

Draw and
Outside Spin

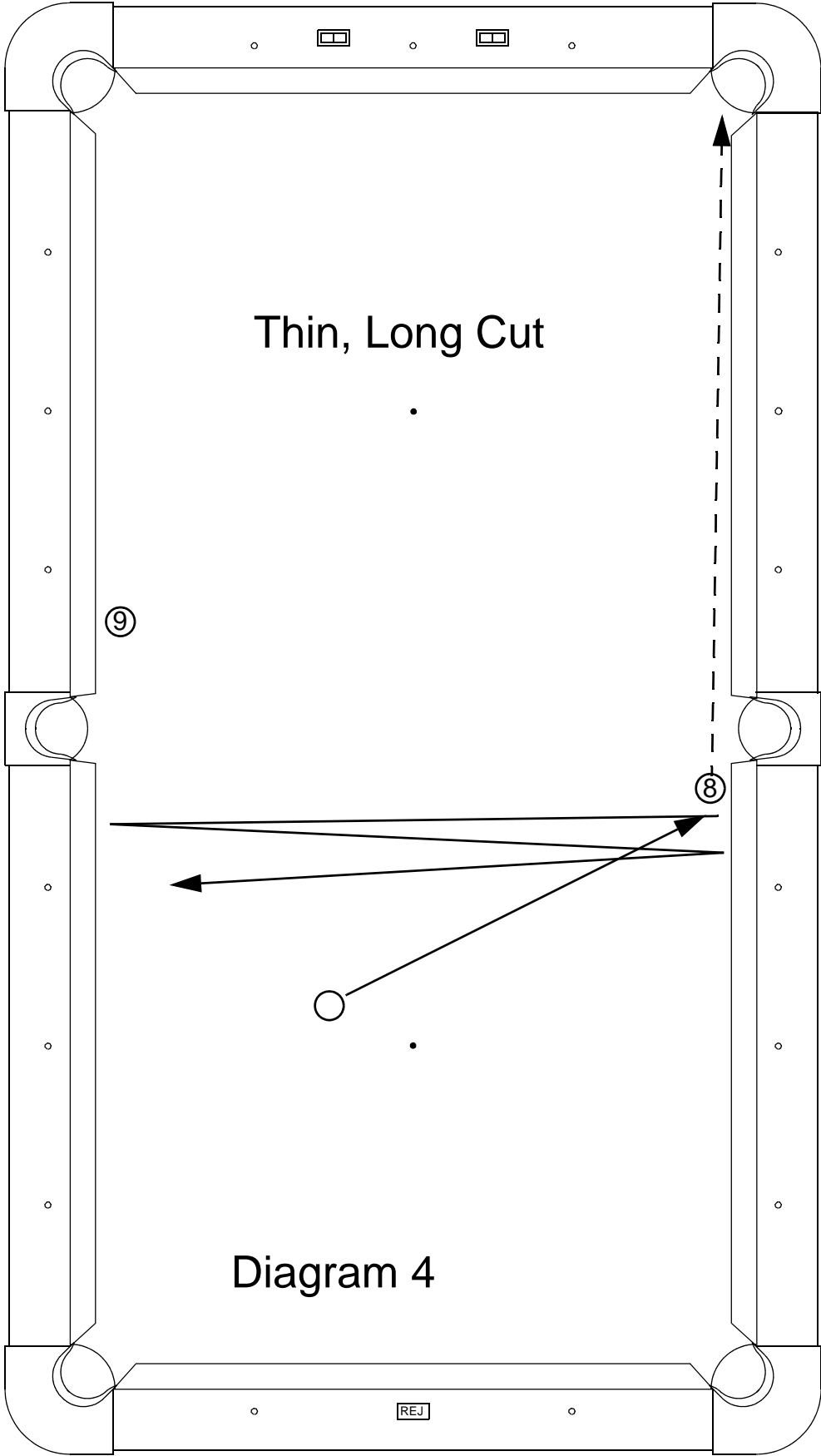
Diagram 3

P

8

9

REJ



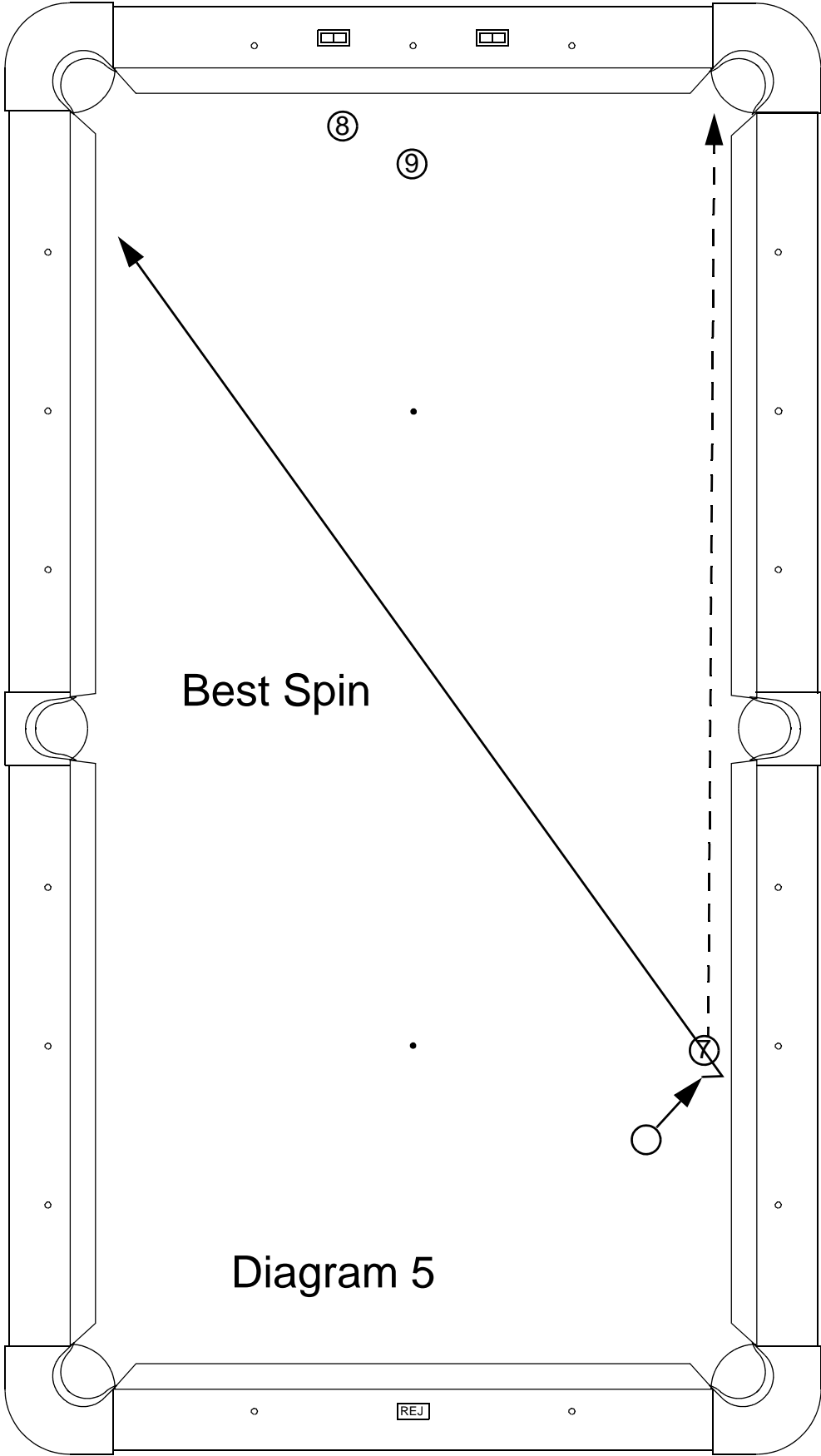
Thin, Long Cut

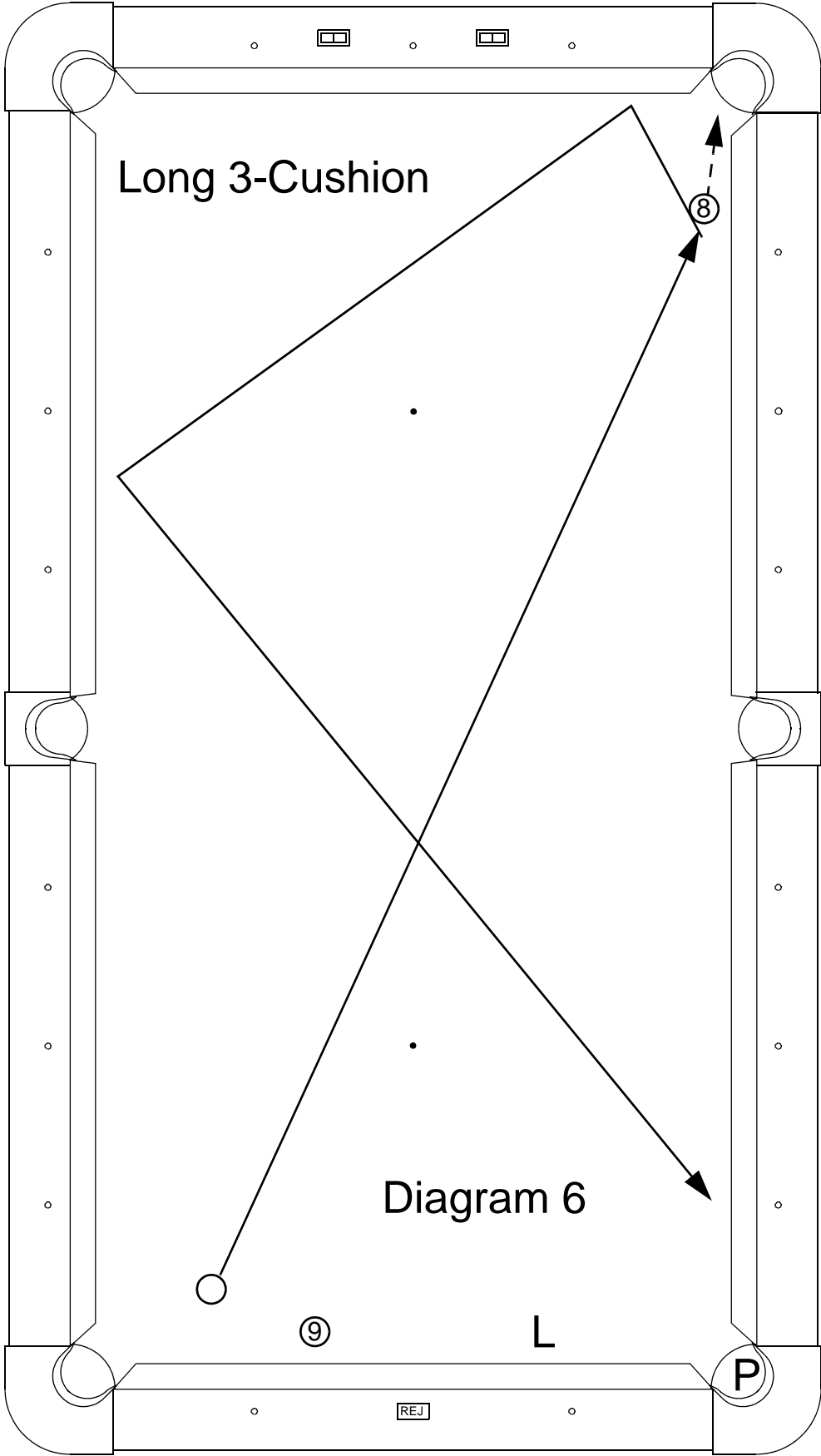
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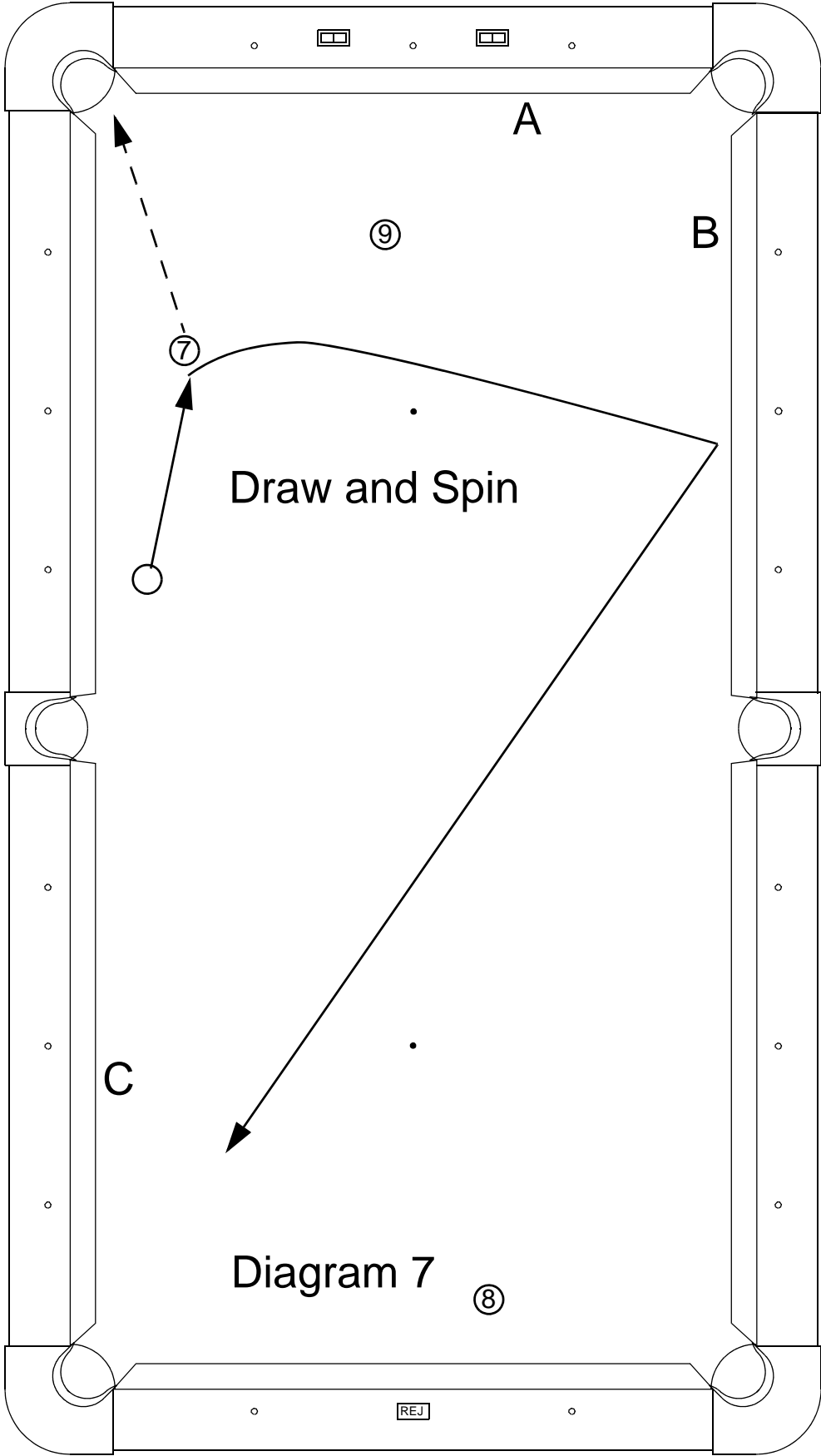
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Diagram 4

REJ







Big Shots

by Bob Jewett

Rotation games more than any other kind of game require big shots to get you through difficult situations. Since there is only one ball to play and one ball to play next, there is not as much pattern play to work on as at 8-ball or straight pool, for example, but the individual shots tend to be harder. Below are some example shots that you need to be comfortable with or at least know if they are within your current range. Your goal in practice should be to expand that range for shots like these.

Ideally you will play position so well that you will rarely encounter hard shots, but for the sake of the discussion let's say that your opponent has missed and left you the shot in the diagram.

Diagram 1 shows the long, straight or nearly straight shot. Perfectly straight and you need power draw, while with some angle follow may be the easier technique. When practicing all of the shots shown here, back off on the difficulty if you can't succeed at least a third of the time. Move the cue ball as close to the 8 ball as needed to allow you to get back to the end rail fairly consistently, and increase the distance as your percentage increases. Alternatively, alter the shot so the cue ball doesn't have to move as much after contact to get position.

In Diagram 2 the problem is the closeness of the cushion which requires you to elevate to get back spin on the cue ball. It's important to know if this shot is within your range. If not, you need to find a different path such as using follow and cheating the pocket or playing safe. To make this shot easier, move the cue ball off the cushion as far as necessary at first.

Diagram 3 shows a very common shot. If the cue ball is a foot away from the 8, you should get reasonable position using right draw most or nearly all of the time. Put the cue ball back in the kitchen on a table with worn cloth and tight pockets and the shot can be a challenge even for top players. Some players favor banking the 8 ball to pocket P on this shot, especially if the cue ball is close to a cushion. That stroke is much easier to execute and there is a good chance of a safety if you miss the 8 ball on the long-cushion side of the pocket. You may have to go that route until you are comfortable with the path shown.

Sooner or later you will face long, thin cuts as shown in Diagram 4. The position is simple -- just go straight across the table three times. If the cut is a little fuller a single pass across might work but that runs the risk of a roll-off. To make this shot easier at the start of your practice, move the 8 closer to the pocket but keep the cut thin and concentrate on controlling the side spin on the cue ball so it doesn't wander up and down the table.

Diagram 5 does not require much speed but it does require more side spin than most players are comfortable with. Played as shown it has a good chance to be safe if you miss the 7 ball but only if you get the cue ball roughly to the right place. The 7 is about a chalk-width off the cushion so you don't have to worry about hitting ball or rail first. See how much cut angle you can deal with for various placements of the 7 ball along the long cushion. Speed control is also very important on this shot.

The 3-cushion route with inside follow (Diagram 6) is an absolutely standard play that you need to work on. In particular, you should know where on the fourth cushion you can send the ball towards. Usually this will be to the long rail some distance from the corner pocket P, but you may want to get directly to L along the “long” path. When working out the details and possibilities of this shot, move the cue ball closer to the 8 ball and then move it back as your skill increases. I think you will find that as the cue ball gets within a diamond of the cushion the aim starts to change due to the change in cue stick elevation.

The problem in Diagram 7 is that the 9 ball is in the way of the more normal path of the cue ball to A, B, and C with right follow. Instead you have to draw the cue ball away from the 9 to get an angle into the first cushion that allows the right English to get the cue ball back for the 8 ball. You need to judge the amount of draw required according to the cut angle, the angle of the 7 into the pocket (how far from the side cushion the 7 is), and exactly where you want to hit the first cushion. Once you get comfortable with this path, move the 9 ball and work on the ABC path if you don't already know it.

You may run into these shots before you have mastered them. In that case you need to have an option ready for a different way to play them whether that's to make the ball or play a safe. I mentioned the two-way shot for Diagram 3 and cheating the pocket for Diagram 2. Can you plan options for each shot? I know it is disappointing to play a safe on shots like the draw shot in Diagram 1 rather than shoot the hero draw shot and get straight in on the 9, but playing smart and within your limits will win more games. Be sure during practice that you constantly expand those limits.