

As in all sports and games, sometimes good defense is the best offense. And sometimes that defense takes the form of fouling on purpose. Some people might think of this as “Dirty Pool,” but it is simply smart winning strategy. In a recent online video ([NV L.108](#)), I cover many different situations where an intentional foul is the best play. I’ll describe some of the examples from the video here, all of which are from the game of 8-ball, shooting stripes.

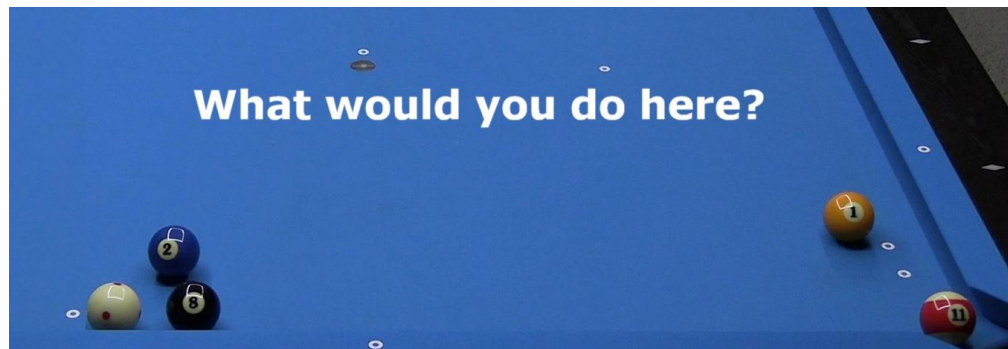
The most common type of intentional foul is where you hit the wrong ball first on purpose to achieve some benefit. **Image 1a** shows a simple example. Since I have no reliably way to get a legal hit on the 11, I decide to tie up the 2 with the 5. This is an intentional foul since I am playing stripes and hit a solid first, so my opponent will have ball in hand. **Image 1b** shows the result of the shot. I created a cluster with the 2 and 5, and neither ball can be pocketed directly. My opponent can attempt a break-out shot with ball in hand, shooting at the 3, but clusters don't always break out the way you want; and the 1 is also a problem, so I like my chances.



Image 1 Creating a cluster

What would you do in this situation shown in **Image 2a**? Again, I don't have a reasonable chance to get a legal hit on the 11. I decide to send the 8 between the 1 and 11 to take away a possible shot on the 1 and leave my hanger blocking the corner. For seeming to have no shot in Image 2a, the post-shot layout in **Image**

2b is a very good result. In the video, I show how the situation could play out from there. With ball in hand, my opponent first decides to replace the 11 hanger with the 2. That seems to be a very effective shot, but I can just play another intentional foul by hitting the 1 first to dump the 2 and leave the 1 bad. My opponent then decides to get the 1 out into the open and freeze the cue ball (CB) to the 8. I don't have any great options on the 8 from there. As with all shots and situations in this column, see the video for demonstrations.



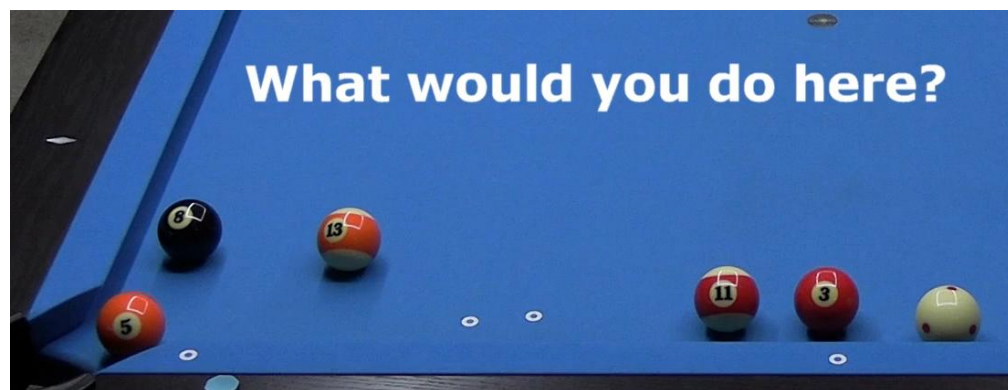
a) before



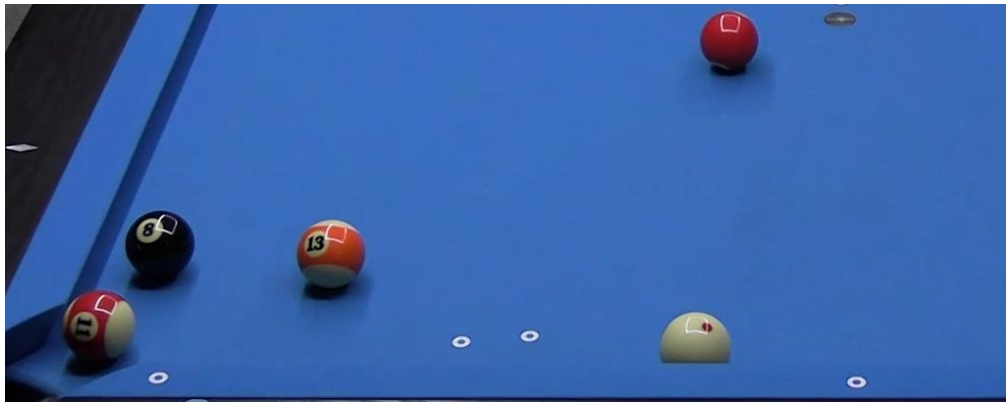
b) after

Image 2 Blocking a pocket

What would you do in the situation shown in **Image 3a**, shooting stripes? Another common type of intentional foul is hitting an opponent ball first to dump an opponent hanger. Hitting the 3-11 combo into the 5 lets me gain control of the pocket to create an advantage, even though my opponent will have ball in hand on the next shot. As shown in the video, unfortunately my opponent is smart, deciding to bank the 3 into the 11 to regain control. That is a good shot for being in a seemingly tough situation.



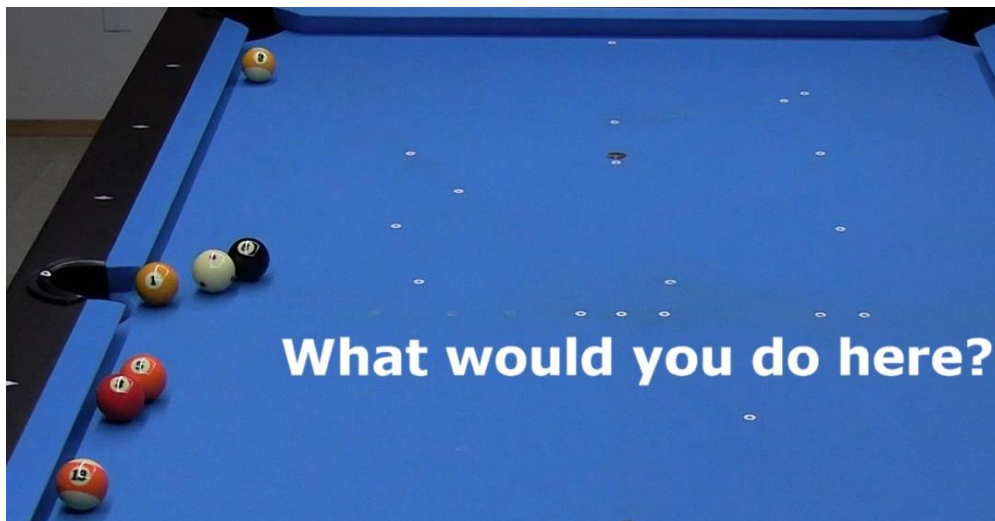
a) before



b) after

Image 3 Dump opponent hanger

Image 4a shows another interesting situation. What would you do here, shooting stripes? If I intentionally foul by dumping the 1, my opponent can't use it to break out the 3-5 cluster. About the best my opponent can do after my shot (see **Image 4b**) is separate his cluster and try to leave me hooked from both the 9 and 13, as demonstrated in the video. Regardless, I am still better off than I was before.



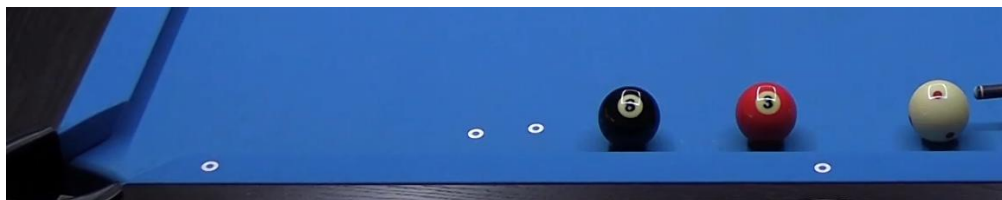
a) before



b) after

Image 4 Dump break-out ball

Image 5a shows a common end-game situation in 8-ball, where intentional fouls come up often. I am shooting stripes, snookered from the 8 behind the 3. The best play here is an intentional foul, where I leave the 3 tied up with the 8. If I am not careful, my opponent can keep me in the same situation by continuing to keep the 3 tied up with the 8, but they have nothing to gain by continuing to do this. I will also just keep the 3 tied up with the 8, continuing to push the 8 toward the corner, where I eventually might get a fairly easy kick shot off the upper rail for the win. The video demonstrates different approaches to the situation, along with many options for initial shots and replies.



a) before



b) after

Image 5 Common end-game situation

A good play for my opponent is to use running spin to leave the CB under the 3 with separation between the 3 and 8 so I can't tie up the 3 with the 8 again. The leave shown in **Image 5b** is nearly perfect with the CB frozen to the 3 at a favorable angle, leaving me with no good options. If I don't get a hit on the 8, my opponent has an easy out. The only reasonable option here is a masse kick off the right rail, but it is not easy (see the video demonstrations).

Another interesting situation where an intentional foul is the only reasonable option is when a single remaining stripe is hanging in a pocket but totally surrounded by solids. The video shows all the options both stripes and solids have in this situation. There is very little that stripes can do gain an advantage in this situation. One option is to not disturb the balls at all and hope your opponent (shooting solids) decides to do the same

thing, resulting in a stalemate, where the rack is replayed from a break shot of a full rack. But as shown in the video, solids has many better options than this.

I hope this column and the online video ([NV L.108](#)) help you be more aware of intentional-foul opportunities that can increase your chances for winning games, even when you are in tough situations. Sometimes the best offense is smart intentional-foul-fueled defense.

Good luck with your game,
Dr. Dave



[NV L.108](#) – Intentional Fouls ... An Important Strategic Tool

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](#).