

RULEZ

HOW THE GAME GOES, BY S A MUSSABINI, 1907

Reprinted in June 65, Billiards and Snooker

*I am sorry to learn that there is a tendency to deride the rule lately passed with regard to the balls **"touching"**. Any radical change, whether for good or for ill, seems most unwelcome to English billiardists. Look at the strong agitation which was needed before one of the most foul strokes that ever disfigured billiards was ruled unfair! I refer to the **push-stroke**, that break-building agency of unhappy memory. There were some very, very **pushful artists** knocking about some ten to a dozen years ago before the matter was taken up in the Sporting Press, & after many expressions of opinion, finally, ruled illegal by the Billiard Association.*

*The most prominent were **John Roberts, Edward Diggle & H W Stevenson**. These players were dead against any interference with the push-stroke. They, collectively, pleaded for its retention on the grounds that big breaks, which so pleased the public, would not be so readily forthcoming.*

*When the **push-stroke** was put in its proper place -- the billiard scrap-heap -- the protest still continued, & their echoes are even now only dying fitfully away. Now, let us see what happened as the result of barring the **push-stroke**. I have mentioned that Roberts, Diggle, & Stevenson were its chief exponents. Did the barring clause affect their position in the billiard world; did it rob the game of any of its charm? No; a hundred times no! There is not one man who knows what he is talking about who will truthfully say that the **barring of the push-stroke** was not a **boon** to billiards & its chief demonstrators.*

*What has done more to breed the beautiful **mass stroke**, that unfailling source of delight to spectators, & even to the players themselves? **The very positions that now demand a sinuous, whirling massed ball were those which previously were blurred over by the push-stroke.....***

*It has been the custom since **1898** to allow the player to operate from the D with the object white on the middle & the red ball on the billiard-spot whenever the balls have **touched**. For what reason he should be so favoured it is hard to discover. That rule is now no more..... At the recent general meeting, the following resolution was ... carried....*

*....."When the striker's ball lies **touching** an object-ball, he can only score off the second object-ball, or off the cushion.*

*Should his ball lie **touching both** the object-balls, he can only score off a cushion.*

*Should the striker, in playing on to the second object-ball, or on to a cushion, **disturb** the ball or balls with which the cue-ball is in contact, the stroke is **foul**".....*

*..... There is no doubt that the **close-cannon** specialists would be armed with a very studious caution when operating under the "leave them on the table" ruling. **What is more, they would need to polish up & put into use an extra supply of masse' shots eminently designed for this especial direction.***

When i first began to attend billiard matches nearly fifty years ago, such a thing as a push was never seen or heard of. It was never recognised in any rules, & has never been a fair stroke, but when money matches practically died out, & players discovered that it was easy to make big breaks --- & thus draw increased gates --- by the aid of constantly pushing, they came to a sort of tacit agreement that this class of foul should not be claimed.

Things went from bad to worse in this respect, & billiards as played in England, became the laughing-stock of the great French & American players. Something had to be done, &, to his great credit, William Mitchell was the first professional to denounce the stroke, & to point out how thoroughly unfair it was. To The Sportsman belongs the credit of killing the push, & i had the good luck to be one of the instruments selected for the purpose.

The cleverest exponent of it i ever saw was Diggle. It did not seem to matter to him whether the cueball was 1/16th" or 4" from the object-ball, he could push with equal facility & success in either case. Consequently, he was selected as the principle object of attack, & wherever he played in London i was generally deputed to report the game. This was the sort of thing that used to appear day after day in reports of his play --

Diggle then made a break of 167, but it was disfigured by no fewer than 7 foul strokes -- Diggle's 113 was a better break than a good many of the larger ones that he has recently made, as there were only a couple of fouls included in it.

The great Manchester player only laughed at this sort of thing at first, but it soon began to get on his nerves, & he fairly lost his temper, a thing i have never seen him do before of since. He was very angry with me indeed, so angry that, at the conclusion of one session, he entirely declined to have a drink with me. However, Diggle has plenty of commonsense, he soon got over his resentment, & not long afterwards frankly admitted that The Sportsman had done a great thing for the game by killing the push.

SHOULD BILLIARDS SPOT BE MOVED?

Tom Newman Jan 1936

From MAKING THE GAME EASIER FOR AMATEURS News of The World

*..... During the first 16 matches for the championship, the spot was 12½" from the face of the top-cushion. When the present **standard table** was introduced, the spot was moved to 12¾" from the cushion.*

*This was done in the old days of **Ivory Balls**. **Crystalates** are now the official balls for all championship billiards. Should the spot be moved to suit this change.??*

*Every player knows that Crystalates & ivories do not **angle** exactly the same. With the ivories, the cueball placed in the jaws of the top pocket offered an automatic **half-ball shot** from the spot into the facing top pocket.*

*The **Crystalate** has to be on the top-cushion slightly clear of the pocket opening to offer the same shot. But if the spot is moved to 13½" from the top-cushion, the placing of the Crystalate cueball from the jaws of the top pocket offers the familiar half-ball cross-loser.*

That is the proposed change. I have an open mind about it, & i am certain that nothing but good can result from discussing it.

.....With reference to Norman Clare's article the spot distance of $12\frac{3}{4}$ " is indeed an odd one.....

Subsequent authorities (Crawley 1857, 1866 & 1876; Dufton 1867) make the distance **13"**, but this could not have been standard, as we find the elder John Roberts stating (in 1868) that **"few tables are spotted alike, but, in my opinion, the red ball should be placed at a distance of $12\frac{1}{2}$ " from the top cushion"**.

The earliest reference to a distance of $12\frac{3}{4}$ " appears to be that contained in the 1886 edition of Kentfield's "Billiards", & this figure seems to have found general acceptance by the end of the century as it is quoted in the Badminton "Billiards" of 1896, the 1899 edition of John Bennetts' "Billiards" & in John Roberts' "The Game of Billiards" (1897). Moreover, AG Payne's "Billiards" (1897) reproduces a set of "National Rules" in which the distance is defined as $12\frac{3}{4}$ ".

However, for many years before the late 1890's there were apparently two standards in common use. The 1873, 1884 & 1894 editions of "Bennett" all contain the statement that the distance is **13" for "ordinary" tables & $12\frac{1}{2}$ " for "Championship" tables**. It could well be, therefore, that the currently accepted distance derives from efforts at standardisation by averaging these two measurements.

NURSERY CANNONS

Fred Lindrum The Sporting Globe 1923.

Now a sequence of **25 cannons** is allowed for nurseries, and if one wants to continue he must break the sequence by an **indirect shot** --- that is by playing with the assistance of the cushion.

I hold the world's record break for nursery cannons, having made **562** (elsewhere says 532) when playing my brother Walter.

WHAT IS A BALL-TO-BALL CANNON

Fred Lindrum The Sporting Globe 1923.

Some trouble over rule interpretation arose last week in the game between **Williams** and **Lindrum**, at Melbourne. During a run of cushion cannons by Williams, in order to break the sequence of **ball-to-ball cannons**, he first played off the cushion and made a direct cannon. Lindrum objected that such procedure was not in accordance with the B.C.C. rules, under which the game is being played. His objection was over-ruled by the marker, and Williams went merrily on his way driving the spheres along the rails. As the point raised by the Australian champion is a rather important one, it is well that it should be made clear. B.C.C rule 19, which governs limits to ball-to-ball cannons reads :-

Consecutive ball-to-ball cannons are limited to 25; on the completion of this number the break shall only be continued by the intervention of a hazard, or indirect cannon.

The rules of the Billiard Association are less explicit, they simply say :-

No player shall make more than twenty-five consecutive ball-to-ball cannons.

And the question arises what is a **ball-to-ball cannon**. And does not ball-to-ball mean from one ball direct to another ball without any intervention? If that is granted Lindrum is right and Williams wrong. The Australian contended that to carry out the meaning of the rules it was necessary on or before the twenty-fifth stroke was made that the sequence of cannons should be

broken by the striker playing from the first object-ball to the cushion, the cue ball then making contact with the second object ball. That is his idea of the indirect cannon demanded in the rules. William's stroke was not an indirect cannon. He certainly fired at the cushion, but when his ball came away it made contact from ball-to-ball direct --- not indirect, as the code stipulated.

This is another example of the rules not being clearly phrased so that the meaning should be perfectly clear. In their next game an understanding as to procedure on this point should be arrived at before the game commences, otherwise there may be trouble if the marker reads in a different interpretation of the rule to that given by the marker in the Melbourne game.

WALTER LINDRUM

The Billiard Player October 1960

Lindrum's **3905** break v McConachy, beat the then record, WJ Peall's **3304** (based on spot-stroke runs), made **40** years previously, & his own **3262**. It took **3 hr 5** minimum, ie a whole afternoon session & 80 minutes of the evening. A superb display & one that my never be equalled -- was a comment.

Next day Lindrum made breaks of **952** & **1627**. The big break ended with Lindrum making a double-baulk, having lost the white, & included close cannon runs of **78, 69, 100, 93, 80, 65, 76, 110, 76, 85, 100, 86, 70 & 53** -- **2344** points of the break consisted of close cannon play, but, says a critic, Lindrum's play was by no means monotonous -- close observers can see that many different kinds of stroke need to be utilized during the execution of a long run of cannons. **Charlie Chambers**, referee, won unstinted praise for his faultless calling of the break.....

McConachy was the victim of this feat, as stated, & he died fighting as, on the last day, he compiled a magnificent **979**. He got his chance to make the break through Lindrum's **exceeding the cannon limit**, when he failed to note Chamber's warning at **30**. He stated afterwards that the words, **thirty cannons**, instead of merely **thirty**, would be more effective as a warning.

From the makers of **Janus Cloth** Lindrum received a cheque of **500 pounds**.

CLOSE CANNONS

Alfred Croneen

The Billiard Player August 1936

It was with great astonishment that i read, in your last issue, a suggestion that, after **35 cannons**, a **2 cushion cannon or loser or winner** be made imperative. Considering that there are probably not more than 7 or 8 players in the world whose skill is such that they can use this exceedingly difficult weapon profitably, it would be ridiculously unfair to them to negate any advantage they may gain over those who cannot do the like. More important still, it would deprive many amateurs of the enjoyment they gain from attempting this, the most artistic & most difficult phase of the game.

I have put this query to several good amateurs of my acquaintance -- **Which part of the game do you like best??** & each one has answered that he would rather make a century by **close cannons** than by any other method. For the simple reason that they have all done it by pot & cannon on occasion, & by open methods very many times, but not many amateurs have made **50** cannons in a game.

A rule of this nature would mean that nobody could make more than a miserable **25** cannons or so, as it would make the beautiful movement of **turning the corner** not worth while. It would be a great pity to maim the game in such a manner, when it is already so constituted as to put a premium on elementary play, & so sacrifice many who pay for the game for the sake of half-a-dozen paid players, even allowing that those are all in favour of it, which i strongly doubt.

Rules of this nature have already driven such as the spot-stroke, the pendulum, & anchor strokes (all of which possess much interest) out of the game entirely. This is a great pity, when it would be so easy to formulate rules whereby they could be retained to a moderate degree. It is my sincere hope that this further attack on high-grade expert play will not succeed.

Editor As always, Captain Croneen's view, interesting & well put, is welcome. We disagree with it most heartily, regarding close cannon play as a **weed** in the billiard garden -- a plant once rare, but now a **pest**.

ARE CLOSE CANNONS BORING? C Whitbourne Billiards & Snooker Dec 1937

..... Take close cannons -- are you sure that these bore those of us who watch billiards regularly, or remain a blank instructionally??

When Joe Davis & Tom Newman are playing against one another i always notice that Thurston's is better filled than when any two other professionals meet, & surely in the former case there is a certainty of more time being occupied in close-cannons. Boring?? Can anything be more interesting than watching either of these two great players make a long run -- that sure & delicate touch necessary to keep the balls together.

And it is not as if each stroke was a mere repetition of the last -- there is infinite variation, all the more interesting & instructive, because it shows us playing contacts the necessity for making those little differences in playing a stroke that make the shot either a bad or a good one.

Have you noticed the breathless interest when they are about to turn the corner?? That doesn't look as if we found it boring. And another thing, have you considered the difficulty & the skill necessary to work the balls into position for those close cannons?? That alone is pretty to watch & surely instructional. Any moderate player can make a few, a very few, of these cannons if the balls are placed in position for him, but can he get them there in actual play?? Only very, very occasionally, & then more by luck than judgement....

RED BALL HAZARDS LIMIT Mr Bissett Chairman The Billiard Player Feb 1936

.... Since the BA&CC limited the losing hazards to **15**, in the English & Empire Championships, the all round standard of play has increased & become more attractive to watch. It was considered unwise to alter it for general play as you no doubt agree that half-ball play is to a large extent the backbone of the amateur game.

COMMENTS ON THE AMATEUR BILLIARDS CHAMPION

by Spectator Billiards and Snooker May 1961

.... Having witnessed 30 years of amateur & professional championships, i can truthfully say few supporters of the game can have seen more championship play than myself..... For the **1961** championship, the BA&CC decided to experiment with the usual Competition Proper rules by allowing **25** hazards instead of the usual **15**..... the scoring rate has gone down, at least **100** points per session..... even the better players have played safety-first billiards, **7** out of every **8** scoring strokes being hazards..... I feel confident the Control Council will, for next year's championship, alter the hazard limit back to **15** again.....

..... only **2 letters** have been received advocating a return to the **15 limit**, & when one bears in mind the stimulus given to the event last season by the **25 limit** it is obvious that the best policy is to leave well alone. Only one player, **John Sinclair**, of Ashington, who took part in the Competition Proper last season, can be called a **red-ball player** in the strict sense of the term, & just as one swallow does not make summer, one red-ball player does not call for new conditions for all. Sinclair's play, however, was novel, in view of the scarcity of **George Gray** exponents today, & his achievements merited high praise, for he ploughed a lonely furrow.....

BONUS POINTS FOR TOP-OF-THE-TABLE PLAY ?

Spectator Billiards and Snooker September 1961

..... Turning to my suggestions, bonus points for top-end play, this was invented by my father & tried out by **Walter Lindrum** in private, just before he left the country for the last time in **1933**.

His idea was **5 bonus points for 100 points** scored at the top-of-the-table, irrespective of crossing the baulk line. At that time the baulk line, in professional play, had to be crossed in the last 20 points of each 200 scored. For this bonus idea the rules are simple. A line is drawn across the table through the **Pink Spot**. All **3 balls** must be on the top end side of this line to qualify for points. No losing hazards or nursery cannons are allowed. This means a player cannot return to hand without breaking the sequence.

My father believed that, if billiards was to survive professionally efforts must be made to brighten it. He often made Walter Lindrum laugh by suggesting that if changes were not made snooker might become more popular.

The originality of the bonus points idea came when they were discussing temperament. My father, jokingly, said -- **I don't think you have a conscience, Walter. If you had, you wouldn't let your opponent sit out a whole session.** Walter replied -- **its strange you should say that, but, would you believe it, i can't ever forget one letter i received after i had two consecutive 3000 breaks in Melbourne, do you know what the critic wrote about that performance ??**

It was genius but it wasn't entertainment.!!

This incident remained in Walter's mind, as a reminder that the game must be kept attractive to watch. It was then my father made **5** suggestions for brightening the game. Walter tried them out & discarded **4** of them, the **bonus idea** (for 100 points at the top), however, he liked.

My father & i watched him practise this idea many times, it intrigued us & even Walter admitted it was a lot harder than it looked. I noticed that he could do it easily once he had gained complete control of the balls round the top spot, but often he failed to do this & it was this element of excitement, which in my opinion, lifted the game to a new level for the spectator. What a pity Walter did not return to this country to push this new idea. If he had done so perhaps billiards would be in a stronger position than it is now.....

Editor's Comments

It was generally agreed ... that last season's billiards championship was equal to any.....

Spectator states the rate of scoring dropped by **100 points** a session..... but we see that the actual drop was **2**.

*Spectator's bonus points scheme seems ... impracticable & **pointless** (bad choice!!).....*

-if **Lindrum** could not do this consistently, what hopes of amateurs.....*
-what is to be his reward? A beggarly **5** points.....*
- a player must be a genuine top-of-the-table player... he would need no special incentive.... therefore... the **paradox** that the feat can only apply to those who could not perform it.*

As to losing hazard play... the only player to exploit it of set policy was John Sinclair, & personally, i found his admirable manipulation of the red ball, which was in the nature of a novelty, quite interesting to watch.....

RULE CHANGES

Billiards and Snooker

August 1964

The following changes will come into force on September 1st 1964.....

General Rules

Ball on Edge of Pocket. *(A slight amendment). If the ball which falls is part of the stroke, that stroke shall be void, the balls placed in their original position & the stroke replayed. If the ball is not an integral part of the stroke, the stroke shall stand & only the ball which fell shall be replaced. If it balances momentarily on the edge & falls in, it must not be replaced.*

Billiards

Baulk line Rule ----- *This has been deleted.*

Limitation of Hazards. *(This was No 8).*

*These have been reduced to **15**. The referee shall inform the striker when **10** such hazards have been made.*

Spotting the Red ball. *(This was No 10).*

When the red is pocketed (or forced off the table), it shall always be replaced on the spot. *If the spot is occupied by another ball, the red shall be placed on the pyramid spot, & if that spot is also occupied it shall be placed on the centre spot. The red is not considered to be spotted unless placed on a spot by hand.*

Penalties. *(This was No 13).*

*For a miss, the non-striker shall add **one** to his score. If, in consequence of a miss, the striker's ball goes into a pocket, or any ball is forced off the table, the non-striker shall add **three** to his score.*

Foul Strokes. *(An addition).*

*Use of dead ball to test whether a ball will pass another, or go on a spot, or for any other purpose, is not permissible. Penalty, **3 away**.*

*Editor's comments. In Billiards the **Baulk Line Rule** has been abolished & few, if any, will mourn its departure. The Rule was introduced in **1932** to limit close cannon sequences by professional players, was changed **three** times & then lingered on till today with little relevance to amateur play.*

*Hazards have again been reduced to **15** (warning at **10**) (Rule 7), & now a player will be able to make **15 pots of the red ball off the Spot** in succession, a momentous alteration in the game & one which materially affects the delicate mechanism of the top-of-the-table game as we know it. However, we shall see how it works out. The motive, we learn, is to stimulate snooker players to take to billiards seriously. Next month we hope to comment further on this change, which is virtually a limited restoration of the **Spot Stroke**.*

SPOTTING THE RED

Rex Williams Billiards And Snooker, Nov 64

*..... Perhaps this is a good opportunity to give my views on the revised "Spotting the Red " rule. Raising the number of permissible successive pots off the spot from **2 to 15** seems to me far too sweeping an alteration because, of course, in doing this, the Rules Revisers have changed the game completely. Previously, in top-of-the-table play, the skill lay in keeping the object white as near as possible to the spot (despite having to play a cannon every second or third shot) & in NOT potting the red twice in succession off its spot.*

The new rule though knocks all the skill & artistry out of top-of-the-table play. As long as the white doesn't interfere with the monotonous potting of the red, it doesn't really matter where it is, provided its near enough for an easy cannon after, say, twelve or thirteen pot reds.

The Rules Revisers say that they have made the change to encourage top-of-the-table play & to get more Snooker players playing Billiards. The essence of top-of-the-table play is (or was) the subtle interplay between pots & cannons & the tight control of all three balls. But there is nothing subtle in trickling in 14 or 15 pot reds, playing an easy cannon, & doing the same again. If the rule does get more snooker players playing Billiards, it will get a new kind of Billiards which the Rules Revisers have tried to make as undistinguishable form snooker as possible.

*The players i feel sorry for are the Billiard players who don't pot very well & who tend to score mainly by in-offs. I'm afraid they'll be easy meat for an average converted snooker player with less than half their knowledge of proper Billiards. I'm sorry too for the players like **Norman Dagley, Clive Everton & Dennis Jenkins** who've put in years of practice at top-of-the-table play only to find that they're no better off than people who havn't practised it at all.....*

FRANK HOLZ ON THE POT-RED STROKE & NURSERIES

Billiards and Snooker August 1965

I read with much interest the various articles on the new Spot Stroke rule in billiards & venture to give my observations based on the World's Championship, in which this stroke was used by Manuel Francisco especially, & in a most fascinating & entertaining manner, & i should think, as skilfully as any professional, furthermore without any evidence of monotony.

Nolan, Karnehm (who played a dozen screw-back pots of the red) & Ferreira also played it to advantage. At the end of Francisco's 518 break there were conspicuous lines from the billiard spot to each of the tip pockets from the red travelling over the same paths.

Rather than being monotonous, i think the amazing potting brought many people (especially those who play only snooker) back many times to the sessions. I think it will soon be obvious to everyone that the Spot Stroke should have been limited but not barred in the first place.

Which brings me to cannons. There are amateurs who can play close cannons but would not risk the difficulties of bringing the balls together in a serious match.

Clark McConachy is possibly the only player who could still afford to do so but amateurs cannot put in the time to cultivate this exactitude, knowing that, if they get a cover, they have not command of the masse' to cope with it.

But is it worth while for anyone to put in the time when only 70 points can be scored after getting the position.?? Nursery cannons will die out if the 35 limit is retained.

BILLIARDS AND SNOOKER JUNE 66

Tom Cleary was once asked, "where did you get that cue?" The enquirer was referring to a "short, grimy piece of wood, whose main resemblance to a billiards cue was that it was thicker at one end than at the other". "Well", replied Cleary, "I picked it out of someone's rack 35 years ago & liked the feel of it. It isn't straight & isn't worth a couple of bob!" As the interviewer remarked, a world billiard player's cue may be a beautiful creamy coloured piece of straight grained ash, or it may look like some forgotten hoe handle resurrected from the gardening shed.

BILLIARDS & SNOOKER JUNE 66

*Harry Eglon, Farnworth, reports: "I had the pleasure to referee the Lancashire Billiards & Snooker Association Championship Final in which **John Spencer** beat L Berry, of Bury, by 600 to 83, to win the title for the third consecutive time. He made his personal record break, **366**, in the match. I warned him for 10 hazards five or six times during the break, which as you will guess, was made chiefly by the red winner. I don't think i moved away from the top cushion more than four times. Any temporary loss of control was easily overcome by his extraordinary screwing ability, both soft & deep. He tired near the end of the break. From this he should have learned that this is a game that requires physical fitness & in one so young this does not speak so well for his attention in such respect. He should take a leaf from **McConachy's** book! He confessed to becoming a "little dizzy" & "fed up" with the constant potting of the red, yet this performance was puny compared with the "spot stroke" performances of **W J Peall** & others in the matter of long periods of concentration".*

GREEN TABLE CHAT Alex Balmer, Maldon, Vic, Billiards and Snooker, Aug 1966

It is clear that the ability to play to what i call the 15 pot routine is a wonderful step in the enjoyment of both games. In billiards there is a definite line between open game players & those who can play the top. In the past, with the two pot rule it was a big step to the top & less players could have made it. Now the 15 pot rule not only makes the tip less difficult, it also provides an intermediate step. In my own case i didn't like snooker for a very simple reason -- because i couldn't pot. I was luckily steered on to 15 pot practice by a very kind member (or RACV Melbourne) Tom Tatchell, who was himself coached in this direction, by Jim Long. In a surprisingly short time i can give the better Club players a decent game of snooker & i get a lot more pleasure out of billiards too. There are vast numbers of players of both games who only improve very slowly simply because they only play & do not think of basic practice.

THE EDITOR CONSIDERS THE NEW RULE & ASKS IS IT TIME TO THINK AGAIN?

Billiards and Snooker, June 1967

Now that the dust has settled on another season's Amateur Championships, it seems a good time to give a thorough airing to the still controversial "New Rule". I refer, of course, to Rule 9, "when the red ball is pocketed it shall always be replaced on the spot". This rule, in conjunction with Rule 7, "Consecutive hazards (winning & or losing) are limited to 15 " has led to a situation in which it is frequently possible to pot the red up to 15 times from its spot.

The main object of this amendment, in effect a limited restoration of the spot stroke, was to bring more Snooker players into Billiards & thus bolster up declining support for the game. In this, it may have achieved a partial success. A few local Billiards leagues which were in danger of going out of existence have been saved because players whose main interest is Snooker have been persuaded to try Billiards because the greater potting element which the game now possesses has improved their potential scoring power & thus given them a very much greater chance of success.

It has not, however, brought about a substantial increase in entries for the Amateur Championship or other major events. On the contrary, the dissatisfaction the new rule has created in players of Amateur Championship class has been bitter & widespread. Players who have spent many years perfecting their "old rules" top-of-the-table & or losing hazard techniques are understandably annoyed when their years of practice are nullified by the stroke of a pen.

Like so many imperfections, the new rule has been defended with the fatuous phrase, "It's the same for everybody". But, of course, it is nothing of the kind, no more than it is "the same for both" when a good player & a not so good player are given an odd set of balls to play a Billiards match. Top-of-the-table play under the old rules involved the most precise control of all three balls. With only a possible two pot reds in succession before the red was placed on the middle spot a high degree of skill was called for to repeat several times the process of positioning the cue ball in just the right place to make a cannon from the red on its spot to the object white while sending the red towards the pocket.

Under the present rules, the red can be potted several times until the cueball happens to finish in the right position for the cannon. The striker need not think at all about getting in the right place to play a cannon until the referee has called "ten hazards". This has meant the virtual disappearance of a number of top-of-the-table moves, for many players ask themselves, "why take a chance with something clever when i can keep potting the red until i drop into a better position?"

One of the reasons the new rule was introduced was to simulate top-of-the-table play. In the limited sense that more scoring takes place around the spot it has done so but it has also eliminated a great deal of skill & artistry from the game. No one with any respect for true definition can refer to ten pots, one cannon, another 12 pots, another cannon, another 10 pots, etc, as top-of-the-table play. Because a break can be so easily compiled virtually with only two balls the third tends to be neglected.

When a top class Snooker player plays Billiards & starts on the spot stroke with the object white within two feet of the spot in any direction one knows that the odds are 3-1 on of at least a 60 break. Given the same position under the old rules, the odds might well be anything from 2-1 to 20-1 against.

It seems to me that while it is admirable to encourage Snooker players to play Billiards the rules should not be tilted so much in their favour that without any extra effort on their part they become overnight a danger to players whose all-round command of the game is vastly superior.

Another point to be considered is that endless repetition of one type of shot is boring to watch & ultimately boring to play. When the hazard limit was very sensibly reduced from 25 to 15, the main effect of this was to reduce the size of breaks which could be made almost entirely by losing hazards. The amendment compelled losing hazard specialists to develop other phases of their game.

The new rule, on the other hand, discourages players from developing a wider range of shots while encouraging them to perfect a narrow range of shots.

If i may write more personally for the moment i will say that as much as i was against the new rule i accepted it & modified my game to take advantage of it. As i have done better in the English Amateur Championship in the last two years than i had ever done previously i suppose it could be said that the rule has acted in my favour. But whereas, under the old rules, i could practise two or three hours without losing my concentration i now find that an hour on my own is about the limit & that it is more difficult to keep my concentration in non-competitive games.

I now find Billiards a less interesting game to play & certain top-of-the-table moves which i used to use three years ago i not only no longer use but have forgotten about. The natural extension of this is that certain moves will disappear from the game altogether & the game will inevitably become coarser, less complex & less subtle.

Here we have the views of some of the leading exponents of the game. We hope to print a further selection of views next month.

Jack Karnehm : *If we can't go back to the old rule i think that the red ought to go on the middle spot after it has been potted **three** times from the spot. If you let them pot it more than that potting becomes the most important part of the game. Potting is the most important part of Snooker & i don't see why it should be the most important part of Billiards as well..... Some of the top Snooker players have got it both ways now. They can do well in the Snooker championship & without any extra practice they can do well in the Billiards as well. Unless the rule is changed i shan't enter the Championship because it makes a farce of it. If you read your history of Billiards you will see that the spot stroke almost killed Billiards once & it looks like happening again.*

Norman Dagley : *I don't begrudge anybody exploiting the rule against me but i can't bring myself to do it myself. I was brought up to play properly & to me the new rule just isn't Billiards. I'd like to go back to the old rule or **three** pots perhaps. It definitely should not be more than **five** pots.*

Gary Owen : *The new rule helps me personally, but i think it has spoilt the game. I've never thought of myself as a Billiards player but i am thinking of taking it up seriously. I can play a fair game under the old rules (a top break in the 250's ed) but now that i am playing a few Billiards matches i find it is better to forget some of the shots i do know how to play & go straight up to the spot as soon as i can. I think **five** pots would be better because then you've got to play some other shots.*

Herbert Beetham : *I'm definitely not as keen on it as i was. I don't think it has brought many Snooker players into Billiards but it has driven quite a few Billiards players away. I think it has made potting too predominant in the game & it has killed some of the refinements.*

*Another important point i think is that it is causing too much **wear of the cloth** in the top part of the table. On a lot of tables now you can see **lines** going from the spot to the pocket & sometimes you get a **hole** on the spot because the red has been put on it so often.*

*I think the rule should be modified -- probably to **five** pots.*

Leslie Driffield : *The rule does bring in a number of Snooker players. If they take too many pots it can be tedious, but i don't think that that is as monotonous as endless losing hazards. Admittedly, Snooker players tend to take the pot at the expense of a cannon but they'll learn that it doesn't always pay. Played to excess, the spot stroke & losing hazards are both boring but i find that potting the red is less unattractive than endless losing hazards. Still, you never know how a rule is going to work until it has been in operation for a bit & i agree that there might be a case for reviewing it -- possible making it **five** pots.*

Wilson Jones : *Frankly, i have not been in complete agreement with the new rule. Admittedly, it is a move to popularise the Game as it was felt that it needed a boost & rightly so. It was, & still is, my humble feeling that the pots should have been raised only to **five** & not **15** for this has taken the artistry from the spot-end game. The precise & delicate movement at the top, particularly the cannons where you have to bring out the utmost to avoid a cover are all spoilt with the new rule. Most players i have seen do nothing but go for the pot smacking the red in many times & playing only an occasional cannon. It would be interesting to know the spectators' reaction here.....*

Tom Cleary *At the outset, i am aware that the Australian Council has made a recommendation to your British Council that the Rules be amended to provide for limiting the number of winning hazards off the red spot to **five** -- instead of **15**. In consequence, i approach this matter with some delicacy, & would indicate that my comments should not in any way be construed as being critical of the views of my Australian colleagues but rather as the thoughts of a sole individual - - myself.*

My first reaction to the change made by the BCC was one of hostility. As one who had developed to a specialist degree the top-of-the-table technique, i felt that somewhat of a penalty was being placed on me playing against players of lesser skill. On reflection, however, i have modified my views for reasons which i shall proceed to give.

First of all, i ask myself -- what is the position in regard to Billiards, its progress & general popularity? In answering this, i speak only from my knowledge of the game "down under". In general trend, the game has been waning in interest for many years, despite the frantic periodical & temporary build-up by zealous bands of officials in the State & Australian bodies. This is reflected in the continued condition of the finances of all Associations to meet the cost of State & Australian championships & of representation in World events. If i might refer to an article in the December issue of Billiards and Snooker, it would seem that a somewhat similar position exists over the other side.

I pass on now to what i consider to be some potent reasons for the decline in interest. I state them categorically, but as they are all related, not in order of importance.

- (i)** *The departure from the days when private residential establishments provided in ordinary course for a billiards room. This change, although now somewhat remote, must, i think have had an eventual effect.*
- (ii)** *the expanded & expanding field of interest provided by other avenues of activity. These include field & indoor competitive sports of considerable legion & the passive time-takers of television, radio & motoring.*
- (iii)** *The difficulty of achieving high skill in billiards as compared with similar attainment in other games. In this regard, one might point to the fact that, over all countries where billiards is played, the number of players of high ranking is small, consequently;*
- (iv)** *The broad gap in comparative skill existing between a few top players & other players is inimical to competitive interest. It results in games where the outcome is a foregone conclusion & tends to dishearten players who cannot hope to reach the top. On the other hand, it might be contended with some strength that it gives that inspiration & incentive to players meeting top opposition to reach the top &, thereby, be a constant factor in raising the interest in, & standard of, billiards. This undoubtedly, is in some strength a beneficial factor but not sufficiently so to stem the decline of interest in the game for, i feel that*
- (v)** *The monopolistic superiority of a few has, overall, had a dampening & detrimental effect on the progress of the game. On this note, it is sad for me to reflect that my reign for many years in succession a Champion of Victoria, actually may not have served the best interests of the game, although it certainly developed a subsequent worthy challenger in the top-of-the-table technique, Mr Jim Long, who eventually wrested the crown from me.*
- (vi)** *The development of the top-of-the-table play is, perhaps, the reason for the broad gap which exists between top players & others. I know, too well, that to reach my degree of competence in this technique, personal sacrifices of great moment have been entailed, in fact, to an extent which involved dedication to an objective. This means that billiards became part of my life, influenced my occupation & habits. This was possible only because of the support & understanding of my family & friends. How many, though, are prepared to undergo the rigours of dedication to the game? Few, i have found, & they, probably, have made the right decision. I have no regrets -- possibly, if i had failed, it would be different.*
- (vii)** *The lack of publicity given to the game is perhaps a sign of the declining interest in it. This lack seems paradoxically when one reflects on the terrific extension, in comparatively recent years, of the mediums of publicity -- press, radio & television with world audiences. I have personal knowledge in Victoria & other States in Australia of the difficulties in obtaining even scant reports concerning billiards organisation & the results of championship events. It surely means that, in the minds of publicity entrepreneurs, the scope of public interest in billiards is not considered wide enough to command commensurate recognition with other sports & games. Nevertheless, i am of opinion that, as in most things, it is necessary in the publicity world to do something to help yourself. In this respect, i feel that sufficient concentration on the publicity aspect has not been given here by the representative organisers of the game. To remedy this i suggest that an integral part of the organisation of all billiard associations should provide for a specialised publicity section actively functioning with publicity as its sole objective.*

Returning now to the consideration of the Rules, as revised by the British Control Council.

I am satisfied that some action was necessary to promote greater interest in the game & to arrest its gradual decline. There is room, of course, for variations in opinion as to what form this action should take.

I have indicated that i regard the monopolistic superiority of a very few to be inimical to the broad interests & development of the game. It would seem to me that the British Control Council sees it that way & although reluctant, no doubt, to penalise high skill, has made the decision to bridge the wide gap & bring more players into the active competitive game.

*The Council's decision to increase the permissible number of winning hazards from **2 to 15** indicates to me its view that drastic action was necessary roll-over regarding-establish the game. In my experience, here, it is meeting with the desired result. The increase to **15** will not entirely bridge the gap -- it will only limit its width. Any lesser number than **15** will have corresponding smaller effect in this respect.*

*I am doubtful whether restriction to **5** winning hazards would have any great effect in bringing about sufficient resurgence in the game. **Ten**, i think, would have an appreciable effect -- **15**, obviously, greater effect still. It is important to remember that even with **15**, the superiority of a few will still remain although the games will be harder fought & in a broader scope of competition, for it is axiomatic that a player with inherent skill & greater dedication will more readily adapt himself to the altered rules than one not so endowed.*

*Might i relate that the new rule came to my aid in the Australian Championships in Tasmania last year, when, in the second-last session against the formidable champion, **Jim Long**, by resort to the new Rule, i made breaks of **378 & 338** after being **450** behind & achieved an eventual very narrow victory, which, but for the new Rule, would not have been possible in the circumstances. My love for the game is great & with recollections of what the game has given me in enabling me to travel the World through the efforts of devotees who have contributed to the organisation of Billiards, i deplore any tendency towards the game languishing.*

Rex Williams As a discussion of the new rule is being given great prominence this month, it seems the right moment to give a professional's view. When i first heard of the rule, i was astounded. I wrote at the time :

Isn't it rather sweeping to raise the maximum at one go from 2 to 15? Because, of course, in doing this, the rules revisers have changed the game completely. Previously, in top-of-the-table play, the skill lay in keeping the object white as near as possible to the spot (despite having to play a cannon every second or third shot) & in not potting the red twice in succession off its spot etc etc (see the rest of Rex's comments earlier in this chapter).

The rule has worked out much as i expected except that there have not been as many big breaks as i thought there would be. Many players have been making hundreds a lot more regularly but this has not led to many more 500's & 600's than there used to be under the old rule. I think the main reason for this is that, whatever cannon or hazard limits are or are not imposed, a break of this size takes exceptional concentration. I am not in favour of going back to the old rules as this would probably drive out of Billiards the Snooker players which the new rule has brought in. I think that an

adjustment to three pots would still not give the converted Snooker player enough encouragement. Five pots off the spot before the red goes on the middle spot seems to me a happy medium.

I also think there is a case for extending the losing hazard limit to 20 or even 25 because the in-off specialist, who more often than not are poor potters, are the players put at the greatest disadvantage by the greater scope for potting.

THE NEW RULE FOR AND AGAINST .

Billiards & Snooker, August 1967

Joe Tregoning, Glamorgan *Although i do not play any Billiards these days, i have been very interested in the correspondence concerning the amount of permissible pots off the red spot. The present rule does help the Snooker player to make bigger breaks, but does it make him a better Billiards player? I think not, and i would favour the return of the old rule. If any player is interested enough, he will work hard to perfect his game according to the rules that apply. Perhaps i am biased, but it is really my honest opinion.*

J Williamson, Gomersal *Regarding the fifteen hazard rule at Billiards, there is no doubt this is the finest rule ever passed by the Billiards Association. At last we are back near the original rules which brought the game to its most popular. Now a player can show his skill at every phase of the game.*

..... That farsighted student of the game Riso Levi realised the need way back in 1933. In his book written about that time he advocates a return to a limited spot stroke.

..... I asked Willie Smith for his opinion and he said: "For fifty years they have been passing rules to make the game harder, so it's time they passed one to make it easier." He could never understand why in the past the BA kept passing restrictive rules to stop a few professionals while thousands of club players suffered under them. He said that without a doubt the top class Billiard player should benefit most from the new rule. He should be able to score faster and retain position at the top longer. Under the twice spotted rule Willie has scored over 750 at the top without ever going into hand, so he knows what he is talking about.

.... Leslie Driffield has made many a 400 or 500 break scored mostly at the top; yet he never takes more than four or five pots. Though he is willing to listen to argument, he tells me he thinks the rule is right as it is. He knows he will beat a player who relies on the spot stroke nine times out of ten. But if occasionally one beats him well good luck to him. It creates more interest.

..... There is more interest in the Amateur Championship and more entries. Many a local competition has had a new lease of life. The rules are just about perfect. Leave them alone.....

WHAT THE PLAYERS SAY Billiards & Snooker, March 1968

Geoffrey Thompson *I no longer get much fun out of practising Billiards. I don't like the open game very much, but the spot stroke bores me to tears. If the rule is changed to five pots from the spot it will still keep the interest of the Snooker players and make it better for the Billiards players.*

Roy Oriel *We're not playing billiards now. We're all getting obsessed with potting. I don't think the new rule's made many more people play Billiards anyway. Personally, i'd like to see the rule go back to what it was, but if it's limited to five that'll be better than nothing.*

WJ PEALL (1854-1952) ON THE SPOT STROKE

Billiards and Snooker

February 1966

Except perhaps the masse', which was introduced into this country by American & Continental players, there is not a single phase of the game of today (about 1920-Ed) which was not invented or evolved by the old pioneers of the game, who worked & played in an environment totally unfamiliar, one is thankful to say, to the modern player. That great master, the late John Roberts, was making long sequences of losing hazards before George Gray was born, & great bunches of cannons before Reece & Falkiner came on the scene.

It was Roberts, too, who evolved the top-of-the-table game which was afterwards to bring fame to such as Stevenson & Diggle.

The late John Bennett won a championship mainly by the cleverness & tenacity of his safety tactics, so that my good friend Melbourne Inman owes something to one of my old colleagues.

It is with some reluctance i make a short reference to my own contribution to the evolution of the game. I have often been pained to read the slighting criticism so frequently levelled at the spot stroke. It was certainly no freak stroke. It was, & is, a fair winning hazard, & by no means easy to play, as hundreds of good amateurs have admitted to me, also a good many professionals. I can attest from experience, to make big breaks from it required exceptional skill, endurance & concentration. So, to call the spot stroke, not billiards, as many do even today, is not only absurd but unjust. Indeed, many good judges consider a grave mistake was made when it was eliminated from all billiards on account of the inordinate proficiency of a few professionals. In a way, the Council of the late Billiards Control Club admitted as much by providing in their rules that the spot might be played by prior arrangement between players.

Prolonged exploitation of any particular stroke is not entertaining to watch, nor is it in the best interests of the game, but whilst freely admitting all this, one suggests that something should be done to encourage the practice of the winning hazard. If the losing hazard be the key to all good breaks, the winning hazard may be regarded as the lock, stock & barrel. Proficiency at it yields big breaks.

If you watch the present day leading amateurs & professionals closely -- those, of course, who go in for all round scoring -- you will observe that the winning hazard comes to their rescue when otherwise their effort would more than probably come to an end. It is the marvellous precision whereby the coloured ball is holed from all angles -- from the very thin cut to the full contact on the object-ball -- that makes the modern Smiths, Newmans, Falkiners, etc.

The onlooker is frequently amazed at the certainty present day players make of a difficult winner while retaining command over the cueball, yet it is extremely doubtful if they could rival the winning hazard striking of those of the old brigade, most of whom, alas, have crossed the bourne.

The modern exponent of the game is, to my mind, far too apt to speak of the old spot stroke in somewhat slighting terms. He would soon be cured of his grossly erroneous impression if he tried a course of practice lessons at it today. And yet, quite apart from proving this or disproving that, i would strongly recommend every amateur to indulge in systematic practice of the spot stroke. It would strengthen the game of the vast majority to a marked degree

For the hundreds who can play a losing hazard pretty well, there is scarcely one who rises above mediocrity with the winning hazard. The old players -- amateur & professional -- built up their

game on a sure & solid foundation, the modern player seems to think the same results can be achieved without any foundation at all.

Tables, implements & environment are all a big improvement on the old days i speak of. Yet, except amongst the most gifted of the amateurs & professionals of today, i doubt very much whether the modern effects obtained are in any way superior to those of the fine players who kept the billiards flag flying thirty, forty & fifty years ago.

SIXTY YEARS OF BILLIARDS

WJ Peall The Billiard Player August 1935

.... **John Roberts** gave me something of a concession during an important money match..... I was not allowed to make more than **100 spot-strokes** in any break. I had to remember my tally of spot-strokes when i settled down afresh in my favourite scoring zone. Obviously, this might mean 3 or 4 visits to the spot-end before i reached my limit, the more so as the conditions induced me to mix my break-building as well as i could Consequently, i soon discovered that i had to combine more mental arithmetic with my billiards than was good for my play. To get out of this bother, i chalked my spot-strokes on the cushion as i made them (we all used **white chalk** in those days).

Roberts objected to this, saying, not unreasonably, that the chalk-marks on the cushion tended to put him off his stroke. I admitted the force of his objection, left off chalking-up my score of spot-hazards, & tried to jot the figures down on my **shirt cuff**. But this, i found, was putting me off, as it meant stopping to work out a series of small sums while a break was in progress. Altogether, i was getting into something of a tangle over what seemed a very simple matter when the condition was made. So i suggested to Roberts that the marker might warn me when i had made **70 spot-strokes**, leaving me only **30** to keep in mind, a task i felt well within my mental arithmetic.

Well -- said Roberts -- i fail to see why you should be warned after making 70 spots, any more than i should be after making the one spot-hazard i am allowed to score.

That was the undeniable logic of the matter, but as it was evident that the ready reckoning was imposing a real handicap on me, compelling me practically to mark an intricate part of my game, Roberts gave way, & the marker warned me accordingly. This was a curious anticipation of the **warning** now given when the **cannon or hazard limit** is being approached, & shows how very little there is which is really new in billiard playing.

By an odd coincidence, among some old press cuttings i am turning over, i see a suggestion to limit **consecutive cannons to 25**. There is no date on the cutting, but i know it to be older than Newman, which shows that, to a point, the cannon limit he has to contend with was proposed in print before he was born.

REFINED BILLIARDSSnooker Scene, August 1979

Having recently witnessed the final of the Pennant Billiards, the top competition in Victoria, between the University and Geelong Clubs, i was appalled to see the poor standard displayed. Of the twelve participants no one had any knowledge of refined Billiards whatsoever. In years gone by, each player who participated in this final would have been able to make a break of 100 or more. But today, all the players want to do is play hazards (ie in-offs and pots) without thinking of their next shot. I saw one competitor (who has been playing for years) deal with a position in which the balls were six inches apart, in a playable position. All he should have done was caress them to leave them in an easy position for a scoring shot to follow. Instead, he gave them an almighty crack and they spread from one end of the table to the other -- end of break.No player can achieve

any measure of competence unless he realises that break-building comes only from correct cueing technique and in treating the balls in a gentle, caressing manner wherever possible. Avoidance of launching a continuous assault and battery is essential. The balls will then only respond by detesting the player who treats them so and will passively resist all punishment, thus ensuring complete failure, cursing and exasperation, not to mention complete lack of enjoyment from this supremely artistic game. Most players of today want to learn top-of-the-table play but, alas, they are on the wrong track. They should make breaks of 100 or more before attempting to master top-of-the-table.

I support the move to return to the **two pot** rule. Most big breaks in recent years have been compiled not with true top-of-the-table but through potting the red in sequences with some top-of-the-table play. The key to top-of-the-table play lies in manoeuvring the cue-ball into the desired position for the red to object-white cannon. With two pots (ie the red being placed on the middle spot after the second pot) the player must at all times be controlling all these balls, a much more demanding mode of play. A return to two pots would probably reduce the size of breaks made by the top players. This in itself might be no bad thing because the bigger the breaks there are the less cut and thrust there tends to be. I venture to say that this top-of-the-table play would take five years to learn thoroughly. Having closely observed all the leading Australia players, very few of them have any idea of top-of-the-table except Jim Long, who has a brilliant Billiards brain but who is unfortunately in poor health.

Super Crystalate balls are just beautiful for Snooker, as Snooker mainly consists of screw and stun. The balls are very lively and this is what Snooker is all about.

But for Billiards they are a **disaster**. They are smaller and lighter and have a tendency to **slide** through and take a different **angle**. The sooner the Billiards authorities think about reverting back to the old Crystalate balls the better it will be for the up and coming player of Billiards.

..... Tom Cleary, Melbourne.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR Jack Karnehm, Billiards and Snooker, Sept 1968

Negative Play My suggestion about the miss at Billiards seems to have caused some comment. Because of this i feel i must express my reason for suggesting the change.

Mark Wildham says tactics are part of the game & should be accepted. I agree, & have never suggested safety should be taken out of the game. I merely suggested that safety should be played by striking a ball & playing a genuine shot. This calls for skill of a high order. To pot one's own ball in a pocket, or deliberately miss, constitutes negative play which apart from spoiling the game demands neither skill nor any special tactical skills.....

If we reduce the game to a battle of tactics which are devoid of skill, we will ruin the game completely, i am not concerned with who wins but that the game beautiful should not be lost.....

MISSES, COUPS & FREE BALLS Billiards and Snooker, August 68.

Although notable support for **Jack Karnehm's** suggestion that the **miss** & the **coup** should become **fouls** has come from **Herbert Beetham & Leslie Driffield**, majority opinion, as far as we can ascertain from correspondence & conversations, appears to be against such a move.

At the same time, the BA&CC's decision to reduce the permitted number of consecutive pots from the spot to **five** has been widely welcomed.....

..... Midland Amateur Billiards Champion **Maurice Chapman** rang us to say : "I'm pleased about that. I don't enjoy Billiards as it is at the moment. I like to play Billiards as a change from Snooker but the way it was being played you had to concentrate so much on potting there wasn't much difference".....

Geoff Thompson said : " I don't think abolishing the miss would be an improvement & I'd definitely be against ignoring the baulk line for the first shot of a break.....

.....With a touching ball i think it should be optional for the striker to decide whether to play from that position or to have the balls spotted..... I think if you can play away from the ball you are touching -- & pot the red for example -- i think this should be allowed. But it wouldn't count as a cannon if you simply play from the touching ball up to the other ball".

Norman Dagley gave the miss & coup proposals a cautious reception : " I can see both sides of this & at first it's very easy to say it would be a good idea. But when you really think about it, it could penalise the wrong players. I think the rule should be left as it is".

But **Herbert Beetham** gave the proposals strong support. : " I think it would be a good thing. I'm all for safety play personally. I think safety -- not so much in the Championship but in league matches -- is definitely overdone. There's been too much safety when a reasonably bold shot could have started a break. Consequently, the games have been getting too long".

READERS LETTERS
BRIGHTER BILLIARDS

Billiards and Snooker, August 68.

Frank Little, London.

I think it is a good thing that the spot is being altered although whether the reduction to five is the answer only time will tell. I also think that, if the BA&CC Chairman wishes to make the game of Billiards "sharper" then the answer might well be in the abolition of "baulk" & make a rule that the player breaking must strike the red. I also suggest that the miss & coup should both carry the same penalty, ie three points to the non-striker. My suggestions for making the game of Billiards "brighter" could be as follows :

1. Abolish "baulk".
2. The player breaking must play the red ball.
3. Retain both miss & coup but make the penalty 3 for each.
4. If the balls are touching, make the striker play "away", as in Snooker.
5. In the event of a foul miss, perhaps t he non-striker could have the option of asking his opponent to "play again" as in Snooker.

PURER BILLIARDS

MARKHAM WILDMAN, Peterborough

I welcome the limitation of five winning hazards off the black spot & expect that this will promote an improvement in purer Billiards by the past exploiters of winning hazard Billiards, Thompson, Wildman, etc. At the same time i think that a slight advantage to the losing hazard exponents, Nolan, Sinclair, etc will occur as they in fact will have no adjustment to make. However, i concede that losing hazard play is a basic art of pure Billiards & should not be penalised.

*I am definitely against a revision of any rule concerning coup play & safety play.....
.....I remember that all of the best Billiards matches i have played in have been studded with coups
& safety misses. Certainly the Billiards spectators prefer to see a needle match rather than an
exhibition. Match averages, which are rarely taken & even more rarely accurate, are of interest
only to the odd statistician.*

*Billiards is not nearly so popular as it should be. In most matches there is a complete lack
of match atmosphere, usually due to a wide gap in the ability of the two contestants. Safety play
helps to equalise things.*

REX WILLIAMS

*I was interested to read of the suggestion in the July issue to make the miss & coup fouls, as they
are in Snooker. I don't myself see the need for this step as safety play is only a small part of
Billiards & not as important as it is in Snooker. In Snooker, its all part of the game if a clever tactical
player can disturb a brilliant break build-up with some astute safety. In Billiards, it is ten times more
difficult to do this already without making a miss illegal.....*

BA&CC OFFICIAL Billiards and Snooker, August 68.

The following amendments to the rules will come into operation on September 1, 1968

*.....The Jump Shot is a foul in which the cue-ball is made to jump over an intervening ball whether
by accident or design.....*

*.....if the red is pocketed five times in succession, in one break, from the spot, or from the pyramid
spot, without the conjunction of another score, it shall be placed on the centre spot.....*

AT THE FIFTH STROKE Billiards and Snooker, August 1968

*.....From September 1st, only five consecutive pots from the spot will be permitted. After the fifth
pot, the red will be placed on the middle spot until it is potted again. The 15 hazard limit will continue
to operate.....*

*..... A complete return to the Old Rule would have been as sweeping as was the introduction of
the New Rule.*

*..... Even with a five pot limit, however, a great deal more attention will be necessary to the position
of the object white than has been the case for the last four years.*

*..... Another suggested rule change on which no action has been taken for the time being was a
proposal to make the miss or the coup a foul when red and object white are both out of baulk.*

*..... The outlawing of the miss would not abolish safety play but it would obviously make it more
difficult.*

NEWS OF INTEREST The Billiard Player February 1951

*WJ Peall, Grand Old Man of Billiards, whom we feature on our front cover this month (& what a fine
photo) is, of course the greatest exponent of the famous spot-stroke. Every enthusiast knows of his
great break of 3304 (3174 pot reds) against Dawson on November 5/6, 1890, including one spot run
of 400. In 1888, Peall made breaks of 2031, 1498, 1203, 1192 & 1125 in 5 days!! Nowadays he is
not able to play much, as most tables are upstairs, but he still takes a great interest in the game &
enjoys chats with old friends about it for he can recall happenings going back a great many years.*

He takes a walk if the weather is not too bad, & he celebrated his 96th birthday with his family, which includes three sons & a daughter. Here's to you, WJ & we all wish you several years more of happy life. All who love billiards cherish your name.

RULES COMMITTEE CONFIRM CONTROVERSIAL DECISION

The BA&CC Rules Committee have confirmed that a controversial decision by referee Bill Turner in the Cleethorpes Bowling Club invitation Billiards tournament was correct. In the July number we reported that Tony Bosworth, in play with a break of 74, attempted to pot the red from its spot & screw back. Instead, he struck the cue-ball too low & caused it to jump several inches into the air, landing on the far edge of the red & continuing into the pocket. Referee Turner penalised Bosworth for a jump shot although both players expressed their disagreement with his decision.

The relevant section of the general rules reads : "The jump shot is a foul in which the cue-ball is made to jump over an intervening ball whether by accident or design". The players expressed the view that the operative word was "intervening" & that therefore Bosworth's shot was not a foul but the referee reiterated his decision.

Announcing the adjudication, Rules Committee Chairman Len Oldham said: " This incident has been brought in front of the Rules Committee & they have ruled that the referee was correct. The cue-ball finished on the far side of the red & thereby was deemed to have jumped over it. The red was the intervening ball.

JUMPING TO CONCLUSIONS Frank Little Billiards and Snooker Sept 70

..... According to my rule book, it is a foul to jump over an intervening ball &, if that is correct, what have the rules committee decided that the red ball in the instance quoted was intervening between.

From September 1st there might have been some slight case for declaring a foul when the rule will state "to jump over any ball", but, in my opinion, the cue-ball in question jumped on to the ball & scored, in my opinion, quite fairly.....

..... I think the rules committee are wrong in this instance. If they adhere to their decision, the rules must be altered to declare it a foul if a ball leaves the bed of the table.

IS THE JUMP SHOT A FOUL?? A Croneen The Billiard Player Jan 1936

*.... The consensus of skilled opinion is that this shot is not in accordance with the **spirit of the game**, which, i take it, is intended to be played with the balls on the surface of the tables, & not flying through the air Moreover..... it is a **foul shot**.... Rule 5.... lays down that all strokes must be made with the **tip of the cue**.*

*My conception is that the ball is **wedged up by the side of the cue**, the bed of the table being the fulcrum....*

Editor We are in agreement.... The jump shot may or may not be technically playable within the letter of the rule. But that is not the important point, which is that **aerial** billiards or snooker is against the correct theory & practice of these games....

The idea of abolishing the shot has been mooted for years -- it was discussed by the old Billiard Association before the Control Council came into being....

..... How, for instance, could a rule be framed to bar the jump without interfering with the perfectly legitimate **steeplechase cannon**, when a ball struck high with force, bounces quite merrily over the table.

SHOULD THE JUMP SHOT BE BARRED? J Hall-Yarr Feb 1936

..... If the **jump shot** can be described as **aerial billiards** then so can all **forcing shots & screw shots**. The **steeplechase cannon**.... is only a jump shot.....

..... **the masse'**, technically speaking, is about as foul a shot as can be played. The ball is actually **squeezed** between the cue-tip & the bed of the table.....

Even the pretty **swerve shot**..... would be..... a foul shot.

As you yourself say, Sir, it would not be the easiest job in the world to name a suitable rule.

I should like to add that i am far from advocating the abolishment of the steeplechase cannon, the beautiful masse' shots, or even **miscues**.

BARRING THE JUMP SHOT A Croneen The Billiard Player April 1936

While i agree with my friend Mr Hall-Yarr's ideas about billiards in nearly all respects, i feel that he has gone rather too far in describing **masse' & swerve** shots as technical fouls. It is true that the ball is squeezed between the cloth & the cue, but then the same applies in nearly all shots. Owing to the shape of the cue & the necessity of clearing the cushions, it is practically impossible to deliver the cue horizontally. A few minutes observation of actual play will clearly show that the blow, even in plain shots, is delivered more or less **downward**.....

.... My letter referred solely to that type of jump shot where the ball is **struck underneath**. Whether played as by experts, by raising the butt & directing the cue at a point on the cloth just in front of the ball, or by laying the tip on the table & just ramming the cue along the cloth, i contend that the ball is **shovelled up by the side of the cue, & thereby is horribly fouled**.

..... Concerning the likelihood of **damage** to the cloth, balls, etc, whereof Mr Hall-Yarr expresses scepticism, i would like him to have been present with me at Thurston's when this happening occurred in an amateur championship snooker heat. The hero Raising his butt, he rammed his tip into the cloth just behind the ball with terrific force, received the applause of some unthinking spectators for hitting the object-ball, & ruined a beautiful new cloth by excavating a **crater** a quarter of an inch across..... A certain big firm have **large notices** printed forbidding this shot, several of which are displayed prominently in each room.

While i agree that there would be some difficulty about **miscues**, i am still of opinion that this atrocity should be legislated against. It has comparatively little importance at billiards, & it spoils many games at snooker.

RESTRICTIONS A Croneen The Billiard Player April 1936

Restrictions are the **devil**. Unfortunately, both are necessary.

If there were no devil, how could we have the comfort of knowing that **jump-shotters, bangers of balls on spots, quoters of Herbert Spencer, table-climbers, & advice-givers** will eventually receive their due reward.

UNDERCUTTING

Noel Lowth, Dublin, Billiards and Snooker, May 1970

We were astonished to read that in England, the home of the game, agreement has not yet been reached on a pocket template that would embrace accurately defined undercutting measurements.

THE ART OF THE UNDERCUT

Peter Courtney, New Zealand Snooker Scene Aug 79

Apart from the financial side of my venture in forming my own Billiards service company, i hope to go a long way in upgrading the playing conditions of tables, which in the main leave a lot to be desired in clubs throughout New Zealand. I refer of course to the undercutting of pockets (refer Snooker Scene, December 1977). To this end, i have made three sets of my own loan cushion giving the perfect undercut & still conforming to the 3 ½" opening at the fall of the slate.

The clubs where i have fitted my loan cushions (which have tolerance in the slate bolt holes to fit any table) have been amazed how balls have been potted into the pockets on my cushions when they are smaller than those on their tables. This is, of course, solely due to the fact that their existing cushions have no undercut at all & that their pockets narrow after the fall of the slate. As i do more regarding-rubbering of tables giving undercut cushions, this can only improve the confidence of players &, as a consequence, raise the standard of play in New Zealand players hoping to play world championships.....

TIGHT ONES

..... C R Woodroffe, Stoke, Snooker Scene Feb 1980

The club i play at has sixteen tables but only about two have pockets anywhere near standard (3 ½ " at the fall of slate). The rest vary in condition & all have extremely tight pockets (some only about 3") so tight that pots along the cushions are impossible & all other pots have to be dead accurate. If the object-ball touches the jaws of the pocket on either side, it rattles violently in the jaws & stays out, in some cases due to the fact that the fall of the slate is well into the mouth of the pocket..... Other members agree that it spoils their Snooker & makes it hard to improve & progress to large breaks.

.....(Editor) Snooker Scene is always prepared to crusade for better playing conditions. Through our initiative, the IBSF and B&SCC recently approved a new pocket template, designed by Norman Clare, which will not only continue to specify a width of 3 ½" at the fall of the slate but will now specify a minimum degree of undercut and stipulate that pockets do no narrow after the fall. Provided that the new template is used in cutting pockets, the excessively tight entrances of which our correspondent complains should become a thing of the past.)

WARNING SYSTEM

SC Bailey

West Midlands Billiards & Snooker Referees Association, Billiards and Snooker, May 1970

The 15 hazards limitation is still in operation, with the referee warning at 10. Many players & some referees are under the impression that since the number of pots from the spot has been reduced from 15 to 5 the player should receive a warning when he has made 4 pots. I feel that it may be worth publishing in your magazine that this is not so. The only warning a player is entitled to is still after 10 hazards.

The Editor comments: *Quite so: but many of the leading players feel that a warning after four pots from the spot would eliminate the confusion which arises when either a player or the referee miscalculates the number of pots taken.....*

THE VALUE OF THE CANNON

FJ Little Billiards and Snooker, April 69

Reference the letter from **Bernard Bennett**..... How many players could benefit from his suggestion of raising the value of a cannon to four points? In my long experience of refereeing in the Amateur Championship i have never met a player who appeared likely to make 35 cannons. **Reg Wright** once had a run of around 19 or 20 & he is by far the best close cannon player i have seen amongst the Amateurs in the last 20 years.

..... the answer might be to reduce the value of a red winner to the same level as a red pot at Snooker, that is, one point, this would give Mr Bennett's cannon players a two to one advantage.

HARKING BACK

Billiards and Snooker, October 1966

A really good news story about **Tom Newman** ran as follows : "Starting the game he sent red into baulk & left the cueball on the middle of the top side cushion. The red, however, duly entered baulk but also a pocket. The referee, **Charlie Chambers**, spotted it. Then Newman, from the position in which he had left the cueball (middle of the top side cushion) played at the red, to send it into baulk again, & also to leave the cueball just behind the billiards Spot. The red, however, again entered a baulk pocket, whereupon Chambers spotted it, but on the Centre Spot. "What are you doing, Mr Chambers?" asked Newman "Twice off the Spot", replied Chambers. Loud laughter!"

HARKING BACK 1946

Billiards and Snooker, August 1965

Alec Brown, the professional was fouled by Charley Chambers at snooker for using his **fountain pen** in place of his cue in a position in which he could not comfortably play the shot with the latter. Needless to say, this drew more attention from the press than a 147 break.

Willie Leigh ... had a humorous experience when booked to play Walter Lindrum. Arriving at the hall on the morning of the match, he was asked the reason for this early visit. "I've come to select a comfortable arm-chair" was his explanation.

Clark McConachy arrived in England, his 6th professional visit to Great Britain. Comment. Welcome, Clark McConachy!! He brings with his weird & wonderful cue remote from any BA&CC recommendation to the average player. Made in New Zealand it has a manuka barrel & weighs **21 oz. Length -- 4 ft 10 in. Tip 11 mm.** (Manuka, an Australian & New Zealand tree of the myrtle family, with hard wood, its leaves a substitute for tea). The New Zealander keeps fit the hard way, does early morning exercises (also road work), skips, ball punches, does not smoke, does not drink : he's in tip-top condition. His vision he looks after by dint of eye exercises, rest & cold packs. No champion can afford to play ducks & drakes with his eyesight.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Billiards and Snooker January 1969

Mexborough, Helmsley, Yorkshire, President of the Billiards Association

May i say how entirely i am in agreement with what Mr Jackson & Mr Wright say in the December issue of Billiards and Snooker. Big breaks are, to my mind, the essence of the game of Billiards. I can well remember, as a boy, coming to Thurston's Hall hoping to see a player adding to an already large unfinished break & i can well recollect when, on some occasions, no more room was available & i was turned away. When, however, i was fortunate enough to obtain a place, & when the player, whoever he was, finally broke down, i doubt whether his disappointment was much greater

than my own. Therefore, i say, like Mr Jackson & Mr Wright, let **close cannons** be once more encouraged in the playing of Billiards.

Letters to the Editor Billiards & Snooker magazine May 1969

NURSERY CANNONS

May i add a voice from Australia to the gathering opposition to the present nursery cannon restriction? The most usual place for a run of cannons to start is near the top-cushion about halfway between the spot and the corner pocket. For a player proficient enough to turn the corner, '30 cannons' will be called when the balls are in a no-man's land somewhere along the side cushion.

Instead of being able to continue the run on to the middle-pocket, there to end it logically and artistically, the unfortunate player must perforce destroy it in its prime (along with the fascination of the audience) in the desperate hope of leaving a pot or in-off 'on' in the middle pocket.

As often as not, this enforced act of billiardistic vandalism ends both run and break and the frustrated player is finally compelled to ask himself if nursery cannons are worth the candle, much less the midnight oil, the more so when he adds to the debit side the factors involved in securing the position in the firs place -- the abandonment, usually, of a good position at the top of the table, the risk of a break-ending cover.

All this, note, for the player already well equipped with the necessary consummate skill. If, even for him, nursery cannons are of doubtful value in compiling points and winning games, what of the nursery cannon player in embryo? Obviously he will either be stillborn or will emerge from the billiards nursery with no notions of nurseries, his game distinctly less hazardous though replete with hazards!

In short, the 35 cannon limit, if allowed to stand, must inevitably become the obituary notice of fine billiards. I appeal to the Council to take very seriously the opinions of Rex Williams, Frank Holz, J P Jackson, Reg Wright and Victoria McDougall as expressed in recent issues of 'Billards and Snooker'. These people, like myself, are devout lovers of Billiards, the 'game beautiful', but they are only a vocal few.

I doubt if anywhere there is a complete player of English billiards who would not wish the wonderful artistry of the game fully restored. Who, on the other hand, would be outraged by an increase from 35 to 50 in the permissible number of cannons?

Albert Johnson, B.Sc., Dip.Ed., N.S.W., Australia.

ALTERATION TO RULES

Billiards and Snooker August 1961

Rule 7 -- It was decided to alter this rule to read as follows --

Consecutive cannons are limited to 35 -- on the completion of this number the break shall only be continued by the intervention of a hazard, or a cannon in conjunction with a hazard. During a run of cannons, the referee shall inform the striker when 30 cannons have been made.

As a result of this change, the distinction between direct & indirect cannons is cancelled, & Rules 7 & 8 now balance each other.

Having spent a considerable amount of time studying the rules, i would like to say, & with the strongest conviction, that, in my opinion, it would be difficult to imagine any game having the advantage of enjoying a set of rules superior in the standard of compilation to those governing Billiards and Snooker, for they are concise, efficiently framed for fair play, decisive, clearly & consistently framed, & can be applied by an efficient referee with 100% efficiency & satisfaction for all concerned..... Mr Frederick Ramus, Burnley Hmmm.???

THE BILLIARDS ASSOCIATION'S RULES SUB-COMMITTEE
is to make two important recommendations at the next meeting of the Control Council.
Billiards and Snooker, February 1970.

- *One recommendation is that the present nursery cannon of 35 increased to 75.*
- *The other is more controversial in that it is proposed to make the miss at Billiards a foul unless both object-balls are in baulk.*

THESE CANNONS AGAIN by CFG Billiards and Snooker Feb 1965

*..... That -- **billiards has not changed greatly over the years**.....etc -- is entirely due to the Rules, which made billiards essentially a 2 ball game. Cannons are allowed with a strong recommendation, as it were, to ignore them as much as possible. True, billiards has not changed & has not improved either. Which is perhaps the real trouble.....*

*..... **Nursery cannons certainly could break through this barrier**, but alas -- the full control -- as Mr Wilson Jones puts it -- seems to be **beyond the reach of the amateurs**, for such highly developed science demands more practice than any amateur could obtain. This conclusion, i am sorry to say, is erroneous. Nurseries are, on the contrary, **well within the reach of amateurs**, but, unfortunately, they are beyond the loser-technique. Given a certain amount of talent, time is of secondary importance. Most players practise **twice as much** as the study of cannons would require. **The real question is what & how to practise.***

One learns losers by practising losers, during which one develops certain technique & theories to support it. If this technique was correct, there would be no reason why one could not learn nurseries without further ado, after all literally hundreds of diagrams are available showing the various tricks & pitfalls. Consequently the crux of the matter lies in the correct technique & not in one's status or in the available amount of time.

*It must be clearly understood, that **close cannons are not the natural extensions of the in-offs** & any approach to them on these lines is **doomed to failure**, unless, one is capable of re-inventing the whole process by trial & error. We, certainly (think) there must be an easier way.!!*

BA&CC OFFICIAL Billiards & Snooker, August 1970
The following amendments will come into operation on the 1st September 1970.

GENERAL RULES

- **Jump Shot** -- first sentence to read :--
The Jump Shot is a foul in which the cue-ball is made to jump over any ball whether by accident or design.

BILLIARDS RULES

- Rule 6. Delete 35, substitute 75. Last sentence to read :--
During the run of cannons the referee shall inform the striker when 70 cannons have been made.
- Foul Strokes (1). Delete 35, substitute 75.
- Rule 8. Delete completely, substitute :--
A. Miss. A miss is a foul except when the striker is in hand and there is no ball out of baulk.
- Foul Strokes :-- (K) should be deleted, and (L) to (O) re-lettered.
- Official Decisions, page 33, first paragraph starting 'Player in hand
-- Delete one away, substitute three away.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Snooker Scene October 1978

Dead or Alive??according to a decision given at the time by the Rules Committee in The Billiard Player of August 1952, page 13.....

..... Rule (i) Technical Terms in the General Rules which states that a stroke is made by a player touching his ball or striking his ball when it is in play with the tip of the cue.

At the time we were fouling players who, in rolling the cueball with the side of the cue in the D to get set for the stroke, inadvertently drew their cues too far back so that their tips just grazed the cueball.

This resulted in the Rules Committee issuing a directive that a player should only be fouled if he was actually addressing the ball.....

REFEREEING – THE ART OF Arthur Goundrill, The Billiard Player, Dec 1951

*Long ago, a very tricky point cropped up at the Cutlers Hall in Sheffield when i was Refereeing a game between Inman & Reece -- then at their bitterest!! At a certain point in the game all 3 balls were on the table with **the red on the baulk line** -- doubtful if it was in or out of baulk. Reece, well placed to go in-off the white or red, asked me if the red was in or out. If the answer was out, it was obvious he would go in-off the white, otherwise in-off the red. I refused to give a decision until he had played his stroke. **But**, said Reece, **you must answer a question of fact, it either is in or it is out of baulk**. I contended that whilst the 3 balls were on the table & in play baulk did not operate, & that by answering his question, i should be assisting him.*

*What Tom said to me was nobody's business, but i stuck to my decision, Tom went in-off the white & i then (on request) gave the red **unplayable!!** -- & Tom went red!!*

*I once saw Inman play yellow ball at snooker in mistake for the qball. When i called -- **Foul, seven away** -- Inman asked -- **What for??** On informing him he said -- **Why didn't you tell me??** I replied -- **You are the player Mel, I'm the Referee.***

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR HF Smith, Ilford, The Billiard Player Jan 1952

I was most interested to read Mr Goundrill's article on Refereeing in your December 51 issue. I suggest Mr Goundrill has not paid enough attention to the vital necessity of the Referee to either move in such a way as not to impede the player or, to remain stationary.

When refereeing for a fast top-of-the-table player, a mutual understanding is arrived at without any word being spoken between the good Referee & the player. This occurs when a long spell of pot cannon play ensues. The player is almost darting from one side to the other & the Referee remains at the centre of the top rail, merely taking the red out of the pocket on either side & then spotting it.

It is vital that the spotting of the red in this phase of the game is carried out quickly & accurately & there is only one way to do it. That is by taking the ball between the forefinger & thumb & placing on the table immediately to the side of the spot corresponding to the arm that is being used & then to roll it on to the spot, taking the hand away with the same motion.

By that time the fast top-of-the-table player is almost in position for the next stroke &, if necessary, the Referee should stand motionless even if bending slightly over the table. This is far better than coming upright, as the movement is near enough to interfere with the player's concentration.

One other point Mr Goundrill does not cover, in my opinion, is the necessity for the Referee to be as unobtrusive as possible.

..... I disagree with Mr Goundrill's ruling at the match between Inman & Reece. What would he have done if Reece had said -- I want to go in-off the red, is it in or out.?? I contend that he would have had not option but to give the decision there & then & that he exceeded his duty in withholding it.

TOUCHING BALL

Clive Everton Snooker Scene May 1972

A body of opinion exists which would like to see the Billiards touching-ball rule changed. The argument runs that a touching-ball position is almost always the result of a bad shot & that therefore it is not right to give the player an unearned reprieve in the form of a half-ball in-off from the object white on the middle spot.

Willie Smith once suggested that if the cueball finished touching red or white, the shot should be declared a foul -- perhaps an extreme measure.

Another solution was that in a touching-ball situation, scoring should only be permitted by contacting either a cushion or the other object-ball first.

The opposite school of thought believes that, as often as not, mischance rather than a bad shot leaves the balls touching, perhaps when an object-ball is half disturbed from a spot which had a slight cup in it & then rolls back on to the cueball. It is further argued that the present touching-ball rule is part of the character -- or even the luck of Billiards -- & should not be changed. All national Associations are to be circularised for their views.

LINDRUM V MCCONACHY

The Times 11 February 1929

..... A curious incident occurred when Lindrum was making a run of cannons. He had made 20 cannons in a run of 52, but after he had made another cannon the referee penalized him for playing a stroke which constituted a push when the balls were touching. In the circumstances they should have been spotted before Lindrum continued the run.....

CURIOS OF CUEMANSHIP

The Billiard Player December 1952

In 1937, Walter Lindrum had a brainwave!! He proposed that 4 balls should be used for billiards, a pink being added to the normal 3, & the two colours counting as 3 points, the object white

as 2. This he thought would give the amateurs a much better chance of scoring & would remove much monotony from the game.

Willie Smith had something to say about this proposal.

Now comes a real howler from Walter Lindrum. If one described Lindrum's proposal as ridiculous & not worth a second's thought, it would be putting it quite mildly. It is too fantastic for words. I like the ending.....

.....would take away much of the monotony from the game.

Who has caused more monotony, if there is any, than Walter Lindrum with his long & continuous nursery cannon runs?? The line-rule has done away with this nonsense. It might be pertinent to ask Lindrum what would happen regarding the cannons if there were 4 balls on the table instead of 3!! However, i hear the ruling body also ridiculed his proposal, so that's that.

For our part we wonder what would be the effect of pink-ball play added to red.?!

ALCOCK'S SPORTING REVIEW OCTOBER 14 1911

If you & i live much longer, Charlie, said Stevenson to Memmott, as they were chatting the night before he left Melbourne, we shall see the game altered out of all knowledge. They'll bar the unlimited hazard, of course, but that's no comfort to me, for my game is not safe either.

You're right, Harry, replied his friend. As sure as you're born, he added in his emphatic manner, they'll draw a baulk line all round the table. That will knock nursery cannons on the head.

Bad for Reece, remarked the champion, reflectively.

And bad for you & for any top-of-the-table player. Where would you be if there was a 9" baulk all round, let alone a 14" one, which it would very likely be.

In regard to the losing hazard, Memmott, whilst deprecating any legislation here, suggested that instead of limiting the series & so putting another set of hobbles on the game, it would be preferable to reduce the size of the D. If you make the D the size of half a crown, said a great barracker for Gray, the boy would score just the same..... If Gray does his 2000 breaks today what will he be able to do in 10 years?? Or take Reece, who if not a youth like Gray, is still quite a young man. The cushion cannon at every 26th stroke troubles him less & less.....

BILLIARD RULES REVISION

Charles Memmott Alcock's Sporting Review March 1912

*.....EJ Campbell, champion of Victoria a **balk line, 6" wide, should run all round the table** Only **one cannon** should be allowed to be made with both balls outside the balk line The red ball game could be easily controlled were it laid down that not more than **6 losing hazards** off the red ball could be played consecutively into **one pocket**.....*

*I do not agree..... I would suggest that the table be marked off with a line across each corner pocket & that the D should be reduced to **20"**, instead of **23"**.....*

May 1912. Whether Memmott's plan of balking the pocket would be always effective Charles Cock, Victoria amateur.... thinks not..... players will eventually be able to master close cannon play in the open.

*A correspondent writes to me & asks why the **red loser should count 3 & the white loser only 2.***

*He suggests losing hazards, whether red or white, should **count 2 only**, that all winning hazards should **count 3**, & that cannons should **count 2**.*

... Up to the middle of the 18th century English billiards appear to have consisted of cannons & winners. The loser was literally a loser, for it carried a penalty. Potting the white for its own sake is generally unscientific, for it gives one's opponent the important advantage of escaping from the fixed position. Then a potted white of course stops all cannon play. Therefore, the red hazard was encouraged by making it 50% more profitable than the white. When the loser was allowed as a scoring shot the same distinction was kept. But here it was an arbitrary distinction & so should never have been initiated.

LONDON LETTER

Alcock's Sporting Review June 1912

*.... **Cecil** finally put the lid on when on Saturday afternoon he introduced **coup running** to such a remarkable degree as to run **27** of these protective strokes. **Inman** was nonplussed & completely flabbergasted by the new tactics, while everybody looking on laughed until their sides ached to see one of the greatest safety merchants of the game hoist with his own petard.*

*Inman's reputation as a tactician suffered a terrible blow, because everybody but himself saw the means whereby Harveson's new tactics might have been effectually scotched. Inman persisted in tap-tapping the red ball below the **baulk line**, whereas by leaving one of the balls **outside the line** he would have compelled his rival to play the ball -- the British Control Council rules which governed the tourney preventing **two successive coups or misses** being given when a ball is playable.*

LONDON LETTER

Alcock's Sporting Review August 1912

*..... Mr Sydenham Dixon, in the name of the committee of the Billiard Association, has decided to **amalgamate** his concern with the Billiards Control Council. it is the very thing most of us have been advocating for well over twelve months past.*

LONDON LETTER

Alcock's Sporting Review November 1913

*..... the **Billiards Control Council** propose to institute an amateur championship in opposition to the one run for so many years by the **Billiard Association**, from which they propose to **exclude all members of the licensed victuallers trade, & also all directors, managers, salesmen, clerks, office boys etc of all firms dealing in billiard requisites in any shape or form.***

*..... The amateur **definition** has always been a thorny subject, & i suppose, always will be.*

..... But why in the name of commonsense the Billiards Control Council have gone out of their way to disturb the whole of amateur billiardom, when they have the following definition (their own drafting) lying handy, licks me --

At billiards an amateur is one who plays from love of the game rather than for profit, who follows it as a pastime & not as a profession.

Extracts from the report of the 25th AGM of the Australian Amateur Billiards Council 1956.

*Council rescinded a motion carried at the previous Annual Meeting adopting **block rubber** cushions in favour of a new rule leaving the type of cushion optional subject only to the condition that the table speed be **not less than 4 ½ nor more than 5 ½ lengths**.*

*In amending the regulations governing cushions Council were influenced by progress reports from England that **strip rubber** had almost disappeared.*

ECHOES FROM FORMER DAYS

The Billiard Player September 1956

*Inman v Reece January 1934. At Thurston's Hall, Leicester Square -- The best break of the afternoon was made by Inman. It amounted to **222**, & was made by thoroughly sound, all round play. When he was **informed at 180 that he still had to cross the line**, Inman did so by means of a **forcing cannon which sent the 3 balls scampering** about in a most bewildering way to the onlookers. The position left was a good one. (We seem to hear a Reece comment!!)*

POCKETS NOT BIG ENOUGH

Richard Holt The Billiard Player Sept 1956

*I came across a press cutting of 1948 headed **Big Pockets Success with Public**, by Sidney Smith..... Smith stated that at a club one of the tables had **3 7/8"** pockets, & the proprietor was so certain that the bigger pocket was a success that he was having all the tables so enlarged.*

*.....Sidney advocated increasing the standard pocket from **3½"** to **3⁵/_{8"}** or even **3¾"**, his opinion being that not only would the average player derive more pleasure by being able to make bigger breaks, but also that public interest in professional match-play would increase.....*

*.....Joe Davis was all against making the game easier for professionals..... adding **But, i had to agree that for the vast majority of amateurs the standard size pocket.....is too difficult**.*

*..... Personally, i should like all pockets to be standard, & i would rather play on a table with **3"** pockets, such as John Roberts & Peall once played on, than on one with oversize pockets.*

A TALK ON TERMS IN 1905

The Billiard Player May 1956

***Dawson** -- We must have a standard table & don't forget the height. **Roberts** -- What is the standard height.?? **Stevenson** -- The minimum is 2 ft 9 ½ in & the maximum 2 ft 10 in. **Roberts** -- The table must not be less than 2 ft 10 in. **Dawson** -- That is an important matter to me, i am short & don't want to play with one end 3 ft high. **Roberts** -- That would be due to a sloping floor. **Dawson** -- Then the height would not be what it should be. It isn't the height of the table but the height from the floor. **Roberts** -- You don't consider me, i am a tall man & cannot get down. **Dawson** -- But you don't have to use a rest. **Roberts** -- That is not altogether an advantage.*

POT ~ POURRI

The Billiard Player September 1955

*Walter Lovejoy ... had strong views on the height of the table, he maintained that a tall man was as much at a disadvantage on a **2 ft 10 in** table as a short man would be on a **3 ft 1 in** table.*

*Playing **Harveson**, Lovejoy left the room & returned with a **stool**, which he planted at the Baulk-end &, seating himself, he prepared to make a losing hazard. Harveson protested, & appealed to the*

referee who declared that, as Lovejoy's feet were on the ground, the stroke was a fair one. Lovejoy made **66** by losers, moving his stool as required.

LINDRUM'S FIRST 1000 FOR 1932

The Billiard Player Nov 1955

For the purposes of the present game the players have to make the cueball cross the balk line at least once in every **200 points** scored in a break, instead of once in every **100**.

..... Lindrum made another fine stroke, a forcing loser down the table, & this enabled him to play the cueball **over the line at his first stroke**. This was the opening stroke of his big break. In the circumstances Lindrum was able to score **398** before he made the second balk-line stroke.

In the early part of the break Lindrum made a run of **60** cannons, & he made the second Lindrum stroke after another little run of cannons at **387**. Lindrum continued to make splendid progress by all-round methods until he made his **third balk-line stroke at 585**. On this occasion he potted the red ball into the middle-pocket, the cueball travelling up & down the table, & he completed the seventh 100 with a run of **58** cannons. Lindrum made a brilliant loser, forcing the red-ball round the table to enable him to make his **fourth balk-line stroke at 792** by potting the red ball in the middle-pocket.

Lindrum then made other runs of **37 & 41** cannons, & he played the cueball over the balk line for the **fifth time** with the last possible stroke, to increase the break to **1000 (unfinished)**. Lindrum was playing approximately for **55 minutes** for the break. At that point McConachy's lead had been reduced to 4991.

..... Lindrum failed to increase his run of 1000 missing a **cross-loser off the white ball at his first stroke**.

..... McConachy made the balk-line stroke at **123** & then made a brilliant run of **101 close cannons**, the highest made so far this season. McConachy began to run near the centre of the top-cushion, played the balls to the left top pocket, back again to the right-top-pocket, & down to the middle-pocket, before he had to break up the position. when the break had realised **481**, he missed a long loser.

MC CONACHY ACHIEVES HIS HEART'S DESIRE

The Billiard Player October 1951

Barrie's play was, despite its skill & accuracy (at its best) a black & white reproduction against the sumptuous colour of McConachy's. He did in fact assay two or three bouts of nurseries when the opportunity arose but he was not their master. Half way through the game McConachy was able to exploit them at will & he made many delightful runs from the top-cushion to the middle, **to pot the red & leave a white loser & so accomplish the baulk line shot**. His speed at them was not striking but a month's regular play would alter matters.

BIG BILLIARDS - WHITHER AWAY ?

The Billiard Player May 1934

..... The trouble with the **line-shot** is that it outrages every accepted standard of billiard perfection.... the line-shot often has to be played with the deliberate intention of smashing up ideal position at the spot-end.....

The vital question is whether we can allow proficiency at the line-shot to count as proof of billiard ability.....

This brings us to the interesting point whether the line-shot can be used constructively, instead of being regarded as a mere obstacle to mammoth break building. In other words, is there a public for billiards in which the line-shot is regarded as a clever exhibition of long-range ball control.??.....

There is nothing new in regarding the line-shot as a constructive contribution to the evolution of the game, but it remains to be proved whether it can justify itself to this extent.

*It was tried at a **100 points** & discarded..... but that was because it was regarded as a stopper pure & simple.*

***Clark McConachy** was the only man who made a real study of the spectacular & sporting possibilities of the line-shot. He mastered the science of it when it was applied in every **100 points**, & those who remember what he did may feel that he was stopped too soon, & that he might have blazed the way to something like the **75 points** game which we feel ought to be worth an official try-out.*

FROM OUR READERS Alfred Croneen The Billiard Player August 1935

***Baulk line Comment** Sir, The idea, of course, that no amateur ever makes **200 without crossing the line** through having lost position is only held by those with a merely superficial knowledge of the game. Moreover, it is apparent that any player who has made a break of **160** is affected, because it is necessary to start thinking about it when that figure has been reached without crossing the line. Thus it is useless to embark on a **run of cannons** down the side cushions, unless, of course, one starts fairly over the **middle-pocket**, which is unusual.*

CLARK MCCONACHY The Billiard Player August 1935

*Clark McConachy has set up a world's record under the new **Baulk Line Rule** with a break of **1178** in a match against Walter Lindrum at Wellington, New Zealand.*

CHARLES CHAMBERS The Billiard Player September 1935

The following Addendum to Rule 10(b) was passed at a Meeting of the Control Council, held on June 12th 1935, & came into immediate operation.

*In Professional Matches the crossing of the baulk line shall take place during the scoring of the last **20 points** of each **200** during the course of the break.*

CHARLES CHAMBERS The Billiard Player September 1935

***WF Rowe, Bristol** -- The line shot in billiards. Has the referee to **warn the player at 180, 380**, etc. And should a player cross when his score was **178** pot red for instance, thus taking his score to **181**, is it in order, or must the line be crossed after reaching **180** & before reaching **200**.??*

Answer -- This ruling only applies to professional matches.

I think the shot would be fair, but no official ruling has been given on the point.

(Mac's comment -- i reckon that for 80 years the Council'n'Association didn't & couldn't make the simplest rule without stuffing it up in every way possible. It appearz that none of them had the slightest idea of what woz a good rule, nor what woz a good wording).

NEW RULES

The Billiard Player January 1936

..... At a subsequent meeting of the Control Council held on **September 4, 1935**, the Baulk Line Rule was amended in such a manner as to make the crossing of the baulk line compulsory once in each **400 points** scored in a break, instead of once in each **200 points**..... the referee shall **announce** the crossing. the referee shall inform the striker when **380 points** has been scored or passed The striker may **ask** the referee how many points have been scored without having crossed the line.

OFFICIAL RULINGS

The Billiard Player

September 1939

EJ Braine, Swindon Am i right in assuming with regard to the Baulk Line Rule that if a plauer crosses the line at **15**, he must cross it again before **215 or 415** as the case may be.

Ruling -- In amateur play the baulk line must be crossed **once in each 400 points** scored in a break or in a completion of each **400 points**. So that if a player has crossed the baulk line at **15** he must cross it again in the stroke which completes **415** on his score.

In **professional championships & matches** the crossing of the baulk line must be made by a stroke which scores one or more of the last **20 points** of each **200 points**, that is to say the crossing of the baulk line must be made between each **180 & 200 points** scored in the course of the break.

UK PROFESSIONAL BILLIARDS

The Billiard Player May 1935

Joe Davis versus Tom Newman It was fairly obvious that **close cannons** would determine the issue. A spot of bad luck came **Newman's** way in the evening. He left the **line shot** rather late & in making a beautiful **red winner** into a top corner pocket, the cueball went down in the **centre pocket without crossing the line**. This was a foul shot & **Davis** proceeded to collect **564** from the spotted balls.

CHARLES CHAMBERS

The Billiard Player February 1936

James Hill, Durham Would a player be held to have **crossed the line** after playing a screw-canon off the red when playing from hand?? The referee gives the red out of baulk, but the player **strikes the part of the ball which is in baulk**.

Answer When played on to the surface in baulk of a ball out of baulk to make a cannon on to a ball in baulk, the cue-ball is held to have crossed the line.

CHARLES CHAMBERS

The Billiard Player September 1935

WG Northcote, Bath -- A pots white & leaves red & white touching in baulk. B playing from hand plays round table to make the cannon, but missing, runs a coup. As A's ball is touching red in baulk, the balls should be spotted. Can A claim up the white ball or is only the red spotted??

Answer -- Red only is spotted. Cue ball in hand.

BELIEVE IT OR NOT

The Billiard Player August 1935

*A quaint shot i saw at the Century Club. The player attempted to make a jump loser off the white, which lay in the jaws of a corner pocket. **Both balls jammed**, one against the centre of the fall of the bed, the other against the centre of the pocket-rail. The base of the first ball was on a slightly lower level than the bed, the centre of the second ball being slightly higher than the rail. I have never seen or heard of this occurrence before. **Capt. Croneen, London.***

STRANGE HAPPENINGS

Capt A Croneen Billiards and Snooker October 1936

My next happening provoked quite a lot of discussion, though the correct solution should be arrived at easily.

The balls were in a straight line across the table between the middle-pockets, red in the middle.

The striker, full of hope, ran through the red. The object white rebounded from a bump, was met by the oncoming cueball, & both whites then stuck in the pocket-jaws. A third of each ball was below the level of the bed, & there they hung, between heaven & earth, like Mahomet's coffin.

What think yee, my masters.??

The answer is undoubtedly that it is a 7 shot, as both balls are in the pocket.

PEEPS INTO THE PAST

The Billiard Player November 1950

*Playing **Walter Lindrum, Tom Newman** ran a coup & sat down. Lindrum made **75** off the red, & went to the pockets to find his opponent's ball, but though assisted by the referee, no ball could be found. Newman, who had been conversing with a friend, & had not noticed the search, suddenly heard a voice (it was Lindrum's) saying, **I'll have that ball of your's, Tom, if you don't mind.** Whereupon Newman recalled where his ball was. In a trouser pocket.!!*

Mac's comments I think i recall that Lindrum made a legal cannon (i don't know what sort), after Tom's ball woz placed on the brown-spot, & then made it into a 1000 break.

***If hazard 25 (15) woz an in-off**, u are then in-hand. With good planning the red iz just out-of-baulk, & ucan play a shortish **screw-back**. If further away u could try a **2 or 3 cushion cannon**, red-first. Koz u arnt allowed to play white-first if u are in-hand, the white on the-spot being defined az in-baulk.*

***If hazard 25 (15) iz a pot-red**, the red iz then placed on **the-spot**, or on the **middle-spot**. With good planning (or luck), the red iz on the middle-spot, & the qball iz above it, koz this might leev an eezyish **red-to-white** cannon (eezyer than if red woz on the-spot). Or, it would be ok if the qball woz below the spotted white, allowing a **white-to-red** cannon (with red on the-spot or on the middle-spot).*

I reckon that Wally would hav had all of this worked out shortly after the rule came in, which woz a month or two before the above incident took place i think.

PEEPS INTO THE PAST

The Billiard Player November 1950

Walter Lindrum made a red-ball break of 1589 against Claude Falkiner in 1925 (he had lost the white at 292, full break 1879) &, except for 3 winning-hazards the whole of the 1585 points were made by top & middle losers. He was 26 at the time.

WHITE & CREAM BALLS

The Billiard Player January 1935

*J Dakin, West Wimbledon A correspondent wrote you suggesting a **dark white ball** instead of the spot ball.*

*I consider this an excellent suggestion. the spot having a tendency to put me off. I also think it does not run so truly as the plain one. My suggestion is **white & cream colour**.....*

LINDRUM V SMITH

The Times 23 December 1929

Lindrum made a protest to the umpire during his match with Smith, at Birmingham, yesterday, when Smith leaned over the table in showing his disappointment when his ball stopped between the jaws of a pocket during a break of 1,420. The umpire upheld the protest, & the balls were re-spotted.....