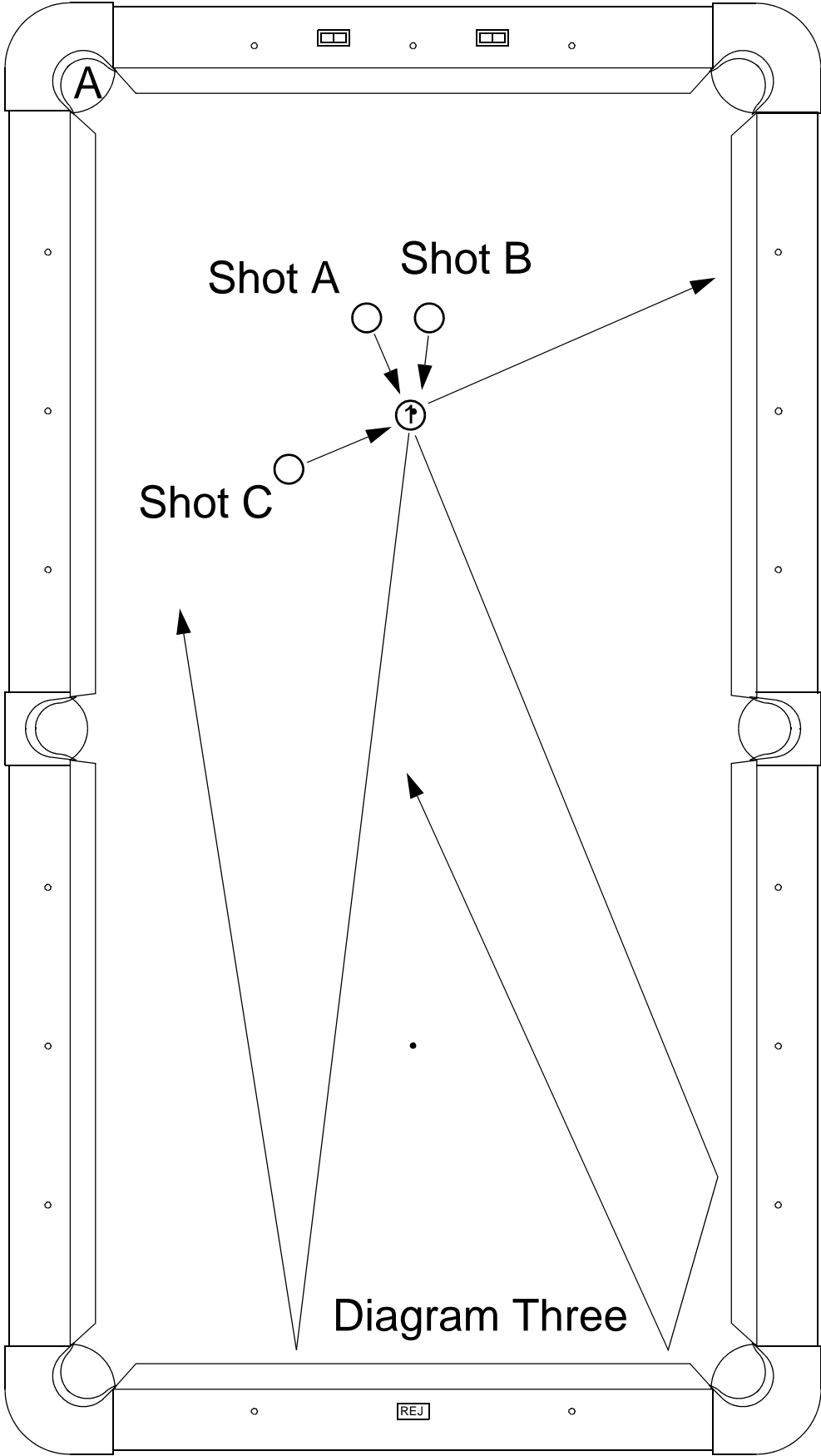


Diagram Two



A

Shot A

Shot B

Shot C

Diagram Three

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One Pocket Specials by Bob Jewett

In my last two columns I covered the basic rules of one pocket and some principles for analyzing the value to each player of the positions of the balls on the table. This time let's cover shots that are special to one pocket and unlikely to occur in any other game. A player who can recognize these shots and use them will have a huge advantage over a less-schooled player.

In Diagram One we see two situations where a ball is near your opponent's pocket and you have to deal with it immediately. For each situation let's look at three options. Which is best depends on your feel for the shots and the positions of any other balls on the table.

For Shot A you have pocket A. The simplest choice is the kick-and-stick safe which is also very common at other games. Hit the short rail as close as possible to the ball so you get a full hit and the cue ball stops dead while the object ball ends in a safe position. The main skills to learn for this shot are how to get a full hit depending on the incoming angle of the cue ball and the distance of the object ball from the cushion and how to send the object ball to a particular location.

A second kicking option is to play the cue ball off the long rail to hit the 1 ball generally towards your pocket. You need right side spin to get a fuller hit on the ball and for the shot shown it is not possible to get enough spin to make the 1 ball in pocket A. This would be a bad choice if there were no other balls around because it is likely to leave an easy bank for your opponent.

The third choice is often overlooked and I think it is the best if you know how to play it: bank the 1 ball off the long rail to pocket A. This may seem impossible at first glance. The trick is to play the 1 ball off the point of the long rail. If you hit the shot too full you will leave a hanger in your opponent's pocket. Too thin is not as harmful but you are likely to leave a possible shot. With right draw you can leave the cue ball in area C for the safe. Experience with this shot is gained for least expense on the practice table.

For Shot B you have pocket B. The no-sweat way is to play the cue ball to the end rail, hit the 2 ball almost full, and send it well up the table. If you can keep the 2 ball near the side cushion you will reduce the chance of a simple bank. You do need to hit a rail after ball contact but that is rarely a problem for this shot.

The cross-corner bank is a possibility but has two major problems. Depending on exactly how the balls are sitting and the speed of the cushions, there may be a double kiss to avoid. Also, it is hard to control exactly where the cue ball will end up and if there are other balls on the table you may sell out.

The third option is to play the kick shot to your pocket by bringing the cue ball off the long rail. It looks to be a sure scratch if you hit the object ball in the right place to make it, and if you use follow you probably will scratch. Use low right instead. It needs to be your best low and pretty good right English. Spend ten minutes with this shot and I think you will see great possibilities. Try different approach angles and distances of the object ball from the rail.

In Diagram Two is a situation with several options. You have pocket A. Your opponent meant to leave you frozen to your side of the 5 ball but has left you a little breathing room. See if you can find three good plays before reading on.

A passive play is to thin-hit the 5 ball and roll the cue ball behind the 2 ball at Z. That won't leave anything easy for your opponent but it does nothing to advance the position. When I do a shot like that my opponent banks the 1 ball in on three cushions and slides the cue ball over for perfect position on the 5 ball to continue his run.

You would like to bank the 1 to your pocket but the 3 and 4 are blocking the shot. Get help from the 4. Bank the 1 ball to the short rail at about Y so it has a chance to slide off the bottom of the 4 towards your pocket. At the same time try to drag the cue ball up the table to about X. That turns the 5 ball into a blocker in case you leave anything close to your pocket.

A problem with the second option is that if you don't make a ball and send a ball to around W your opponent will have a bank towards his pocket with an easy safe. Instead you may be able to kick the 1 along the path to Y which offers other possibilities for the leave.

Finally, you could shoot almost straight at the 1 ball which will send it into the 3 and 4 and with a little luck all three will end up playable to your pocket. To get a safe, play the cue ball with heavy left side spin -- but softly! -- to bring it off the long rail to Z. Do a few of these shots successfully and you'll start to feel like Efren.

Diagram Three shows some bank shots for a spotted ball. Balls are spotted very often at one pocket and you need to know all the possible ways to get such a ball into your pocket at A.

Shot A is a two-rail bank. On most tables this is at the limit-line of banking possibility -- any closer to your side of the table and the diagonally opposite corner pocket is in the way. On brand new cloth you might be able to make the shot one or two balls farther over because the ball will slide off the first cushion and take a longer angle. On many tables you will need to transfer a little spin to the object ball which will take on the second cushion. That would be left spin on the object ball for the shot shown given by right spin on the cue ball.

Shot B is a simple one-rail bank. You need to be able to shoot this from various angles. Note that if this is the last ball left on the table you still need to think about safety. If you miss the ball and it bounces away from your pocket a little, you may leave a bank shot. One way to avoid that is to shoot harder and draw the cue ball to the foot cushion. If the ball misses, it should bounce well away leaving only a tough bank. A second way to avoid the sell out is to get your bank speed down to the point where the ball will be left in the jaws of your pocket if it doesn't drop.

Shot C shows the extreme angle for banking from the spot. If you shoot a spotted ball hard and with "hold-up" English (left on the cue ball in this case), you can send the object ball straight at the first diamond on the long rail and it will still go in your pocket. Some tables with very sticky rails may allow a target even closer to your opponent's pocket, but the first diamond is common. One pocket players usually don't play such banks at high speed but sometimes the positions of the other balls requires it.