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## Maximum Stun Follow

While playing billiards a few years ago with legendary cue builder and 3-cushion player, Dennis Dieckman, I picked up a simple and valuable piece of knowledge. Although most of the numerous shots and systems he shared with me during that session have seeped out of my sieve like brain, I did manage to remember a principle of his that continues to serve me well in all cue games. A certain shot arose prompting Dennis to explain that whenever a shot demands the absolute limit of the technique that's called for, that's a good thing since we know exactly what's required—as much as possible. So, whenever we see a shot that requires maximum draw, the most extreme english, the thinnest possible cut, or some other technique pushed to the limit, we can proceed to give it our all with no need to measure the effort.

In the diagram we see an easy, almost straight-in shot on the second to last striped ball and the challenge of moving the cue ball to the long rail near the X for position on the last striped ball. Because the angle is so close to straight and a normal, rolling follow shot will run the cue ball into the 8 ball, moving the cue ball forward to the long rail with the necessary lateral movement to get past the 8 and to the X presents a genuine problem. Achieving the desired position for this shot requires maximum stun follow.

Set up the balls on the diamonds as shown with the striped ball about a half-inch from the cushion and the cue ball one ball width away from the same cushion. To begin, play the shot a few times making certain that the object ball goes into the pocket off of the far facing without touching the short cushion on its way in. Keeping the striped ball on that path will be critical for two reasons. First, the position we seek for the solid ball will require a very firm stroke and, at that speed, we have no room for error in the pocket. The shot must be hit precisely. And, in order to move the cue ball out to the X, you must cut the striped ball as far as possible to your left for the best possible cue-ball rebound from the short cushion.

Playing the shot for the position shown requires a firm, stun-follow stroke. Think of the shot as a hard stop shot that moves forward slightly. Some players find it challenging at first to associate the same stroke we use for a stop shot with forward movement. So, a good place to begin is with a stop shot. Hit the cue ball just below center with a firm, accelerating stroke. Remember to keep the acceleration snappy all the way through the cue ball. Keep your shooting hand relaxed and hit the shot with long follow through. A firm stop shot will put the cue ball on, or close to, the dotted-line track.

Once you can hit the dotted line with speed, getting the cue ball to the X requires doing everything the same except with your tip slightly higher than the stop shot. This shot nicely illustrates how sensitive the cue ball is to slight changes in tip placement when working near center ball at high speed. Keep playing the shot, altering tip placement until the cue ball is tracking to the long rail near the X. On successful trials the cue ball may begin its journey along the dotted line before the partial roll grabs and

moves it forward to the long rail. If the technique is not yet working, move the cue ball another ball width away from the cushion to get a feel for the shot from an angle that calls for less than maximum stun follow. After nailing a few from a slightly friendlier angle, success from the position shown in the diagram should come more easily.

Here's a shot that puts us in touch with maximum stun follow for position, and the concept of reaching the limit in one area of cue-ball control. And, with its extreme speed, the shot is a valuable stroke trainer. When we can pocket balls and achieve position at high speed, we soon find greater precision with all of our shots at more normal speeds. Working with shots that dwell near the limits of our abilities help us to identify those limits and then push them further as we improve.

