

# GAMES PEOPLE PLAY

by GEORGE FELS

## 2-Ball

A pool game designed for experts.  
Don't expect any suckers.

Every once in a while, some ingenious expert in a game will invent an elitist version of that game so that he can enjoy some competition at his own level. Examples include "blitz" chess (move in 30 or fewer seconds), concentration rummy (in which you see your hand only at the deal, but play it face-down thereafter), and, closer to home, rail-first 3-cushion billiards. Here's a pool game I've never seen played by anybody but me (not that that qualifies me as its inventor), which nobody but experts figure to enjoy much.

The name 2-Ball is self-descriptive; to begin the game, the balls go on the head and foot spots respectively (Diagram A). The object of the game is to score a billiard on the two balls while pocketing at least one of them. Diagram B shows you the obvious 2-rail solution to scoring on the break shot, and this is by far the most common shot in the game.

**Further rules:** All balls pocketed are immediately respotted, whether the shot is successful or not. You respot the ball closest to where it was sunk; if sunk in a side pocket, respot farthest from the other ball. (This constant re-spotting of the balls is the

reason the shot of Diagram A comes up so much, with the cue ball, naturally, in varying positions.) As in bank pool, scratches are optional, since the game is relatively hard. (If both balls are behind the string following a scratch, respot the closest to the end rail.) It's also optional whether or not to award 2 points for a billiard in which both object balls fall. Calling your pocket shot is optional too.

Eight points' worth of this ought to be a long enough game for anybody. Even five is not a bad game. I've included some additional diagrams showing how you might typically score. Diagram D is hardly typical of anything except a pipe dream; I include it for the sake of showing off, to borrow an apt phrase, because it easily represents my finest hour ever at the pool table (carom the 1 into the corner off the 2; follow the cue ball for a time-shot on the 2 at Point X). It took me many minutes to convince my opponent that I had indeed scored.

Miscellaneous other virtues of the game:

1) There will be no lambs and no lions. Players from intermediate on

down will not take to this game; it's too difficult to score. Conversely, nobody can score at this game and still disguise his speed doing it.

2) Similarly, the game is a great equalizer. If you're good enough to play this competitively, you can take on a pool (or billiards) player who might otherwise rank a few notches above you. The game should hold him in; hardly anybody figures to score in big clusters.

3) The suggested low number of points required to win adds enough pressure to make 2-ball a pretty fair game for stakes. This should not be unattractive to experts.

4) Almost anybody can play reasonable defense — allowing that it would take a member of the Jukes family to blunder into leaving the two object balls close together. Just about anything else will make your opponent *work*, even balls hanging in different pockets.

5) The game, ultimately, should help either your pool, your billiards, or both. It also gives you a chance to develop your thinking and creativity.

Go find a guy who's been torturing you for years and make him play you some 2-Ball. Revenge is sweet.

