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## Tricky Shots

Often, when players get together apart from competition they like to trot out their favorite shots. Sometimes we see a standard trick shot or two but are more likely to witness what I like to call “tricky” shots, ones that can come up in a game as problems with no obvious solutions. A Grady Mathews exhibition consists of one eye-popping shot after another, all useful in real play if they turn up. He showed me one a few years ago with such unimaginable cue-ball movement that it made me feel like the game I had been playing up to then was something other than pool. The shot came up for me last year in a tournament final and helped me move from a 6-5 deficit to a 7-6 victory. Thank you Grady.

Someday I will share that shot here but for now I want to present three shots that I learned from local players who possess enough talent and experience to rival the game’s well-known stars. So, let’s step out from the usual discipline and work to have fun while learning something new.

Shot A in the diagram belongs to Jim Blakeman, one of Denver’s best all-around players. It is a shot that I had tried from a book illustration but had never executed successfully before watching Jim shoot it so effortlessly. Set up the cue ball and object ball as shown with an unavoidable scratch in the side pocket if cutting the object ball into the corner. You may place other balls around to make shooting the ball into the corner the only offensive option. Since the shot itself is not easy you may want to play it a couple of times, suffering the scratch, to become comfortable with cutting that ball down the rail. Once you are pocketing the ball you can shoot it with a technique for beating the side-pocket scratch. Accomplishing that requires jumping the cue ball just high enough to hit the rim of the pocket liner and bounce off of it, back onto the table. It is not a big jump shot by any means so the key to success lies in elevating the back of your cue no more than twenty-to-twenty-five degrees and resisting any temptation to hit the shot hard. The ideal amount of force will send the object ball along the rail with just enough speed to get it into the pocket. And make sure to hit cue ball above center to give it the topspin that will make it jump upwards when it hits the pocket rim.

On the same night that Jim demonstrated the first shot, Jake Jacobsen showed us shot B. I had seen and tried this one before with some success but no consistency for the same reason that I had problems with the first shot. I had been shooting too hard and hitting the cue ball too low. Set up the bank shot shown with the object ball frozen to the rail. The challenge is to bank the object ball cross corner and avoid the double kiss, an impossible task with a conventional hit. However, a jump shot makes the bank possible; a little practice will provide enough consistency to attempt it in a game under favorable conditions. The proper techniques and speed are very similar to those of shot A: moderate elevation, an above-center hit on the cue ball, light-to-medium speed. When struck properly the cue ball will jump almost straight up while the object ball passes underneath toward its destination. This shot will turn up in some trick-shot exhibitions where the performer will call up someone to try it. After several unsuccessful attempts

by the unwitting spectator, the star will then substitute a golf ball for the cue ball and make the bank shot easily. The much-lighter golf ball bounces away quickly enough to escape the kiss as the object ball makes its way slowly cross table. Try it.

Shot C, my favorite of the three, comes from Chris Onesky, who showed it to me a couple of years ago. I have never seen anyone else shoot it or diagram it before or since. The diagram illustrates it as an eight-ball shot but it can just as easily be set up for nine ball; the requirement is hitting and pocketing the ball hanging in the far corner. Of the three, this shot may be the most challenging because of its speed sensitivity, but is otherwise not exceedingly difficult. If struck too hard the cue ball will jump off of the table while too soft of a hit will cause it to rebound away from, instead of along, the side rail; softer still and the cue ball will not get over the obstructing balls. The hit requires slightly less elevation than the first two shots and some inside english, right in the diagrammed setup. Aim to hit the rail as close to the obstructing balls as comfortable with a sharp, but not hard, jump stroke. The english will help keep the cue ball close to the side rail.

There you have three entertaining and, maybe someday, useful variations on the jump shot. Remember always to employ safe, jump-shot precautions. Move any nearby glass; find a corner where you can practice without shooting the cue ball toward other players and then chasing it around the room; and watch out for passersby. If you should happen to injure someone while practicing any of these shots, please instruct that person to take the medical bill to Shakespeare's and present it to me—Howard Ashford.



