More on Stroke

Last month we explored cue ball tracks and how they are influenced by the relationship between speed and the spot on the cue ball that one chooses for the shot. Now we can repeat last month's exercise adding changes in stroke to the mix and noting the results. In striving to deliver a straight, smooth stroke many players do not learn the variety of strokes that make up a complete game. Some players may employ several strokes in their games without really knowing it. At the Billiard Academy our most popular and powerful workshop focuses only on stroke where we spend six hours learning to identify, distinguish, and execute the necessary strokes and to integrate them with our games. That work provides extremely rapid access to improvement and produces immediate results in performance.

Set up the cue ball and object ball as shown in the diagram with each ball about a ball's width from the rail. It's important that the shot is not quite straight in. Begin with a stop shot that you execute with medium speed, a hit on the cue ball just below center, and a punch stroke. Your punch stroke is a snappy, accelerating stroke with normal follow through. As with last month's exercise this first shot establishes the perpendicular track that goes through point A to give you a reference or benchmark for cue-ball travel. When you are hitting the perpendicular track consistently make a mental note to identify it with your punch stroke.

From there we can move on to the follow stroke by establishing the track for your best follow shot in this situation. Hit the shot softly with a high center hit on the cue ball and a smooth level stroke that accelerates gradually. It may help to think of a follow stroke as lazier than the punch stroke. When executed effectively this shot should send the cue ball to the long rail near point B; this is the track for extreme follow. Without changing the stroke, keeping it lazy, add speed trying to hit the rail as close to point B as possible. To keep the cue ball within a couple of inches of point B you must maintain the gradual acceleration that defines the follow stroke.

After you are hitting the rail close to point B with medium speed try some punch strokes with medium speed and the same high-center hit on the cue ball. A good punch stroke will have a remarkable effect on this follow shot perhaps sending the cue ball past the second diamond on the long rail. Without changing the speed or the spot on the cue ball experiment with various degrees of acceleration between the snappy punch stroke and the lazy follow stroke to alter the cue ball's track between points A and B. Pay close attention to the effect that your stroke has on the cue ball's track. Try some shots with a below center hit on the cue ball, medium speed, and a follow stroke. If you apply a follow stroke the cue ball will not track to point A as it did with the punch stroke but will go to the long rail on a track between points A and B. Try some shots with various degrees of punch or laziness and study the cue ball's tracks to see the effect that changing your stroke has on the shot.

Now establish your best draw track with a very low hit on the cue ball and medium speed. Mark the spot on the near long rail where the cue ball hits. Your draw stroke is similar to a punch stroke but with more snap and rapid acceleration. With that in mind try to improve your extreme draw by shortening your bridge and hitting the shot with less speed but plenty of snap. Try the shot again with a short bridge and no follow through. This technique, when executed, will track the cue ball back to you as close to the corner pocket as possible. Without altering your speed or the low-center hit compare the tracks of draw shots with a long bridge and long follow through to the tracks of draw shots with a short bridge and no follow through. You will find that the former tracks the cue ball out toward point A before it draws back to point X as shown in the diagram while the latter will move the cue back rapidly toward point C. Note this distinction and try to visualize its place in your pool game.

A

X

B

C

TR TOM ROSS POOL