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## When Less Is More

One of pool's great challenges during the early learning stages is the fact that much of the knowledge we need is so counter intuitive. We see that phenomenon illustrated nicely in the matter of throwing a frozen combination shot, a basic technique that nobody guesses correctly at first and one that a few fairly accomplished players never learn now that 9 Ball is the dominant game. When we consider the game's mystifying nature alongside the sheer volume of information confronting us as beginners we can expect to make a lot of bad guesses as we learn how to put it all together. In the worst scenarios we don't know that we guessed wrong but blame ourselves for bad execution and then continue haplessly when the same shot reappears.

In Diagram 1 we have a shot on the 8 ball with the 9 waiting on the far short rail for the game winner. This is not necessarily a difficult shot, but it is one that many players commonly play incorrectly. And, because it arises somewhat rarely, proper execution can easily remain elusive to those players who neglect to apply a little practice time to learning it. For the setup we see here there are position options other than the one diagrammed, but we are going to confine the discussion to the draw shot that's indicated with the black, solid line.

What makes this draw shot different from most is the fact that the cut angle on the 8 ball initially moves the cue ball in the opposite direction from its destination. However, many players fail to consider that aspect of the shot and focus solely on the distance to good position for the 9 ball. And because it makes perfect sense to associate more speed with more draw the logical choice is to hit the shot with firm speed. But in this case extra speed works against the desired outcome because of the cut angle on the 8 ball. Whenever we cut an object ball in one direction the cue ball always begins moving in the opposite direction along the tangent line, seen here in red. A sliding cue ball or stun shot remains on that line. A cue ball with draw or follow starts out on that line before the spin grabs and moves it off of the tangent line. The distance that the cue ball travels along that line before veering off relates directly to its speed. The faster it's moving the longer it will stay on the tangent line before changing direction.

With that principle in mind it's easy to see why more speed with this shot yields less draw. As the cue ball moves farther along the red line before drawing back to the cushion, it's less likely to rebound with enough draw to move off of the cushion for position on the 9 ball. Unfortunately, because it does make sense to associate more speed with more draw and the shot does not come up very often, when it does arise again the shooter may remember the previous failure as not hitting it hard enough. From that logical standpoint it makes sense to hit it a little harder with each successive attempt, digging the hole a little deeper every time until that player is buried in discouragement.

Set up the shot as you see it in the diagram and mark the balls' positions. The precise arrangement is not critical as long as the cut angle moves the cue ball away from the 9. In fact it's a good idea to experiment with various cut angles to find the limit for

this shot. For the setup in Diagram 1, the line of centers with the cue ball and 8 ball is aimed about one diamond away from the corner pocket.

Because success depends on snapping the cue ball off of the tangent line as quickly as possible speed is the shot's key variable. So we want maximum draw with just enough speed to get the cue ball to its destination. Along with the necessary draw the shot also requires some left-hand english to spin the cue ball off of the cushion to the right as we see in the diagram. Choosing the correct english when drawing back into a cushion is another matter where our first intuitive guesses are usually wrong. Because we always associate right english with a wider rebound to the right, it's common for beginners to try right-hand english with this shot. If making the correct english choice with a backwards moving cue ball presents a problem, the easiest way to handle it is to walk around the table and face the cushion that the cue ball will hit. Or in this case turn the magazine upside down. From there left becomes the obvious, correct choice.

Play the shot a few times with maximum draw and left-hand english. Because you want maximum spin with minimal speed this is no time to shy away from the cue ball's edge. Miscues in practice cause no harm and they help us to find the cue ball's limits. If you are miscuing make sure that your grip is staying relaxed. Tension in the shooting hand at impact is the number-one cause of miscues on draw shots as it moves the butt of the cue up and the tip down to dig under the cue ball. When I play this shot I like to use a short bridge so I can accelerate the tip all the way to the cue ball without generating too much speed.

With a little practice this shot and others like it become simple as we learn that, in some cases, less is more. To see the video that Dr. Dave and I taped of this shot go to: [http://billiards.colostate.edu/normal\\_videos/new/NVB-47.htm](http://billiards.colostate.edu/normal_videos/new/NVB-47.htm)

Then go to the following URL to see Corey Deuel's draw shot on the 4 ball, the same shot diagrammed on page 21 of our August issue as a Stroke of Genius. Note how much forward movement his cue ball overcomes before drawing the length of the table. Also note his speed in comparison to the rule I just worked so hard describing to see how someone with a superhuman stroke can break that rule and make me a liar.

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_plsd-1TNNw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_plsd-1TNNw)



