

Cutting With Stun

Last month we discussed what is called the tangent line and practiced hitting it consistently. Now that you have the stop shot mastered and can hit one at any time, any distance and any speed, we can work on a technique for making small adjustments to the track that the stop shot yields.

What makes the stop shot the foundation for position play is the certainty of its result, whether you employ it to stop the cue ball on a straight-in shot or to hit the perpendicular track on a cut shot. That certainty makes the stop shot a very powerful tool and reliable reference to plan position for the next shot. Part of my routine when studying many shots for position on the next ball is to begin with the question, "Will a stop shot work here?" When the answer is no, what's often required is something very close to the result that the stop shot would yield. These are the situations where the stop shot works as a strong reference.

Suppose you are faced with a layout where the perpendicular track would take you to the next ball except for the fact that it is blocked by an obstructing ball or perhaps it leads to a scratch. Here you need a track different from the one you have mastered but close to it. You can approach a situation like this with confidence because what is required is so closely related to what you have mastered.

Set up the shot in the diagram and begin with the cue ball at point A. From there hit some stop shots with firm speed just below center on the cue ball. When you feel that you can stop the cue ball every time at this distance you can begin to make some small adjustments to the shot. Set up to shoot the stop shot again, then move your tip slightly higher on the cue ball for some forward movement; as little as an eighth of an inch may be enough to make the cue ball move forward after hitting the object ball. Play the shot in this way until you are consistently moving the cue ball forward no more than four inches despite the firm speed. Repeat the shot now with a similar downward adjustment on the cue ball until you are moving the cue ball backwards from the object ball, again no more than a few inches. Some players call this stun follow and stun draw. Try the shots a couple of times with soft follow and soft draw and compare those attempts to the stun shots to see which are easier to control for such slight cue-ball movement. Probably you will find that the stun shots are easier to control and more reliable.

Now move the cue ball to point B and play some stop shots to keep the cue ball on the perpendicular track. After you are hitting that track consistently you can place another object ball on the track as an obstruction. With the obstructing ball in place employ the technique described for stun follow, and play some shots to track the cue ball below the obstructing ball for a shot on a ball at point X. Now, play some stun-draw shots to track the cue ball above the obstruction for a side-pocket shot on a ball at point Y. Try this shot a few times as a regular draw shot and note how easy it is to scratch in the opposite side pocket while the stun draw insures against that possibility.

The shots you are working on today are extremely powerful tools because they offer a very reliable method for taking control over some of the numerous possibilities and challenges that will show up in a pool match. As you master the stop shot you will master the techniques for adjusting it to hit other precise tracks. From such practice you will gain a new level of confidence as you begin to recognize how often what is required is the same as what you know.

