

## Combining Draw and Follow with English

Up to this point we've explored and learned an impressively wide set of skills for cue-ball control. And mostly, we've learned each one in a somewhat isolated situation apart from the others. Today, we shall integrate some cue-ball skills and uncover three principles essential to great pool.

In Diagram 1 we have a shot on the striped ball into the upper-left corner with the next stripe waiting at the other end of the table near the upper-right corner. Although it's possible to get position for the next shot without english, we're going to use english to uncover some new knowledge. Set up the shot as shown and mark the balls' positions. Now, with a smooth follow stroke and some right-hand english, pocket the object ball and move the cue ball across the table's diagonal for the position shown with the solid line.

While it's not critical that your cue ball hits the exact points of contact on the rails as shown, you must however replicate two features of this position shot. Since the cue ball is moving to your right as it goes into the first rail, right-hand english will make it run. Observe how the running english widens the cue ball's rebound angle and increases its speed. But, when the cue ball goes across the table and hits the second long rail, we observe the opposite effect on the second rebound. The cue ball loses speed as that running english from the first long rail becomes reverse english on the second long rail. **Principle Number One:** Running english keeps running as long as the cue ball hits alternating types of rails—i.e. long, short, long, short, long, etc. And, the running english helps move it around the table easily and naturally. But when the cue ball goes from a long rail to a second long rail, the english reverses to kill the cue ball's speed and stop it from running. So, when sending your cue ball into the neighborhood of your next shot, you will commonly want to finish with a long-rail-to-long-rail path that reverses its english and kills its speed to keep it there for your next shot.

The other critical feature of this shot to note is the cue ball's path over the center spot on its trip across the table. The exact points at which your cue ball makes contact with the two long rails is not important. However, it's absolutely necessary that you learn to move the cue ball through the table's exact center when traveling around the table for position. **Principle Number Two:** Because there is no straight line from any rail to a pocket through the center spot, a cue ball rebounding from a rail and rolling over that spot cannot scratch. When you develop your feel for moving the cue ball over the center spot as it moves around the table, you join an elite group of players. Watch the pros play 9 Ball and observe how often you see the cue ball rolling *to* the center spot, *toward* the center spot or *over* the center spot. If this is new to you, the frequency with which you

observe that principle in action may astound you. Despite all the differences that we can observe among great pool players, every professional has a cue ball that tracks through the center on auto pilot.

Now, set up the same shot with the second striped ball positioned on the left, short rail as shown in Diagram 2. For this shot, we're going to apply the first two principles in concert with a third one to reproduce the position shown with the solid line. Because we want the cue ball to keep running and return around the table, we must go from the first, long rail to the right, short rail as dictated by Principle One. Then, in order to avoid scratching in the upper-left corner at the end, we must obey Principle Two and roll over the center spot on the return trip. Note the same kind of long-rail-to-long-rail finish we employed on the first shot to reverse the english on the fourth rail and keep the cue ball in the position zone. In order to hit the position track shown we must widen the angle of rebound from the object ball with some draw. That contrasts with the first shot where we used follow and running english for a tight angle off of the ball and then a wide angle off of the first rail. Here, we use draw with running english for a wide angle off of the ball and a wide angle off of the rail to bring the cue ball around the table. **Principle Number Three:** We use draw and follow to control the cue ball's angle of rebound off of the object ball. We use english to control the cue ball's angle of rebound off of a cushion. Combining the two techniques gives us a full toolbox for cue-ball control. Remember that english has no bearing on the cue ball's angle of rebound from the object ball. A distressingly large number of avid players are sadly unaware of that fact.

Here we have two common and simple shots to learn cue-ball control with english. Although it's important to achieve the desired results for both shots, it's far more important to absorb and understand the principles they illustrate. Those principles will serve you as reliable and consistent guides through a vast array of pool shots to help you manage the game's complexity and remove some of its mystery.

