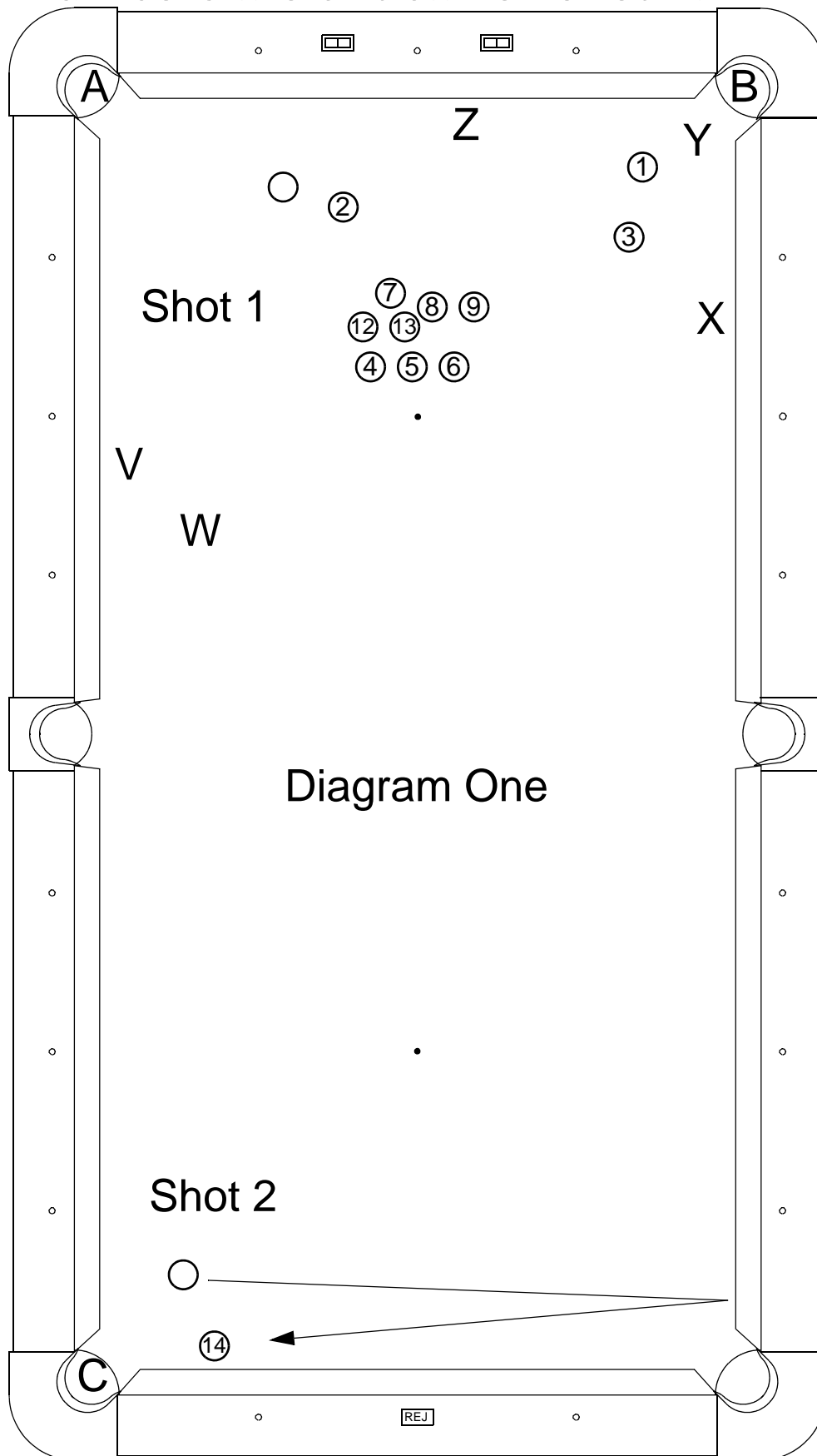


Designer please note! Positions and numbers are critical for Shot 1.



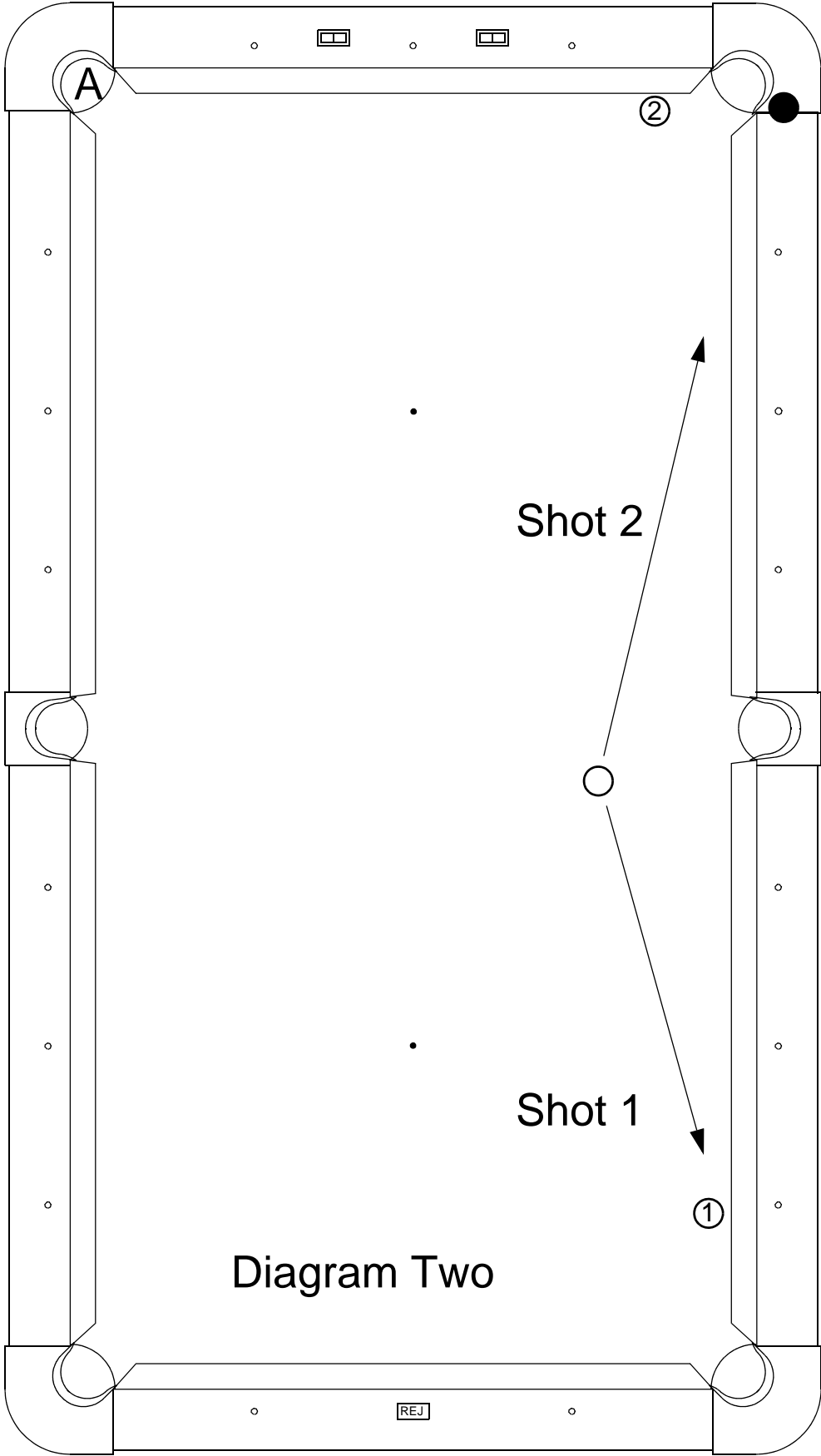


Diagram Two

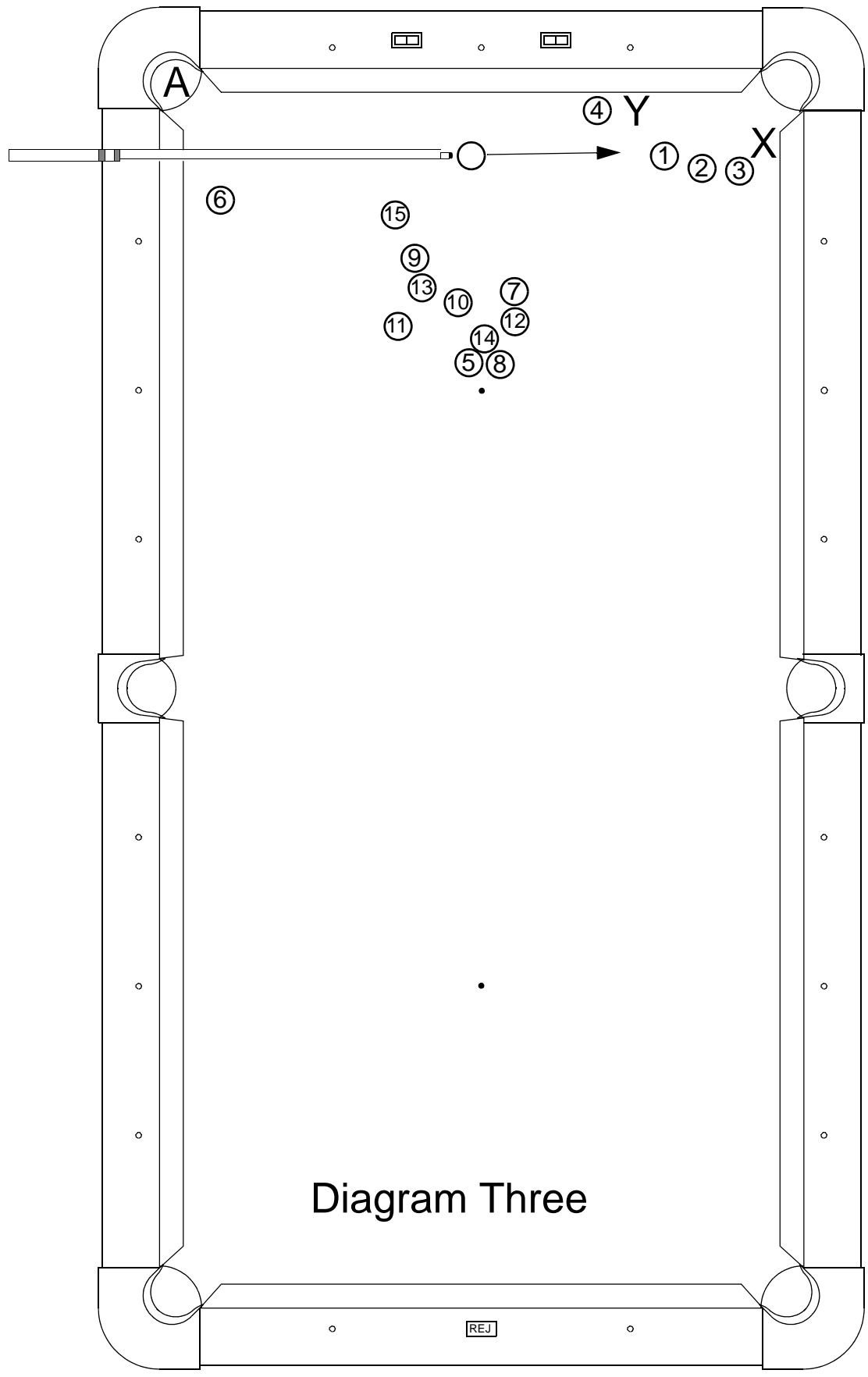


Diagram Three

One Pocket Specials II

by Bob Jewett

Continuing this series of columns about the great game of one pocket, here are some more shots that are standard but are rarely, if ever, played in most other games. In fact one excellent reason to play one pocket is that it will stretch your shot-making and shot-seeing abilities for all games.

In Diagram One, Shot 1, is a fairly common situation. You have pocket A and the 2 ball hides the 1 ball completely. Before reading on, come up with a couple of choices for your shot.

A simple shot would be to barely skim the 2 ball, touch the rail at Z and end up at Y. That would probably force your opponent to move balls away from his own pocket. OK but passive.

Right now you have no ball on your side of the table. Your opponent can leave the cue ball anywhere up-table without fear of you having a shot. You can correct that by shooting nearly straight at the 2 ball and banking it to X with the goal of it stopping at W. Ideally you would like it to end far enough off the cushion so it could be banked off the head rail back to your pocket. But your first priority on the shot is to leave the cue ball safe. That could be done with follow off the 2 ball to Z and then to Y.

But there is a potential shot to your pocket with a chance for safety. Play the cue ball to the cushion at Z and then bank the 1 ball towards your pocket. If the cue ball then caroms into the 3 ball it will not go far and the shot should be safe. Even if the 1 ball doesn't fall, you will have reversed the position on your opponent and now he is in trouble.

Rail-first banks like this are standard fare at one pocket and merit practice. Sometimes it is the only way to hit the ball, as in the diagram, and sometimes it is the only way to avoid a double kiss.

Now suppose you are player B. What is your shot choice? The 1 ball blocks the 2 ball cut to your pocket.

Depending on exactly how the balls are sitting, you can play the 2-1 combination. You have to hit it pretty hard which would normally turn the cue ball loose, but it looks like the cue ball will land full on the 12 ball to stop the cue ball against the cluster. Always keep an eye out for ways to leave your opponent frozen to his side of the rack. More aggressive is to play the combo but draw the cue ball to miss the 12 and go up-table for position on the 3 or maybe the 2 depending on where it ends.

If the combo looks like it will turn the cue ball loose, you can shoot the 2 ball fuller so it hits the side of the 3 and caroms into the 1, possibly sinking it. If you draw the cue ball to V, the cluster will block a return take-out by your opponent.

A minimum effort shot is a soft follow shot on the 2 ball to hit the 3 and leave the 1-2-3 near your pocket. It's easy to follow to the rack and leave the cue ball frozen to the 12 and 7. I would put my effort into getting the cue ball's speed perfect so the only response is an awkward kick or an intentional foul by my opponent.

Finally, you can shoot straight at the 12 ball which will bank the 4 ball generally towards your pocket. Work to leave the cue ball frozen to the 7 ball. This kind of power shot out of the rack can win a game but you have to be careful that no ball can pop out of the rack to your opponent's side. In this case it looks only good things happen like the 8 ball going towards your pocket.

In Shot 2 there is only one ball left and you have pocket C. The 14 is placed ideally for the kick shot in that it can be made either directly or with a second cushion just before the ball. You need to be able to make most kicks like this. If played at "just to the pocket" speed, it will almost never sell out unless your aim is really bad. You also need to know how to kick the long way, especially when it is the only way to make a hanger in your opponent's pocket.

Diagram Two shows a situation with two balls left and no good shot to your pocket at A. Can you see a good shot other than removing the 2 ball from your opponent's pocket?

Shot 1 is a rail-first bank shot. The bank shot is possible hitting the 1 ball first but you are likely to leave a shot on the 2. By playing rail-first, you hit the 1 ball full and the cue ball stops on the cushion. You need to work with this shot a little to learn how far off the cushion it needs to be, the angle the cue ball should come from to stick on contact, and whether any side spin is needed.

Shot 2 is much easier than it looks. Play the cue ball off the side cushion to cut the 2 along the rail to your pocket. The shot is a high percentage to do something good even if you hit it a little off. The trick is to know the target for the shot. If you want to land the cue ball on the first full flat portion of the end rail, there is a target like the circle shown by the pocket that works from a lot of different angles. It is more or less even with the 2 ball and centered on the wood of the rail. Of course that depends on the design of the table. Use running follow. Shot 2 comes up a lot when your opponent barely misses a ball to his pocket.

Diagram Three shows a common kind of shot that I call the Mass Take Out. You have pocket A. Your opponent has patiently gathered balls by his pocket but then has left the cue ball where you can destroy his hard work. A passive shot would be to barely nick the 1 ball, go to the foot cushion and leave the cue ball at X. That still leaves all those balls on the wrong side.

What happens if you shoot firmly and just a little on the left side of the 1 ball? Maybe the 1 ball comes off the left side of the 2, hits the end rail and bounces up-table, the 2 ball hits the 3 about half-ball and goes up the table, and the 3 ball banks over to your side of the table. If you can park the cue ball nearly stuck to the 4 ball at Y you have killed several birds with one stone. If in addition the banking 3 ball hits the 15 ball you may make one of them and have position on the 4 to your pocket. A shot like this can win the game from what looks like a bad position.

But maybe the kisses of the 1-2-3 don't go as planned. What if the 1 ball moves too quickly and gets in the way of the banking 3 ball and somehow both balls get left near opponent's pocket? In that case you may be saved by leaving the cue ball stuck to the gum at Y. With more experience at this kind of shot you have a better chance to see and avoid such timing errors.

A major problem at one pocket is often too many shots to choose from as opposed to no shot at all. Your choice needs to be guided by your current skill set and your practice needs to be guided by the skills you lack. Don't let your imagination outrun your skills, but don't suppress it entirely.