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Useful Double Kiss

Mention the words “double kiss” to an experienced player and then observe that person’s reaction. When I hear those words, my imagination floods with missed banks, lost one-pocket games, and long, perfectly hit billiards insidiously kissed out from the doorstep of scoring. Considering all of the heartbreak and disappointment associated with double kisses, it’s difficult to imagine any positive attributes.

Because the double kiss comes in so many forms, its knack for causing fits can never be fully offset by any useful applications. And aside from the unpredictable and accidental version that sometimes leads to a fortunate outcome, I can only think of a few situations where we can hit an object ball twice with enough control to make things work in our favor. Two common shots are shown in the diagram, one defensive and one offensive.

Shot A shows a possible 9-ball setup where the shooter has no good shot on the 8 ball resting on the right, side rail. The 9 ball is positioned such that the shooter can hit the 8 ball but cannot hit it thin enough to play the cross-corner bank. And if the 9 ball’s position does not permit that shot, then it also precludes banking the 8 to the middle of the top rail for a safety, the shot I prefer when it’s available. One good safety that is available with the illustrated set up would be to cut the 8 ball very thin on its left side, moving it a couple inches to the right while sending the cue ball across the table to the left, side rail. That’s a good safety but we’re going to explore a different one that involves a double kiss.

Arrange the cue ball and 8 ball as shown with the 9 ball positioned such that it allows a hit on the 8 ball only slightly to the right of straight on. Our first double kiss will involve shooting the cue ball directly at the 8 ball. If the 8 hit is squarely straight on, the cue ball will bounce straight back off of the 8 to roll over its original spot on its way across the table. That straight kiss back can be very useful with an object ball frozen to a short rail, so you should set it up that way and practice kissing the cue ball back the entire length of the table for a reliably difficult leave.

With the straight-on kiss under your belt you can now modify it slightly to play the safety we see in the diagram. With an above-center hit and relatively slow speed, hit the 8 ball slightly to the right of straight on. When the shot is hit properly the 8 ball gets squeezed left to the top rail while the cue ball kind of slides off of it to the right. Hitting the correct spot on the 8 with good speed will yield the safety that’s shown in the diagram with the two dotted-outlined balls. Speed is critical for this shot and the correct spot on the 8 tends to be closer to straight on than most players initially think. Play the shot until you’re moving the 8 consistently to the top rail. And then you can experiment with various starting positions for the 8 ball on the side rail. One last note, an object ball does not have to be frozen to the rail for the shot to work, however it gets tricky fast as the ball’s distance from the rail increases.

Shot B offers an interesting bank that I’ve only seen in one pocket. Imagine banking the striped ball on the right side rail for the upper left corner (X). This time the grey, dotted-outlined ball represents an object ball lying near your opponent’s pocket at the upper right. It’s not the most difficult bank shot, but because it requires cutting the object ball rather thin, it is a risky one since the cue ball is likely to move around and leave a shot on the grey ball in case of a miss. But, with a double kiss, you can play the bank and keep the cue ball on the right side rail to leave your opponent without a shot. Apply the same technique from shot A, hitting the striped ball straight on, or maybe a hair to the right of straight on, with an above-center hit and just enough speed to get the ball across corner. Because the game is one pocket, you want that ball hanging near your pocket if it fails to fall. When the shot is played correctly the stripe will get squeezed out wide to the left while the cue ball remains on the rail.

Because the double kiss most often occurs as a mistake, we must step over a natural mental barrier in order to view the shot in a positive light. The willingness however to take something negative and make it useful is one quality that the best players bring to the game and employ occasionally to turn apparently hopeless situations around to their advantage. And that measure of creativity adds one more critical element to a complete, competitive game.

