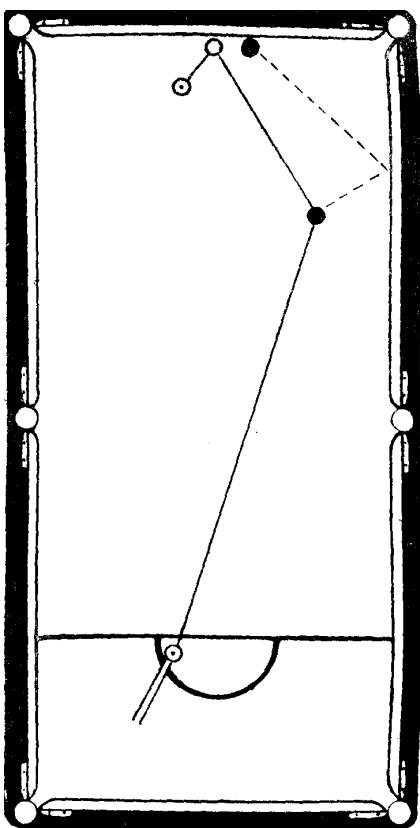


I play the stroke to cannon about a **QUARTER-BALL** on the red, edging it towards the corner pocket.

At the same time I endeavour to bring my opponent's white ball towards the vicinity of the top spot, taking care **NOT** to get it below this mark. In fact, it is **BETTER** that the opponent's ball should lie on the top cushion, for then there would be little fear of a **COVER** -- a thing we all dread in playing this simple-looking shot.

If one cannons too full on the red that ball will come away from the top cushion, the cue ball will most likely rest on the cushion, and failure at the next shot will ensue unless the object white rolls up to leave a loser on. But this is very unlikely. Take care, therefore, to cannon about a **QUARTER-BALL** on the red.

Some professionals try to cannon **MUCH THINNER** than a quarter-ball. For myself I am quite content with the quarter-ball cannon, and I advise this for amateur players. They, like myself, are usually not endeavoring to set up **NURSERY CANNON** positions from the "drop" cannon.

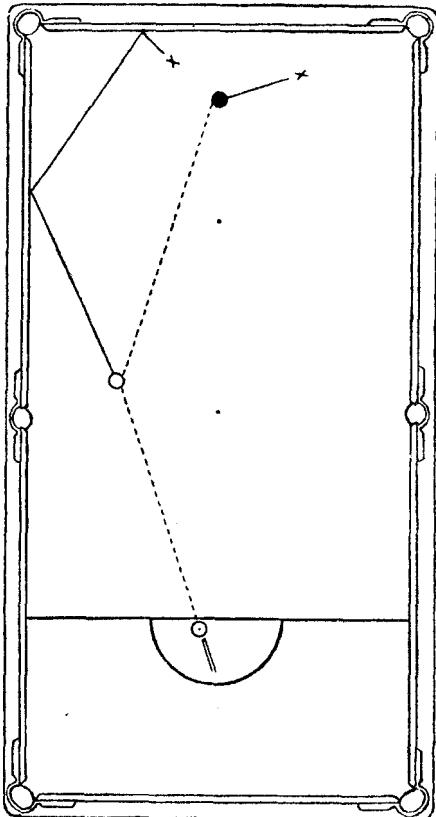


This cannon is shorter than the last, and instead of making the contact quarter-ball as in the previous example the second ball must be caught **FULL** in the face — jammed, as it were, on the cushion. If it is hit half-ball it will come away down the table, leaving the cue ball near the cushion and most likely in an awkward position.

In the last example the first object ball had to be hit half-ball, whereas in this a nearly **THREE-QUARTER BALL** contact on the first object is the way I play the stroke, for the reason that it enables me to keep the red ball nearer the corner pocket than if I hit it half-ball.

When playing cannons the important thing to remember is to get the right contact on the **SECOND BALL**.

Even with the same set of balls used on different grades of cloths the **ANGLES VARY**. All that is required is a slight adjustment in the placing of the cue ball for the stroke. When I am playing club games on different tables day after day I find it necessary to **"ADJUST MY ANGLES"** frequently.



Play **THREE-QUARTER BALL** on the white to cannon on the red.

This is not the easiest way of making the cannon, because by moving your ball a little to the right you could make a half-ball shot of it. You make a three-quarter ball-to-ball contact with the white, the first object-ball, simply because it is the only way in which you can **STEER** it into the desired position.

This **THICKISH** contact with the first object-ball is the great underlying principle of the "drop-cannon," and the main reason why **AMATEURS** so often play this shot **BADLY** is because they will make a half-ball of it.

CORRECT PACE has to be studied of course, but the thickish contact always helps in this respect. The **RIGHT STRENGTH** for a "drop-cannon" ought to leave a feasible shot at the red ball when, as is usually the case, the

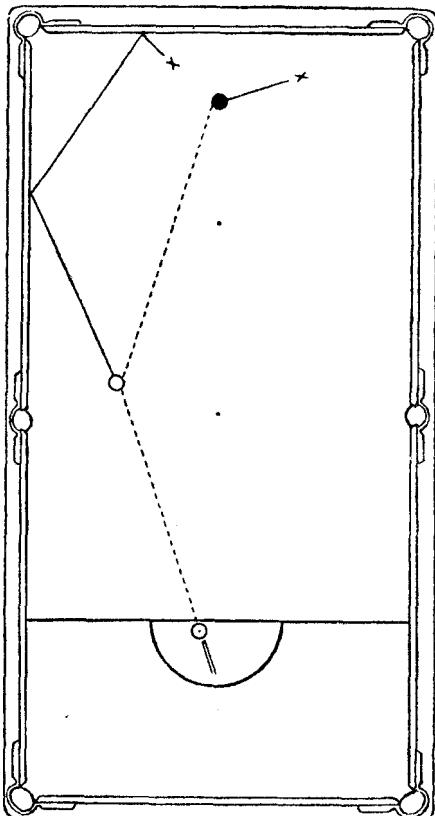
cannon is completed on that ball. It will generally leave a red winning hazard, with the white somewhere near the spot for top-of-the-table play after the red is pocketed.

But I do not advise you to specialise in the direction of spot-end billiards. **GET AWAY** from it as soon as you have an opportunity to pot the red and leave the half-ball loser shown in Diagram 3 (page 18). This will pay you **MUCH BETTER** than endeavouring to control the balls at the head of the table, an alluring department of the game which has no connection with "First Steps."

ALTERNATELY, the "drop-cannon" may leave you a red loser. It may offer you a loser off the red or the white. This is likely to happen if you play a shade too hard, but it is no leave to be despised. Speaking for myself, I am **PERFECTLY HAPPY** when I have the choice of **GOING IN-OFF** either ball — I ask for nothing better.

SOMETIMES, your "drop-cannon" will "bunch" all three balls close together for the easiest of short **CANNONS**, in which case I advise you to cannon with the idea of leaving a hazard for your next stroke, a shot at the red for preference, and if it is a winner you can play to leave so much the better. It may seem harsh to thus advise the **SMASHING UP** of a close-cannon position from which Tom Newman or Claude Falkiner could tap away on a beautiful run of **NURSERY CANNONS**. But what is the use of this to you? If you have the exquisite touch and judgment requisite for close-cannon play, you have one of the rarest gifts in the world of billiards, and I assure you that this book is not written for the one gifted mortal among many thousands of cuemen. For the remainder, the vast majority whose touch is not of close-cannon delicacy, and never will be, it is worse than a **WASTE OF TIME** to attempt these lovely little sequences of nurseries. It is **FAR BETTER** to play a bold shot, to open the game in the manner I have described.

The positional variations which result from the " drop-cannon " depend mainly on the exact position of the first and second-object-balls when the cannon is played, but so many other considerations enter into the matter that it is **IMPOSSIBLE** for any man to be quite certain of the precise spot where the balls will stop after a " drop-cannon " is played. As a rule, one or the other of the positional alternatives will leave something of break-building value. But it occasionally happens that even the best professional exponents will " drop " the balls together so **AWKWARDLY** that a terrific **MASSE** is the only road out of trouble. This is due to playing with such nicety that a fraction of an inch makes all the difference between a good leave and one of the very **WORST**, and I do not advise you to " step " in the direction of such precise control of all three balls.



You will do very well indeed if you play **THICKLY** enough on the first-object-ball to carry it up the table in accordance with the "drop-cannon" principle, and leave it in a good scoring zone.

NO SIDE is required for the example shown and I advise you to avoid the use of **SIDE** as much as you can when playing your " drop-cannons."

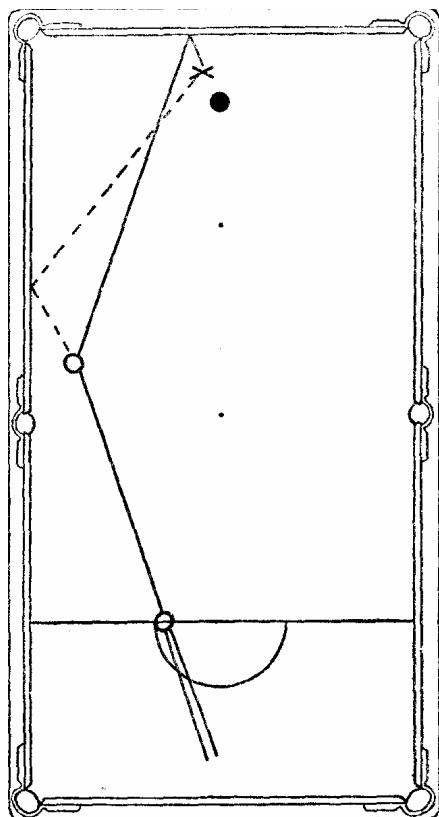
Every now and then you will be confronted by a leave which calls for the use of **CHECK SIDE** to help you to get your ball through, but do not make a habit of doing this unless it is absolutely called for.

If the angle for the cannon demands the use of anything like **STRONG SIDE** to score direct from ball-to-ball, you had better take a second look at the balls to make sure that a losing hazard off the first-object-ball is not a more likely and lucrative shot.

It is much more probable that you will want **SIDE** on your ball when the direct cannon is not possible, and you are thus compelled to play to make your cannon off the **TOP CUSHION**. Even then, however, I do not advise you to use **SIDE** if you can get the angle you want without it. —always remembering, when computing the angle, that you must strike the first-object-ball to steer it where you want it near the head of the table.

When utilising the **TOP CUSHION** in playing " drop-cannons," it is very necessary to guard against bringing your ball off that cushion at such an angle that the second-objectball is struck fully " from behind," and moved more or less straight towards baulk. This is a sure path to **TROUBLE**, and you should avoid it by striving to cannon so that the second object-ball, whenever it is the **RED**, is sent in the direction of a top pocket. If you cannon on the **WHITE** off the top cushion, you should concentrate on taking the **RED** up to offer you a succeeding shot.

You want to play on the **RED** as much as you can. Always remember that the **WHITE** ball is only the mortar which binds the bricks together when you are making a break—the **RED** ball gives you the bulk of your material you can either pot it or go in off it.



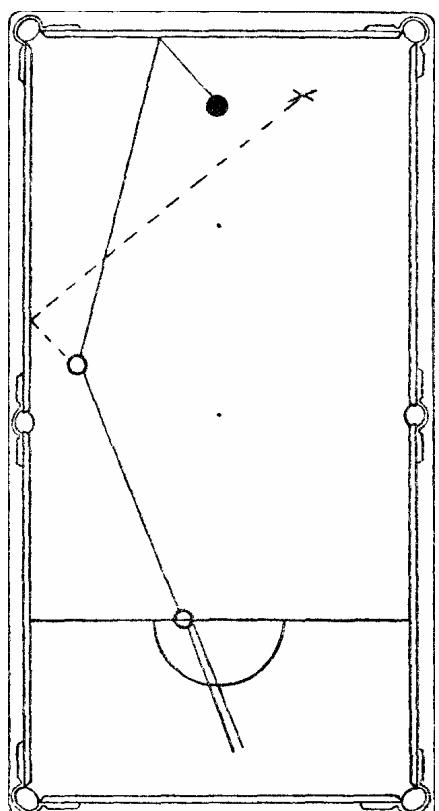
My next diagram shows another cannon which often catches the useful amateur **UNAWARES**.

The red is on the billiard spot, the white is eight and a half inches from the left side cushion and eleven and a half inches from the centre of the middle pocket.

The cue-ball is in hand, and it looks as if you can place your ball with every confidence to play a plain-ball, natural-angle cannon off the top cushion, which is just what many **AMATEURS** do.

Then, very frequently, they get a **KISS** at the point marked by a cross in my diagram, and the "hard lines" is intensified because the cue-ball was "making straight for the red".

Really, however, there is no bad luck about it, as the kiss is almost a certainty if the stroke is handled in this **WRONG** manner.



The **RIGHT** way to do it is shown.

You should place the cue-ball five and a half inches from the left-spot of the "D" and play a shade **FINER** on the white, with a lot of **RIGHT-HAND SIDE** on the cue-ball -- then the kiss cannot possibly happen, and if you play at nice strength, good position is assured.

This shot, with its obvious variations, is in constant request — I grade it as a match-winner of no small value, and advise you to **PRACTISE** it until it is so familiar to you that you would **NEVER** dream of playing the plain-ball cannon and **RISKING** the almost inevitable kiss.

END OF WILLIE'S STUFF.