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Two Rail Kick Shots

Throughout the years, I have had the great fortune of both conducting a few workshops teaching alongside him and attending several of his workshops as a student. Perhaps his greatest contribution to billiards instruction is the set of kicking systems that he has taken from 3-cushion billiards and translated for the pool player. Here then is stage one of his two-rail systems and the first part of a set of professional level kicking systems.

The feature of this two-rail system is that it requires no calculations, making it easy to learn and remember. However, to make the system work, you must deliver a consistent stroke with one tip of english. So we need to begin with a shot that defines one tip of english in terms of result rather than the diameter of your tip. Place the cue ball on the head spot and shoot it, with right or left-hand spin, straight through the center of the table to the center diamond on the far short rail. Also, you will use a smooth follow stroke and hit the cue ball a half-tip above center with enough speed to rebound back to the foot rail and travel no more than a few feet after hitting it. When the cue ball hits the side rails just past the side pockets, the spots marked with X's in the diagram, you are delivering one tip of english. Naturally, a tip of right will make the cue ball return to the side rail on your right while a tip of left sends it to the X on the left-hand rail. It is important that you become comfortable with english on both sides of the cue ball; mastering a tip of right for example will not automatically teach you where a tip of left is.

Now that you have your stroke and english tuned, look at the shot in the diagram where the cue ball is snookered behind the striped ball. You want to kick two rails to hit the solid ball. First, find the spot on the table that is the midpoint between the cue ball and the ball you want to hit. Make a straight line with your cue from that midpoint to the center of the pocket, as shown with the dotted line in the diagram. Now, to find your spot to hit on the short rail, move your cue from the dotted line to make a line parallel to it over the cue ball. Hit the rail where that parallel line meets it with a tip of right english, a half-tip above center and a smooth follow stroke. When all of the steps described are in order you will hit that solid ball every time. The parallel shift is critical and many players have trouble at first moving the cue on a line that is exactly parallel to the dotted line. At first you may want to lay one cue on the dotted line and move a second one to the cue ball to compare the two lines. Nobody is born with this skill so spending the necessary time learning to make a reliable parallel shift every time is the key to success with this two-rail method.

It won't take long before you are executing the kick shot in the diagram consistently. After that you can experiment with different setups and hitting various, specific parts of the ball at which you are kicking. Set up a variety of shots that fit the parameters of this system and experiment with them. You will find that when you follow the steps and hit the cue ball consistently, the system will work consistently for any two-rail kick on the same half of the table. If you want to refine your technique to hit a

specific part of the object ball you can do so by moving the midpoint within the range of a half-ball width. Moving the midpoint slightly closer to cue ball will give you, after the parallel shift, a spot on the rail to hit the near side of the object ball. If you wanted to play the ball into the left side pocket, you would move the midpoint slightly closer to the object ball.

Because ball in hand is the most powerful, offensive weapon in pool, we learn to play safeties that will stump our opponents. And, when we are hooked, we want to play kick shots that will not relinquish ball in hand. Professional 9 ball has evolved to a point where those two elements have become the crux of the game and, because we watch the professionals to learn, the safety/kicking game has found its way into our arsenals at the lower, but no-less competitive, levels of play. Those players who devote the necessary time to learn accurate kicking are consistently rewarded with faster improvement and more victories.

