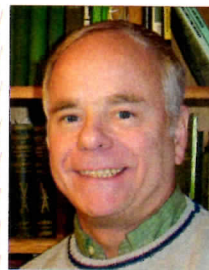


RACK-RUNNING DRILLS

The challenge of standard layouts with a variety of requirements.



LAST MONTH I introduced a family of drills that covers the entire range of pool abilities from total beginners to top pros. I described 18 different levels over that range. Let's look at those sorts of drills in detail and how you can use them to help your own game and the game of someone you might be teaching. Since last month the drills have evolved a little.

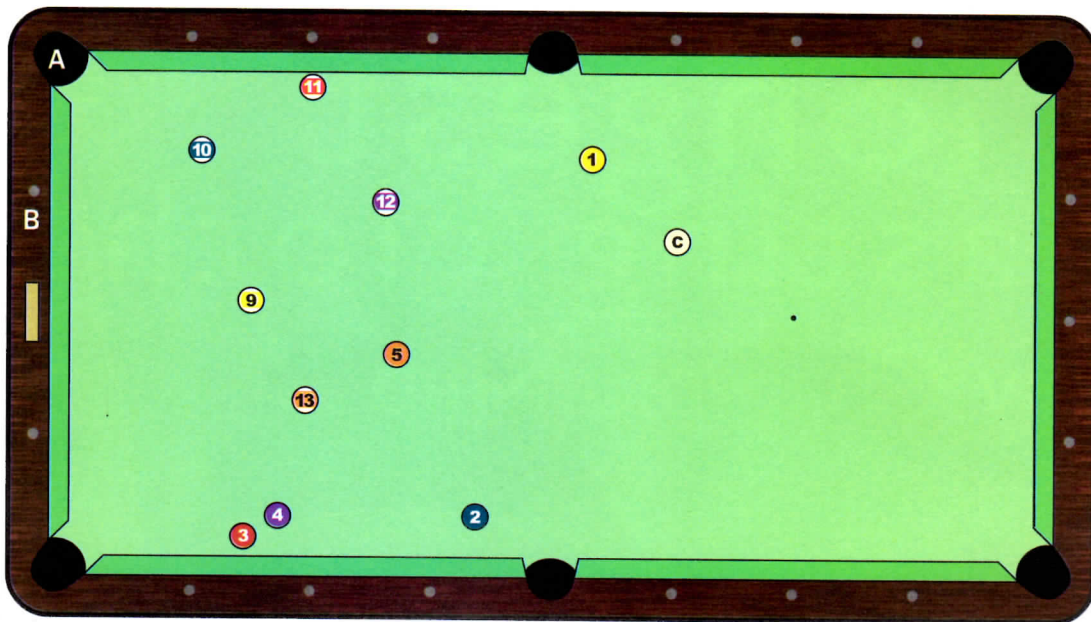
The basic idea is that the shooter will run racks of balls with various additional rules to make the task easier or harder. The shot common to all levels was the open, free break. I've added something to that below.

The first difficulty adjustment was in the number of balls in a rack which was six, ten or fifteen. I think that's plenty of steps. Those are all triangle-shaped racks.

The second knob on difficulty is how many times during the rack the shooter gets ball in hand. The easiest levels give ball in hand every shot while at the tough end, it's ball in hand for only the shot after the break. For levels in between the shooter gets ball in hand every two, three or five balls.

Next, the requirements of the shots change to make things tougher. The easiest level has the shooter hitting balls directly into pockets without using the cue ball. Normal shooting may specify any order, color pairs (1-9, 2-10, etc.), numeric order, and a new one: stripes and solids.

Another factor of difficulty is how many good shots are required to successfully complete the drill. Last time I proposed a total of 30 in a row, which



is an even number of racks for each of the three rack sizes. Let's modify that so while 30 good shots may be the gold standard, going for a smaller number, say one or two racks of a level, will fit some players better and make the goal more achievable. It will also allow a player to fit several different levels into one practice session.

I'd say that if a player can reach 30 fairly often on a level, it is time to move on to a harder level unless they are really working on something more basic, such as stance or sighting, and just need a framework for their practice. Also, since there are many options to create new levels, once you get a 30, start working on a similar level that has different requirements.

The change to the break shot I propose is that the shooter gets to play two break shots at the start of each rack before taking ball in hand for the first shot. This allows the shooter to solve clusters and make the table more runnable with their second "break" shot which is really a free rearrangement shot from behind the line. Remember that any ball pocketed on the break(s)

returns to the table wherever the shooter chooses.

Also added this month are situations like eight ball with stripes and solids. With racks of six or ten balls, there is no room for the odd-ball eight. The goal is to run the stripes or solids and then run the other group. A ball in hand can be inserted after the first group to reduce the difficulty a little.

Let's look at some of the underlying principles that went into the design of these drills.

Unlike drills that have you repeat the same or similar shots for several or many repetitions, these drills provide constant variation in the shots you face, the position required and the game requirements of the situation. I think it is important to work on specific shots or position plays in isolation, but game-like problems are also needed. I think these drills provide a good source of specific shots to make up your list of "Work on these!" shots. You should note repeating, similar problems during the drills to work on later.

The different levels require different pattern strategies. If you are shooting in

