





True or False

By Bob Jewett

About thirty years ago there was a friendly argument in these pages between two of the premier contributors - George Fels and Robert Byrne - about several techniques and technical aspects of the game. The differences involved the reasons behind certain shots and what was possible or advisable in special situations.

In the years since, there has been a lot of development of our understanding of what happens on the table thanks to high-speed video cameras and some careful experiments followed by the formation of theories to explain the observations. Perhaps the best example of this new knowledge is our increased understanding of the phenomenon of squirt (AKA cue ball deflection) about which we had only crude guesses and suppositions in the 1980s.

It turns out in hindsight that both George and Bob were partly right and partly wrong. Below is a quiz to see if you have been keeping up with the latest developments and to test your general billiard knowledge. I'm offering two prizes to the readers who turn in the best answers. First prize is two books from each of George and Bob while second prize is one book from each of them. Email your answers to jewett@sfbilliards.com or send them by snail mail to this magazine.

A word of warning first. The questions are set as true/false choices. Some of the situations are not perfectly clear cut. In those cases you should include some qualification, such as "In some tournaments, rule X is not enforced," for example. Also, the stuff in parentheses is not part of the questions, it's just informative and I believe it's all true. Pencils ready? Start the test.

1. Diagram 1, shot 1 is a cut shot on a frozen ball sending it down the rail. The best way to make this shot is to hit the ball and the rail at the same time.

2. In shot 2, the bank is set up so that if you hit the 2 ball full, softly and without spin on the cue ball, it will go straight to the pocket. If you hit the same shot very firmly, the 2 will land at about point B, between a diamond and two diamonds from the pocket.

3. Shot 3 is played with inside (right) English and the 3 is frozen. You can tell whether the ball or rail was contacted first because ball-first takes path B and rail-first takes path A. (Knowing which was hit first is useful if the ball doesn't get to the pocket since rail-first would then be a foul.)

4. In Diagram 2, shot 1, the cue ball is frozen to the 1 ball. It is legal to pocket the 9 by using a level stroke and shooting partly into the 1 ball.

5. To make the 9 like that you need to divide angle A in two equal parts and shoot along that angle bisector.

6. In shot 2, you can use "get-in English" on the cue ball which effectively makes the pocket larger for the 2 ball. (This idea was one of the points that George and Bob differed on.)

7.If you have a ball at point B that is partly blocking the path of the 2 ball, it is possible to curve the 2 slightly around that blocker with the correct spin on the cue ball.

8.In Diagram 3, shots 1 and 2 are both straight in and have the cue ball the same distance from the object ball (about 1 diamond). Shot 2 requires twice the cuing accuracy of shot 1. (That is, the target on the object appears half as wide from the cue ball.)

9.Assuming that the second shot does require twice the accuracy as the first and you miss the easier shot one in twenty, you can expect to miss the harder shot about one in ten.

10.Shots 3 and 4 are set up with the same distances involved but shot 3 is a full-ball hit and shot 4 is about a quarter-ball hit. Shot 4 has a target about one fourth the size as for shot 3.

11.Willie Mosconi set the competitive high run record at straight pool in 1954 in Springfield, Ohio and that record still stands today, over 60 years later.

12.The longest run of consecutive scoring shots at any form of cue sport was set by an Englishman, was over 240,000 shots, was on a 6-by-12 foot table, and took five weeks to complete.

13.At 3-cushion billiards, modern players routinely score at twice the rate (per-inning average) that Willie Hoppe produced.

14.To move the cue ball the same distance after a straight-in shot, a draw shot requires considerably more speed than a follow shot.

15.If you play a side-spin shot with a level cue, the cue ball will not curve to the side of the spin.

16.For a normal side-spin shot, the squirt will always dominate over the swerve. That is, the ball will never swerve back to cross the original line of the cue stick.

17.It is not possible to transfer useful side spin to the object ball.

18.As long as you do not use side spin, the ghost ball aiming system (land the cue ball so that the centers of the two balls are exactly in-line to the pocket at the instant of contact) is guaranteed to pocket the ball for any cut angle.

19.It is impossible to make a 90-degree cut shot if you are not allowed to masse or jump the cue ball.

20.For a half-ball shot (with the path of the center of the cue ball directed at the edge of the object ball) the cut angle will be 45-degrees, ignoring friction.

21.With an old, well-used set of balls, playing draw will likely be quite a bit harder.

22.The most common overlooked foul at nine ball is the double hit.

23.The referee is not allowed to give any assistance to the player.

24.When playing an intentional foul, perhaps at straight pool or one pocket, tapping the cue ball with the side of the stick or simply passing the shot are both options.

25.In a nine ball rack, the one ball goes on the foot spot and is the only ball other than the nine that has a set place in the rack pattern.

You have about a month to get your entry in. George and Bob are waiting for you. Feel free to consult any material or experts you can find. Good luck.