

## A Deadly Kiss

Since I don't hold much editorial influence I never know what we'll see throughout an upcoming issue of *Cue Times*. But after looking back at some issues over the past six months or so, I might say that if Chisolm Woodson isn't somewhere on the cover of this installment, then the resurrected Elvis must have shown up at a tournament and run 200 balls. We see Chisolm's picture on the front page so often now that, if I hadn't been watching some of his matches lately, I might wonder if his mom had taken over as editor. The truth of course is that he's been playing consistently great pool and winning a lot of tournaments. A couple of weeks ago I watched him win an 8-ball tournament with one of the finest run outs I've ever witnessed, weaving his cue ball through the heavy traffic of a crowded table to finish with two long banks and then a shot on the 8 ball that many good players would not see, let alone execute.

Looking at shot A in the diagram we see an easy example of the shot in question, so easy in fact that it's part of many trick-shot setups. Let's say that, for whatever reason, we cannot get position to shoot the striped ball into its nearest corner pocket, and we see that its path to the far corner pocket is blocked by that solid ball sitting in front of the side. The best shot then is to play the striped ball into the side pocket as a kiss shot off of the solid ball. When the setup is right, the shot is almost a guarantee. The best setup has the solid ball centered in the side pocket or slightly past center toward the far end. And its ideal distance from the rail is a little less than a ball width so the striped ball cannot pass it while moving along the rail. When everything is in order, it's hard to miss the shot. It still requires a little practice however to seat it firmly in memory and learn to identify it as an option when it appears on the table.

With an understanding now of the basic principle we can look at shot B, Chisolm's tournament winner. But before examining the shot I should clarify what led up to it. Hearing that someone finished a rack with two long banks and a difficult kiss shot might lead some to believe that he was missing his position and thus flailing desperately at difficult shots. That is not true. At a certain point in almost every 8-ball run, it can become nearly impossible to get out of trouble with a good safety while the opponent has all seven balls on the table. At that stage the shooter is often forced to run out. And in the case under discussion, Chisolm studied the layout with careful forethought and planned the last three shots as executed. Simply making shot B would be very respectable; seeing it in the future as the best option is professional.

Once the setup changes from the easy arrangement in shot A, the shot quickly gains complexity owing to several factors. Most obviously, as the striped ball moves farther from the pocket, the shot naturally becomes more difficult. But distance from the pocket is not the only consideration when looking at the striped ball's position. The distance between the solid ball and the striped ball also comes into play. When the balls are separated as they are in the diagram, the 8 ball will roll to the striped ball, something we must consider to determine the angle of deflection from the striped ball. In a nutshell, a rolling ball that hits half of another ball will deflect at an angle of 30 degrees to the line between the two balls, the solid line in the diagram. Pool's authority on that subject is *Billiards Digest's* Dave Alciatore, who describes the 30-degree principle in great detail at [www.engr.colostate.edu/pool](http://www.engr.colostate.edu/pool). If the two balls are closer, another principle comes into play. Because an object ball can slide a short distance away from the cue ball after contact, the solid ball can deflect at 90 degrees to the line of centers for the two balls if the solid and stripe sit close to each other. When the line 90 degrees to the line of centers for two balls that are frozen to each other meets a pocket, that shot is called a dead kiss and considered a sure thing by players who know how to recognize it. A little practice with distance and speed will help distinguish the two types of kiss shots.

So here's a new shot for a new year and one that can pull out wins in dire circumstances. But because we see it in so many different shapes, it's also a shot that requires careful study and practice. Let's all make a resolution to become proficient enough with this deadly shot to provide this paper with some fresh faces for future covers.

