



Perfect Pool

By Buddy Hall

How'd I Miss That? Preventing Skid

Buddy Hall has been a champion player for over 20 years with countless titles to his credit. He competes on both the men's pro tour and senior tour. He is sponsored on tour by Cue & Case Sales and was inducted into the BCA Hall of Fame in 2000.

If you have ever watched a pro tournament played on new cloth you have probably heard a player complain after a miss: "That ball skidded on me." Skidding is a phenomenon that occurs when the friction between the cue ball and the object ball is so great that the two balls 'stick' together long enough to throw the object ball off its intended path. Take a look at the diagram below.

The player intended the object ball to go straight into the heart of the pocket. Instead, it 'skidded' and hit the rail beside the pocket and the shot was missed. The cue ball and the object ball remained in contact just long enough to throw the object ball toward the foot rail and away from the pocket. Skidding cannot always be prevented or otherwise you would never hear the complaint from the pros as they would always take the necessary measures to prevent skidding. But there are several things you can do to reduce the chances of being victimized by a skid.

First, the consensus among players is that skidding is caused by a combination of dirty balls on slick cloth. So if you are playing on a table that has just been recovered you must be aware that the elements are right for skidding to occur. Next, you can always reduce the chances of a skid by cleaning the balls well before playing. For the cue ball and object ball to cling together for that instant it almost always requires that one of the balls be dirty. The dirt increases the friction between the balls.

Now, this 'dirt' isn't something that comes off of your shoes. It is the chalk that lends friction to your cue tip and (sometimes) the powder that players use on their bridge hand. It can be made worse by oil and sweat transferred from a player's hands (as when racking), or even by increased humidity that allows the balls to "sweat."

If you see a cue ball that has chalk spots all over it that is an invitation for skidding. Just as the chalk creates friction between cue tip and cue ball so it will also create friction between cue ball and object ball. This is a very good reason to play with clean balls and it should be an extra incentive for all players to chalk their cues and to powder their hands away from the table. Remind your playing partners that the excess powder that they deposit on the table does not help their stroke and can affect their play adversely.

Thick cuts produce more skids than thin ones because there is more inertia from the direction of the cue ball upon contact. Also, inside english, since it has the effect of 'throwing' the object ball, can really increase the effect of a skid.

Is there anything you can do if you are playing in skidding conditions to prevent the skid? If you have the luxury of being able to use outside English, that will almost always nullify a skid. Because the cue ball is spinning in a motion that carries it away from the object ball it does not allow the two balls to 'stick' together for that instant that is required to cause the skid. You must first determine that you can achieve the position you need on the next shot before using this english but, when you can, it will eliminate the fear of skidding.

