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Plus Two Kicking System

Last month I introduced a simple, yet effective, two-rail kicking system that I learned from world-champion artistic shooter, Tom Rossman, also known as Dr. Cue. When I first began using Mr. Rossman's systems two aspects jumped out to amaze me. One, their simplicity belies their accuracy. And two, the systems are remarkably consistent and easy to transfer to any table, an appealing feature for a competitive player who may have to play on ten or more different tables over the course of a tournament. Because of their effectiveness I was not surprised to learn that many top professionals employ Dr. Cue's kicking systems.

Before proceeding to this month's two-rail system that Tom translated from 3-cushion billiards to pool, please note that, to make it work, you must learn to deliver a consistent stroke with one tip of english. My experience with students who have trouble at first invariably reveals that they have not spent the time required to nail down the required stroke. 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 foot rail, 5 in the diagram. 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 head rail and travel no more than a couple of 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. It is important to become equally 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.

After gaining consistency with one tip of english you can proceed to the two-rail system. Look at the diagram and note how the diamonds are numbered, that each half diamond on the top short rail counts as one whole number, which serves to make a square out of a rectangle that is twice as long as it is wide. Note also that we begin counting with diamond 1 in the far corner pocket. Finally, on the long rail, we will count diamond segments from our target, which is always zero, to the cue ball. The benchmark line for this system is the one that connects 5 on the long rail to 5 on the short rail for a two-rail kick to the bottom, left-hand corner. Place the cue ball on that line and shoot with one tip of right-hand english and a half tip of high to make the cue ball go two rails into the corner pocket. If your english is consistent you will soon be pocketing the cue ball consistently. What makes the 5-to-5 line the benchmark is that it works with one tip of english. Going down the rail, 4 to 4, then 3 to 3, requires adding english—roughly $\frac{1}{4}$ tip for each diamond so that to hit the corner pocket going from 3 to 3 would require $1\frac{1}{2}$ tips of english. That is only an estimate however and does not hold as gospel for every table. Tables with softer cushions for example do not require adding so much english as the cue ball moves down the long rail. Going up on the long rail to the 6-6 or 7-7 line would require that you subtract $\frac{1}{4}$ tip of english for each diamond.

Now try the shot in the diagram. Place the balls as shown to play the two-rail kick on the 8 ball. Lay your cue on the 5-to-5 line and then move it on a parallel line over the center of the cue ball. Shoot the cue ball to where the parallel line meets the short rail with a half tip of high and one tip of right-hand english until you are pocketing the 8 ball consistently. Then you can move the cue ball up and down the long rail to play the same shot from different positions. The method remains the same for every shot. First you will find the nearest connecting diamonds to the cue ball, and then make a parallel shift to the cue ball to find your aim point on the short rail. Pay attention to your parallel shift since making an accurate one is critical to using the system. To demonstrate the power of this system move the cue ball back to its original position and move the 8 ball a half diamond up from the corner to the spot marked Y in the diagram. Now count diamond segments from the center of the 8 ball toward the cue ball. When you arrive at Z you will have counted four diamond segments. Connect Z with diamond 4 on the top short rail, parallel shift to the cue ball and play the shot with the same stroke you employed when the 8 ball was hanging in the corner. It shouldn't take long before you are hitting the 8 ball consistently. To pocket the 8 ball begin counting from its top edge toward the cue ball and continue with the process as before.

Most players can acquire a working feel for this system in a half hour or less and a competitive knowledge of it in an afternoon. Once you get it working you will begin to greet these kicks as an opportunity to turn the game around and demoralize an opponent who gives you the table with what he might have thought was a good safety.



