

A Rare Shot

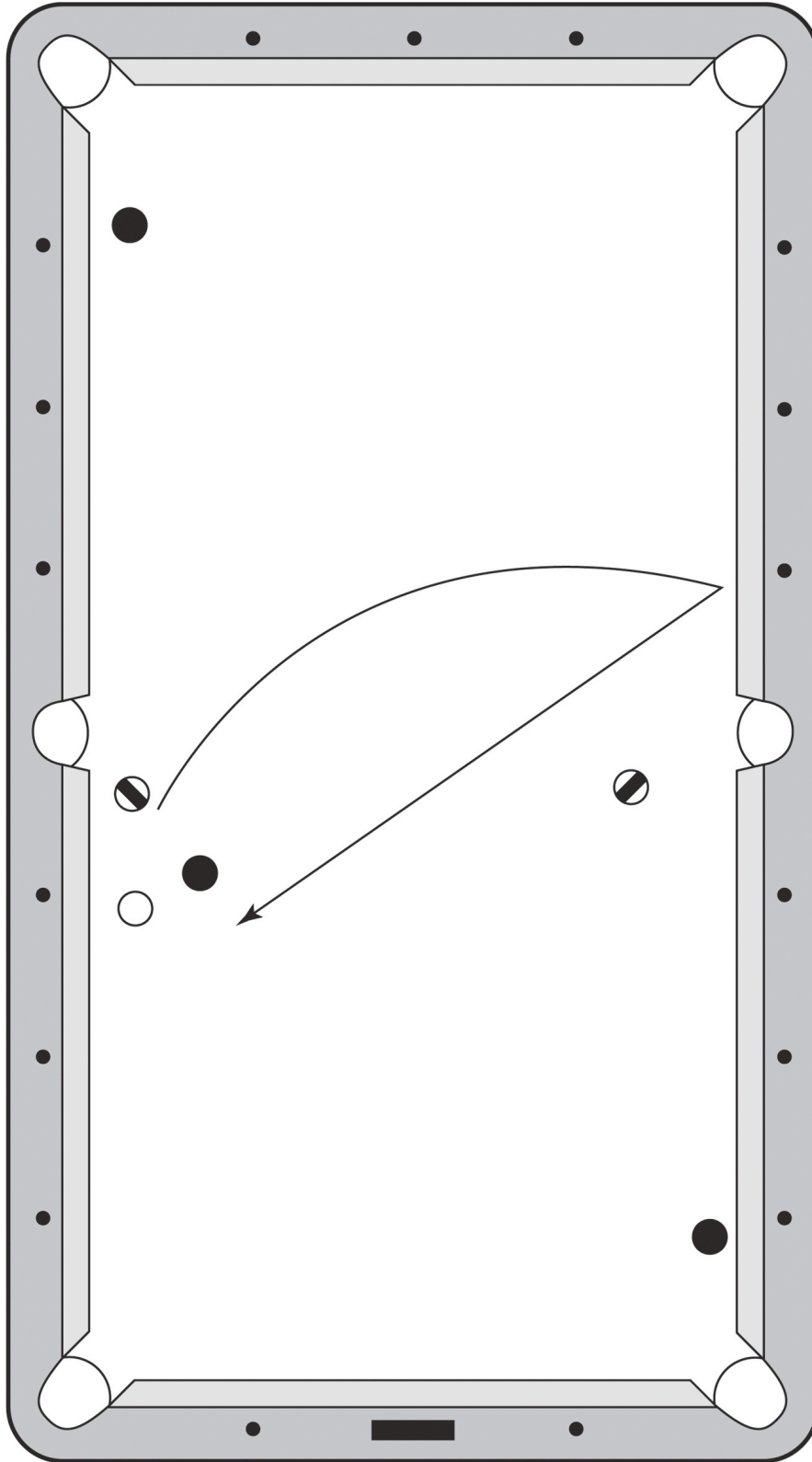
When I think about all of the extraordinary shots I've learned from other players, it's easy to see why pool has held my fascination for so long. And I also wonder how many more there are that I don't recognize, waiting in the future for me. Few things are as satisfying as turning around a seemingly hopeless situation while shocking an opponent with a little piece of wizardry. And, from my standpoint as an instructor, the greatest feature of what I call "tricky" shots is the fact that they usually do not call for super-human talent. Our ability to make them springs mostly from a knack for recognizing them when they arise.

In the diagram we have yet another shot that I learned from The Professor, Grady Mathews, and one that came up for me in a recent game. As with many shots in this family, I had played similar versions before learning what we see here, but had never assembled the components from related shots to produce the more sophisticated example in the diagram.

Here, we're playing 8 ball and shooting stripes. With a clear shot at only one of the stripes and a solid blocking the upper-left corner, the only reasonable offensive shot is to play the near stripe into the side pocket. However, because of the shot's angle, the cue ball will move across the table to hit the right, side rail with no natural position path to a shot on the next stripe in the opposite side pocket. If the first object ball were a little farther forward and closer to the side pocket's jaws, the cut angle would be thin enough to send the cue ball to the top, short rail with some right-hand english for a natural two-rail path back into the area of the arrowhead. At this angle however, that's not an option and so, we must find another solution.

For this shot the answer is to play the cue ball across the table and off of the side rail as shown with the arrow, a rare position track perhaps but not a difficult one. Set up the shot and play it with draw and right-hand english until the cue ball is moving along the path indicated for the next shot into the opposite side pocket. Many players have an impulse to play this shot too hard, a mistake that can make the desired position impossible. If your cue ball is traveling too far up table before reaching the opposite side rail, try taking off some speed. Also, be sure to apply maximum draw and a good dose of right-hand english. Finally, the precise set up for this shot is difficult to depict on paper. So if it doesn't seem to be working, try adjusting the setup until you find success. Look for an angle that gives you an easy shot into the side pocket with a cut angle that's too full to allow the cue ball to hit the top, short rail.

Here's a shot that many players would not see but almost every player can make. Shots like this come up frequently during my Thursday clinics where we usually have a wide cross section of skill levels, sometimes spanning the range from national champions to beginners working together. It's quite common on Thursdays to see a group of students learning and successfully shooting shots that we might only expect from pros. And I can't think of anything more gratifying than to witness players unlocking another one of pool's mysteries.



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