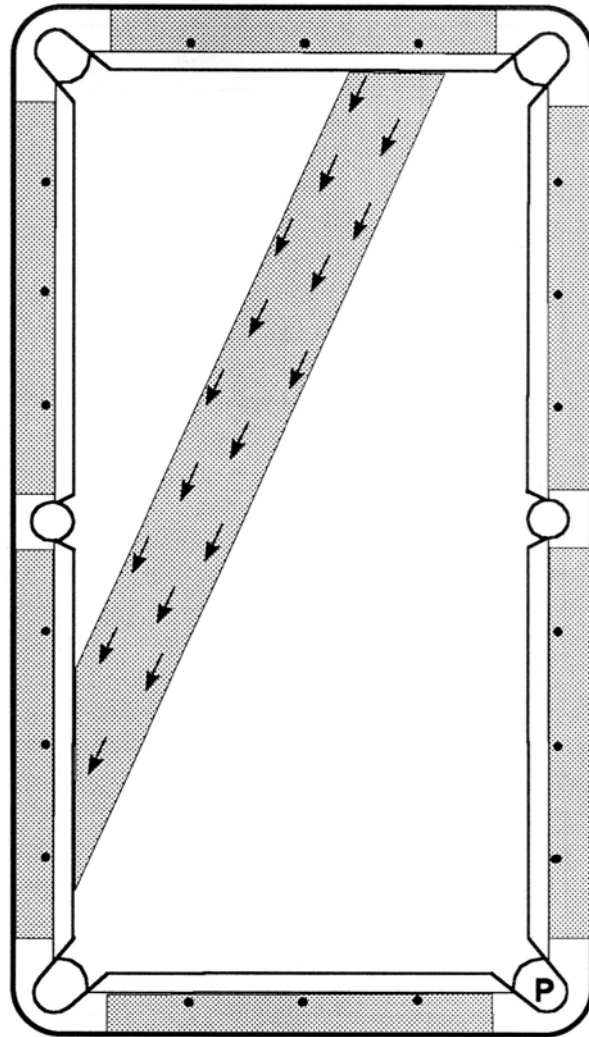
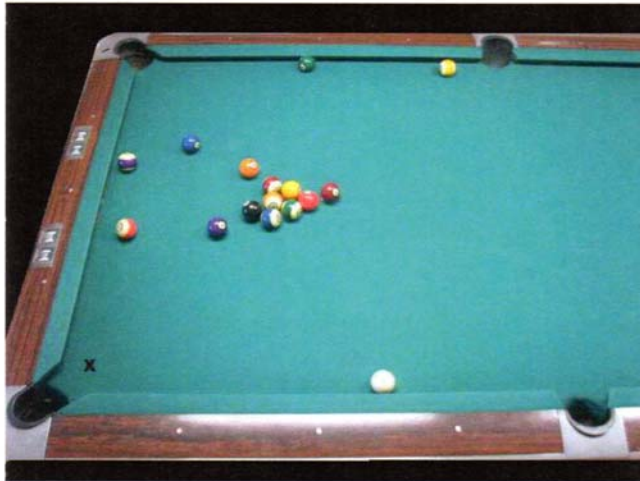


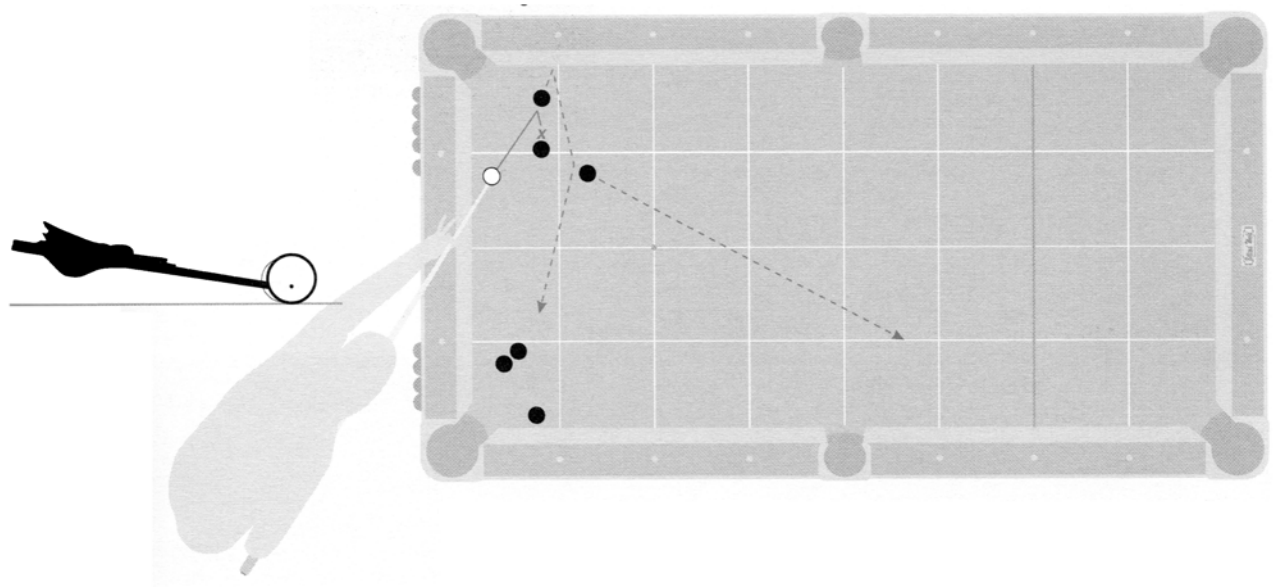
1 Willie Jopling spotted ball shot



2 Jack Koehler 5-cushion bank tracks



3 Tom Wirth Break Shot Answer



4 Eddie Robin Bank Off A Ball Move

One Pocket Studies

by Bob Jewett

This is the sixth in a series of columns on one pocket. By now you should know the rules, how to evaluate a position on the table, basic moves, a few special shots, and possible handicaps. To really learn one pocket will take you years and require study far beyond what I've covered here. Let's look at some learning tools you can employ on your quest for pocket-apiece excellence.

Billiards Digest has had columnists who regularly covered one pocket shots. I think those columns were a good way to pick up useful shots as you had only one or two to work on at a time. Grady Mathews specialized in the game here with shots that turned bleak situations into game-winners. His column appeared from 1985 until 2000. One pocket champions Shannon Daulton, Jeremy Jones and Wade Crane each made several appearances in the instructional column section.

While his column from 1998 to 2009 was titled "Trick Shots", Willie Jopling -- the pen name of Bill Marshall -- frequently showed skill shots directly related to one pocket. Willie also published sets of shots in various categories including for one pocket. Fig. 1 shows one example. You often end up with a line of spotted balls towards the end of the game. You might not think of this solution on your own, but it moves all of the balls to your side and puts your opponent in a difficult situation. The whole collection of Jopling's shots is called "Willie Jopling's Book on Pocket Billiards." It's hard to find now, but it's definitely worth the search.

Long-time BD columnist George Fels wrote about colorful characters who played one pocket and also wrote the first instructional material on the game that I know of. In his 1977 book "Mastering Pool" he gives twenty pages to the game including strategies from the break to the end game. While the content has been superceded by later books, I think it is a book every pool student should have and you can get a used copy delivered to your door for about \$10.

Jack Koehler who wrote the ground breaking book "The Science of Pocket Billiards" also wrote a book about one pocket titled "Upscale One-Pocket" that is over 200 pages devoted to the game. Fig. 2 is from his section on banking concepts and shows the starting paths for five-cushion shots. Other interesting parts of the book include drills and a checklist of strategies. This is another book you can get used for under \$10 or new for \$20. I think this book is probably the best written introduction for new players of the game.

Fig. 3 is from a recent book by Tom Wirth titled "One Pocket: A Game of Controlled Aggression." The title itself makes an important point: playing the game well is often a balance between offense and defense. Wirth illustrates many situations and discusses the various shot options keeping in mind the current abilities of the reader. In this particular figure, which is just after your opponent's break, how would you respond? You have the pocket marked with the "X". Try to come up with three reasonable responses before reading on.

An aggressive response that Wirth gives is to bank the 7 ball towards your pocket and draw the cue ball back to the same rail you are shooting from but somewhere above the side pocket. That should leave a ball near your pocket and no good offensive shot for your opponent.

For those who can't draw the cue ball from that position, Wirth suggests banking the 9 ball to your side of the table above the side pocket and rolling the cue ball to freeze against the one ball. This is a much easier shot but doesn't advance your cause as much.

A third possible shot is to shoot the 7 into the right side of the 6 with a stop shot that sticks the cue ball on the top of the 3 ball. This has the advantage of removing your opponent's most playable ball and is a little easier to play than the draw shot. Whether a shot like this is on often depends on exactly how the balls are lined up. Will a ball pop out if the cue ball hits the 3 a little too hard? If you can get the cue ball right, which in this case is stuck to the 3, the object balls can go a little wrong and not hurt anything.

Which option is right for you? Wirth wants you to do a little self analysis when you play and match your choices to your skills. Is your elevated draw a thing of beauty or derision? Maybe you better play the easy roller safe.

In 200 pages, Wirth covers nine different parts of the game including how to run balls and drills. The book is spiral-bound so it lays flat on the table for your lab experiments. It costs \$65 with shipping, but if you drop me an email I will point you to a promo code for \$10 off.

Fig. 4 is from what I consider to be the best book for one pocket and certainly one of the best-illustrated books of any cue sport. It is from Eddie Robin's classic book "Winning One Pocket". Much of the book is devoted to situations such as general situations with multiple solutions that depend on the player, as in the example from Wirth above, or in this case a situation that is used to demonstrate a particular technique. Robin enlisted six top players including Ed Kelly, Eddie Taylor and Grady Mathews to propose and review solutions.

This example demonstrates banking a ball to hit another ball. Your pocket is the lower left one. Note all that the shot accomplishes if performed correctly: it removes two balls from your opponent's side, it loosens up the unplayable pair by your pocket, it blocks your opponent from removing balls by your pocket and if you manage to freeze the cue ball against an object ball as shown, it forces your opponent to move that last ball on his side away from his pocket or to play some kind of kick shot to leave the cue ball near your pocket.

Note also the complete and precise graphics Robin uses in the illustration. The position of the bridge hand is shown in the inset along with where to hit on the cue ball and how full to hit on the object ball. The paths of all the balls are shown. The score is shown by the balls in the front of the table. There are some other graphics that show when a lot of spin is used, when serious power is applied, and which ball passes first when the paths of two balls cross.

Robin also includes the history of the game, stories of the great players and matches along with many pictures, a discussion of strategy, a section on handicaps and one of the best write-ups of diamond systems I've seen. If you can add this book to your collection, I highly recommend it, but since it is out of print and the demand exceeds the supply, you are unlikely to find it for less than \$300. A similar second volume called "Shots, Moves and Strategies" can be found for about half that price, if you're lucky.

Multiple instructional videos for the game are available, including DVDs from Grady Mathews and Willie Jopling. For top matches, Accu-Stats has an extensive library that is migrating from DVD to video on demand. Some very good matches are available for free on YouTube. I recommend the Orcollo-Chohan battles for the contrast in styles and inventiveness. Hint: the right-arrow key can be used to repeatedly skip ahead five seconds during the bouts of intense thinking, a feature that is unfortunately not available on live matches. For on-line discussion of the game, I recommend the website onepocket.org which also has the de facto official rules.

So, you now have all the tools you need to master the game. The next ten years should be a lot of learning and fun.