

Stun Follow and Stun Draw

Very often, maybe incessantly, I tell students that in order to become great players they must master the stop shot. More than any technique in pool the stop shot removes randomness and turns probability into certainty. On a straight-in shot where the shooter can stop the cue ball dead, he knows precisely where the cue ball will come to rest. On a cut shot the player knows, when he executes a stop shot, that the cue ball will follow the track off of the object ball perpendicular to that ball's path to the pocket. In both cases the stop shot removes guesswork from position play and offers the player confidence over hope.

Once mastered, the stop shot also serves as a reliable reference point or benchmark. This month we shall examine that aspect of the stop shot while learning a couple of shots in the process. Set up the shot in the diagram and place the cue ball at position X. From there shoot some stop shots hitting the cue ball just below center with medium-firm speed and a good punch stroke. After you are stopping the cue ball consistently you can begin to adjust your hit on the cue ball for some stun shots.

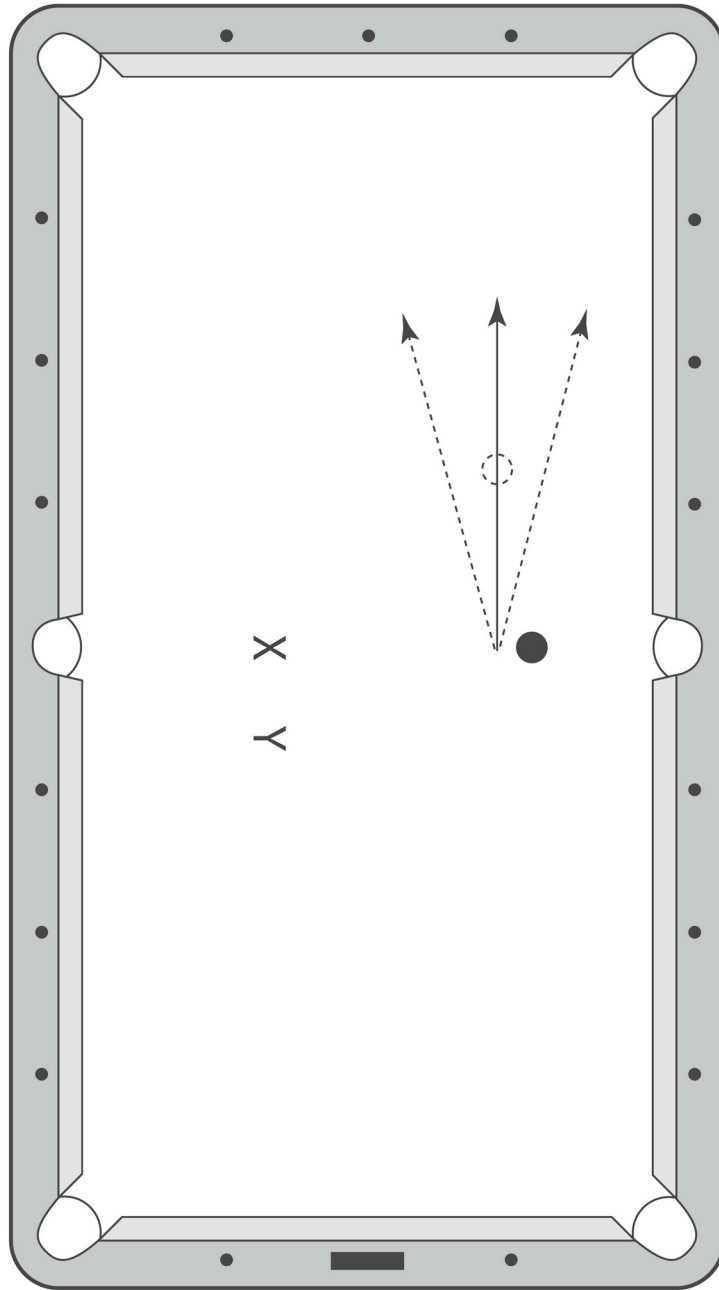
While preparing to shoot, put your tip on the cue ball where you would hit it for a stop shot and then move it up a hair, maybe a sixteenth of an inch, to hit a stun shot with some follow. Shoot the shot with the same speed and punch stroke until the cue ball is moving forward just a few inches after hitting the object ball. When you are hitting stun-follow shots consistently you can try the same thing for stun draw by adjusting your tip down slightly and doing everything else the same way. The stun-draw shot should, despite the firm stroke, move the cue ball back just a few inches off of the object ball.

These two stun shots are essential to a complete pool game and very useful in many situations where normal follow and draw shots are too difficult to control for such minor cue-ball movement. Set up a long shot and try the same two shots with follow and draw strokes and the soft speeds needed to move the cue ball so slightly. Usually the shot is extremely difficult and sometimes impossible to control when played so softly. Imagine playing the shot this softly to control the position on a table that may not be level.

Now move the cue ball to position Y and shoot some stop shots. Shoot the shot until you are tracking the cue ball consistently along the solid line with the same medium-firm speed. You can place a ball on the solid line and shoot more stop shots until the cue ball is hitting that ball consistently. With that second ball still on the perpendicular, stop-shot line, shoot some stun-follow shots to track the cue ball between the obstructing ball and the side pocket along the dotted line. Using this technique you should find it rather easy to track the cue ball consistently. Shoot some shots now with stun draw to track the cue ball between the obstruction and the center of the table on the other dotted line.

Using the stop shot as a reference gives you precise control over the cue ball when adjusting its track for position play. When you need a track that lies close to the perpendicular line, this technique is far more powerful than merely trying to create the track you need from thin air.

From this reference point you can begin to adjust the cue ball's track in both directions. Making sure to use a punch stroke for each shot, you can vary the speed and the spot on the cue ball you choose to hit a range of cue ball tracks. First work with the top half of the cue ball and then the bottom half. Because you are using a punch stroke for every shot you will not be working with the full range of tracks available for this shot. Instead you will discover your punch or stop-stroke range of cue ball tracks. This will give you feel to control the cue ball's path very precisely as you begin to compare the track that you want to the stop-shot track and adjust from there. As you approach mastery with the stop shot, you will begin to associate the punch stroke with reliability and consistency while you find yourself controlling the cue ball with precision and confidence.



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