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

In a recent online video ([NV L.91](#)) and column, I demonstrated and discussed the latest changes to the WPA official rules of pool. Many people commented on the change concerning “Cue Ball (CB) Fouls Only,” which is common in league system rules, where you are not penalized for touching or moving an object ball (OB) by mistake. This is no longer an option under the WPA rules. Instead, the rule is “All Ball Fouls,” where it is a foul to touch or move the CB or any OB by mistake. In a follow-up video ([NV L.92](#)), I present arguments for why all leagues should follow all official rules of pool, including “All Ball Fouls.” I know if you have played in leagues under “CB Fouls Only” for a long time, it will be hard to accept something that might at first sound very different, but try to have an open mind as you watch the videos and read this column.

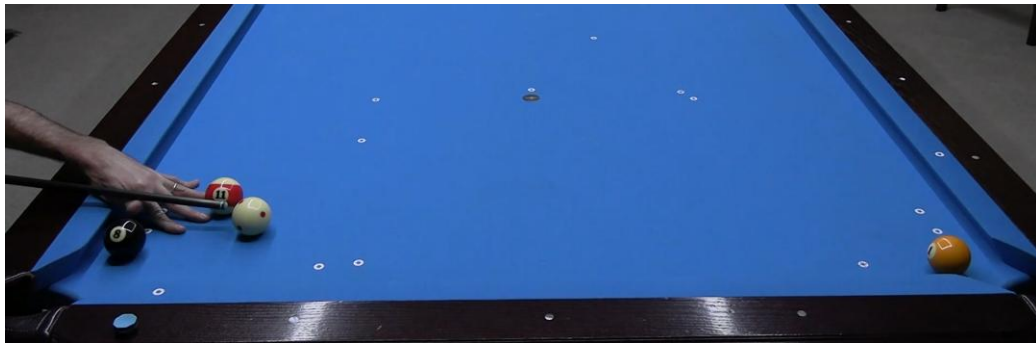
This is how “CB Fouls Only” works in most leagues: If you touch the CB by mistake, it is always a foul, even if it was unintentional. However, it is not a foul if you move an OB by mistake. The videos show many interesting examples of game situations where unintentional OB motion is allowed. However, there are many cases in most leagues where touching an OB by mistake is a foul, including:

- moving the OB back after you touch it, since only the opponent is allowed to do this.
- touching more than 1 OB.
- a moved OB contacting another OB.
- a moved OB contacting the CB.
- touching an OB when it is in motion.
- touching an OB with the CB when in hand.
- a moving ball contacting a touched ball.
- a moving ball passing through the space where the moved ball was before it was moved.

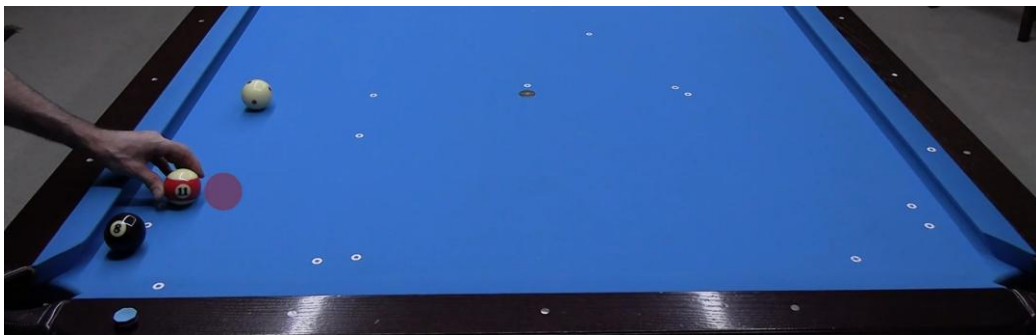
The last one is the trickiest because you and your opponent need to know where the moved ball was, and you and your opponent need to be able to judge if another moving ball would have hit it during motion if it had not been moved, and you both need to agree to all of this. And after all that, your opponent has the option to either leave the moved ball where it ends up or decide to put it back where they think it was before the move. Obviously, not all players will be as careful with this as others, and many players won’t always have a good idea exactly where the moved ball was originally anyway.

For example, see the game-situation example in **Image 1**. The 11 is moved by mistake with the bridge hand during the shot, but the 1-ball is pocketed and the CB ends up with good shape on the 8 (see the CB position in Image 1b). But the opponent has the option to re-position the 11 where they thought it was before it was moved. In this case, they could place it (intentionally or not) in a worse position that takes away the look at the 8 (see in Image 1b the read circle marking the original 11-ball position and where the opponent re-positions the moved 11-ball). If you are the person who moved the ball by mistake during the shot, you might think this is unfair; but this sort of thing can happen in leagues with “CB Fouls Only” rules.

The main reason why American amateur league systems claim they prefer “CB Fouls Only” rules, is it is less demanding, especially to novice or social players. These players might not enjoy the league experience if they are penalized often by petty rules for making small and honest mistakes like touching an OB with their hand, cue, shirt, or hair. It is also thought that fewer arguments or disagreements might result. For example, if you were playing under “All Ball Fouls” instead, your opponent might call a foul because they saw you touch or move a ball by mistake without you even noticing it. You might disagree, and this could lead to an argument and bad feelings.



a) before the shot



b) after the shot

[Image 1](#) Moved ball re-positioned by opponent

Now I am going to make a case for **why all leagues should use the official rules of pool**, included “All Ball Fouls.” Here are the main arguments:

1. **Pool Should Be Played Properly**
Just like any other sport or game, pool should be played based on the official rules. Touching balls, even if unintentionally, is not allowed under the WPA official rules of pool. With just a little care, it is not difficult to avoid touching balls by mistake.
2. **All Leagues Should Use the Same Rules**
If all leagues would simply use the official rules of pool, things would be a lot simpler. As listed on the “[pool league differences](#)” resource page linked in the YouTube video description, this is not the case. Every league system has a different set of rules, and this can be confusing for everybody involved. If everybody in every league were playing under the same rules, there would be much less confusion, especially with players and referees who might be involved in multiple leagues in different organizations.
3. **Most of the World Uses the Official Rules**
Most pool around the world outside the US is played under the official rules, including “All Ball Fouls.” They know and accept that you are not allowed to touch balls you should not touch. There is no possibility for disagreements because everybody knows it is a foul, just like double hitting, hitting the wrong ball first, not getting a rail after contact, etc. Even in the US, as you advance to more serious pool, you will be expected to play under the official rules of the game, especially if you play in non-league tournaments or against better players.
4. **“CB Fouls Only” Rules are Complex**
As pointed out above, “CB Fouls Only” rules are very complex and difficult to explain, and all the possible situations that can arise can lead to much confusion, disagreements, arguments, and bad feelings. If the rules were simpler, there will be far fewer misunderstandings. Saying it is a

foul to touch any ball is much simpler than saying the following:

If you touch the CB by mistake, it is always a foul, even if it was unintentional. However, it is not a foul to touch an OB by mistake unless you try to move the OB back after you touch it, or touch more than 1 OB, or the moved OB touches another OB, or the moved OB touches the CB, or the OB is in motion when you touch it, or the touch is with the CB in hand, or a moving ball makes contact with the touched ball, or a moving ball passes through the space where the moved ball was before it was moved.

Try explaining all these details to a social or novice player and expect them to want to stay in the league and obey all these rules. Good luck with that!

5. **Ball Touches Are Easy to Detect and Avoid**

Detecting if a ball is touched or moved by mistake is very easy by both the shooter and any observers. The same cannot be said for other fouls in pool. For example, most league players, especially novice and social players, are clueless about how to detect double hits or whether a wrong ball was hit first or not. In fact, even experienced professional referees sometimes make mistakes calling these types of fouls. Many examples can be found on the [“bad calls in pro matches”](#) page linked in the YouTube video description. To learn how to easily detect these types of fouls, see the videos and info on the [“double hit”](#) and [“wrong ball hit first”](#) resource pages also linked. If you know what to look for, these types of fouls are very easy to detect.

6. **Simple Foul to Add**

There are many possible fouls in pool, so adding one more, which is among the easiest to detect, should not be as big of a concern as some people might think. Here’s a partial list of the many fouls already enforced in most pool leagues: hitting the CB twice, touching the CB by mistake, touching a ball with the CB with ball in hand, hitting the wrong ball first with the CB, not driving a ball to a rail after ball contact, not having a foot in contact with the floor during a hit, not driving 4 balls to rails on a break shot, scratching, pushing the CB, intentionally miscuing, intentionally jumping with a scoop shot, lifting or dropping the cue instead of stroking forward, driving a ball off the table, marking the cloth with a chalked tip, marking an aim point on the rail with a chalk or anything else, interfering with ball motion, not marking the pocket called for the 8, etc! And again, many of these are much more difficult to detect, and can involve more disagreements and bad feelings, as compared to seeing if a ball is touched or moved by mistake.

The best way to prevent disagreements, arguments, and bad feelings in pool leagues is to be knowledgeable of the rules, be friendly, and have good sportsmanship. If you want to improve your knowledge, see the videos and info on the linked [“rules”](#) and [“fouls”](#) resource pages. Novice players should especially be encouraged to take advantage of these free resources so they can learn how the game is played. Check out online video [NV L.92](#) for lots of examples of both proper and improper behavior concerning application of rules, including how to avoid potential arguments.

To make a change to **All-Ball Fouls** go smoothly, it would help to institute a **procedural policy** that would help prevent disagreements, arguments, or bad feelings. Here is a possible framework:

- If the opponent did not ask to have somebody observe a shot (or game) and did not ask to video record the shot (or game), and if the shooter did not see or feel the foul and does not agree they fouled, **the shooter gets the benefit of the doubt** (no foul). There is no reason to argue because this is the rule.
- If a dishonest player develops a reputation of not admitting to any fouls, even those blatantly obvious, it is the opponent’s responsibility to **ask for an observer** more, especially if there is any suspected chance for a foul resulting from a double hit, wrong ball hit first, ball touch, etc.
- If a dishonest player attempts to call “phantom fouls” that obviously did not occur, there is again no reason for an argument since the shooter gets the final say (if no observer was asked to watch). The **dishonest players should also be reported** to their team captain and league operator so an attempt can be made to change their unsportsmanlike behavior.

With a clear and circulated procedural policy, there is no reason for arguments or disagreements. People will quickly adjust to the new rules and policies and how they are applied, so there should be fewer chances for disagreements and bad feelings.

So what do you think? Should pool leagues continue to use non-standard rules? And should they continue to play under “CB Fouls Only” rules? I know this can be a “touchy” subject since there is tradition and inertia involved with doing something a certain way for a long time. But based on all the arguments above, I hope you agree that league systems should consider changing. I also hope you also agree that allowing players to touch balls by mistake is not a good thing. If so, please share and discuss this column and the online videos with your teammates, league operators, and league owners and administrators to try to get things changed.

Have fun in league, and good luck with your game from Dr. Dave!



[NV L.91](#) – New WPA Official Rules of Pool ... Learn About All the Changes

[NV L.92](#) – Why Pool Leagues Should Embrace “ALL BALL FOULS”

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 drdavepoolinfo.com.

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