

Ask Allison

by Allison Fisher

Bitten by the Bug

Hi everyone! If you have any questions, please send them to me through my website, www.allisonfisher.com, and I will do my best to answer them in my column.

I saw you play on TV, and you won the match with an incredible kick shot. Do you use geometry?

When I came to America in 1995, I didn't realize that players used systems for banking or kicking. The reason is that snooker tables have no diamonds or points of reference to calculate angles. Everything is done by feel. Of course, there is so much information on video, DVD's and in books nowadays that you can find out about anything you want to. I have never learned the diamond systems; I have reference points for one rail and two rails. There are numerous ways to calculate kicks and banks using mirror systems or points away from the table even. It does get very complicated if you let it. When we play on a 30-second shot clock I wouldn't have time to think in numbers, which is why I don't try to use this method.

Another thing to consider are the conditions of the table and atmosphere. When we play in WPBA events, we play on a Brunswick Gold Crown with a new cloth for four days. Just when you start playing well and get adjusted the conditions are changed. For television the table is changed to another Brunswick table with new cloth, and the lighting is completely different. It is much brighter and hotter. This changes the way the table plays. My point is that it is a good idea to have reference points on the table in order to get a feel and be able to adjust for the way that particular table plays. Some tables play much shorter than others even going one rail across table. Figure out how much shorter it plays. If it is half of a diamond across table, aim at one quarter off the first rail. Try to also keep your speed the same when learning. As you get better and understand the game more you will notice how speed really affects the rails and consequently the shots. When you hit the cue ball hard into

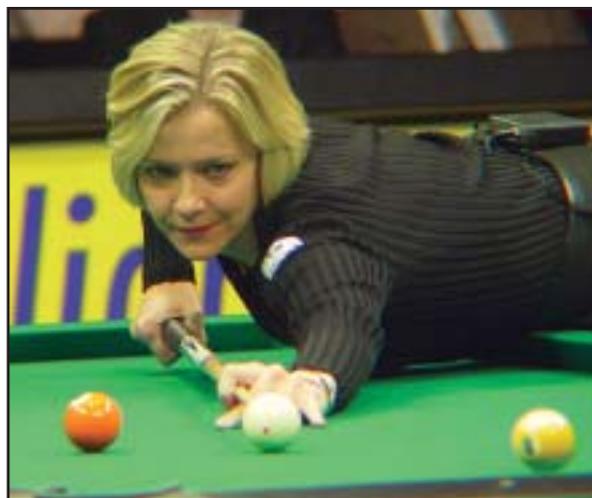
a rail, it rebounds at a shorter angle. Much depends on the angle you hit into the rail at. If it is almost straight on, the angles don't change much. Practice and learn just by using a cue ball to begin with and notice how the ball comes off the rail at different speeds, taking note of where it crosses on the second or third rail. Many top players adjust with feel. Systems are good references, but as I have mentioned, conditions vary, and that is when your own touch comes in to play.

I am a 22-year-old pool enthusiast. Until about 6 months ago, I was never interested in pool. I really don't know why all of a sudden I love it so much now. Whenever I see billiards on ESPN, I drop everything I am doing to watch. The problem, though, is I never get a chance to play. I have played maybe 5 or 6 times. I think for my limited ability, I did well. With practice, I think I could be a decent player. My question is: Where do I begin? I have no idea what I need to do. I am going to buy a table in about 6 months. I do not know how to buy a cue, nor do I know how to buy anything relating to pool. Can you

please assist me in any way possible?

I guess you have bitten by the bug! I am very happy to hear that you have fallen in love with the game. The first thing to do is to go and buy yourself a cue. Go to a few different stores and play with different brands of cue to see how they feel. Don't be afraid to ask questions of the retailer. I suggest an 18- or 19-ounce cue with the weight going slightly forward when you are in a shooting position. If it is too heavy in the butt, the stick will lift up out of your bridge hand, and if it is too heavy in the front, this inhibits control of the cue ball. Find a cue stick that is reasonable, consistent, and warp resistant so that atmospheric conditions won't affect it. The next step is to get someone to teach you good fundamentals so that you create good habits straight away. Really work hard on good fundamen-

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Allison lines up for a kick shot around the 5 ball.

tals and learn how to play the basic shots: follow, stop, and draw. Don't run before you can walk. Go slow and learn the right way because it is worth it in the long run. Most people spend much of their lives unlearning bad habits, which is very tough to do. As far as tables go, shop around and try to learn why each table is different and what they have to offer. Really research it and find what you want. When you feel good enough, join a league. They are all over the country, and anyone of any standard can play. This will expose you to many different styles of play and will help you improve and have fun.

Considered by many to be the leading lady in women's pool today, Allison Fisher started her illustrious pool career by winning the World Snooker Championship at the age of 17. She continued playing snooker and living in England for the next ten years, accumulating a stunning array of titles. In 1995, Allison relocated to the U.S., where her domination continues on the women's pro tour. She currently resides in Charlotte, NC, and has recently become a BCA-certified instructor. Her countless collection of awards, titles, and championships have made Allison one of the most popular and well-respected players in the game today.

THE FREEZER'S SECRETS FROM PAGE 18

or second shot, all you have run out and then hold out your hand.

I hope you can now see how important strong end rail play is and how avoiding the Danger Zone can win you more games and will benefit your game play. On my behalf, I'd like to thank you for taking time away from the table to learn a little more.

A disagreement with his basketball coach inspired the 16-year-old Scott Frost to make his first visit a local pool hall. "A guy beat me out of \$22, and I loved it. I went ahead and continued to play. I had a passion for it," he said with a smile. Now 28, the Phoenix resident still exhibits the same ardor for the game by attending every major tournament and many of the smaller ones as well, which is difficult without a sponsor. Recognized as one of the top one-pocket players in the country, "The Freezer" also is a strong 9-baller. He has been making his presence known in all kinds of events around the country, taking first place at the 2003 Legends of One-Pocket and the 2002 Music City Open. Any questions or comments for Scott may be sent to scottfrost@insidepool.com.

must chalk properly to prevent a miscue whenever applying any type of english, especially draw. Your bridge hand should be firm and steady. Aim downward on the cue ball as low as you can, keeping your eyes on the object ball, with a nice smooth stroke and follow through.

The cue ball must create a backspin after contact the object ball in order for the cue ball to return with draw. It is always helpful to practice at shorter distances to determine how much english you can get on the cue ball. The more english you can apply to the cue ball, the better. Explore and discover your speeds. The technique and velocity of the stroke determines how far the cue ball will come back. And always remember to stay down until you hear the ball swish the pocket.

When I popped this ball in the hole and drew the ball back and got perfect shape, Efen unscrewed his cue stick and said he was done. The casting director emerged out of the crowd and introduced herself as Gretchen Rennell. She really enjoyed the pool match between Efen and me, and she asked me to follow her in the back office to talk to Martin Scorsese, Tom Cruise, and Disney Productions. They showed me the script book and had me read lines for three different characters, Grady, Julian, and Amos. Three hours later, Martin Scorsese told me that he definitely wanted me in the movie but hadn't decided which character I was going to play. They told me the reason they were so interested in me is because of all the fun I was having and the entertainment that I showed them. I was really only just being me, and that is why I got the part in the movie.

I will always be grateful to Efen Reyes for bringing o the best in me that night. I believe in my heart that the reason why I was selected for the part of Grady Seasons wasn't because I made the draw shot. They weren't necessarily looking for the best pool player. They were looking for a character, and with all my antics and passion for the game, it finally paid off.

Undeniably one of the most colorful characters in the game of pool, Keith McCready never failed to entertain a crowd, with his gutsy and gritty style of play. He is known as "The Earthquake," "Keither With the Ether," and "The California Kid," and has been playing pool ever since he was old enough to hold a cue. Originally from Southern California, Keith has traveled all over the world and has won numerous titles. He is probably best remembered for his role as Grady Seasons in "The Color of Money" with Paul Newman and Tom Cruise. To this day, his fans quote his infamous line, "It's like a nightmare, isn't it?" He currently resides in Washington, D.C., and continues to play in every event he can.