

TOEING THE LINE

The “right side” of a ball depends on where you’re headed.



RECENTLY, DURING an exhibition in Toledo, Ohio, a friend of mine, Tom Gearhart, asked a question about getting on the “correct side” of an object ball for position. Tom asked me if I could do an article on this question, so here it is.

Having written on this topic before, I thought it would be good to go back and take a bit of a different approach to the subject. Being on the right side of a ball refers to an imaginary line drawn from the pocket through the center of the object ball, as shown by the red line in **Diagram 1**. Sometimes you need to be to the left of this line; other times the right side is ideal. And sometimes, you may need to be on the line for position on your next shot.

In Diagram 1, I’ve drawn three different positions for the 9 ball. (The three 9 balls are labeled A, B and C.) There are also five different positions for the cue ball (C-1, C-2, C-3, C-4 and C-5).

So when are you trying to figure out where you need to fall for position on the 8 ball, what’s the best place? Well, it depends on the position of the 9 ball. For position 9-A, you need to fall slightly to the right of the straight-in position line — somewhere near C-2. This position is natural because you can cut the 8 ball slightly to the right, which sends the cue ball to the left. Contact the cue ball with draw and a half or full tip of natural English (left English in this case). Hitting the cue ball below center will keep the cue ball above 9-A. Leaving the cue ball near position C-6 is a perfectly acceptable result.

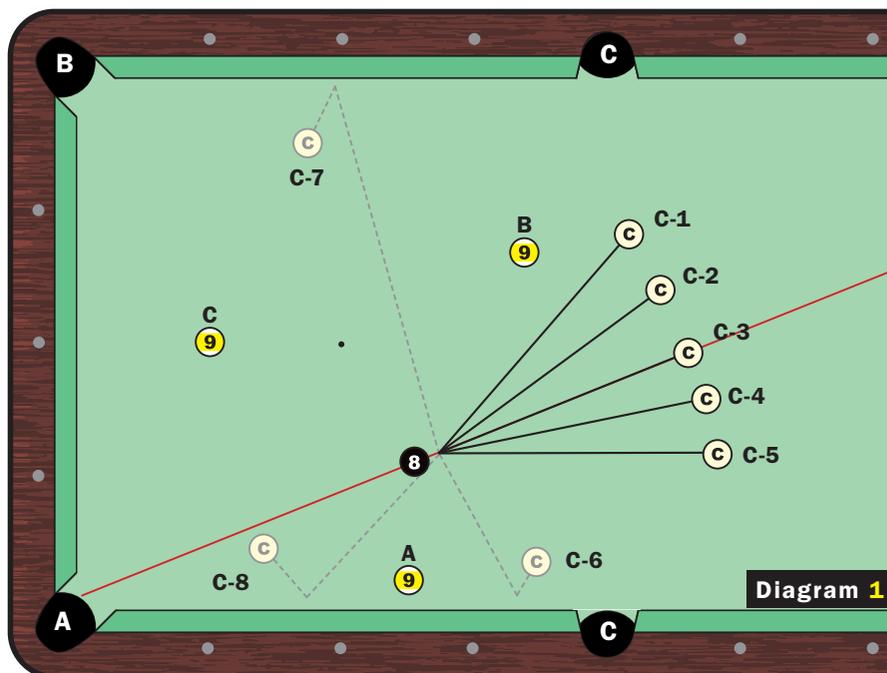
The position shot from C-2 isn’t all that difficult, because you were on the right side of the 8 ball. In this case, you have a slight angle on the 8 and you don’t have to hit the cue ball too hard or too easy to get shape on the 9.

But a cue ball at C-1 presents a few problems. From this position, you are a little too far to the right. You will have to shoot softly to stop the cue ball close to C-6. Anytime your speed is toward an

extreme — either soft or hard — pocketing the shot becomes much more challenging. You not only need to be on the correct side of the line, but also keep the cue ball around the correct distance from the line.

If you need to get position for 9-B, you want to fall on the line or very close to it. The cue ball at C-3 is the perfect position. You just need to stop the cue ball after

above center and try to keep your cue as level as possible. This eliminates any curve or deflection on the cue ball. The position that might be the next best for 9-C is to the left of the red line at C-5. In this case, you can play position on the 9 ball for pocket A. Using low, right English, you can slide off the 8 ball and bounce off the top rail to cue-ball position C-7 for an easy shot on the 9.



contacting the 8 ball. This will leave you a straight-in shot on 9-B for side pocket C. To kill the cue ball on the shot on the 8, you want to use a medium amount of draw, hitting the cue ball on its vertical axis at a soft-medium or medium speed.

For position on 9-C, a few cue-ball positions could be used. C-2 is probably the best for position on the 9 ball for corner pocket B. If you are at C-2, you can leave the cue ball at position C-8 with a softly struck follow shot on the 8. The cue ball will roll forward and bounce off the side rail and in line with the 9 and pocket B. Contact the cue ball about a tip and a half

Position C-4 is a little too close to the center line, but you can still get to C-7. It will just take a firmer stroke. From position C-3, you could follow straight forward and try to fall straight on 9-C for pocket B. At position C-1, however, you are looking at a hit too thin to roll forward for position.

I hope this sheds some light on how important it is to be on the correct side of the object ball. If you can recognize which side of the ball you want to be on (and how far from straight in), you’ll be running out more often. See you in the winner’s circle.