



Ask Allison

by Allison Fisher

Quality, Not Quantity

Hi everyone, and thank you for reading my column. I hope it has been helping you improve and understand your game. If you have any questions that you would like to have answered, please go to my website www.allisonfisher.com.

I know that some tables play differently than others. Some might be faster and make the balls roll differently. Do you adjust your game according to the table, or do you still use the same techniques no matter what kind of table you are playing on?

I think this is a very good question. If you are used to practicing on the same tables that play at the same speed all of the time, it can be a little intimidating to play on a table that runs completely differently. On the WPBA, we use Simonis 860 cloth, which plays very consistently. There is also the 760, which plays faster than the 860. Both cloths have a wool-nylon blend, but the 860 is a thicker cloth with a higher wool content and thread count.

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Something else that affects the way a table plays is the atmospheric condition. In a humid climate, the table starts to feel a little damp and the pockets play a little tighter. When the air conditioning is cranked up, the table plays more consistently. Ideally, it would be great to maintain the same temperature in a room. On the WPBA we play in casinos, and often the room is very cold. As more bodies appear, the room becomes warmer, and the temperature rises along with humidity. From morning to night there can be a big difference in the playability of the tables.

The rails can also become more bouncy, thus adding more speed to some shots. Personally speaking, I maintain my same technique as far as rhythm goes, but I may adjust my bridge hand to a longer or shorter back swing according to the shot and speed of the cloth. It is never a good idea to change your own rhythm; just find a way to get a feel for the

shot by adjusting your stroke slightly. That way you can go to the table confident in any conditions. If a cloth happens to slide a lot off the second and third rail, I may choose to change my shot selection. To sum it up, keep your own rhythm, making minor speed adjustments and be confident with every shot you choose.

I was wondering if you could tell me how many times a week I should practice and how long each session should be? I feel that I am playing too much and don't know if I am damaging my game by doing so.

First of all it depends on how good you want to get. The most important thing is not to kill your enjoyment of playing the game.

If by over-practicing you don't look forward to playing, then you are playing too much. You may burn yourself out. I always go to the table with a purpose—I don't just hit the balls around. I work on different aspects of my technique. This can only be concentrated on when practicing alone, because you are very conscious about what you are doing. When practicing or playing someone, you should just play the game. If you

have practiced correctly on your own, then your technique should be good. I mostly have practiced alone in my life, but I think it is good to have a mix of playing people, too, so that you can gauge your improvement. When you warm up for a game, keep the shots simple and just focus on your rhythm.

I also think that we only have a capacity to concentrate for a certain amount of time that varies from person to person, but even so, if you find your mind wondering after 30 minutes or an hour, then either change your drill or take a short break. When I used to practice snooker, I would do a drill for an amount of time and then change to another one to help maintain some focus. You can also do drills whereby you can find an average score after so many goes. This gives you a goal and something to beat next time. Just remember it is about the quality of practice that you do, not the hours you put in. ♦