"Pool vs. Snooker"

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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**. Reference numbers used in the articles help you locate the resources on the website.*

I recently spent time with respected snooker coach Nic Barrow to record some podcast discussions dealing with differences between pool and snooker, with a focus on helpful things the pool and snooker worlds can learn from each other. All podcasts and videos we posted can be found on YouTube by searching for "Dr. Dave and Nic Barrow Pool vs. Snooker Collab playlist." In the first video in the playlist (**NV L.132**), we summarized many of the differences between snooker and pool. I'll cover the highlights of this video below.

One thing Nic and I learned throughout our discussions is that our terminology for things is often different, and sometimes even totally opposite. Here are some examples. The pool world says "pocket" a ball, they say "pot" a ball. They call a "side pocket" the "middle." Our "mechanical bridge" is their "rest." We refer to vertical axis spin on a ball as "sidespin" or "English." They call it "side." Our "draw" shot is their "screw" or "screw-back" shot. Our "combination" shot is their "plant." Our "carom" shot, where we deflect the cue ball (CB) off an object ball (OB) is their "cannon." Our "kick shot," where we rebound the CB off a rail is their "cushion-first shot." Our "bank" shot, where we rebound an OB off a rail is a "double" to them. We call excessive throw caused by a chalk mark at the ball contact-point "cling" or "skid." They call it "kick" or "bad contact." We call the end of the table from which you break the "head" of the table. They call it the "foot" of the table. We call the side of a ball facing us in the shooting position the "front of the ball" since it is what we see. They call it the "back of the ball" since it faces away from the shot direction. What we call an "open" stance, where you face the shot more, they call a "closed" or square stance. When discussing things where our terminology is totally opposite, we sometimes we had "failure to communicate."

There are several differences in equipment between pool and snooker. First, a standard 12' snooker table is much bigger than a standard 9' pool table. And snooker tables almost always have green baize with directional nap. The most popular modern pool-table-cloth color is tournament blue, and there is no nap. Pool tables have diamond markings on the rails to help with aiming kick and bank shots. Snooker tables have no markings on the rails. The playing-surface height of a pool table is usually close to 30" compared to about 32-33" for a snooker table, so snooker players don't need to bend down quite as low as pool players. As shown in **Image 1**, the pockets on a pool table have flat facings that allow balls to rattle in. Snooker pockets are smaller and have curved pocket facings that cause the pockets to play much tighter.

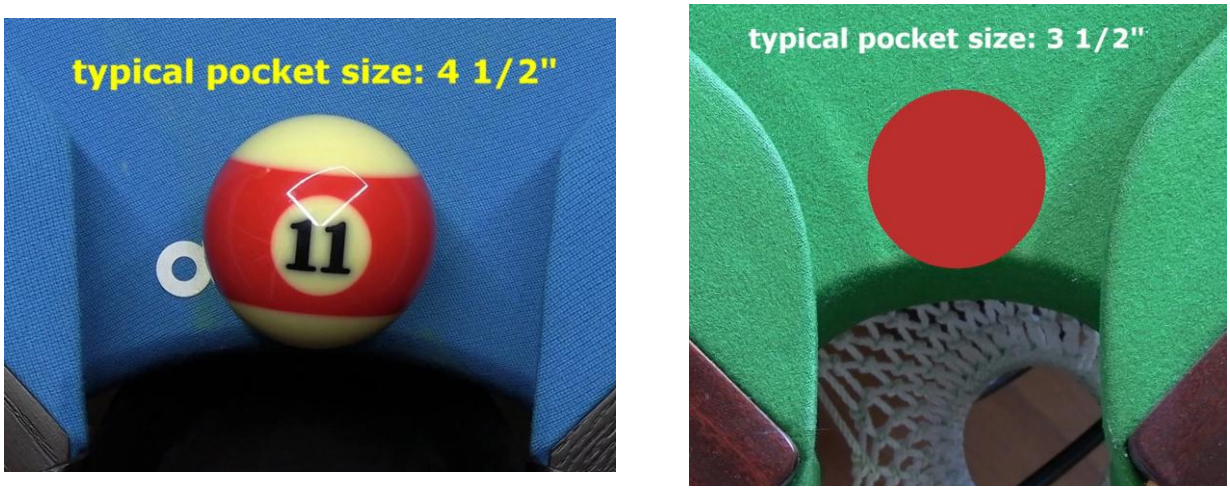


Image 1 Corner pocket

The cushions on a pool table have a triangular profile with a distinct nose that contacts a ball well above its equator. Snooker tables instead have a flat face, with the bottom edge of the face contacting a ball just a little above the equator. Contact above the equator is necessary to prevent a ball rolling into a cushion with topspin from hopping up on rebound, especially at fast speed. As shown in **Image 2**, snooker balls are much smaller, but still larger relative to the much smaller pockets.



Image 2 Ball size

Pool cues are commonly carbon fiber or maple with a larger tip diameter, usually with a straight pro taper, which is well suited to a closed or loop hand bridge. Snooker cues are ash with a brass ferrule, with a much smaller diameter at the tip and a pure conical taper over the entire length. The joint of a pool cue is usually in the middle, making storage and transport easier. The joint of a snooker cue is farther back, at the ¾ point, mostly so it is well behind the chin during the stroke, and for aesthetic reasons. The butt of a snooker cue is flattened on one side. This is mostly due to early cue-sport history, when the end of the mace was slid on the table during the stroke into the CB. Players usually orient the flat part up because of the feel it provides. The chevrons of the grain on the shaft are also aligned with the butt-flat, so the aesthetics are better with the flat up, with the grain pointing in the direction of the shot.

A typical snooker table usually plays much faster than a typical pool table. In the video, we show this using a stimpmeter ramp. On the snooker table, launching the ball from the same ramp height, it travelled a much greater distance. Because of the smaller rounded pockets on a snooker table, the corner pockets play much tighter than on a pool table. On a pool table, you can often contact the near cushion and still have the ball slide and rattle in. The video has clear examples of these effects. The middle pockets on a snooker table play much larger than the corners pockets. Again, the video has clear examples showing this.

Because the cloth on a pool table is napless, a ball rolling with sidespin heads straight in any direction, regardless of the sidespin direction. The cloth on a snooker table has directional nap. You can feel the difference when you slide your hand across it in different directions. It feels smooth sliding with the nap from baulk to the rack area, and it feels rough sliding against the nap in the other direction. And a ball with sidespin also reacts differently based on the travel direction. As clearly demonstrated in the video, when shooting against the nap with right spin at slow speed, the ball turns quite a bit to the shooter's left. But when shooing with the nap in the other direction, the ball turns to the shooter's right instead. Everything is opposite with left sidespin. And I thought aiming with sidespin was tough on a pool table! Although, as demonstrated in the video, the ball-turn effect allows an interesting S-curve shot in snooker.

We tested draw shots with both pool and snooker equipment on a snooker table. We initially thought it might be easier to draw the ball with snooker equipment due to the lighter CB. We tested both wood and carbon-fiber pool and snooker cues. Carbon fiber seemed to offer a slightly more efficient hit, resulting in longer draw. We were also able to draw the ball more with the pool equipment compared to the snooker equipment. We also tested throw with both snooker and pool balls cleaned the same way, and there was no difference. We also tested CB deflection for wood and carbon fiber snooker cues. The ash snooker cue with the brass ferrule deflected quite a bit. As expected, the smaller diameter CF snooker cue had the least CB deflection.

We also looked at cushion effects. Because part of a pool ball sits under the cushion nose when in contact, the CB gets pushed away from the cushion when shooting parallel to the rail. **Image 3** shows an example shot showing the effect. Nic is elevated over the 10, shooting straight along the rail to attempt to draw off the 11 straight back to hit the 10 and open the 13-8 cluster. With an elevated cue like this, the CB gets pushed away from the rail dramatically. As demonstrated in the video, if the CB is instead just a hair off the cushion, this sort of shot works fine. Before filming these videos with Nic, I honestly thought snooker balls contacted the flat face of the cushion nose along the ball equator, but this is not true. Part of a snooker ball also sits slightly under the bottom edge of the flat cushion nose, so the push-out effect happens on a snooker table also.



Image 3 Cushion push-out effect

The last effect we looked at was cushion compression. One might think a pool cushion could compress more since the cushion comes to a nose instead of a flat face. The test shot we used for this is shown in **Image 4**. The 13 is frozen to the cushion and the 3 is frozen to the 13 at an unfavorable angle. The goal is to compress the 13 into the cushion enough so it can clear the 3 to pocket the 9-11 wired combo up-table. This is no problem on a pool table. Surprisingly to me, the shot also worked fine on a snooker table.



Image 4 Cushion compression shot

The video also summarizes and demonstrates some significant rule differences between pool and snooker. First, in snooker you are not allowed to hit the CB into a frozen OB. They call this a push shot and it is a foul. But in pool, since the CB separates from the tip just as it does with any normal non-frozen shot, with no pushing, this type of shot is allowed. For more info and super-slow-motion video proof, see the frozen-CB-foul resource page at ***drdavepoolinfo.com***.

In pool, after the CB hits a legal OB, something must be driven to a cushion. In snooker, no rail contact is required after ball contact. Also, in snooker, hitting away from a frozen ball counts as contact. So, in snooker, you could just roll the CB away from a frozen ball and not need to contact anything. For a shot like this to be legal in pool, you need to drive something to a rail after hitting a legal OB.

In pool, you are not allowed to miscue intentionally for your benefit. That is an unsportsmanlike conduct foul. But in snooker, a purposeful miscue safety is allowed. In snooker, you are not allowed to jump the CB over any portion of a ball unless you deflect the CB off another ball or cushion first. But in modern pool, the jump shot is an important offensive weapon.

In snooker, when an opponent scratches, you must place the CB in the "D" portion of baulk ("in the kitchen"). But in pool, after an opponent scratch, you can place the CB anywhere you want on the entire table. In snooker, you don't need to call the ball or pocket. If you are on a red, you can pocket any red in any pocket and be able to continue shooting. But in pool, you must pocket the intended ball in the intended pocket.

In pool, you are not allowed to use a hand bridge on top of a mechanical bridge head or handle. But in snooker, these "creative" bridging techniques are allowed. Concerning technique and fundamentals, there are many differences with what is considered "best practices." Some of these differences might mostly be due to tradition, but some might be due to slight differences in the games and equipment. Nic and I cover differences in stance, stroke, bridging techniques, eye pattern, and other topics in our series of video podcasts. Check them out if you want to learn more about these differences. The focus in the podcasts is on helpful things the pool and snooker worlds can learn from each other. Again, the podcasts can be found on YouTube by searching for "Dr. Dave and Nic Barrow Pool vs. Snooker Collab playlist." And if you want to see demonstrations of everything described in this column, be sure to check out **NV L.132**. Enjoy!

Good luck with your game,
Dr. Dave


normal video

NV L.132 – POOL vs. SNOOKER – Equipment, Rules, and Fundamentals Differences
Playlist – Dr. Dave and Nic Barrow Pool vs. Snooker Collab playlist

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 PBIA 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***.