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## An Elegant Kiss

Back in the nineties Efren Reyes surprised a lot of pool players when he told an interviewer that he loves to watch pool and often adds to his knowledge while watching inexperienced players. He explained that because great players tend to manage the table and solve problems rather predictably, he can learn more from watching bad players who cause the balls to move in ways one would never see while watching pros. So he is able to observe something that the rest of us might consider "wrong," convert it to a useful skill and then add it to his famous bag of tricks.

I also like to watch pool and, though I prefer to watch the best players, have nevertheless watched countless hours of pool as presented by many players who are somewhat less than stellar. Mostly, perhaps because I lack Efren's vision and imagination, the bulk of what I've seen among untrained players has gone by the wayside as I fail to find much use for it. Recently however, while watching a recreational player shooting alone, I happened to look up at just the right moment to see shot B in the diagram.

Since the shot in question is a close relative of the more commonly seen kiss shot on the left side of the table, or shot A, let's begin the discussion there. Although we may see this shot in any pool game, it's mostly an 8-Ball shot, employed in situations like the one pictured, where we have no good shot on the solid ball because of the striped ball blocking its path to the pocket. The informed player knows to bank the solid off of the side rail to make contact with the inside of the stripe as shown with the shaded ball. The dotted line going to the pocket is perpendicular to the line of centers at the moment of contact. Good 8-Ball players know the shot, and competitive bar-table players shoot it routinely, owing to tighter traffic and bigger pockets on the bar tables. There's no real technique for the shot except to note how the balls must make contact and to remember not to play it with too much speed. Set it up as shown and practice it until you're pocketing the solid ball at least 50% of the time.

Although Shot B is essentially the same shot, I must confess that I had never seen it, or noted seeing it, until my recent experience. The only difference between the new shot and shot A is that the ball we use to kiss the solid ball into the pocket this time is not the obstruction. In this case the obstructing striped ball remains undisturbed while we bank the solid ball past it, off of the other solid ball and into the pocket. Here, the kiss also frees up that second solid ball to facilitate a run out. The setup you see is identical to the setup that confronted the player I was watching when I first saw the shot, with the break out included. Again, the dotted line going to the pocket is perpendicular to the balls' line of centers at the precise moment of contact. As with Shot A, practice this one with manageable speed. And because it's likely to look unfamiliar, you will want to spend time with it to feel comfortable. I was fortunate enough to have another table at my disposal when I first saw it and began practicing it immediately.

Although the shots we see here require no special skills or techniques they can easily elude any player who hasn't seen them, especially Shot B. And while I'm certain that I cannot be the first person to present this shot, I do not recall ever seeing anyone play it prior to recently, not even a professional. So, from now on, I'm going to pay more attention when I'm watching, no matter who's at the table.

