

## BREAK TECHNIQUES & TIPS

by *vbb*, November 19, 2009



So lately, because of the success I've been having making both the eight and nine on the break, I have been asked by people – "What are you doing? What's the secret? What can I do to have that kind of success"? Well I can pass along the following tips and hopefully you can find that same exciting feeling of knowing that any time you break you have a great likelihood of dropping that eight or nine on the break. I will tell you that this really all started with trying to find a consistent spot of hitting the rack in either format and just being able to drop a ball on the break. As time passed I discovered some very interesting things like not only was I dropping a ball at a rate of 95% of the time

but starting to drop the nine or eight at a 20% rate. Sounds crazy but if you play against me you will find out it's very true. So these are things I have discovered...

### Nine ball

A. Make sure your opponent aligns the rack correctly, meaning the one ball should be directly in alignment with the two second diamonds from the top of the table as you break. Anymore than half a ball out of alignment and you will not get the same ball spread on the break. Opponents may get a little snippy about you asking them to re-rack, but it's your right to ask for a re-alignment per the rule book. Many, many times the spot on the table is not in alignment with the diamonds on the table. Check it and the rack each time you break.

B. Cue ball position is the next important thing. This tip applies to either left or right-handers. The cue ball should be placed at the top of the square if you draw a perpendicular line from the first diamond to the left of the pocket and connecting it to a horizontal line from first diamond above right side of the pocket. Of course you reverse the position of the ball for a left hander. Use the rail as your bridge between two fingers not your hand.

C. Now that the cue ball is in the right spot, where and how to hit it is the next key. I have found that if you strike the cue ball just slightly above center with a three-quarters full stroke, on impact, the cue ball hits the rack, the one ball scoots back and because of the slight top the cue ball begins to spin through the rack. This spin creates a secondary reaction many times hitting the nine ball and driving it to a top corner pocket and yes – dropping in.

Probably the single most important thing I have discovered, believe it or not, is how to hold the cue stick in your hand during the striking of the cue ball. This may sound crazy to most, but I use a \$40 dollar Sneaky Pete which I purchased at nationals a little over a year ago. I put a very hard tip on it and have found it to be great success. So it's not about spending hundreds of dollars on a break cue, it truly is technique. Ok, so what's the secret of holding?

D. If you hold the cue stick about a hand and half off the back end of the stick and as you stroke to the ball you hold it loosely in your hand at point of impact just enough so that you don't lose it you will transfer all of the energy generated in the stroke to the cue ball. That energy directly translates to the cue ball and to the impact on the head ball creating an explosive break despite the fact you only hit it three quarters. Many players grip the stick tight, and swing away hoping the power will create a dropped ball or nine break. I discovered that only deadens the impact on the cue ball and many times nothing drops.

### Eight Ball

A. Unlike nine ball where you must strike the head ball, eight ball is very different on where you can strike the rack and what happens. Again, like in a nine ball rack, alignment is the first key. Head ball on the rack needs to be in alignment with the two second diamonds from the top of the table with an imaginary line intersecting the center of the head ball. Any more than half a ball out of alignment and the ball reaction is not true to how the balls will fall in the pockets. Check for alignment and ask for a re-alignment if you feel it's too far out.

B. Cue ball position, unlike nine ball, I move the ball over half way between that corner I described above for nine ball and the first diamond coming from the right corner pocket. As you place your cue stick down on the rail you will notice that on a Valley bar table, which we mostly use, the cue stick is just on the edge

of the metal sliding alongside the cue stick. That's where you want it.

C. Ok here is the tricky part - where to strike the eight ball rack. This is something you just have to practice and you'll eventually find that spot. My aim is to hit the second ball in the rack, not the head ball and to hit it as head on as much as possible. The cue ball must be struck using center and slight upper left so that on impact the cue ball comes off the second ball and strikes the right rail and comes back through the rack creating tremendous ball spread. Problem is if you don't hit correctly you're going to scratch in the upper right corner. So beware, there is a downside. Yes I have lost a couple a games where I have made the eight ball and scratched, but I promise if you believe in the shot and practice you can avoid the scratch and drop that eight. With consistent success, not only do I drop at least one ball but many times two plus balls including the eight ball. If you focus and can hit that magic spot you will find the eight ball dropping in the right middle pocket or it will rocket to the bottom right corner.

D. Finally, as in nine ball, holding that break stick softly in your hands is paramount to how the cue ball gathers all the energy of your stroke in order to drop balls including the eight ball. Physics truly comes into play here and is really my secret to why without using a massive power stroke I can take a little off and use three quarters stroke and create such a powerful disruptive break where the eight ball moves to the pocket time after time.

Well I hope that's not too much to absorb and hopefully you can find yourself on a great ride and have a great season dropping eights and nines with lots of excitement. If you have questions or would like to talk in person I will be glad to help anyone out. My hang out is the Gin Mill - corner of Pecos and Windmill.

Best of Luck!  
Mark A. Lerma