

“Yapp’s 8-Ball Shot ... Was It a Foul?” Dr. Dave Alciatore, PhD

ILLUSTRATED PRINCIPLES

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.

Did you see Aloysius Yapp’s match-winning shot in the recent 8-Ball World Championship (see **Image 1**)? It was the last shot of the entire tournament in the Finals, winning Yapp the title and \$90K. If you did see it, do you think he hit the 8-ball first? If he hit the purple 4 first by mistake, the shot would have been a foul and he would have lost the game. If you want to be totally convinced and want to learn more about how to judge shots like this, see online video [NV L.123](#), which analyses the shot in great detail. I’ll cover some of the highlights here. Spoiler alert. The shot was most definitely a foul.



Image 1 Yapp’s match-winning shot on the 8.

Based on Yapp’s reaction after the shot (see the video), it is clear he was uncertain if the shot was good or not as he waited for the ref to make the call. His girlfriend Silviana Lu in the audience, who is also a good pool player, had a similar reaction. The ref called the shot good, so Yapp got the win for the World Championship title and \$90K. One thing that impressed me was the gracious reaction of his opponent Francisco Sanchez Ruiz (FSR). He didn’t question the call and got up to immediately and genuinely congratulate Yapp for the tournament victory. If I were FSR, I would have most certainly questioned the call and asked for a video review, because the shot definitely looked suspicious. In FSR’s defense, his view of the shot was blocked by Yapp (see **Image 1**); but FSR should have leaned over more or gotten out of his chair to be able to see the shot since it was obviously going to be close to a foul. Ideally, the ref should have decided on her own to check the video or to have more time to think about the cue ball (CB) reaction to decide if it indicated a foul or not.

With Yapp on the hill, up 9 games to 4, and with him breaking and running out as well as he was, and with FSR not getting results on the break, FSR probably had no realistic chance to win the match even if the call were reversed. But this has nothing to do with anything. FSR should have been given the game and the next break with a chance at the title. A world-class player like FSR never gives up and always has a chance to mount a comeback. Regardless, congratulations to Francisco for making it to the Final and for showing his good sportsmanship.

Let’s first take a close look at the original video footage available to see if there was any direct evidence for a foul or not. In the video frame just before the hit (see **Image 2a**), neither ball has moved yet. And in the very

next video frame available (see **Image 2b**), which is after the hit, both balls are moving. We don't know from the video what happens between the frames, so there is no direct evidence of a foul in the video replay. BTW, be careful with video clips you might see posted on social media. For example, in online video [NV L.123](#), I show a Facebook reel that seems to indicate the 8 moved first, indicating a legal hit. In today's world, you can't always trust what you see posted secondhand. Sometimes, videos are manipulated. And other times, smart phones and video compression algorithms do funny things to video when interpolating between available frames. With the slowed-down version of the original footage, there is definitely no direct evidence the 8 was hit first.



a) before the hit



b) after the hit

To analyze Yapp's shot further, I decided to re-create it and show what good and bad hits look like. I did my best to set up the balls on my table as closely as possible to what Yapp faced. Based on everything I show in the video, I am confident my ball placements matched Yapp's very closely. The re-created shot in the video that most closely matched Yapp's shot was very similar in all regards. The 8 was pocketed and the CB and 4 moved in very similar directions and at very similar distances. **Image 3** shows a comparison of the shots in the middle of the action to show how similar the ball motions were.

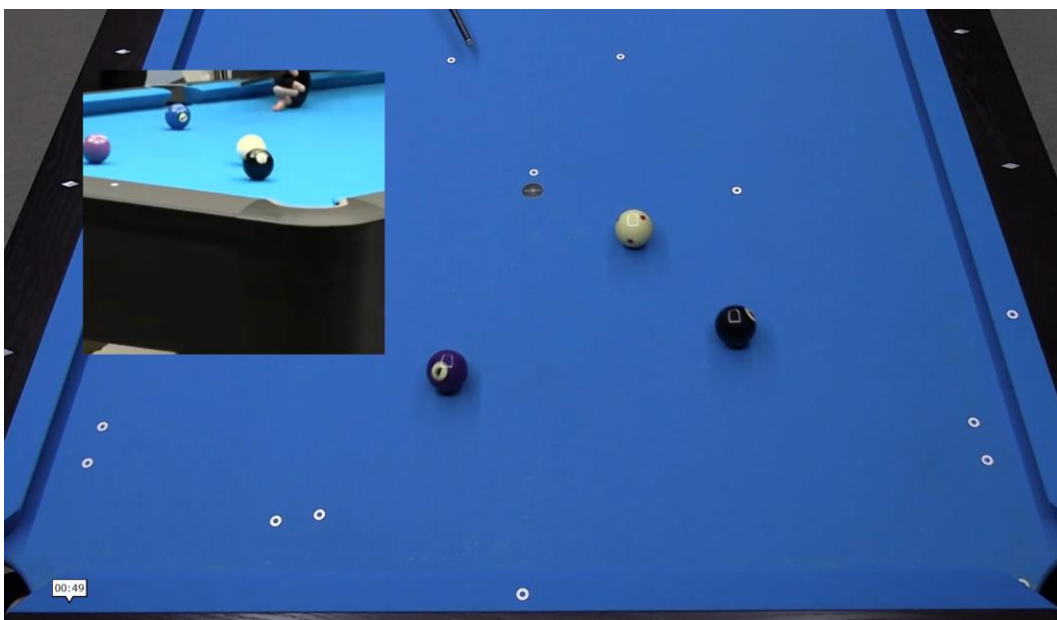
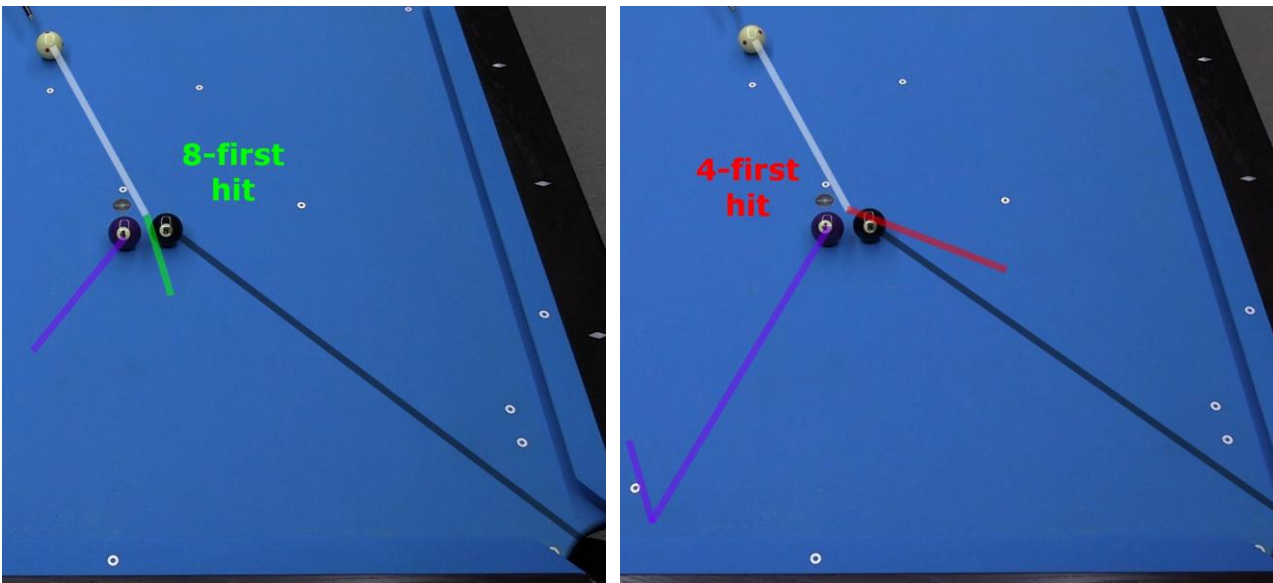


Image 3 Mid-shot comparison of Yapp's shot and my re-creation

With close calls like Yapp's shot, you usually can't directly see live (or sometimes even in video replay) which ball was hit first, but by observing motion of the CB, indirect evidence is usually very clear. Online video [NV L.123](#) includes a through explanation and demonstration of how to call wrong-ball-first fouls, so watch the video before continuing if you want to better understand the following logic. With Yapp's shot, hitting the 8 first (see **Image 4a**) would send the CB off the tangent line of the 4 slightly, which would send the CB more toward the 4. This would also slow the CB some since the tangent-line motion is in the opposite direction as the topspin follow motion. The expected final CB path is shown in green. Hitting the 4 first instead (see **Image 4b**) would send the CB off the tangent line of the 8 slightly, making the rolling CB go more toward the 8 (see the red line). The ball motions in the 8-first and 4-first examples I show in the video clearly demonstrate the expected ball motions shown in **Image 4**. Note that the 4 also moves much farther in the 4-first-hit case since the CB is not first losing speed off a fairly full hit on the 8 (see the purple lines in **Image 4**).



a) legal 8-first hit

b) illegal 4-first hit

Image 4 Expected ball paths

Yapp's shot obviously sent the CB toward the 8 (see the inset photo in **Image 3**), so his shot was most definitely a foul. There is no doubt that he hit the 4-ball first. There is no way the CB could have headed toward the 8-ball side of the shot line unless the 4 was hit first.

A ref's job is not always easy in situations like this. It doesn't help that they don't even know exactly how the player is going to shoot the shot. For example, I was expecting Yapp to use stun and a little more sidespin to get maximum spin-induced throw so he could hit the 8 as full as possible to avoid hitting the 4 first by mistake. Instead, he slow-rolled the ball with only a small amount of sidespin. Another difficulty for refs is they don't want to interrupt a player's rhythm by asking to study the ball layout before the player shoots. But in situations like this, if the ref has not had a chance to study the ball positions before the shot, it is probably a good idea to stop the shot clock and take a quick look and decide on the best place to stand to best visualize the action of the shot for a possible foul. Regardless, if the ref was uncertain about the call (which I hope was the case), she should have taken more time to think about it and review the video if possible. This was too critical a call to not give it the time necessary for a confident decision. The event was streamed live, so video footage was available.

Tournament officials should make sure video review is made available for convenient and quick access by refs, especially in the Finals. Reviewing the video or even just pausing a while to think about CB motion would have given the ref more time to consider if the CB motion was consistent with a good hit or not. In this case, it was most definitely not. Tournament organizations should also consider allowing, enabling, and encouraging refs to film suspect shots with dedicated high-speed video equipment. And if such equipment is not available,

refs should be allowed to use the slow-motion video feature on a smartphone or tablet. As demonstrated in online video [NV L.123](#), using slow-motion video on a phone is fast and very easy and it almost always makes the right call completely obvious.

Enjoy the video. And as always, see the links in the YouTube video description for more information and examples dealing with every topic covered in the video.

Good luck with your game,
Dr. Dave



[NV L.123](#) – Yapp’s Controversial Tournament-Winning Shot in the 8-Ball World Championship
... Was it a Foul?

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](#).

Dr. Dave is a PBI Master Instructor, Dean of the Billiard University, and author of the book: [The Illustrated Principles of Pool and Billiards](#) and numerous instructional DVD series, all available at: [DrDaveBilliards.com](#).