

TOUGH 8-BALL OUT

This layout shows the importance of planning for your last shot.



HAVING JUST gotten back from the World Classic in Galveston, one runout in the 8-ball event stood out from the rest. Take a look at the layout in **Diagram 1**. How would you approach this?

The 11 ball was made on the break, and now you have to make a decision: stripes or solids? The biggest problem with stripes is that you don't have a shot to pocket a stripe from the cue-ball position C-4. If you did, you would probably pick stripes because solids are a bear. For starters, the 8 ball only goes into pocket A, unless you break up the 8 and 15. Since the 8 only has one destination, you would like to break it out. But the only solid close to it is the 1 ball, which is close to the 13 ball, which blocks part of the path to the 8 ball. Also, the 6 ball is blocking the path of the 1 ball into pocket D.

Another thought might be to pocket the 4 ball into pocket E and come across the table to break out the 8 toward the 1 ball. But the 13 and 15 balls could end up blocking pocket D for the 1 and 8. You also run the risk of getting the 1 and 8 tangled up with one another.

Moving up-table, look at the 3, 2 and 7 balls. They are all on the same rail. At first glance, the 7 ball doesn't look like it even goes into pocket C. If the 7 ball doesn't go into the side, it would be a tough position shot for pocket B or a bank shot for the side pocket F. This would require you to pocket the 5 ball first. At a soft speed, however, it is amazing how thin a shot you can make into the side pockets. It looks impossible at first, but it's really easy. The key is to leave the cue ball close to the 7 ball and nearly straight in.

Since the 7 ball can go into the side pocket, a possible pattern is developing. By saving the 6 ball before pocketing the 1 ball into pocket B, you could fall straight in on the 1 ball (or very close to straight in) and draw back from the 1 ball for position on the 8 ball into pocket A. As you can see in **Diagram 2**, the player made sure he drew the cue ball back far enough for the 8 ball. He

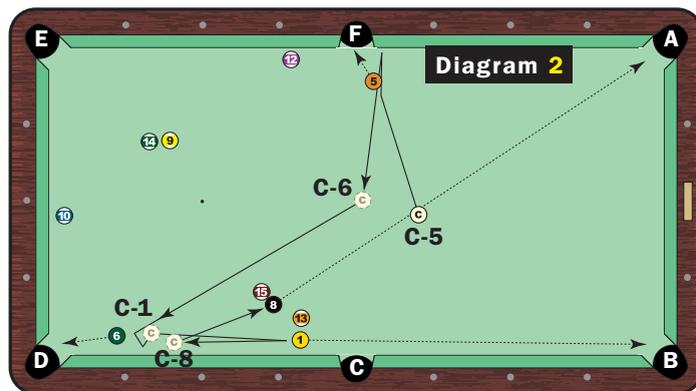
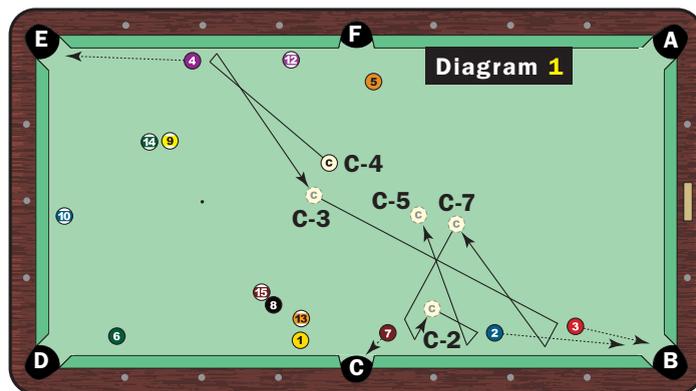
ball into pocket B and play position for the 7 ball into side pocket C. Removing the 3 ball opens up pocket B for the 2 ball. After playing the 7 ball into the side, you have an easy shot for the 2 ball into the corner. Next is the 5 ball into pocket F. Position is critical on the 5 ball. After pocketing the 5, the cue ball should bounce off the rail and go back to position C-6 (see Diagram 2). You

need to fall as full as possible on the 6 ball. Be careful — don't go too far and end up behind the 8 and 15 balls. You may also want to roll the 6 ball in with low-left English, using a soft kill stroke. Because you want to end up straight in on the 1 ball, some players make the mistake of trying to get closer to the 1 ball. They can end up with too much of an angle on the 1 ball and could fail to get a good look at the 8 ball. Just take the longer shot from C-1; the angle is more important.

The player made sure he came back far enough for the 8 ball at position C-8. He played the shot with a nearly level stroke and medium-soft speed. Some players might think leaving the 8 ball close to the pocket is a good strategy and sometimes you might

get back to the table, but don't count on it. Instead, try to focus on pocketing the 8 ball. It is always better to keep your opponent in the chair.

What is so difficult about this pattern is you end up with an easy-to-miss shot on the 8 ball. Often good pattern play leads to an easy shot on the 8 ball, but not this time. It was a great runout, all the way up to the player pocketing the 8. It was a run that was suspenseful from beginning to end.



actually went a little too far, ending up with a real test on the 8 ball. Most players would definitely like an easier shot on the game-winning shot. But after looking at the layout from the start, the shot on the 8 ball looks like a bargain. Just making it to the 8 was challenging enough.

Putting all the pieces together, let's look at the pattern from the start. The first shot is for the 4 ball into pocket E. Now at position C-3, you can play the 3