

“VEPP – Part XIII: Safety and Carom Challenge Drills” ILLUSTRATED PRINCIPLES David Alciatore, PhD (“Dr. Dave”)

Supporting narrated video (NV) demonstrations, high-speed video (HSV) clips, technical proofs (TP), and all of my past articles can be accessed and viewed online at billiards.colostate.edu. The reference numbers used in the articles help you locate the resources on the website. If you have a slow or inconvenient Internet connection, you might want to view the resources from a CD-ROM or DVD. Details can be found online at: dr-dave-billiards.com.

This is the thirteenth article in a series based on the “[The Video Encyclopedia of Pool Practice \(VEPP\)](#),” a five-disc instructional-DVD collection I recently created with fellow BD columnist Bob Jewett. VEPP is an organized and methodical training program and pool workout. It teaches you how to develop, assess, and track progress of skills for all facets of your game. An outline of the entire VEPP series along with video excerpts from each DVD can be viewed online at: dr-dave-billiards.com/vepp. Last month, we looked at useful jump shot drills and advice from the 4th DVD: “[VEPP IV - Banks, Kicks, and Advanced Shots](#).” This month, we’ll look at useful and fun safety and carom challenges from the 5th DVD: [VEPP V - Challenges, Games, and Advice](#).

Safety play is an important part of the game; that is, if you want to be a good player. When’s the last time you’ve spent practice time working on defensive shots? For most people, the answer is either “a long time ago” or “never.” In my [December ’12 article](#), I presented some drills that one can use to practice safety drills, but some people find “drills” monotonous and boring. Online video **NV C.17** demonstrates a safety challenge game that might be more fun while still offering important practice at defensive play. The game is simple. Start with a 9-ball break, and then play a safety on every shot. It’s more fun to play against an opponent, but you can also play alone. If playing an opponent, keep score by awarding a point every time the opponent fails to hit a legal shot after a safety. Jump shots are disallowed to force you to practice other types of safety escapes. After the break, if you pocket a ball, you have the option to play a safe or have your opponent go first. If you don’t make a ball on the break, your opponent has the option. As with 9-ball, you are always required to contact the lowest-numbered ball first. You are allowed to pocket balls, and sometimes that can be to your advantage in this game, but generally you attempt to play safe by sending the current object ball (OB) and cue ball (CB) in places that will snooker your opponent.

NV C.17 shows me and Bob trading safeties back and forth. Check it out and give it a try with a friend. The drill is challenging and fun and it will give you good practice with safeties and safety escapes. Diagrams 1 and 2 show a couple of examples from the video. In **Diagram 1**, there are many options for hiding the CB and/or the 2 ball, but the choice made in the video was to lock the CB up against the 8, while sending the 2-ball into the center of the table where it can be more difficult to hit than if it were close to a rail. Ideally, the 2-ball would land just behind the 7 to at least partially block some kick options. That’s a good safety. It would be difficult to hit the 2 from this position.

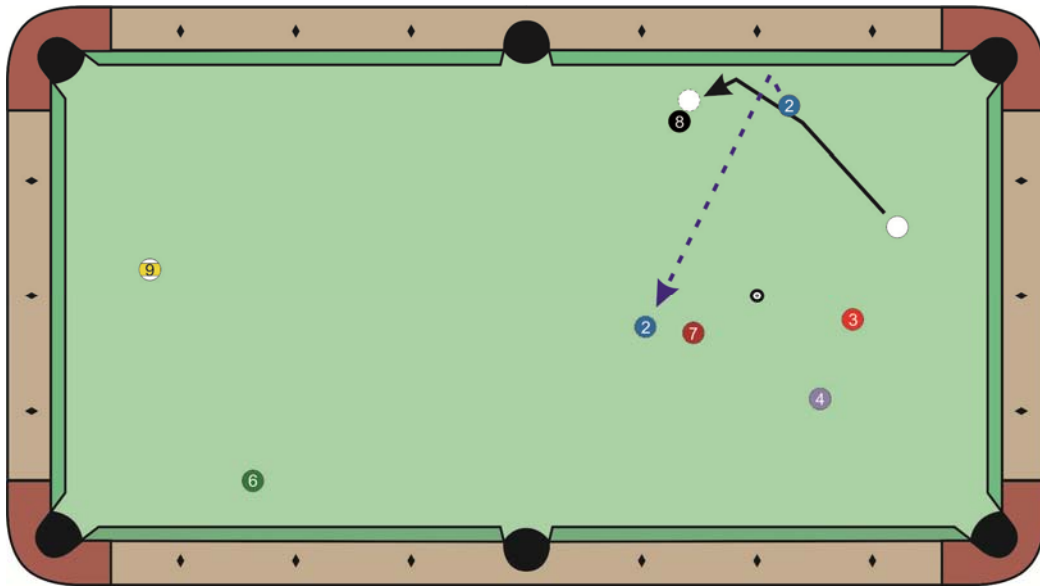


Diagram 1 Safety game – shot 1

Diagram 2 shows another example shot from later in the game. Here, the goal is to send the 2 up table, creating as much distance as possible, while trying to hide the CB behind the 3, 4, or 7. Check out the video to see many more safety and safety-reply examples, and give the challenge drill a try. You'll see that it can be fairly difficult to score points, especially if playing against a decent player. But when you do, the power of ball in hand after an opponent foul gives you the opportunity string points together ... unless you're playing Efren or any of the Filipinos who seem to be able to kick at anything, regardless of the number of cushions required.

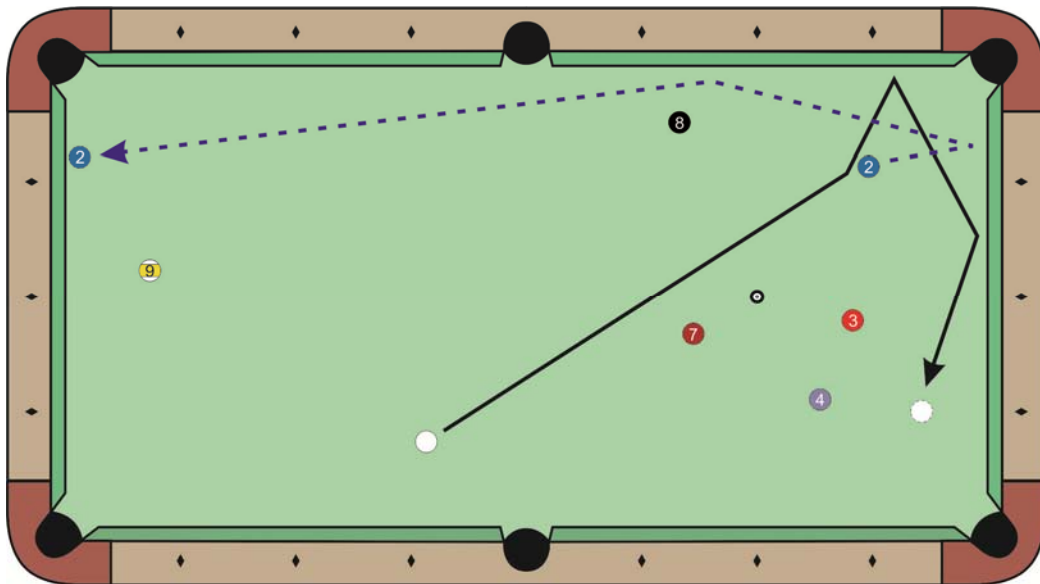


Diagram 2 Safety game – shot 2

NV C.18 demonstrates another fun challenge drill, in this case for practicing carom shots. A carom shot is where you deflect the CB off an OB, usually to pocket a 2nd OB. The carom challenge drill is called "Loop," which is "pool" spelled backwards. The name is inspired by the fact that the game is played backwards. You

strike the OB ball instead of the CB, and the goal is to carom the OB off the CB into a pocket. This gives you good practice with carom shots, and it is a fun game to play either alone or with an opponent.

Starting with a full 15-ball break shot, the goal is to carom all of the OBs in with as few shots as possible. If you're playing an opponent, you can score a point for each successful carom. For the break, use the 1 ball as the CB, and place the actual CB in the top position of the rack (where the 1-ball would normally be). On every shot, including the break shot, the goal is to pocket the OB by caroming it off the CB. On the break, shooting from the head spot with about a 1/3-ball hit on the CB will spread the rack some and pocket the 1 in the corner. After the break, you are allowed to shoot the OBs in any order. As demonstrated in **NV C.18**, sometimes the best choice for which ball to carom is decided by whether or not you need to break up clusters (for example, from or a poorly dispersed rack).

Diagrams 3 and 4 show a couple of shots from the video. The 90° rule for stun shots, the 30° rule for rolling-ball shots, and the trisect system for draw shots are very useful for aiming carom shots. Lots of information and numerous demonstrations of these systems can be found in the [position control](#) FAQ page of my website. **Diagram 3** shows a good strategic example, where the goal is to carom the 5 off the CB into the side pocket using the 90° rule to pot the ball and hopefully send the CB off the end rail with enough speed to break up a cluster down table. In **NV C.18**, the break out doesn't go exactly as planned, but the carom still works.

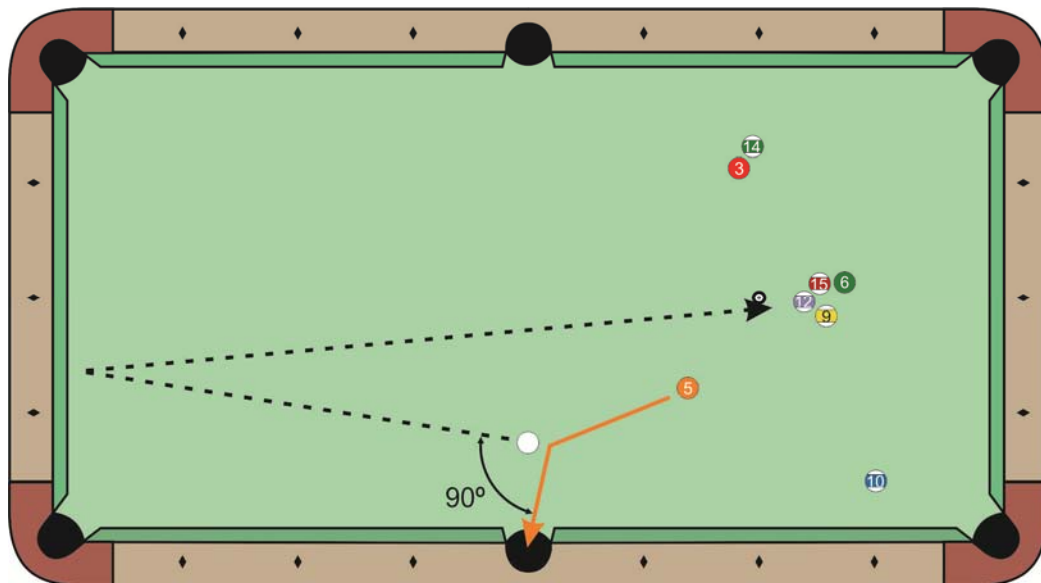


Diagram 3 Loop – shot 1

Diagram 4 shows another example from later in the same game. Here, the 30° rule natural angle is perfect for the 9-ball off the CB into the corner, and the CB will kiss off the 14 and end up in a great place for a follow-on carom of the 12 or 15 into the side, which will help open the ball cluster. After you play this game some, you'll realize that there is a lot of strategy involved. Check out **NV C.18** for more examples and to see how important strategy can be. Also, try out "Loop" yourself and work on the carom skills that can help you win games and matches in the future.

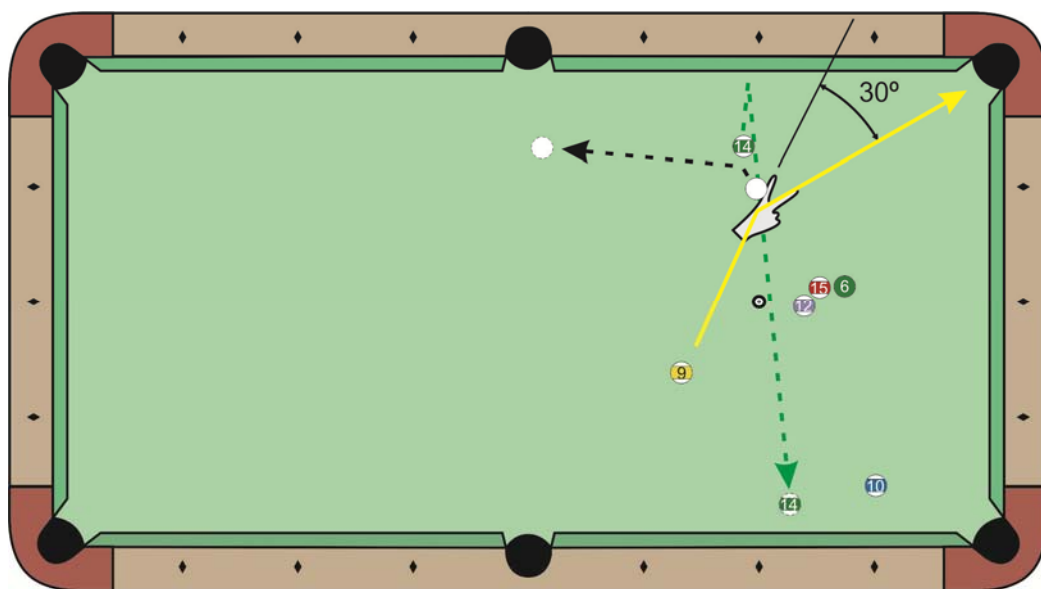


Diagram 4 Loop – shot 2

I hope you are enjoying and benefitting from my series of articles featuring drills from the “[Video Encyclopedia of Pool Practice \(VEPP\)](#).” As with all of the drills on VEPP, you should record your scores and track your improvement over time. The “[How to Use VEPP](#)” document on the VEPP website contains some sheets to help with this. Scores are useful for assessment and to provide a challenge. You can also use them to set goals for future improvement. Next month, we’ll look at a useful approach to practice where you create and work on customized drills based on you specific areas of weakness.

Good luck with your game,
Dr. Dave



normal video

NV C.17 – Safety challenge game and drill, from VEPP V
NV C.18 – "Loop" carom game drill, from VEPP V

PS:

- I know other authors and I tend to use lots of terminology, and I know not all readers are totally familiar with these terms. If you ever come across a word or phrase you don’t fully understand, please refer to the [online glossary](#) on my website.

Dr. Dave is author of the book, DVD, and CD-ROM: “[The Illustrated Principles of Pool and Billiards](#),” and co-author of the DVD Series: “[Video Encyclopedia of Pool Shots \(VEPS\)](#)” and “[Video Encyclopedia of Pool Practice \(VEPP\)](#).”