

DON'T HAVE A STROKE? ...GET ONE!

April 01, 2010 ~ by Greg Kuhl



In case some of you haven't figured out what it takes to be a great player, let me put it in one word, "STROKE". You can figure out all the angles, the stances, bridges, etc., but trust me, the game is played with a stroke. The stronger and smoother, the better. The word stroke has several definitions. I guess the one that applies here is "A series of repeated motions". Let me emphasize the word *repeated*. You must learn how a stroke is physically performed. Once you have that, you just repeat the motion. Using speed and cue elevation on the cue ball to control it.

I'd like to be able to explain exactly how to do that, but I can't put it into words. I give a lot of lessons. The first thing I teach is the stroke, by using certain fundamentals that make it happen. And trust me, it's hard to teach. A lot of it is natural talent. Some have more than others. With patience anyone can learn it. Some will do it better than others, since strength is an asset. Sorry ladies, it is a little tougher for you, but you can do it.

I remember once watching Ed Kelly playing one-pocket. He had a magnificent stroke. He was very good at striking the ball very hard and floating the cue ball forward only a few inches, which allowed him to move a lot of balls, but control the cue ball. I'll never forget his opponent saying "Damn Kelly, how do you do that so well?" Eddie turned and looked at him and said, "I practiced it". I hope you get my point!

Two of the most important fundamental factors to a great stroke is the ability to hit as low on the cue ball as possible, and to follow through with the tip of the cue. Most players stop the follow through too soon, which inhibits the action of the stroke.

This weekend I spent some time at the Andy Mercer Memorial 9-Ball Classic tournament. I was sitting next to my good friend, Jim. On the table right in front of us a match was being played by one of our better local players. Shane Van Boening was playing a match on the next table over. I had given lessons to Jim a while ago. I spent a lot of time on improving his stroke. We had success with that, and it did improve his game.

As it worked out I had a perfect opportunity to make my point to Jim. I said, "Watch our local player stroke the ball, and then watch Shane." I told him to see the difference from good to great. He immediately noticed how much better the tip of Shane's cue stayed down and how much farther the follow through was. And he really noticed that his body never moved until well after the shot was completed. Shane stayed lower and his cue tip extended in a much farther, downward motion. The fundamentals of a good stroke! Then we got lucky and got to watch Jose Parica play next, where his fundamentals were similar. A coincidence, two champions doing the same thing? Maybe not!

To put it in a nutshell, if you can't draw your ball from one end of the table to the other end, you will always be an amateur! But you can still love to play the game. After all, if everyone was a champion, we'd have no heroes!

Catch you later...Greg