

November 2009

Avoiding Scratches

For me the best thing about pool is the fact that the learning never ends. And after spending most of this past spring and summer filming the *Video Encyclopedia of Pool Shots* with Dr. Dave Alciatore, I learned a lot, especially in light of all the years I've played and taught pool. Our work culminated in the most comprehensive collection of pool shots ever published, spanning five DVD's of nothing but shots and explanations from the most basic to the very advanced. Last month I presented a simple but powerful technique I learned from Dr. Dave for predicting the cue ball's path for many shots and will continue now with more examples of that technique's usefulness.

Earlier we learned that for cut angles ranging from a quarter-ball hit to a three-quarter-ball hit, a naturally rolling cue ball will deflect away from the path it takes to the object ball at an average angle of 30 degrees. The overall range from minimum to maximum deflection is narrow enough to use 30 degrees as a reliable indicator for the cue ball's path after its collision with the object ball. Then we learned to apply Dr. Dave's famous peace-sign technique to predict the cue ball's path. It turns out that, for most of us, a relaxed peace sign makes a 30-degree angle and you can check yours with a drafting triangle. Or you can visit Dr. Dave's site where he has a template you can download and print for that purpose. You can find the URL at the bottom of this page.

Last month we applied the peace-sign method to a couple of shots in order to predict and execute accurate position play. Now we can apply it in another way to determine shot selection. In the diagram we see an 8-Ball situation with only two stripes remaining before the 8 ball. Initially most players would lean toward shot A first, mainly because it's closer to the cue ball than shot B, something we learn to prefer very early in our learning. And we would look at shooting that ball into pocket X. But that looks a little dangerous. So we examine the outcome by placing the peace sign as shown with the index finger on the line that the cue ball takes to the object ball and the point where our fingers would meet over the spot where the cue ball's center will be at contact. Sure enough a quick peace-sign check tells us that a rolling cue ball will scratch in pocket Y. So then we decide to shoot the stripe into pocket Y, but that one looks a little scary too. Once again the peace sign reveals that shot will lead to a scratch in pocket X with a rolling cue ball. We can avoid both scratches with stun or draw but either one of those choices will send the cue ball to the side rail and keep it at that same end of the table, far from the next shot. The only way to get position for the next ball from ball A is to shoot it into pocket X with draw and inside english to move it three rails around the table for a shot on the next stripe. That's possible but quite difficult, in terms of both pocketing the ball and controlling the cue ball.

After seeing no future in shot A it's time to turn our attention to shot B. Though it's a little farther away it turns out as the better shot to play first. To make sure that it's okay, we apply the peace-sign test and see that the middle finger points to the short rail well away from the nearest pocket. Further we see that a rolling cue ball, perhaps with a

little right-hand english, moves easily and naturally into position for ball A and an easy run out. So, even though it's slightly more difficult, we see that ball B is the better shot to play first.

Very often we find ourselves looking at a shot and asking, "Will I scratch?" And on too many of those occasions we shoot the shot only to catch ourselves grumbling soon afterwards, "Damn, I knew that was a scratch shot." It takes a lot of experience and many thousands of shots before we can paint consistent mental pictures of the cue ball's path to predict position or scratches. With the peace-sign method however, we have a simple yet reliable tool to make those predictions for a rolling cue ball across a broad range of cut angles.

For a 30-Degree Template:

<http://billiards.colostate.edu/>

Click on Instructor and Student Resources then scroll down to Templates and Diagrams where you will find the 30-Degree Rule Angle Template.

Disc 1 of The Video Encyclopedia of Pool Shots will be available November 16

At that time you can watch the trailer and place an order at:

<http://dr-dave-billiards.com/>

