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

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Did you hear about the push-shot-foul controversy during the recent European Open? If you did, do you think the shot was a foul? There was a frenzy on social media, and I posted a video ([NV L.118](#)) to attempt to dispel all the myths and misconceptions surrounding the debate. Quinten Pongers was faced with the situation shown in **Image 1**, where the cue ball (CB) was frozen to the 6-ball. Pongers checked to make sure the balls were frozen. Pongers is a true professional and knows the rules. That’s why he asked the ref to confirm the balls were frozen before shooting. He would not have taken the shot he did if the balls were not frozen; because if there were a small gap between the balls, his shot would certainly have been a double-hit foul.



**Image 1** The shot

The table ref called a foul almost immediately after the hit, like he was expecting the shot to automatically be a foul based on how Pongers was cueing. In fact, Pongers hit a very smart shot, attempting to hit the 9 with the CB for a chance to pocket the 9 for an early win (which he almost did in the upper left corner).

**Image 2** shows the pertinent WPA rules concerning the matter. If the CB is touching or frozen to an object ball (OB), and the balls are declared frozen, you are allowed to hit into the CB at any angle, provided you don’t commit some other foul. It is important to note that in British-based cue sports like snooker and English pool, you are not allowed to hit into a frozen CB. You must shoot away without moving the OB. And in snooker, you are not even required to hit a rail since the initial OB contact counts as hitting a ball, even though it doesn’t move. But this tournament was a pro pool event, not a snooker or English pool tournament. Although, some people still might think Pongers’ hit was a push shot foul. In pool a push shot is where you prolong tip contact, usually intentionally. Many examples can be found on the [push shot resource page](#) at [drdavepoolinfo.com](http://drdavepoolinfo.com).

### 3.7 DOUBLE HIT / FROZEN BALLS

If the cue-stick contacts the cue-ball more than once on a shot, the shot is a foul. If the cue-ball is close to but not touching an object-ball and the cue tip is still on the cue-ball when the cue-ball contacts that object-ball, the shot is a foul. If the cue-ball is very close to an object-ball, and the shooter barely grazes that object-ball on the shot, the shot is assumed not to violate the first paragraph of this rule, even though the tip is arguably still on the cue-ball when ball-ball contact is made.

However, if the cue-ball is touching an object-ball at the start of the shot, it is legal to shoot towards or partly into that ball (provided it is a legal target within the rules of the game) and if the object-ball is moved by such a shot, it is considered to have been contacted by the cue-ball. (Even though it may be legal to shoot towards such a touching or "frozen" ball, care must be taken not to violate the rules in the first paragraph if there are additional balls close by.)

The cue-ball is assumed not to be touching any ball unless it is declared touching by the referee or opponent. It is the shooter's responsibility to get the declaration before the shot. Playing away from a frozen ball does not constitute having hit that ball unless specified in the rules of the Discipline.

### 3.8 PUSH SHOT

It is a foul to prolong tip-to-cue-ball contact beyond that seen in normal shots.

#### Image 2 WPA rules on the matter

To help provide more clarity, I included in [NV L.118](#) similar shots with a side view in super-slow motion to better show the action of the tip and balls. **Image 3** shows a frame of video very soon after tip contact. The CB separates from the tip immediately, just as with any other shot with a normal non-pushing stroke. There is certainly no prolonged tip contact. The CB and OB move forward together naturally because the frozen balls kind act as one solid object during the hit.



Image 3 Slow motion video showing no double hit or push after initial contact

Now, as with any shot, it is possible to get a double hit or push with a frozen-ball shot, especially if you have a large tip offset and exaggerate the stroke acceleration or follow through in an abnormal way. For example, with one frozen-CB example in the video, I was able to prolong tip contact or get a double hit by unnaturally exaggerating the stroke acceleration into the ball with topspin. Regardless, even this exaggerated shot could not be called a foul live, without the benefit of super-slow-motion video replay. And even in super-slow motion, the evidence for a push or double hit is not crystal clear (as shown in my video example). Pongers certainly did not use an unusual stroke to prolong contact between the tip and CB. There was no reason to do so.

One reason why the shot caused so much controversy was the commentary by Karl Boyes and Michael McMullan, which was "unfortunate," to say the least. He's a sampling along with my commentary on their commentary:

**Michael:** "That is quite honestly the strangest thing I've ever seen on a pool table."

I agree with Michael that this call was the strangest thing I have seen in a while, but Michael was unfortunately referring to the shot and not the call. Here, Karl gives Pongers' a little credit for knowing how to play pool:

**Karl:** *"Quinten Pongers can play the game. ... Of course it was a push shot. What was he thinking?"*

Apparently, Quinten also knows the rules a little better than Karl. Michael continued with his hyperbole:

**Michael:** *"That was the maddest thing I've ever seen in any cue sport."*

Again, I agree with Michael that the call and commentary is about the maddest thing I've ever seen and heard from a pro ref and two experienced commentators. Obviously, their British cue-sport influences and experiences had them confused, or they simply do not know the official rules of pool dealing with frozen-ball shots and pushes. That most certainly would be mad. It at least makes me mad. Karl finally says something I can agree with.

**Karl:** *"There must be some sort of rule I am unaware of."*

Michael now continues to demonstrate that he does not have a good understanding of non-British-pool frozen-ball shots and push-shot fouls:

**Michael:** *"I just can't find the words to sum up how astonishing that is. ... Because not only are you saying rightly Karl that that was definitely a push shot ... there was no possible way of playing that shot without it being a push."*

All I can agree with there is that it was astonishing! Karl and Michael both finally say things I can agree with:

**Karl:** *"In snooker, if it is a touching ball, you can play away, but that's not the rule in 9-ball. ... He obviously knows something we don't."*

**Michael:** *"[We're still in rack 1] and I think we can definitely say we'll never forget this match."*

Then Karl went too far:

**Karl:** *"I think he needs to change his name to Quinten Bonkers."*

It is the ref and commentators who should instead feel embarrassed for not fully understanding the official rules of pool. IMO, Pongers deserves an apology from both Karl and the ref. This from Michael is even more bonkers:

**Michael:** *"I've been working in cue sports for 30 years, and been watching them for nearly 40. Honestly, I've never seen anything quite as crazy as that. I really mean that."*

The following statement is also mostly rubbish:

**Karl:** *"When you have a situation like that, usually you see the players kind of raise the back arm up and play across the ball, not kind of right through the face of it, because even if you go right through the face of it, it is a push shot."*

Many people do wrongly think you are not allowed to hit straight into a frozen CB and must angle your cue up or sideways at least 45° for the shot to be legal. One reason for this confusion is the unfortunate special rule used at the Derby City Classic (DCC) for frozen-CB shots (see **Image 4**). Even American league systems did away with the antiquated 45° rule many years ago. VNEA was one of the last hold-outs, but they got rid of the rule in 2023, partially in response to a video I posted on the matter (see [NV J.125](#)). The arguments in that video also apply to the DCC and anybody like Karl who thinks the way he does. I hope DCC also decides to get rid of the "special" rule, just like VNEA did. DCC should instead use the WPA official rules of pool on this matter, just like pretty much all other pro pool tournaments do.

## DOUBLE HITS, PUSH SHOTS, AND MISCUES

Object balls frozen to the cue ball or very close to the cue ball, require you to **elevate the cue approximately 45 degrees** to stroke the shot. This will be considered a legal shot even though a double hit may occur. Even with an elevated cue, you cannot place the cue tip on the cue ball and shove it forward or it will be called a push shot and result in a foul.

An unintentional miscue is not a foul. An intentional miscue is a foul. The decision of the referee is final.

### Image 4 Derby City Classic (DCC) “Rules”

When Pongers questioned the call, Marcel Eckerdt (the Head Referee), was asked to come over to consider an overrule of the Table Referee. I have been in contact with Marcel, and he explained to me that he felt it was inappropriate for him to reverse the call. I know a reversal is something that should not be taken lightly, and it should not be done unless there is clear evidence. Unfortunately, neither the table ref or Marcel had convenient access to video replay, so Marcel had to make the call based on what the ref and Pongers told him. Marcel decided he didn't have enough information to change the ruling. He concluded that the table ref must have seen something that would indicate to him that the CB was pushed by the tip.

Pongers was very polite and respectful, knowing that at this point there was nothing else he could do. Even when you disagree with a ref's call, the call is final and you must accept that and move on. I was very impressed with how calm and composed Pongers seemed right away. Many players who know the rules well would not have been so calm. I certainly would not have been.

Based on the WPA rule regulations, a foul should not be called unless there is clear direct or indirect evidence of a foul. And any benefit of doubt goes to the shooter. Actual push shots can usually be seen very clearly. But to call a push shot foul on a normal shot into a frozen CB, there needs to be very clear evidence of a push. I am confident there was no such evidence with Pongers' shot, especially since there was no access to video replay or super-slow-motion video. In my opinion, after Marcel heard the whole story from both Pongers and the table ref, he should have reversed the call, but I can also appreciate how one might be reluctant to do so.

Do you still think the shot was a foul? If so, please watch and listen to everything in online video [NV L.118](#). Personally, I have no doubt the call was bad. This type of shot is explicitly allowed in the rules, unless there is some other foul, and there was certainly no clear evidence of a push or double hit.

Good luck with your game,  
Dr. Dave



[NV J.125](#) – Please Fix POOL LEAGUE RULES

[NV L.118](#) – Controversial European Open Push Shot Call – The Myths Busted

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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