

## Not Trying For Position

Let's do some work this month to examine and distinguish a prominent element of performance, the relationship between success and trying. Conventional wisdom dictates that the more we try to do something the sooner we will experience success as in the adage, "If at first you don't succeed..." So, through the experience of working toward success in our endeavors we condition ourselves, in the face of difficulty or adversity, to put forth a mighty effort when called upon to excel. Let's perform an exercise to test the effectiveness of the accepted method for performing successfully.

Set up the balls for a rather simple cut shot as shown in the diagram. Pocket the object ball with a smooth follow stroke and center ball. Play the shot until the cue ball is returning to the near rail at X with enough speed to hit the rail and rebound no more than twelve inches. Make the necessary adjustments to your speed and stroke until the cue ball is hitting the near rail according to the conditions described above. Once you find the target with the cue ball you should find it easy hit that target repeatedly.

After your cue ball is hitting X consistently play the shot a few times with your best punch shot to make the cue ball track as wide as possible with a center-ball hit and enough speed to hit the rail but rebound no more than twelve inches. Hit this punch shot until the cue ball is tracking at least as far as the diamond marked Y. If the cue ball is tracking beyond Y with no english or draw, you have a powerful punch stroke and a nice, wide position range with the center-ball hit. Play with the exercise for five more minutes trying to hit each diamond from X to Y including the side pocket. Pick out a diamond and play the shot adjusting only the amount of punch in your stroke to hit that diamond. Keep hitting the cue ball dead center and controlling the speed as described above. If you miss your target keep playing the shot making certain to try as hard as possible to get the cue ball on track. After five minutes, regardless of your success, put down your cue and take a short break to consider what you have been doing.

Evaluate your performance and ask yourself how hard you were trying. Chances are that putting forth a great effort did not help you to complete the exercise effectively. Let's go through the exercise again this time eliminating all effort to make the cue ball hit the target. Before shooting each shot pick out your target diamond and identify it clearly to yourself as the place where the cue ball will hit the rail. While still standing erect visualize the cue ball hitting that target with the desired speed as you feel your relaxed hand shooting the shot. Get down now to play the shot focusing on the object ball as you shoot and putting forth no effort to *make* the cue ball go to its target.

You will experience greater success in the exercise and your pool game as you spend more time playing in the context of not trying. How quickly you move into this realm will depend on how much effort you normally apply to making the cue ball roll into position. See if you can view the cue ball's movement on the desired path as something that will happen instead of something that you need to force. The greatest effort you need to apply to position play is in choosing and identifying the desired path

for the cue ball; after making that choice you can allow your imagination to take over and let it happen.

When you feel comfortable with the center-ball shot you can move on to perform the exercise with draw, follow and english to work through the spectrum of available tracks for this shot. Go for each of your original targets with a follow stroke and the appropriate touch of outside (left) english to move the cue ball along the rail. Find the limits of the position range from low, outside to high, inside english making note of how the cue ball moves after a certain hit, particularly those hits that move the cue ball to the limits of the range. Shoot for various targets in your range employing the visualization technique discussed above. You will find that the key element to hitting shots accurately is how clearly you identify your target rather than how much effort you apply to forcing the cue ball.

Take a minute to recall one of your great pool performances and a great performance from another of your endeavors or hobbies. As you relive these moments do you feel yourself exerting a large effort or do the greatness and virtuosity seem to flow from you on their own? Now recall a performance about which you or someone else might have said that you tried really hard or gave it a good try. Is this a memory of success? Think about memories associated with trying and see how many are efforts that fell short of a goal. Your breakthrough with this month's exercise will occur when you see that you have the power to generate greatness rather than having to wait passively for it to call on you.



