroke comes up, you will not succeed. Therefore you must have a good practice session in order to build your strength in this great game.

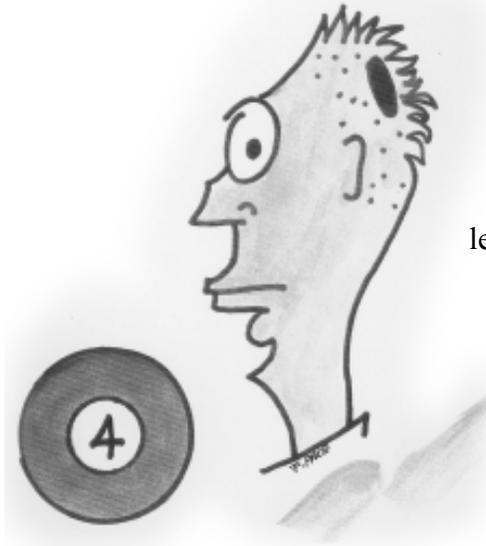
The main cause of a breakdown in our game is distraction. We are not focused, therefore we miss. Mid-level players have the same skills that great players have, however they lack focus. They do not give one hundred percent to the shot. On some shots they are lazy. On others they give up before they shoot. They simply don't work as hard as fully developed players. They also look ahead and see problems that do not exist. They talk themselves out of shots, they project a loss before it has happened. How many times have you walked away from the table saying to yourself, "If I had worked harder for that shot, I could have run the table." After you miss you can see where the balls have opened up for you and you could have run out. This is the difference between the level C player and the A player. The A player works harder than the C player.

In order to finish run outs with strong focus skills you must work on them. Just as you may sharpen your draw skills, cut shots or bank shots, you need to sharpen your focus skills. Concentration is a skill. You must work on it from time to time. You must be aware of how clearly you see things and how hard you are working on each shot.

I have a system in which I am willing to “*take my medicine*”. Most of the time when I miss a shot it is because I do not know where the cue ball is going. I am not sure this is the right shot for me. In other words, I am not fully committed to the shot. I don’t know how it will turn out, therefore I am reluctant to shoot it. When I come into a situation like this I simply tell myself it is time to “*take my medicine*”. Shoot the shot and take whatever the table give you. In other words, don’t miss the shot. Shoot it and see what you have next. You may end up with a bank shot or a combination, but at least you will have shot. I win games with “*take my medicine*” shots.

So often we get caught up in running the perfect rack. I’ve seen players run a rack and then complain about position or how they got out of line. Running racks is a tough business. When we run out, we should be happy no matter how we succeed in the run out. After a run out you have the chance to anchor some great skills. When I complete a rack, I take a moment to instill that feeling in my subconscious. I would love my mind to think that running racks is a natural thing for me. A win is a win. Since we are concerned with becoming a winner, we should use a victory to instill some purposeful habits in our minds.

Chapter 31



I Am Not Preoccupied

I should be glad that I am at this level. Now I need to find a way to deal with this new and exciting position in which I have put myself. I should see it as a new challenge. I know I will overcome choking or key ball syndrome. Of course I will. I have overcome so many things in this great game. I am now

ready to build my strength and courage. I am ready to become a champion.

Now is the time to really lay down some rhythm principles. I will find my rhythm and use this pace to make the key ball. Sometimes in practice I count – one, two, three and shoot. Breathe in, lean over, breathe out and shoot. Simply shoot the ball. I like to say – “I don’t know if I am going to make this shot or not. There are two things that are going to happen here, I could miss the shot or I could make it. These are the only two things that can happen. I don’t know which it will be, but I do know one thing. I know I will look good shooting the shot.” Then I add, with total confidence, “God I love this game!”

Do not ignore “key ball syndrome”. One of the things I did was to remember the pain that was in store for me when I missed the key ball. I could clearly feel the pain of choking. It was an embarrassment. I lost the game. My opponent was laughing and I felt like a loser. To choke was painful, very painful. So I had a lot of reasons to overcome this weakness. I wanted to change this syndrome more that a man who is held under water wants air. Once I could feel this pain, I was willing to interrupt this train of thought. The pain was my leverage against myself. In order to change a bad habit, we need leverage and a good strong reason to make the effort at personal change. I knew I needed

to stop worrying about it. When I ran down to the eight ball, I developed a habit of thinking I might choke. That which I feared had come upon me and I would choke. This was a pattern in my behavior. Missing the eight ball was ingrained in my mind. I needed to change this thought process or continue to lose.

So I tried closing my eyes when I shot the money ball. I named the stroke, the speed and the pocket in which I was going to shoot the ball. This way I was not thinking of it as the key ball. It also reduced my fear of losing because I was not preoccupied with results. I was not concerned with winning and losing. My job was to deliver the stroke for this particular shot. And this I did.

Once I changed the way I looked at the money ball, I created an entirely new association with the key ball. I reduced my fear, and let the shot shoot itself and was not preoccupied with results. This was within my ability.

Reaching the key ball stage was an opportunity to become a really fine player. Only the good players experience key ball syndrome. So I welcomed this time to work through it. In other words, I did not fight or complain about it. I embraced it much like a martial arts student uses the energy of the enemy to defeat him. I welcomed key ball syndrome so I could move on. As long as I was fighting this I was stuck in a rut. Once I let it go and simply moved on, I found myself finishing my run outs.

When it is your turn to perform, you need to have command of your state of emotions. It is your responsibility to manage your state of mind. Some think they can do this with drugs and alcohol. Players will tell you they shoot better after they have a few beers or pop a few pills. All they are doing is controlling their state of mind. That form of control will eventually lead to personal destruction. You can maintain control without the aid of pills or booze. Make up your mind that you

are in charge of your emotions. You decide what requires focus. You will not allow negative thoughts to invade your mind and interfere with your performance.

Control the way you move your physical body and you can control your state of mind. Step up to the table with confidence. Walk briskly. Be glad it's your turn. Move with conviction. Don't allow your shoulders to sag forward. Keep your head held high. Don't lean over with defeat. Stand tall, move confidently. Keep your mind clear of negative thoughts. Don't pay attention to doubts. Remember, what you pay attention to, you strengthen.

I've had a series of games in which I could do nothing right. Everything I tried turned out wrong. My safety play was laughable. My shot making was not even serious. Everything I tried turned into failure. At one point, I hoped my opponent would make every shot so I would not have to go to the table. When he ran to the eight ball, I was rooting for him to win so I would not have to try the run out. My head was full of negative ideas. My slumping body told the story. Has anyone ever asked you, "Why do you look so down?" People can read you by your physical gestures. They can see your attitude just by the way you are sitting. Sometimes I just smile. I smile brightly and I can feel the confidence come back. I try to look confident when I walk to the table.

When you are down you might try to simply "*wing*" a shot. I fire away at a very tough shot and it splits the pocket. All of a sudden I brighten up. I stand up straight and smile. The successful risk gave me a new perspective on how I am shooting. The shot helped me change the state of my mind. It helped me get back into a rhythm.

Remember your brain secretes endorphins which give you calm state of mind. You can control this. In fact, you must control this.

You must become rock solid. Take the emotion out of your face. Settle in and focus on what is to be done. What do you really want to accomplish with this run out?

Focus on what you want to do. Each shot calls for all of your abilities. Don't give in to anxiety or preoccupation with results.

You must reach a state of mind where you have very little emotion. I do not react to anything in this game. You would not be able to determine the way the match is going by the look on my face. I save my emotions for the final game. I go about my business with a purpose – that is to be clear about my intentions and how they give you energy. In my book, I Came To Win, I wrote about how powerful your intentions are and how they give you energy. What you intend to do gives you desire. Your desire gives you energy. So you must be clear about what you want to do and go about the task of doing it. As long as you are certain about your intentions, you will be free to shoot the shots.

If I ask you to measure your state of mind on a scale of one to ten, where would you be? If you were faced with a tough run out, what state of mind would you need to be in to succeed? Are you in that state of mind? If I am facing a tough opponent, I need to be at a level nine or ten if I want a chance to succeed. Am I at that state? If not, I need to find a way to get there fast or I will be sitting on the sidelines watching my opponent perform.

Controlling your state of mind is a skill. You can develop this skill through meditation. I have tapes of exercises you can do to bring your level up to nine or ten. Try to determine what level you are at when you perform. Sometimes on the final shot you are so nervous that your level goes down to a three or a four. You won't win many games at level three. You must be free to perform on all shots at level nine or ten. At level three, your stroke will not be good enough to succeed.

Develop a pace in which you walk around the table at the same speed. I always walk in the same direction. I arrive at the shot and stand back to observe it. I stand erect visualizing what I want to accomplish and deciding what stroke will make this happen. I am in

charge of how I move around the table and this is in the direct relation to building my confidence with the shot. I am not worried about missing. That is something that does not relate to me. I am only focusing on what I need to do to experience success. Doing the right thing is all that matters to me and doing it at a high level. I want to exercise my skills at level nine or ten.

Create physical gestures that will snap you into a high state of alertness. I breathe deeply. I take a deep breath and this alerts my senses that I am going to a high level state. My mind habitually reacts to this move. It is a trigger that puts me into action. Find your own trigger. You can manage yourself to move to a high level simply by controlling your physical gestures. As Marcia says, “Do not let anybody rent space in your head!”

I am sure we have all asked ourselves from time to time, “Why do I miss the key ball?” We wonder why we choke so often. Actually, choking once is too many times. It leaves an indelible mark on your mind. You ask yourself, “Why do I miss the key ball?” You must believe that you are going to miss. You must believe you are going to choke because if it were not a concern of yours, you would not ask.

Anytime you ask a question, your brain will search for an answer. It will not come back and say, “Oh, you didn’t really choke.” It will give you an answer as to why you choke or miss the key ball. By asking a question, you are proposing a fact and the answer will reinforce your awareness of missing the key ball. It will actually strengthen it. The answer will make your reason stronger and practically guarantee your choking the next time you get into that situation. You must be careful of the questions you ask of your brain, for your brain does not debate your belief system.

You must find a way to reduce the strength of your belief that you will choke. Reduce the fear you have, otherwise it will get stronger and stronger. There was a time when I could not shoot the money ball without missing it. It got so bad that I had to shoot the eight ball with my eyes closed. That is the only way I could make it. With my eyes closed all I could focus on was the stroke. I could not see the eight ball, therefore I only saw the shot. I shot the money ball with my eyes closed for a long time. It was the only way I could win. I took the focus off the shot. I did not believe I would choke because it was only a shot. I changed the way I believed. I actually changed the value of the way I saw the shot.

Believing that you will choke is irrational. You must change that. You can change the value of your choking by giving it a new meaning. Choking means that you have become a good player. After all, you are good enough to run to the ball you choke on. Getting to this money ball is a relatively new experience for you. You are now running balls. You are getting into a position where you can become nervous. I often said, "If all the shots were the first ball in my run, I would be a great player!" Now I have arrived at a point where I am running balls. Choking is a new thing for me. It is a new experience. I am proud of the fact that I have arrived at this new level and happy I am getting myself to the pressure situation.

When I am standing over a difficult shot or key ball in the run, instead of crying over it, I smile and say, "God I love this game!"

Sometimes I will rise out of my chair and stare at my opponent. I try to create a little hostility or anger. Not so much between us, but from me towards him/her. This pumps me up. I imagine that this guy is trying to beat me. He is trying to make me lose. As long as he holds the cue in his hand, he is my enemy. So I focus on winning the match and keeping him away from victory.

I use the four, sixteen, eight breathing method I outlined in Point The Way. It floods my brain with oxygen and gives me the peace of mind I need to focus on what I am doing. When I am alone I use the breath of fire. I am in control of my state of mind. If I try to win when my mine is all over the place, I will surely fail.

If you focus on the score, you will experience a physical reaction. If you are far ahead, you will find yourself relaxing. If you are far behind, you will find yourself tensing up. In both cases your focus has caused a physical reaction. So you need to be in complete control. Don't allow your state of mind to be controlled by outside circumstances. Stay in charge!

When you focus on anything, your brain begins to ask questions. The brain will not remain idle when questioned. For instance, if you focus on the score, your brain will respond with relative feedback and cause you to react to this information. You must be careful of the questions you ask of your brain. If you ask, "Why am I such a loser?", your brain will give you an answer. It will search your experiences and come up with a series of reasons as to why you are a loser. Focus on the shot at hand and nothing more. In Zen, we only exist during the breath we are taking. That is the only reality we consider, therefore we can only focus on the shot at hand. Stay in the present because that is all you have. Do not become preoccupied with results.

In the Dhammapada we find – "If, with tranquil perception, one speaks or acts, thence ease follows as a shadow that never departs." I have recorded a series of compact disks featuring this meditative material. You can order Immersion 101 and begin to train your mind to be free from preoccupation with results.

Chapter 32

Chicken Eagle

There once was an eagle who had fallen from his nest. A farmer picked up the baby bird and placed him in his chicken coup with his chickens. Day by day the eagle grew among his chicken friends. He ate like chickens, walked like chickens and he even tried to lay eggs like his chicken friends. His chicken friends treated him just like he was one of them. And for many years, he thought he was a chicken.

But somewhere in his mind, he knew he was different. One day he looked up in the sky and there was an eagle gliding the wind currents. Something stirred within him. For a brief moment he thought he could fly like that eagle. He told a few of his chicken friends about his thoughts.

“Don’t be silly”, they told him, “You’re a chicken like us. You’ll never fly in the sky like that big bird. Get those thoughts out of your head, you belong here.”

But his heart did not agree. For a long time he thought about flying. He thought about gliding through the air high above. And he thought about devouring one of his chicken friends right on the spot. He was different. He could feel it. He could sense it. He was not like the rest of his family. True – he loved his cousins. He loved the way they walked. He loved the way they clucked. He appreciated his chicken friends. But he knew he was different and he could not settle for a chicken way of life. He had to have something more.

So when they were not looking, he practiced flying. For a long time he couldn’t even get off the ground. And when he fell back, there was a chicken somewhere telling him to quit trying. “You are one of us, stay on the ground where you belong.”

One day the eagle lifted off the ground and flew through the sky. He flew high above his chicken home and could see that he did not belong in the chicken coup. He spread his wings and flew. He touched the soul that was the real part of him. He came face to face with his own magnificence. For a brief moment, he had an encounter with who he was.

After a short trip, he landed back in the chicken coup where he had grown up. His chicken friends would not talk to him. They shunned him. They did not want to hear about his flight. They did not want to hear about his achievements. They ignored him.

The eagle was sad. For the first time he felt alone. His friends were not talking to him. No one wanted to share his excitement. No one seemed interested. He decided he would never fly again. He would never dare to be different. He was a chicken and he should act like a chicken.

Then one day he was talking to Half Beak. This was the wisest chicken in the coup. An old bird who had survived the chopping block. It had been the nieces' turn to decapitate the Sunday dinner and she missed her mark as the ax came down short and cut off half of his beak. She panicked and let her victim go. Old Half Beak ran around the coup squawking and screaming like a chicken with visions. The farmer decided to let the chicken live. He felt that it was his destiny to survive. So the old bird lived for a very long time. Half Beak learned many things in his time. He grew to be the wisest chicken on earth. And he knew that the eagle was not a chicken. He knew it all along. It was only a matter of time before the eagle would realize the difference.

“What’s got you so down?” The old bird asked.

“I don’t belong like this.” Was the eagles’ reply.

The old bird went on to explain that from time to time a person comes along who does not belong with the others. There is a difference right from the beginning. Though they try to fit in, they cannot. There will come a time when they come face to face with a decision. A defining moment in their life. Do they want to quell the champion within so they can fit in with their family? Or do they leave the nest, separate themselves from the pack and take their rightful place in the winner’s circle? “Either you define the moment, or the moment defines you.” The old bird said. “You have to make a decision and the hard part is you really don’t have the skills to choose the one that is right for you.”

The eagle thought for a moment and asked, “What do I do if I don’t have the skills to be who I really am?”

The old bird scratched half his beak and said, “You have to declare your intentions to be who you are and then begin the journey. Once you know what you want to do, you can’t look back at what you must leave behind.”

“But I don’t want to lose my family.”

“Do you want to be one of us?”

The eagle could imagine himself clucking around the yard, content with his controlled life, not being able to fly. This was not a pretty sight. It was so bad that some of his friends had to be carried up on the perch so the fox would not get them at night. They wouldn’t even jump like the young ones. This was not the life for him. This was not his life. He remembered one time how the fox had gotten in and walked right past him. He was standing on the ground and the fox did not make a move towards him. He was not the same as the rest. He did not lay eggs, he did not cluck, he did not bob his head when he walked. And he could fly! There were times when he thought about killing one of his chicken friends. The thought popped in his head. It came from nowhere. Of course he controlled his impulse, but the thought was there.

“If I leave, will I ever come back?” He asked.

“We are your family, we love you. You love us. We cannot help who we are. This is who we are and this is our life. You are different, not the same. You want more for yourself. You can come back from time to time and visit us. But as time passes by, you will leave the coup forever. You will fly like an eagle, because that is who you are. Don’t be afraid to claim your destiny.”

To hold back is the worst of choices. You will live a life of regret. You will always be unhappy. Sometimes when you make the wrong choice, you spend the rest of your life trying to make it right.

There are no words that will make a bad decision right. If you make the right choice, the choice will justify you. Be the eagle you are.

The eagle could see up through the opening of Half Beak's beak. He could see right up through to the small pea shaped brain in his chicken head. "Wow!" The young eagle thought, "Half Beak is the smartest bird in the whole world!" For a moment, the eagle wondered if he would ever be that smart. What a wise chicken, he thought.

Chapter 33

Listen to Your Voice

Within the champions heart there beats a drive. It is a subtle desire. It comes from somewhere deep within. At first it is a simple source of agitation. We do not fit in where we are. This is not what we are meant to do. Some of us branch out and explore the gentle urging. Some of us even go so far as to declare it to our friends and family. And most of us are told to leave it alone. Don't rock the boat. Stay where it is safe. Stay where you are.

"You don't want to be a seven," they say, "It is too hard to play at that level. Don't enter the tournament, you can't win. You will only lose and then you will be sad."

We hear the warnings. They make sense. But the drive within is still there. We want to reach out for something better in this game. We want this because this is who we are. If we send in our entry fee we have lifted off the ground and left the chicken coup. If we listen to our chicken friends, we will crash back down. No matter how high you fly, or how fast you soar through the air, your chicken friends will have something negative to say about it. They refuse to recognize who you are because you are different than them.

"See – I told you, you don't belong." This is what they say when you do not win the tournament. "Stay here with us, you'll never be hurt. It is safe here." Your chicken friends are quick to bring you down. They do not want to see you fly like an eagle.

If you listen to them – you will become like them. To enter a tournament is to fly. You have entered the sky when you send in your entry fee. You made your declaration. Winning does not change your declaration. Losing does not change your declaration. You left the chicken coup when you entered the arena of competition where you belong. You have joined the eagles. You have defined a moment. Don't look back. Take your rightful place among the champions. You belong.

From time to time you will run into one of your chicken friends who joined the tournament. This one will complain – cry – try to intimidate you, shark you because he does not belong. It is only a matter of time before this player ends up back in the chicken coup, where he belongs. But you are an eagle. You are a champion. You fly. You play the game like it is supposed to be played. You belong. And winning or losing does not define who you are. You define yourself by putting up the entry fee.

Chapter 34

The Anatomy of a Runout

The ability to pocket balls is just the beginning of a winning posture in the game of pocket billiards. The other piece of the puzzle is within the mind. How we view the rack has a lot to do with how we pocket the balls. If we make a mistake in our evaluation of the layout, pocketing balls will only lead us to a dead end and an open rack for our opponent.

Likewise, if we begin the runout with the wrong attitude, we will end up in a similar situation. Once we are out of rhythm, we find ourselves making poor decisions. This has nothing to do with our shooting skills. Once our opponent sees this, he will try to increase the bet. Since we are not thinking clearly, we agree to the wager in the hopes of getting our money back.

I have designed a series of steps to follow during your runout. When I was living in a cave deep in the forest of Tibet for two years without food or water, I played pool every day and came up with the following steps to a winning run out.

Be sure your cue is level when you attempt the opening break. Shoot slightly below center and increase the cue tip so it is angled upwards on the cue ball. Only those who have eyes will know this information. Shooting up on a below center hit is equivalent to shooting center. Do not hit the cue ball hard. Control is paramount. An upward hit sends the cue ball on a pure line towards the rack. A downward hit digs the cue ball into the cloth. And when it makes contact with the stack, it is actually off the playing surface.

Affirmation #41

"I seek the sound of my stroke."

This hit propels the one ball into the cloth and into the remaining balls. You have an upward, downward, upward, downward reaction and thus your consistency is left to chance. Purity is what we are after. I made five nine balls with this break in one match.

You must relax. Tell yourself to relax. With the balls spread across the table from a fine break, walk around and reach a relaxation state before you begin your runout. Do not proceed until you are ready.

Have you ever scattered the balls with a great break only to have your opponent walk away with the excuse he had to go to the bathroom? Then you took the time to study the layout. By the time he returned, you were ready. You took the time. Always take enough time to be prepared for what you want to do. Determine which balls you want. Which ones are runnable? What is the best route? Be sure to make this evaluation every time you begin the game.

In 9-ball, do you have a shot at the one? Can you get to the two? If you cannot get to the two, you will have to play safe on the one. *Do not pocket a ball when you will not have another shot.* If there is no clear runout on the table, you are in a sparring match. Do not pocket a ball if it leads you to a dead end.

For instance, let's say that you can make the one, two, three, four, and five – but have no chance to make the six. Play a safe before you run is over in such a way as to set up a break shot and leave your opponent a tough kick for a hit. Remember, you can only go through this winning process if you have ordered yourself to relax. It is hard to think clearly when your mind is confused by anxiety.

The same goes for 8-ball. If you do not have a clear runout, don't put yourself at a disadvantage. Block a pocket, set up a break shot and play safe. Get the winning edge. Set the table up so you have the advantage.

Affirmation #42

"I share my good fortune with others."

On the last few balls in your run, you must be sure to make each shot. Do not judge your situation. When you get to these last balls, you have leaped off a cliff and have no way to turn back. Far better to concentrate on hitting the water in a vertical position than to complain about the speedy descent. Once you have decided how you are going to clear the table, you must be ready to go straight forward with your work. Remember to relax, take your time, and to do you very best on every shot.

In your league match, you are on the line for one very important contest. On some nights you can't miss and on other nights you are not shooting so well. Understand that this happens to all competitors. We see great pitchers get shelled and come right back with a shut out. If you are able to win games when you are not playing well, you will join the elite circle of top-ten shooters. A twenty-game winner in the majors has a few wins to his credit when he did not have his great stuff. This is the key to being a champion.

On the nights when you are not shooting well, don't try a difficult shot. Here is the Tibetan secret to winning pool: *Not all shots are the same on every night.* A long stick shot can be a gimmie one night and a difficult shot the next. We can deliver a power draw on one occasion, and the next time we are only able to keep our turn at the table with a stick shot. This is how it goes. This is the human side of the game. Understand how you are performing and use that skill level one hundred percent on each shot,

On rare occasions, I will attempt a hard shot in an effort to shake my stroke up. I once saw Grady Matthews come to the table in a straight pool match and shoot a four rail shape shot. I asked him about it later as he could have achieved the same positions with an easier stroke. He told me he wanted to see what kind of speed he had before entering on his long run. The four railer was not difficult – it was just a speed shot with a lot of safety valves built in.

The anatomy of a runout involves your ability *at that particular time*. Play within yourself. If you are not capable of making a long stick shot, play it safe and cinch the ball with a soft roller. Then you should make the next shot to keep yourself going.

After you gain experience, you will come to situations where you know you will be giving up your turn at the table. This does not make any sense if you are capable of making the shot. But in your heart of hearts, you know this will be where you will miss. Don't be alarmed. No one said this game would be easy. What has happened is that you do not have the shot in you at this time. You are not stroking well enough to handle the shot. So you must back off and simply make the shot and take what you get next. I call this *taking your medicine*. You may end up with a bank shot. So what – you are still at the table, and banking a ball should be over fifty percent for you. It will help your disposition to make this shot. You may shake up your stroke and dramatically improve your game as a direct result of this experience.

The anatomy of a runout calls for an evaluation of your skill level during the match. Great gamblers understand this secret. A great gambler does not win all the time – but when he loses, he does not lose very much money. He understands his skill level at that time. He knows when he has his stuff. And when he does not, he usually takes his losses early and goes home.

Affirmation #43

“I am successful at all shots.”

Affirmation #44

“I deserve to win.”

This is much like the pitcher in baseball who cannot find the plate. While he may possess great skills, the manager goes to the mound and gets him when he has lost it. He does not leave this competitor out there to get shelled.

In a short league match, you cannot pack up and go home. So you do the best you can and resort to soft follow strokes or punch shots. You avoid the power follows and draws and complicated position shots. You can still win a short race this way. But over all, if you are in a long match with a gambler, you will come up on the short end. Winning without your great stuff is what takes you to the top ten in your league.

Sometimes all it takes is a great bank shot or long cut shot to get you going again. The skill level you possess is always yours – provided you maintain a certain regimen of practice.

When things are going badly, you have not lost anything. It is simply a bad night. Do your best and forget about it. Let it go and move on. Anguishing over a bad night can send you into a prolonged slump. In order to fully understand the anatomy of a runout, you must fully understand yourself.

There are times when you have ball in hand with four balls on the table and do not know what to do. The layout is easy, but no solution comes to mind. This is because you have no control over your stroke. Therefore, you do not know where the cue ball is going. Without this position knowledge, it is impossible to anticipate the runout.

Do not be alarmed. Do not feel sorry for yourself. Shoot one shot at a time. And if you get into trouble, play a safety. Remember, you can almost always run four balls with ball in hand – but there will be times when you cannot.

Affirmation #45

“I feel good about my game and it shows.”

Failure can sometimes cause bad decisions. I once tried a difficult shot after getting out of line. I told myself, "If I can't run four balls, I don't deserve to win."

There are valid reasons why you do not succeed with an easy runout. Do not beat yourself over the head. When you get into trouble, do not insult yourself. Look for a safety. Fight until the bitter end. Do not give up. Can you imagine the anxiety level when you turn and say, "I blew an easy four ball run out?" *Don't add to your woes.* This paragraph is worth the price of this book because you will win more games with this philosophy. You will raise your average with the knowledge that you are human and cannot play a perfect game of pool.

Learning to understand the shots you can handle at a particular time is the key to the anatomy of a runout. Staying in this frame of mind is the key to winning more games and raising your average. When it all comes together, you can throw no hitters. But when it all falls apart, you can still win. Give yourself this chance. Fight until the bitter end. You can do it!

Chapter 35

8-Ball Strategy

Moving through a scattered rack of 8-ball requires you to think on your feet and make shots under the pressure of losing. So you must have a plan. A basic style that works to give you the advantage. Those who stick to a system usually win the extra games – here and there. This style should encompass both safeties and runouts. Your choice of shots should reflect this style. Your opponent will eventually anticipate your every move.

Stay on the high side. Take only the high percentage shots and leave the tough ones to your opponent. Most games are lost when we leave our opponent an open table following a missed shot. Our goal is to leave the table for one of two reasons – either we played a safety, or we pocketed the eight ball. Always make it tough for your opponent.

Once the rack is open, check out the keys to your runout. If all balls have a pocket and you have a beginning shot, then proceed to run the rack. Running racks is like home runs – they come when you least expect them. But we are always swinging for the win, so they do come.

If you need to break two or more clusters in a run, then play safe. Do not attempt to run a rack which requires two or more break shots. In playing the safety strategy, send one of your balls into the break shot area so you can use it later. If your opponent has two clusters, you would prefer that he attempts the difficult run anyway.

Affirmation #46

“Good things come to me all the time.”

Look for a backup ball in all break shots. Breaking up a cluster with the idea of shooting the dislodged ball is a low percentage maneuver.

If you get into trouble with poor position, go into defense immediately. For instance, you have a great break shot and miss the cluster completely. You have had your chance. You don't have it anymore. Chances are you will not get the opportunity again, so abort your plan early. Don't wait for a wide-open path to victory. Do not run to a dead end. *Do not believe in miracles.* Take your trouble ball early. If you give up the table while all your balls remain, it will be difficult for your opponent to run out. Always make it difficult. That is your style. *You give nothing away.*

The game of 8-ball is a strategy game. The smart player usually wins the games. Running racks in 8-ball is rare. The pros are succeeding about thirty percent of the time. Sometimes they get on a run when they are breaking well. But most league players run about ten percent of the time. Ninety percent of the time, you come to the table with several balls missing.

I once complained to my opponent that my break was terrible. He responded, "But you're winning nine to one!" With a poor break he was coming to the table to begin the run. He would run off five or six balls and leave me an open table. If I did not run out, I would play safe and get ball in hand. Because he was the first to shoot, I was getting the advantage.

With a wide-open rack, you must thread your way through your opponent's balls. Sometimes you get hooked and have no shot. I think 8-ball requires greater position skills than any other game. You must be able to hit the shooting lanes or get snookered. There is pressure both to make the shot, and to leave the cue ball in position for the next shot.

Affirmation #47

"I radiate a glow of inner fulfillment."

Rid yourself of body english. Stay in the shot until it is completed. Body english is a sign of having no confidence. Once you show this to your opponent, you have given him an edge. Follow through and stay down. Look good at the table. Be sure to make the shot. If your position is in question, allow this doubt to leave you before you deliver the shot. Pull back on your expectations. Tell yourself you will make the shot and take your medicine. Let the cue ball go and succeed with the shot at hand.

It is not always that we have an instinct on position play. Sometimes the speed is just not there. The speed of the cue ball has more to do with rhythm than anything else. How else could you explain the ability to move that cue ball four rails on a slippery surface to within two inches of your target? It has to do with rhythm. So you must style yourself to a rhythm that suits you. After the break, make your decision and proceed with rhythm to run out.

Sometimes I am ready to shoot and for reasons unknown, I delay. Once I have gone past my rhythm, I more than likely miss the shot. "Too much time in the huddle," I tell myself. I realize that had I delivered the stroke when I was ready, I would have pocketed the ball.

The eye finds the target and sends the information to the brain. Once agreement is made, the brain moves the hand that wins the game. If we delay, the brain moves on to other information and we are left with a tentative stroke. Rhythm plays a huge part in the game of 8-ball.

Make it a point to come to a complete stop in your last practice stroke and visualize the shot. Then shoot and let the results be just that. Feel the cue tip go through the cue ball. Feel it and sense the final cue ball/object ball contact. Then try to be part of the exact moment the cue ball hits the object ball. At the moment of contact, see it happen. Try to take a picture in your mind.

Affirmation #48

"My winning self-image shows in my game."

Allen Hopkin's advice is to stay away from your opponent's balls at all cost. Try to keep the cue ball from touching anything during your run. Play around the shots and don't move anything. This is good advice from a great player. Rarely does a ball have no pockets.

You have been practicing *sevens* so you are trained to clear the table when your opponent runs five or six balls and misses. Listen! You must practice this all the time! If you are not able to run *sevens* – eighty percent of the time – you will be at a big disadvantage when your opponent runs his five balls. Train for this skill.

Once my opponent handed me the money and said, "I out shot you, you out thought me." Because he tried to run every rack, it was necessary for him to make some great shots. Great shots are like ten-foot putts. We will miss more that we make. Far better to adapt a conservative style and take the high road.

Once you begin your run, you should have a plan in your mind – a picture of what you want to accomplish. This picture is your guide. If you get into trouble along the way and have to change your plan, you need to allow the first picture to disappear. Most amateurs will proceed with two pictures in their mind – the first one and the second one. You must stop and let the first plan go. Act as if you are beginning your run. Formulate a new plan only after you let the first one go.

Your plan is your guide. This is what spurs you on in your run. If I run out ten times, in seven of those runs I have changed my plans. This game was not invented to play perfectly. Those perfect racks are rare. *Learn to change your plans during a run.*

Affirmation #49

"I enjoy the fruits of victory."

Running racks in 8-ball is easy provided that a few important elements exist – your break must spread the balls well, and your punch stroke must be dead on. If you are punching well, your track lines are accurate and you will be able to use simple shots to clear the table. If this is happening, your high road is to run your opponent out of town. If I'm running racks, my opponent is in trouble because this spills over to the previous strategy where I allow my opponent to attempt a dead-end runout while the table is full. When the table offers a runout, I am able to deliver. This is a nice place to be. *Always seek the advantage.*

The best break in 8-ball is the stun stroke. In an earlier chapter we talked about the stick and stun exercise. You learned how to stun the cue ball forward about a ball's length. If you use the stun stroke for your 8-ball break shot, you will scatter the balls in every direction. Make sure you feel a good stun, and you will be happy with the results. A dead-level stroke and a direct hit on the head ball are paramount to a good break. You must seek complete control of the cue ball. I am so particular about my break that I offer ball in hand to my opponent if I do not keep the cue ball in the center of the table. The break is the most important shot in 8-ball. I advise my students to take one solid month and break softly, softly, and a little harder, a little harder until you can deliver a smooth, straight stroke on each delivery. Smashing balls with no purpose does not raise your winning average. Take your time on the break and deliver the winning stroke.

Once the rack is spread around the table, you are in what is called *the ABC mode*. An A ball is one that will go in any pocket. One that has no obstructions. How many A balls do you have? You need to have

Affirmation #50

"In each contest, I gain."

at least five to go for the runout. How many B balls are on the table. B balls are those that have a pocket once you remove an A ball. For instance, you have two high balls on the same rail. When you shoot the first one, the second one has a clear pocket. You may have two or more B balls to go for the run. How many C balls do you have? C balls are those that are tied up with your opponent's balls and have no pocket. You need to make a break shot on C balls. If you have more than one, you need to play this rack in a conservative manner. Make a ball of your choice and block a pocket. Attempting more than one break shot per rack usually results in a failed runout. Often times when you choose high or low, the eight ball becomes a C ball. Make sure you are aware of the eight ball and where it is going.

When you have a C ball, look for a break shot early in your run. Do not wait until the last shot to attempt to break up a cluster. And always look for a back up ball to play position for. When you break up the cluster, be sure there is another ball on the table that will be easy to make following the break shot. I like to play for a hanger. This way I am guaranteed another shot.

If you aren't going to run the rack, be sure to turn one of your opponent's A balls into a B by blocking the pocket. When you get into trouble during your run, send one of your balls to the eight ball and make them both C balls. Sometimes you need to bring the game to a safety match at the end of the rack to have a chance of winning.

If you miss your break shot, you will not get a second chance. You used it. You missed an opportunity. No need to panic. Take your medicine and abort the runout plan early.

Affirmation #51

"In each experience I gain a positive benefit."

Often times we try to make up for a mistake. It cannot be done. The Pool Gods don't like it when we mess up and don't come to grips with it. When I miss the breaks shot, I look to block a pocket or to turn my opponent's ball into as many C balls as I can. I deal with my mistake. In all my efforts, I try to gain the advantage – just like in a chess match.

You will be using a lot of stick shots and slide shots in the game of 8-ball. Master the punch stroke, as it will serve you well. And as you work your way around the table, be sure to avoid your opponent's balls at all cost. Do not send your balls into other balls. Sometimes we turn our A ball into a C ball because we are not aware of where it is going after we pocket a ball. Sometimes we send our opponent's balls into our own balls and turn an A ball into a C ball. Be conscious of all of this during your run. Once you make a mistake, abort your plan immediately. I believe you get one good opportunity to run out. If you fail, you need to re-group. You cannot recover that which is lost. You will be winning more games with this 8-ball philosophy.

Running a rack in 8-ball is an adventure. It is a journey we all enjoy. Following a successful run, you should allow the adrenaline to flow peacefully before you begin the next one. Often, because we are victims of some misguided sins of our past, the running of three racks will be filled with screaming voices in our brains. Voices will utter words in other languages. The dialogue will use creative volume to attract our attention – and if we succeed, our past sins will be mentioned one by one. “You do not run four racks because your children are not happy or you stole from your parents when you were a little child!”

Affirmation #52

“I have unlimited ability to grow in this sport.”

You must learn to shoot one ball at a time – without judging the results. Can you make the shot at hand? It is an inanimate object. It is not attached to past penance. We do not need to miss the shot to atone for our misspent youth. Get in a rhythm and turn in your performance.

Remember, you are in a league with your friends. You are part of the team. A missed shot or a lost game is not the end of all life. Make this a night of fun. If you don't judge, you can never fail at this game. Turn in your performance and let it be just that. We can learn if we accept our infallibility. If we are in denial, we lose the lesson being taught.

You are with your friends sharing fellowship. You are performing on the table. You are learning something from your experience. These three things will always be yours when you play in a league. Enjoy them.

It's your shot. I've left you two C balls in a cluster with no backup ball. What are you going to do?

Affirmation #53

"I reach all my goals."

Chapter 36

The Inner Game

I believe that the inner game of pocket billiards is the single most important aspect of the game. We lose more games as a result of our mind that we do because of shots we are unable to make. Think of the times you've left the table with anger in your heart because you've done something beneath your ability level. If you had missed an impossible shot, you wouldn't have responded with such frustration. Our anger increases when we do something inexplicably stupid. This is the inner game which we must learn to conquer if we are to deliver a 100% winning effort.

There are many variables to finishing a runout, and most of them have to do with the inner game. Have you ever noticed that the final three shots of a match are the hardest to make? While those shots may be of the same degree of difficulty as any other shot, the rising tension makes them appear harder. We are about to win, but sometimes we are tentative about winning. There is something holding us back. Perhaps it's the fear of harassment from our peers. (When you rise to the top, you will find out the meaning of "It's lonely at the top.") Or maybe the exciting rewards of winning prohibit us from delivering a smooth stroke. The newness of being in the winner's circle can also hold us back. Coming to the end of a run taxes our concentration and makes it more difficult for us to focus on the final shots

To begin with, you must have a clear understanding of the type of player you are – social, tournament, league, or match player. Then you must strive to reach the highest level you can. We must separate winning from losing and learn to focus in on the performance. All we should be concerned with is our performance – and this is narrowed down to the shot at hand. There is no person who can run three racks in

Affirmation #54

"My concentration level is keen, sharp and I see the shot perfectly."

a row. It is impossible. No one can run one rack. *All we can do is make the shot we are facing at the moment.* This shot is all you have. Shoot it and go on to the next. If it results in three racks in a row, you are still faced with the shot at hand. Shoot the shot, and shoot the shot, and shoot the next shot until you have run out of shots.

When we make one shot, even though it may be for the championship, it is still one shot. No need to pressure ourselves with some kind of identity tag. Our championship only lasts until the next tournament. Now we are entered into the one-shot-at-a-time mode.

The stroke, minus the interference, equals the shot. If you experience fear of losing, you are allowing interference to affect your stroke. If you are filled with the anxiety of winning, you have welcomed interference. Any time you allow interference to affect your stroke, it will affect your shot.

When the money ball looms before us, we need to put a good stroke on it. Just lay a good stroke and let the results happen. "I may miss this shot for one reason or another, but I will stroke it well," I've told my students. Often times, simply because I deliver a smoother stroke, the ball splits the pocket. If choking interferes with our stroke and causes us to miss, we used a *choke stroke*.

During the three-day lesson we give at the Monk Billiard Academy, we teach many skills. Once we develop your shooting ability, we then spend some time on the skills that enhance your runout capability. For example, with *will skills* you must learn to focus on your will to turn in a fine performance. When you are down six to three in a race to seven, you will need *will skills* to pull off the comeback.

Affirmation #55

"Nothing interferes with my performance."

Dig down and call on that championship blood to square your shoulders for the comeback march. You are sitting in your chair with a desire to win. This thought is paramount in your mind. You are not concerned with the prospects of losing. In the face of this lopsided score, all you think about is winning. Sharpen this skill and it will carry you to many comebacks. I've come out of my chair and pulled many matches out of the fire.

For a year, I lost this skill. I could not make a comeback if I fell too far behind. It comes and goes, so we need to be aware of how we are doing.

Sometimes when you are down so far that you are out of the match, you have to tell yourself you are now playing for respect. Make a mild comeback and your opponent will respect you. Other times when you are down, you have a chance to show your toughness. Remember, you have to be down to have this opportunity. The game of pocket billiards is a strange mistress. You never know what is going to happen.

Another skill we teach is the *Trust Skill*. You need to be able to let go and shoot the shot. Many times I've had a tough winning shot in front of me. I lined up, did all the right things, and trusted myself to deliver the stroke. Check your trust skills from time to time.

Awareness is the ability to deliver a specific stroke. You must be aware of the exact purpose of each shot. It is not an intellectual comprehension, but rather a simple experience of knowing. Be sure to practice this skill.

Affirmation #56

"I make no judgement on my performance. It is as it is, and I accept it."

I cannot stress the importance of a wonderful skill called *Rhythm*. Mosconie was a dancer at the table. His catlike movements were choreographed to perfection. He floated from shot to shot.

I've walked on eggs with my feet barely touching the floor. One, two, three and shoot. Always the same. It does not happen often enough – but when the rhythm is there, we are in stroke. Rhythm can inspire you to great things. Identify the right rhythm for you and improve this skill.

At the Monk Billiard Academy, you will be trained in the greatest skill of all: *Concentration*. This is the mark of the great ones. You must be absorbed, immersed in the shot.

There are four points of concentration:

1. Point of contact with tip and ball.
(How often do we hit high or low right or left and are not even aware of it?)
2. The spot to hit on the object ball.
3. The stroke you will use.
4. The speed which will help you succeed with the shot.

These four dynamics of concentration must be developed to perfection. Be aware that thinking about the four points of concentration during the shot is interference. They must come naturally to you.

Do you internalize? Do you accept the results and move on from there? If you do, you are well on your way to a championship. It will happen.

Affirmation #57

"I am free to perform today."

Do you externalize? Are you concerned with the lighting, the cloth, the rails, the cue ball, the tournament director, etc.? While these elements have their validity in the outcome of the game, worrying about them is interference to the stroke. This anxiety becomes a detriment. It interferes and causes us to lose long before the defective equipment enters the picture.

Internalize. Turn in your performance. There is nothing worse than losing a tournament because of faulty equipment. Our hands are tied. It does not happen often, but it happens to all of us. Accept it and move on. You cannot retrieve an arrow once it's in flight.

How do you let go? You increase your awareness. "It is a cut shot. Not hard. Not easy. A cut shot and nothing more." Increase your concentration. The spot on the cue ball, the spot on the object ball, the stroke, the speed. Increase your trust skills. Let go. Perform and we will meet in the finals.

Expectations do little good. We usually set them lower than our true ability. "I'm so surprised that I ran that rack," is a sad commentary. You've exceeded your expectations. We measure up to them. We can sabotage a very good performance simply because we do not expect this of ourselves. We also tend to choose opponents who fall within this expectation level. This prohibits our growth. Far better to forget about your expectations and just perform.

Go to the table and stare at the green cloth. You are in the land of the pool table. The comfort zone. How many hours have you spent in this world? The leather pockets, the balls, the bright light. This is your comfort zone. Get into the game. Get into your world. Stare, and let the steady activity of the players fade from your conscious consideration. Win or lose, the game is the only thing.

Affirmation #58

"My practice is honest and I always get something out of it."

Chapter 37

Survival: Getting The Advantage

Within the mind of all pool players is the desire to survive the contest. When the advantage goes our way, we feel like we have received a special visit from a force greater than our humble selves. In this vast and mighty universe, we are singled out by destiny's calling. We entered the race and survived!

Our survival can be enhanced by getting the advantage and making the right choices. A man approached me one time in a resort town in the wild region of the Upper Peninsula in Michigan. I was sitting at the bar drinking a soda, and out of nowhere this middle-aged fellow asked if I was interested in a game of pool.

"Was I interested in a game of pool?" Of course, this set off a chain of events in my brain. He was quick to add the possibility of a wager. I patted him on the shoulder just to see if he was real. Then we talked for a while. It is not often a game just walks up to me. He wanted to play for fifty dollars a game. Fifty dollars a game has a way of tapping into all the negative thoughts that are lurking in your mind. Especially if the person is a misguided bar plater. We talked for while about the game. I didn't say *no* and I didn't say *yes*. I fished for more information.

It is pointless to ask a stranger how good he is. Both of us were simply hobby players who haven't played in a long time. We were bored. Nothing to do in this small town. (I'm sure the truth angels were rolling on the floor over this conversation!) So we poured it on, and before long neither of us even knew how to play the game – but we were going to play for fifty dollars a game.

Affirmation #59

"I am deliberate on all break shots."

Then he said the magic thing. He told me he had just arrived from Milwaukee. He had dropped his family off at the camp. He had three kids, a wife, a dog, and he drove a Chevette. The temperature was over 90° outside, and Milwaukee was two hundred and sixty-seven miles from this bar. Three kids, a wife, a dog, and two hundred and sixty-seven miles in a Chevette – this does not produce a good pool game. We played.

I got hot, really hot. I reached dead stroke and played the best games of my life. In the end, I just barely beat him. In fact, after five hours of playing way over my head, I came out with three hundred dollars. That's just six games ahead.

It has always been my tradition to buy my opponent's dinner if I win. During the dinner, he confessed to being a road player and complimented me on my game. No kids, no Chevette, no wife, and no dog. Not even a Milwaukee! He simply offered me the advantage, and I leaped all over it. This is the sweet taste of survival.

The survival mentality is a fun game to play. Often during my developmental years, I challenged players who were superior players. Once I ran into a friend who had just come from the gym. Sweat poured off his face. He was alive with adrenaline, and his muscular chest heaved up and down. Almost high, I offered to play straight pool for one hundred dollars. Under normal circumstances, he would spot me thirty to a hundred and still beat me. So, of course he agreed.

With a gleaming smile on his face, we rushed to the pool hall. I was ready to play. He was not. With his muscles tight, he did not turn in his normal, relaxed performance and I won. He failed to realize the enormous advantage I had. Straight pool after a workout at the gym is not the right choice. I survived another one.

Affirmation #60

"I am focused on all draw shots."

These stories and many more are in my Monk Billiard Academy Newsletter under the Sharking column. The theatre of pocket billiards is like riding on a roller coaster. You are happy to get off, but glad you got on.

Hustling and gambling with players that you know are inferior is counterproductive to your development. Getting the right game with your superior is the best way to go.

Those who gamble for a living will pay a high price. Years of gambling takes its toll. Always, the fiddler will have his hand out and you'll hear the same old tune. I've seen good road players come to the end of their career – no money in the bank, no retirement plan, no insurance, nothing to show for their work. Just has-beens who can't play the game anymore.

Road players can't get around this reality. They are victims of their choices. Defeat in the end. Paranoid, without trust in their fellow man. Doomed to a life of unhappiness and humiliation. I'm sorry to tell you this. No one likes a road player – no one. All that's left is bitterness from all who have been touched. Far better to enjoy the contest as simply a contest, not a means to an end. A contest you have embraced for the moment.

Affirmation #61

"I am focused on all follow shots."

Chapter 38

Your Subconscious Mind: Changing The Script

Very often the running of the rack is not relative to our ball-striking ability. Our run ends when we miss a makable shot. We miss. If this happened once in a while, we would not have cause for concern. How often does it happen? How often do you leave the table following a missed shot? Why do you miss?

It is not so much the missing that I want to talk about, but rather the not winning. There is a difference. I often wondered why my missed shots would be so costly. The game of pocket billiards is a mirror of who we are. This is why many of us only go so far. We are swept to the Wayside by our own inability to face the man in the mirror. If this sounds like you, I have a series of tapes that will help you deal with this issue.

Perhaps it is not your fault that you miss these critical shots. Maybe it is something you learned. All human beings are programmed. We learn from subtle experiences beginning from day one. We are in a constant state of learning and conditioning to handle all situations that arise. Our personalities are being influenced by what we learn. We are being influenced to form a personal value system and this carries us throughout our entire existence. This value system is not questioned. We do not challenge that which we have come to accept.

Within our brain is a subconscious area that stores information – information we use over and over to make decisions. It does not matter what you tell yourself. If it is not part of your subconsciousness, you will not believe it.

Affirmation #62

“I attract success wherever I go.”

For instance, I would tell myself I was a champion – but I would not *really hear* this message. I would turn in a championship performance, but the one missed shot would knock me from the tournament. It seemed as if I was finding ways to limit my performance.

After many years of tournaments and practice, I began to notice a pattern. For instance, I dedicated myself to run one hundred balls. The running of one hundred balls would truly establish me as a great pool player. On many attempts, I would miss one shot somewhere in the run – and the shot was quite makable.

I dedicated myself to run four racks in a row. Again, many times I was faced with the opportunity, but a missed shot doomed me. It seemed I should not allow myself to reach a personal goal..

My pattern in life was to come up short – to fail. If I was playing brilliantly, I would find a way to miss and end my run. I would sabotage and cut short my performance. I yielded to my own subconscious message. I went only as far as I was programmed to go,

In my book, Point The Way I tell about my experiences as a lumberjack in the northern wilderness of Upper Michigan. My job was to cut logs. Each log I piled up netted me a certain amount of money. Somehow, in the early days of my experience, my subconscious mind determined that I would cut two hundred logs per day. I accepted that, and proceeded to cut two hundred logs per day.

On one occasion, I was in the worst stand of timber known to mankind. My boss felt sorry for me, thinking I would certainly lose money on this job. Still, I cut two hundred logs per day. He was amazed. No one could cut two hundred logs in that limby mess. Trees

Affirmation #63

“Good sportsmanship is important to me and I show it.”

were twisted within each other. Some trees actually had limbs growing from the ground up. There were trees that had only one log in them. Yet I was able to cut two hundred logs every day until the job was done.

On the next job, he placed me in a beautiful stand of timber. The trees were tall and had very few limbs. Each tree had an average of seven logs in them. Now I could make some money, he reasoned. But he was wrong. I cut two hundred logs a day. If I went over my quota of two hundred logs, I would make up for it the next day. One thousand logs a week was my expectation. I did not exceed that amount. Any time I went beyond my two hundred logs, I would do something to slow myself down.

For twelve years this went on. It was like clockwork. Always the same. I tried to improve. I made a mental effort to improve my performance, but something would happen to bring me back to my expectations. Herein lies the key. *We achieve exactly what we expect to, and nothing more.*

I collected a softball team of underachievers. In every position we were solid – great arms, speed, power, athletic ability – but we would self destruct in every game. Half the guys on the team didn't pay child support and the other half couldn't hold a job. We didn't deserve to be winners, so in spite of our obvious talent, we were not going to let it happen.

I carried this over to my pool game as well. I would not allow a one hundred ball run. I didn't deserve that. I would not allow myself to run four racks in a row. Because of my love of this game, I was forced to face the man in the mirror.

Affirmation #64

"I am poised and self-assured."

Whenever I appeared to overcome my destructive nature, I would get creative. The phone would ring in the middle of my run. Many times during a run, nature called me to the bathroom. You do not fool with mother nature. Something would always happen to prevent my winning performance. A knock on the door, an unexpected visit from someone, or anything to assure me of my failure. I had achieved the ability, but I did not have the will. There was something preventing me from a winning performance. I could make winning shots, but I could not win games.

I loved working in the woods. I loved the sweat, the soreness, the hard muscles, the sound of the chain saw, the quiet moment eating my lunch, and the four seasons. “The woods are not a real job,” my family would argue. I loved playing softball. They’d say “Why don’t you grow up and quit playing a kid’s game?” I loved pocket billiards. “A pool player is the worst kind. You’ll never succeed!” It was deeply ingrained in my subconsciousness. No matter how good I became at anything, I would make sure I fulfilled my expectations of myself. I would not exceed my own expectations or abilities. A winning performance was not in my mode. I did not believe I was a winner – therefore, I did not win.

I played a match with a superior player who had serious problems with his ability as a father. His wife would always equate his fatherhood with anything he wanted to do. “Oh, you’re going out to play pool? Why don’t you spend time with your kids?” Anytime he went fishing, played baseball, or went out for a beer, she would bring this up. In fact, she brought it up so often he began to think he was a bad father.

Affirmation #65

“My grip is always professional.”

During our match, if he was winning, I could always ask him how his kids were doing and guarantee a miss. I pointed this out to him. “Once you start thinking about being a failure as a father, your game is gone,” I said. He was convinced he did not deserve to win. He was a failure who did not deserve to win – but what a talent he was!

I played another player who was afraid of success. All I needed to tell him was how wonderful it was to see him shooting so well and how I expected him to continue that high-level of performance. He would self destruct because he was afraid of the responsibilities success would bring. Another player would not enter the contest because of his crippling fear of failure. “If I don’t enter, I cannot fail.”

These limiting messages are buried deep within our subconscious mind. At some point in our lives, we accepted this information as indisputable fact – and have let it go at that.

If a message comes in contrary to what we believe, we simply deny it and dismiss it from our minds. It seems that in our brain, there are little guards standing watch over our subconsciousness. If we are receiving contradictory information, the guards reject it. They never let it get into our subconscious mind.

You see, we make all our decisions from information stored within our subconsciousness. Our subconscious mind does not like debate. It is on automatic all the time. It’s like the automatic pilot on an airplane. You program the information and the plane responds without questions. If there is a mountain coming up in the flight path, the plane will simply fly into it. It will go where it is programmed.

Some of us are programmed to believe we can only achieve so much in our efforts. We do this regardless of the opportunities. We are programmed, and the subconscious mind does not debate. It acts on the information it has received.

Affirmation #66

“I love the game of pool and all my actions show it.”

You need to reprogram your subconscious mind. But how do you do this when it rejects all contrary information? The guards cut you off at the pass. They stand ready to prohibit contrary information from reaching your brain.

Have you ever met people who are uncomfortable with compliments? While the compliment is absolutely, indisputably true, they are not comfortable with it. It is contrary to the information stored in their subconscious mind. We need to get past this barrier. We need to change the script. However, to get past the script and change the message often times takes years of psychological therapy.

In order to break down the barriers to a championship performance, you need a bombardment of positive messages designed to wear out the guard and get through to the subconsciousness. Once the subconscious mind accepts the winning information, it will use it to make decisions – and you will be able to be who you *want* to be, instead of who you *think* you are.

If I could stand by you and tell you ten thousand times that you are a winner, you would eventually accept this idea. Your guard could not withstand that onslaught. Of course, I can't undertake that project. But I do have a solution. I've designed a series of cassette tapes to lead you out of the darkness. I have a plan to overcome the guards. We'll break down the old messages and create new ones. We'll do it when the guard least expects it – while your mind is relaxing. We'll play soft, relaxing music. While the conscious mind is listening to that, the subconscious mind will listen to the subliminal message. If the guard does not block the information, the subconscious mind will receive it without question – just like the airplane on automatic pilot. If you can overcome the guard, you can reprogram the mind. This is where you will be making your decision to succeed with your own personal goals. What the mind can conceive, it can achieve. (I've always hated that line!)

Your subconscious mind never sleeps. So we listen to these tapes at night when we go to bed. Relax and receive the new script. Allow it to become part of you, and the change is remarkable. Once you believe, you will perform. Getting past the blocks is how we change the message.

These tapes enable you to begin your journey towards a winning attitude. Some have lectures and information you will need to incorporate into your game. You need a performance mind set. You need a winning attitude. Both go hand in hand. The lectures help you establish a game philosophy.

These subliminal tapes impress upon your subconscious mind – your championship ability. Never again are you going to doubt yourself. You will step up to the table and do the right thing. You will do this automatically. There won't be any inner debates on what to do. You will *know* what to do. You will always turn in your best performance. You will not interfere with yourself. You will gain your freedom from that inner obstacle called your script. Change the message and change the performance.

Focus on Winning deals with your mental states and helps you to focus on the task at hand. Our perceptions form our mental states. From our mental states, we act, we perform, we think. Mental states are supreme. We must flood our minds with positive information so our actions will reflect that. If we perform, act, think with polluted perceptions, suffering will follow. Use this tape series to change your mental state of mind into a positive force so you will be able to handle the success this new you brings to the table.

Consistency through Concentration helps you sharpen your concentration skills. The biggest cause of our missed shots comes from loss of concentration. Make up your mind today, you will improve your ability to concentrate. Very often we are running along through a rack of eight ball only to have our run stopped by a lapse in concentration. We took our eye off the ball and missed. We jumped up and missed. We had two shots in our mind and could not deliver a one hundred percent effort. We hear the voices around us. We are distracted by the environment. This set of tapes will clear all that up for you and help you develop the consistency you deserve. Concentration is a skill. You need to practice this fine art. What you practice, you strengthen.

As a special 8-ball student of The Monk Billiard Academy, I will let you order these tapes at the wholesale rate. Focus on Winning sells for \$49.95. Consistency Through Concentration sells for \$49.95. Both tape sets cost \$99.90. You can have both sets for just \$49.95! Two for one! 50% Off! This offer is for you and you only. I want to help you with your game. I want to help you win more games. I want to help you enjoy this great game of 8-ball! When you order, make sure you mention that you are an 8-ball student of The Monk's. Sorry about this commercial, there is so much to the inner game of pool I could write a book about it.

Note: For more information on this series of cassette tapes, contact the Monk Billiard Academy.

Chapter 39

Conclusion

In conclusion, let me share with you the idea that this is just a game. So often our intensity takes the fun out of it. We need to understand that we are many things beyond being a pool player. We need to know that the sun rises even though we missed the eight ball.

Our opponent goes through the same ordeals as we do. We should rejoice in his good fortune when he runs the rack. Be glad in what you accomplish. But at the same time, be happy for your opponent. We come together to have a good time. We come together to compete with one another. If we did not have an opponent, we would not have a contest.

I count it as a game won whenever I can get into position to win the game. My purpose is to give myself *a chance*. I don't always take advantage of my opportunities, but I always play for the chance. Reading a scattered rack of 8-ball and making the right choices gives us a feeling of accomplishment. Only when we make poor decisions do we feel bad. If I lose a game because I chose a low percentage shot over a high percentage safety, I feel worse for my bad decision than I do about losing the game. Our goal is to play the game as it is intended and let the wins and losses take care of themselves.

Use this book well, my friend. Memorize the bricks and build a strong wall. I guarantee you will be far ahead of your competition if you do so. You will mature and build a solid game. I *know* you will do well.

Appendix

The Five Precepts

Many are called but few are chosen. Players from all walks of life are called to the gateway of pocket billiards excellence. The lure of the table is your enlightenment. The balanced feel of the cue awakens you to a higher desire and the neon lights of battle become your calling card.

While the pocketing of balls is easy for you, the journey towards nirvana pocket billiards is filled with pitfalls and snares. Few there are who reach the final resting place. The long and winding road must be followed by all. Talent, desire, and a persistent faith in oneself are the keys to success. Nothing can dim the aura of the call. You are the one. You have been selected.

While there are many who champion the cause and sing the battle hymn, there are few who survive the first cut and fewer still who survive the second, the third, the fourth, and finally the fifth. In this last corridor, there bands an army of highly skilled combatants who understand, "Many are called but few are chosen."

You are called out because you have an unexplained desire to play this game. The desire is the force. Against more logical ideals, you have chosen to play this game. In the beginning, you are filled with enthusiasm. You get discouraged and lose the desire. Excuses begin to be bigger than reality. At first you say, "I can be a champion," and then it becomes, "I don't get the time to practice." If you cannot get through this precept, you will be swept away to the Wayside – never to return.

In the second stage, you are in command of most of the shots. Those that allude you are the ones you cannot comprehend. You enter your first tournament and get crushed. You are amazed by the competition. If you survive this stage, you will be determined to improve your game. You cannot conceive of anyone having continuous superiority over you. You'll do what it takes to be on top. "If you give me enough time, I will beat you," is the second precept.

In the third precept, many are swept away. It is time now to be challenged by the reality of this game – precision. You understand how exact you must be. You begin to see those tiny margins for error and wonder if you really have what it takes. All warriors go through this self doubt. In order to maintain your skill level, you will need to dedicate yourself to the unglamorous task of practice, practice, practice. With the heavy, unfamiliar cloud of doubt lying on your soul, you press on in the face of certain defeat. Here you are showing the faith in yourself necessary to survive this third cut. Faith in the face of defeat is a gift of the chosen. Do not turn back. You have been chosen.

When you reach the fourth precept, you will be given your wings. Now you will soar to your own personal destiny – whether it be the tournament trail, the league top ten, the serious match play, or social perfection. You can now fly on the wings of your new enlightenment. And fly you will.

The enthusiasm of your new discovery carries you swiftly from one skill level to the next until you are confronted with *the grind*. Now the glamour is gone. This fourth stage is for the hard worker. You are demanded to set up a rigorous schedule of maintenance on your game, while also being asked to put in more time in the development of your skills. Here you will need to practice for one hour just to reach the level to be able to practice what you will need to win the battle. This is where the Wayside claims many a victim. Without the glamorous lights of the finals, the calling card loses its glitter. Soon you are washed away to the Wayside, condemned by the very journey you chose. It is too bad, as the oasis is just over the hill. Millions are stuck in the fourth precept.

The fifth estate welcomes you in. You have made it. You are satisfied with your game – win, lose or draw. You understand that winning is not the end at all because there are so many deserving players in the fifth estate. Now you are free. The shackles of determination no longer enslave you. Your eyes have lost that faraway glare. The obsession is gone. You are free to perform. You are free to be part of the final precept. And in this celebration, you wonder why you took this game so seriously. You wonder why you lived and died with every win or loss or missed shot or failed safety. You have been enlightened that this is just a game – and in this awakening, you see your performance improve.

You bore a heavy load to reach this level. Now you can understand the reality of that armor. You realize that you needed the intensity to move through the precept.

Never would you want to travel down that long and difficult road again. The journey has left its mark, and you're grateful it is over. When you see an eager young enthusiast announce, "The championship is just around the corner," You do not celebrate his entry into the journey. While another has been chosen and the bells are ringing, it is still a tough journey. Enter if you must, but travel on your own. While the road is filled with many like you, you are alone in your own personal journey. I would help you if I could. I would give you my skills and give you my experience if it would speed your arrival to the resting place. But my experience would rob you of *your* experience, and I would be the worst of masters. All I can do for you, my fellow traveler, is *point the way* . . .

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