

Supporting narrated video (NV) demonstrations, high-speed video (HSV) clips, technical proofs (TP), and all past articles are available online at billiards.colostate.edu. Reference numbers used in the articles help you locate the resources on the website.

Did you see Skyler Woodward’s controversial shot during the recent European Open (see **Image 1**)? A foul was called by experienced referee Marcel Eckardt. This led to much debate on social media. Check out the shot at the beginning of online video [NV L.62](#) and decide if you think Marcel made the right call or not. In the remainder of that video, and in this column, I try to convincingly settle the argument once and for all.



Image 1 Sky Woodward’s controversial shot at the 2024 European Open

In the previous shot that led to the situation (also show in the video), Sky was trying to break out the 6-9 cluster and left the cue ball (CB) very close to the 6. An image from the video posted on social media created confusion, because it looked like the balls were frozen, but they were not. It was just a bad camera angle, where the gap was not visible. Both Sky and Marcel later confirmed there was a very small gap between the balls, which is why there was no discussion before the shot concerning the balls being frozen, because they were not!

After the shot in **Image 1**, Marcel confidently called a foul immediately. Sky obviously thought the shot was good, but Marcel is totally confident it was a foul. Many of Sky’s followers obviously thought Sky was wronged because they think if Sky thought the shot was good, it must have been good. But even top players don’t always have a full understanding of rule subtleties and pool physics. However, referees are human, and they sometimes make mistakes. Many examples can be found on the [“fouls – bad calls”](#) resource page linked in the YouTube video description, where I have compiled numerous incorrect calls made by top referees in pro pool tournaments over the years.

During the shot replay, commentator Karl Boyes said you need to physically see a double hit to call a foul, but that is incorrect. There needs to be clear evidence of a foul, for example observed motion of the CB, but

you don't actually need to see the tip hit the CB twice. After the replay review by Marcel, which he probably did only for "appearances" and to quiet Sky's protest, he stuck to his initial call that the shot was a foul. Again, watch the shot at the beginning of online video [NV L.62](#) to see if you agree with him or not.

Well, whether you agree or not, Marcel was most definitely correct. The clear evidence for the foul is the motion of the CB. With a clean single hit, the CB would head along the tangent line before drawing back, but Sky's shot went well forward of the tangent line (see **Image 2**). Because the gap between the balls is so small, the tangent line direction is obvious. It is the kiss line off the 6, perpendicular to the direction the 6 heads. With a small-gap, non-jumping draw shots like this, the CB can go forward of the tangent line only if the CB is hit more than once or pushed forward after 6-ball contact. As Marcel stated, the CB clearly went forward of the tangent line before drawing back, so the shot was an obvious foul. In the top-right of **Image 1**, notice Marcel's perfect view down the tangent line, which helped him see that the CB clearly went forward well too far.

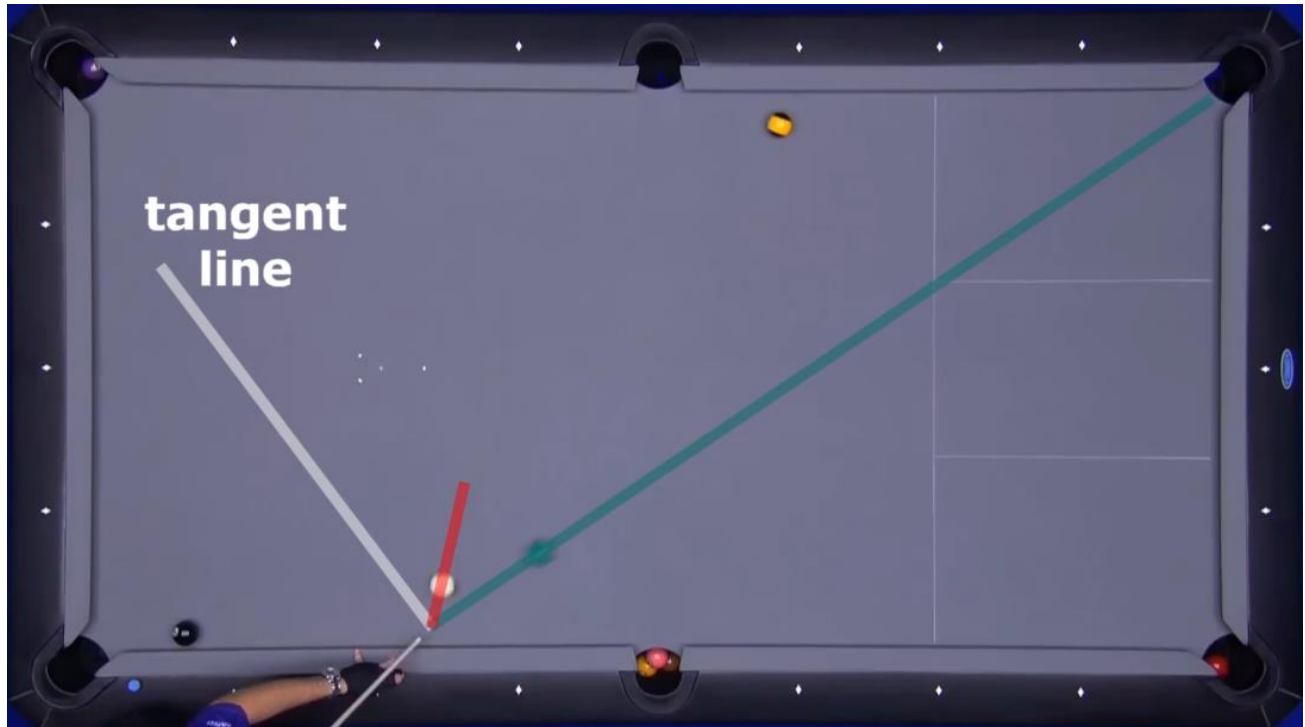


Image 2 Overhead view immediately after the hit during the instant replay

In online video [NV L.62](#), I recreated the shot to demonstrate both clean and illegal hits. Check out the video so you can clearly see the difference. Past pool hustler and world-class pro player CJ Wiley (who sometimes has "interesting" pool and life philosophies, which he often eloquently orates on social media with his smooth Texas accent) also posted a video in response to the controversy. Unfortunately, he claims in his video that the shot was not a foul, thus adding to the confusion on social media, since many people apparently worship him and believe everything he says. The shot CJ demonstrated in his video was in fact not a foul (see **Image 3**), because the CB did head in the tangent line direction off the 6 before drawing back, but CJ used a much larger horizontal angle and higher cue elevation, and there was probably a larger gap between the CB and 6 as compared to Sky's shot. But again, Sky's shot was clearly a foul since the CB went well forward of the expected tangent line (see **Image 2**). Marcel most definitely made the correct call. Good job Marcel!



Image 3 CJ Wiley’s “recreation” of Sky’s shot

If you were watching recent US Open coverage, I know what you are thinking. If Sky’s shot was a foul, how come Corey’s similar shot (see **Image 4**) was called good. If you watch Corey’s shot in online video [NV L.62](#), the CB obviously went well forward of the tangent line. Well, the major difference is, unlike with Sky’s shot where there was a small gap between the balls, the CB was frozen to the 4 in Corey’s case. You can see the balls settle together at the end of his previous shot, and Corey had the ref verify the balls were frozen before shooting. As clearly explained and demonstrated on the [“fouls – frozen CB”](#) resource page linked in the YouTube video description, you are allowed to hit into a frozen CB at any angle since it results in a clean, single hit.



Image 4 Corey Deuel frozen-CB shot

If you want to learn more about how to both detect and avoid fouls, including double hits, see the “[fouls](#)” and “[double hit](#)” resource pages at billiards.colostate.edu. Included are many super-slow-motion clips showing what both legal single hits and double-hit fouls look like in different situations. Check out the videos and other info at the links. Seeing stuff in super slow motion really helps understanding.

Well, I hope you agree that the argument is now settled.

Good luck with your game,
Dr. Dave



normal video

NV L.62 – Skyler Woodward Foul at the European Open ... The Controversy is Settled

PS:

- I know other authors and I tend to use lots of terminology, and I know not all readers are totally familiar with these terms. If you ever come across a word or phrase you do not fully understand, please refer to the [online glossary](#) at billiards.colostate.edu.

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