

## Good Mechanics, Step Two

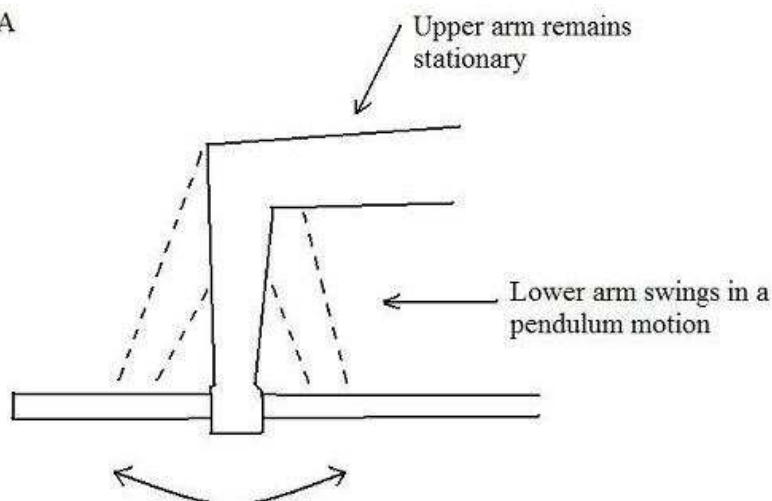
*By Roger Long*

Last month, we talked about the mechanics involved in achieving proper alignment. This month, we'll wrap up our discussion on good mechanics by talking about the mechanics involved in maintaining a level cue.

Any time a cue is stroked through a cue ball at a downward angle, the cue ball is almost always curved off of its straight-line path. The reason for this is because the downward angle puts a backspin on the ball, which then sets up friction between the ball and the cloth, which then generates heat, which then causes the cue ball to "drag". If there is any sidespin (English) on the cue ball (which there almost always is, due to the fact that the cue ball is rarely struck at exactly dead center on the vertical axis), the ball will curve in the direction of the English, i.e., Right English will produce a right-hand curve. Therefore, unless the shooter is intentionally wanting to curve the cue ball, the cue stick must be held as level as possible all through the stroke.

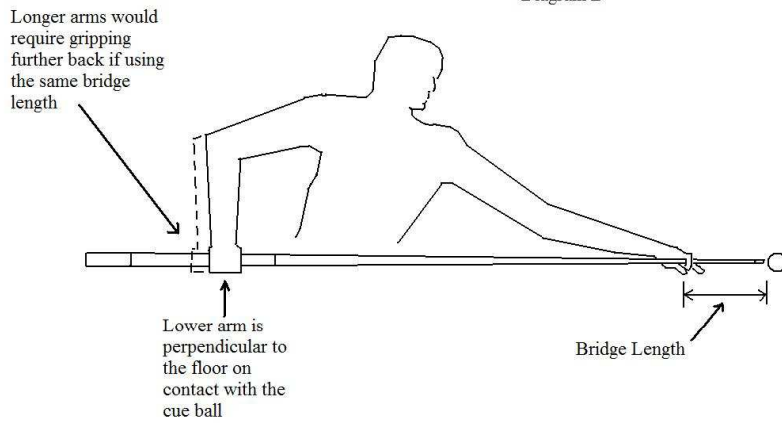
The best way to keep the cue level all the way through the stroke is to use what is called a "pendulum stroke" (see Diagram A). A pendulum stroke is one where you start with a level cue, and then you move only the forearm back and forth, keeping everything else, including the upper arm, locked into place. The motion resulting from this stroke will look like the swinging of a pendulum on a clock. When you use a pendulum stroke you are eliminating all unnecessary body and extremity movements from which miss-hits on the cue ball generally occur.

Diagram A



Another thing to be considered is where you should grip the cue. This will vary from player to player depending on physical make up and personal style (upright stance, low stance, etc.). The one thing everyone should try to practice, however, is adopting a grip that will have the forearm perpendicular to the floor as the tip contacts the cue ball (see Diagram B). Gripping the cue at this spot will ensure that you contact the cue ball at the cue's most level point (at the bottom of the pendulum arc) when executing the stroke.

Diagram B



Well, dear shooters; that about sums up my own viewpoints on mechanics that can help achieve better fundamentals. But just remember, you're not going to see all great players using these exact mechanics – many have developed their own ways of achieving straight and level strokes. So don't let me, or anyone else, tell you that you absolutely have to do things this way. Only you can be the judge of what's right for you.