

THE CAPTAIN'S LOG

A first-hand perspective from the 2009 Mosconi Cup.



ALWAYS look forward to the Mosconi Cup every year. For me, it's the most exciting event in pool. I've played in Las Vegas for many years, after all, so it should not be such a big surprise. Many times walking in the amateur league tournament rooms in Las Vegas, I would see a level of enthusiasm that is missing at a lot of pro events. But the Mosconi Cup takes team pool to another level by creating a geographic base between Europe and the United States. The addition of patriotism adds that heightened level of excitement. The U.S. can be a target on the list of many countries who'd really enjoy knocking America down a peg or two.

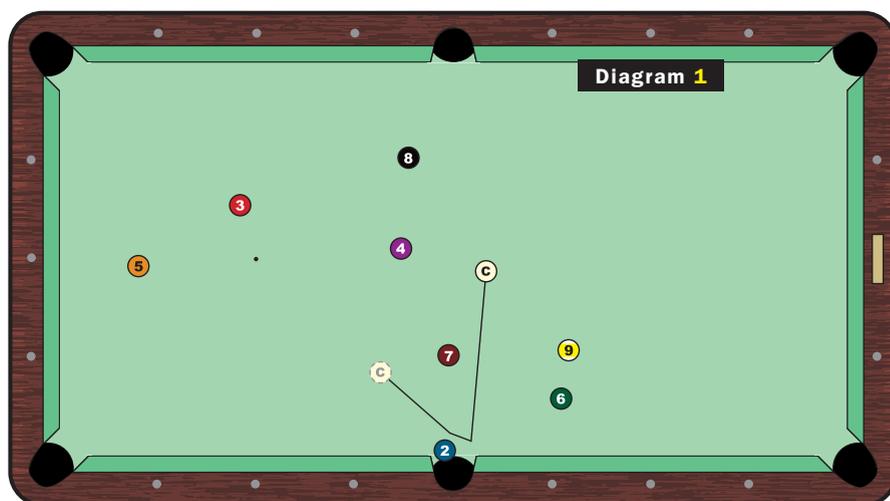
But this time, Team USA found itself a big underdog at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas. They were 2-to-1 underdogs by the odd makers in London. Plus, they had not won the Mosconi Cup outright since 2005. (They tied in 2006 and team Europe knocked off the Americans in 2007 and 2008.) Also, going into December's event, Team Europe had five world champions on its roster. It might have been their best team of all time.

One of the toughest aspects about team pool is that one player can't win it all — no matter how great he plays. It takes the best performance of all five players versus the other team's five players. Also, Matchroom Sport changed the format this year, which made it even more important for the whole team to perform. Every player on the team had to play before a player could play a second time. In other words, all five players had to play before someone could get back to the table. I like this rule, because it makes the performance of every player truly count.

At our first players' meeting in Las Vegas, Shane Van Boening might have summed it up best: "This is my third year on the team. I lost the first two years, and I would like to see how it feels to win one." Shane certainly found out, as he was the player who pocketed the winning ball.

Having led team America six times, I can say Johnny Archer definitely would put a smile on any captain's face. His knowledge, experience and winning attitude are incredible assets. And I don't know anyone who can bear down harder on an opponent than Johnny. Next up, Dennis Hatch. As it turns out, Dennis brought a level of enthusiasm and excitement that really was surprising. His high energy was welcomed by the team and fans. His play was incredible and resulted in his receiving the Most Valuable Player award from Luke Riches of Matchroom Sport. Then we had Corey

the foot rail (the left short rail in the diagram). But if he kicked one rail, it would have been near impossible for him to get a shot on the next ball. So instead, Oscar played the cue ball off the point of the side pocket. By playing this shot, Oscar had a chance at position on the next ball. Adding to the degree of difficulty, he had to try and hit the object ball thinly or the cue ball could double kiss the object ball and it wouldn't fall. Oscar hit it perfectly, with the cue ball thinly hitting the 2, and he made the shot. Everybody in the crowd was buzzing after he made this one. This is a shot



Deuel, whose knowledge and experience are always a big plus. He has been on Team USA six times and was a winner of a critical match, where he made a great shot on the 2 ball in a hill-hill match.

Oscar Dominguez, the final player on Team USA, was making his debut in the Mosconi Cup. He played great and was always eager to play as soon as possible. He brought a lot of youthful excitement, fresh ideas and an intense competitive spirit to the team. And he probably made the best shot in the tournament, shown in **Diagram 1**.

Oscar was hooked and had to pocket the 2 ball in the side. Most players thought he would kick the cue ball off

you can add to your game. The object ball was out a little from the lip of the side pocket, which made the thin hit crucial.

The Mosconi Cup is back in America, compliments of Dennis Hatch, Johnny Archer, Shane Van Boening, Oscar Dominguez and Corey Deuel. Our Team USA came together, stayed together and ended up successful. Even on the final day, as Team Europe tried to mount a comeback, the team remained focused and closed the door. The team stayed positive and didn't let bad shots or lost matches interfere with their play. Mentally, they stayed strong all four days against a tough European team.