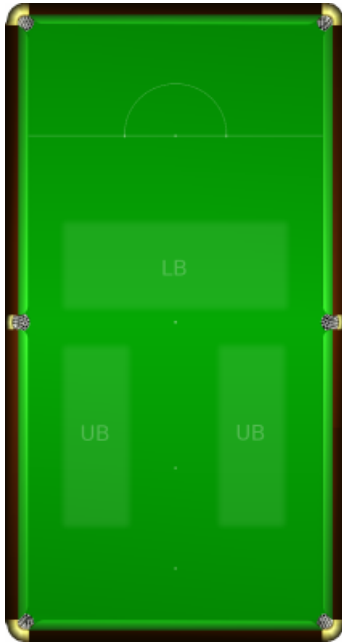


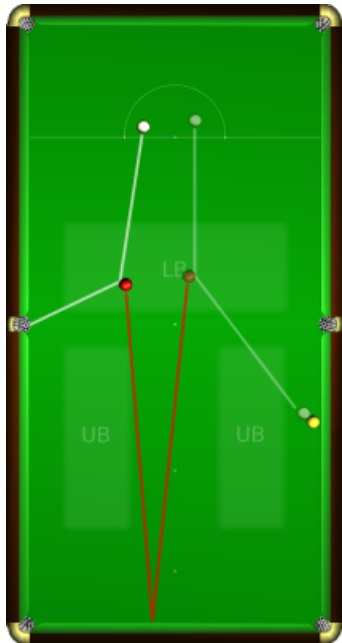
1



To play this kind of Game I work at what I call Set Piece Variations, playing any given Variation until a choice has to be made about moving on to some other Variation. In doing so I mentally divide the table up into a number of key sections. The most critical of these I call the Box, (See Diagram 1) the area of the Table on both sides, between the Middle and Pyramid Spot, such that an easy drop cannon can be played, but not necessarily a long loser. (Let's call it the Upper Box, UB). The second area is that below the centre spot such that a pot or losing hazard can be made relatively easy into both Centre pockets. (Let's call this the Lower Box, LB) These areas of the table are critical, both to play INTO and to play OUT OF, as will become apparent when I deal with particular SPVs and their connectability to other aspects of the Game.

It is my contention that every losing hazard should leave an object ball(s) in one of these boxes, (UB and LB) whenever possible, since this virtually guarantees a relatively easy scoring opportunity at the next turn.

2



You are in hand, easy pot red or in off available into the centre right pocket, but the other object ball is tight on the left hand rail, say between centre and top left pocket. What do you do :

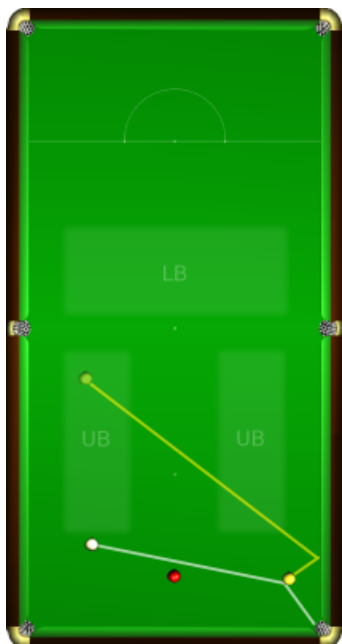
A run of hazards, then say lose position, and be forced into a safety play or whack a cannon?

Pot red, go for the cross loser from the centre pocket area, again a run of hazards and lose position?

Pot Red, Cross Loser, then go for the Cannon to release the other object ball into play?

These choices are not the only ones available, but the point I make is that the sooner you release the trapped object ball with the cannon, the red should be sent towards the top pocket, and then you probably have two scoring choices with all three balls in good position. I will consistently play this variation whenever one ball is trapped and not directly available as a scoring opportunity.

3



A straight pot red available off the Spot, white offering an easy in off to the same pocket. What to do :

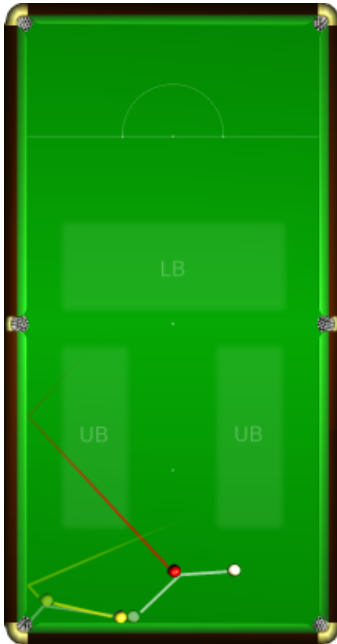
Pot Red, then a cannon?

Pot Reds, Middle spot, then back again?

Pot red, and then in off the red?

My approach when faced with this leave is to take the in off and drop the Object ball into the UB, to leave the Drop Cannon for the top.

4



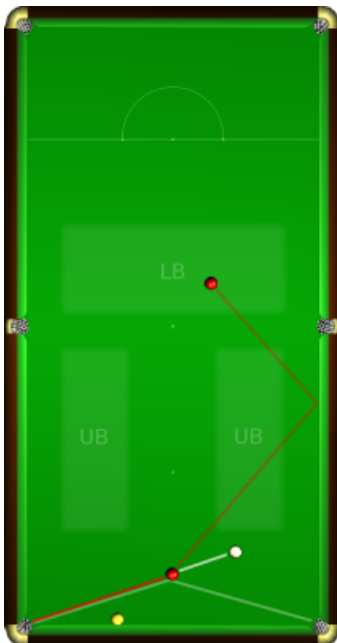
Another example (See Diagram 4) that seems to crop up regularly is at the Top end, You leave a pot red with both balls in a line across the table, i.e. not straight at the pocket, the object white is tight on the rail away from the centre line. You have a choice of a Pot or a Cannon, but unfortunately if you take the cannon the Red moves away towards the side rail. What to Do?

Tickle the cannon and hope that the balls gather somewhere?

Pot the red several times and take your chances?

My choice would always be to play the cannon, move the red forward but off the rail and into the UB area, the cannon should move the Object ball off the rail sufficient to get the ensuing in off but taking specific care as to where the Object ball will end up.

5

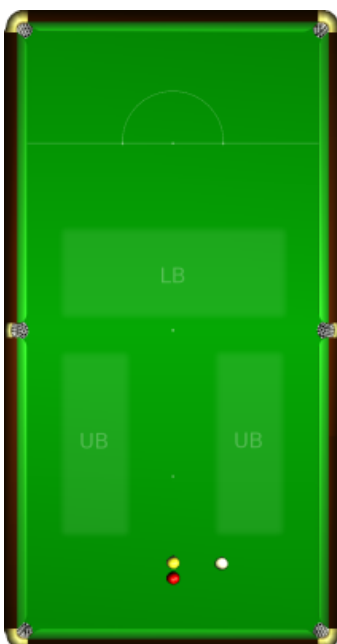


Following on from the second example, (See Diagram 5) you reach the Top End, and begin to score some points, then begin losing position :

Say for example you are faced with a dead straight pot into the right corner, but yellow is trapped on the rail but away from the spot line. What to do?

I will consistently play for the SPV set up in the following manner: Pot red, then the Cross Loser from the corner, driving the Red ball down into the LB area It is important that the Red ball is driven into the LB area, and care should be taken on this, and not simply play the in off. From there any number of variations can arise. My favorites are a few in offs, to get the red into the UB area from where the drop cannon can then be played.

6



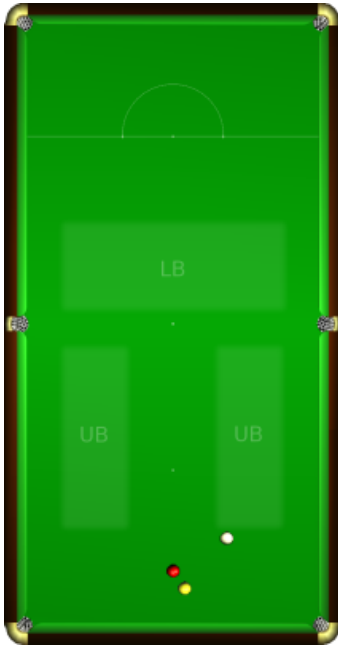
Red on Spot, white immediately below.

With a delicate touch and deadly grimace you should be able to make 50 or so, before the white drifts down the table. Then you look for the opportunity of landing the Yellow lower down the table to leave the gathering cannon to get into the Top End floating white position. How soon you can turn the balls will depend on your preference here.

I generally expect to score 30+ before the distance between red and white obliges me to position the yellow below the white such that the next cannon sends the white behind the red and achieve the Top End Position.

Alternatively you could aim for an in off white, leave white in the UB, Red close to the spot, and then use the drop Canon to get back to the top.

7

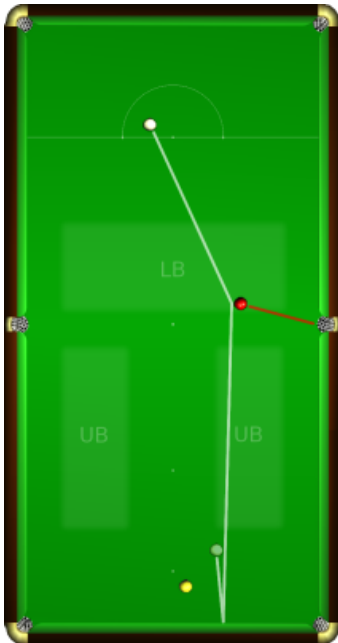


The floating white position, or Postman's knock.

All one can do here is what John Barry once said, practice relentlessly, and you will discover the strangest variations both to play into or out of, and in addition, when to leave top end and drop into an SPV choice (as in example 3 above.)

A Time to experiment.

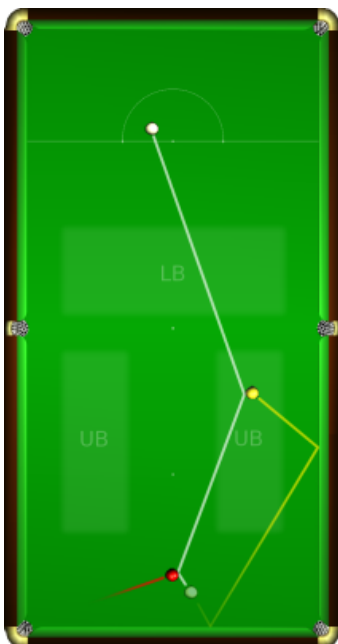
8



White close to spot, above it, Red pottable into centre pocket from hand, Go to Spot end.

Repeat from both sides of table. This exercise is a variation of (7) and valuable for the acquisition of a sense of touch, weight of shot, and speed of the cloth

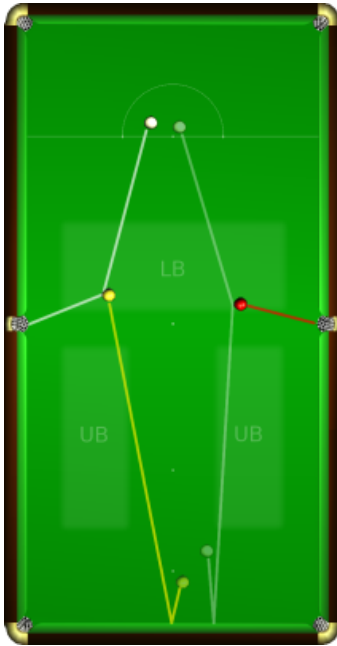
9



Drop Cannons, from both sides with Object white in the UB area.

Drop cannons are notoriously treacherous. Walter Lindrum is said to have preferred diagram 10 as his preferred route to the top.

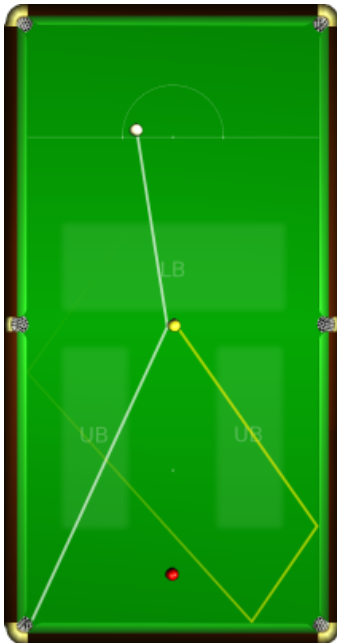
10



White and Red in the LB area, either side, or in what Walter Lindrum called the Magic Circle area.

In off yellow sending yellow behind Spot. Pot Red, go to Top End. In fact specific practice with the balls in this area should be attempted. There are quite a few variations that can be learned from this starting position.

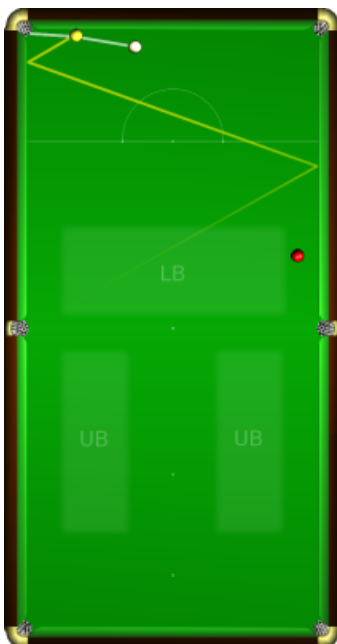
11



Re-potted balls. In off the White to top corner.

With this shot you should aim to drop the white into the UB area each time, then the drop cannon to go to the Top end. In fact with this shot you should be pinpoint accurate with the white leave in the UB area each time.

12



Earn Position at the Top End: Red below centre pocket and a losing hazard available into the same centre.

Yellow tight on lower rail on opposite side, about 12 inches from the pocket. Run through in off the White, driving the White towards the middle of the Table, then in off the white sending white above the Billiard Spot, then in off the red, followed by a pot red to go to the top end. This is must have variation in any Billiard player's repertoire.

Try it, and after a while some secrets of Billiards will begin to surface. This is technically difficult set of variations in order to get to the Top, but one well worth perfecting

If these SPVs are practiced relentlessly, and even though you make mistakes and repeatedly break down, it may suddenly dawn on you during a game, hell I know this position, I know how to handle it, you also learn what not to do, you work at your game to arrive at the SPV, you work at your game and play out of a now familiar SPV. Life is Good. As an example, you find that both balls are in the LB area, you are in hand. Now having practiced diagrams 6 to 12 with due diligence, you know exactly what to do when you find yourself in this area.. You also should know what not to do.

There are other SPVs that are not easily spotted, but which seem to emerge from the gloom once you set your mind to packaging your game in a structured pattern. I mention a few in passing:

White is past the middle pocket, and not directly available as a scoring opportunity. Red is available for a hazard, but not a cannon as yet. What to do? Plainly you have to work the red ball into the most favorable position for the cannon, and the preferred choice is where the eventual cannon drives both balls forward towards the Top end pocket, and from there play as seems fit. Again the idea here is to play the balls into a gathering position, and gathering is the very essence of Billiards, because when both object balls are in front of the Cue ball and in reasonably close proximity, there has to be a higher rate of scoring and the opportunity to be creative in maneuvering the balls in a smaller space.

Every SPV should be so executed that the object balls should be driven into a position of further choice, sometimes close together, sometimes to a specific pocket, or the Cue ball left in a determined position for the next choice.

You may well say that on a Billiard table, Sod's Law is in operation and that your opponent always gets the luck and the best quality flukes. But if you regard yourself as having a sound proficiency at the game you may well find that the level of flukes and Luck in your play will be significantly be reduced, if a pattern of play can be worked into your game. I hazard a guess also that there is a direct co-relation between the high levels of flukes and skill at the game, i.e. the more you fluke, the less your skill at the game, and vice versa.

I said earlier that gathering shots of whatever kind are a critical aspect of ones game and can repeatedly arise as an opportunity when the basic SPV pattern is broken up. Knowledge of the Geometry of the table is critical here. To be able to find the angle of stroke and cushion throw is the mainstay of these choice, and also the weight of the shot. For example you are faced with Red and White lying close to the side cushion near a top pocket, Yellow in between but the 3 balls not quite in a straight line. A pot red is on. A brutal choice (a gathering choice) is to screw off the White back to the Red, and bump into the Red ready for a Pot, and send the White round the angles to gather in the corner with Red and Yellow. Making this choice rather than taking the easier pot Red is the creative way to gather the balls into a close position, and then build from there into an SPV. Plainly how you play this is critical, for weight of shot and the geometry of table and cushion bounce have a say in the outcome. Any other choice of shot prolongs the waste of a dead white ball lying on the cushion and retrieving it would depend on an accurate outcome of the pot Red choice. If successful, you have the balls in a small area, and therefore are capable of being manipulated into a possible SPV. This one example alone illustrates the principle of making sure that there are always three balls available for the next stroke option.