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Billiard Practice and instruction

Many players will, regardless of effort, reach a plateau in their game. There are many worthwhile books, video and practice aids available to the serious billiard student. However, sometimes it is just not enough to proceed to the next level. There may be many reasons for the player's inability to progress. More often than not, the problem can be addressed through a review of the fundamentals of the game and the implementation of proper practice techniques.

To assist the player in meeting and conquering these roadblocks, the player should consider acquiring the services of a BCA accredited instructor. A qualified instructor will be able to evaluate such things as stroke mechanics, pre-shot routine, eye patterns and alignment. Using tools like video analysis, an instructor can help the player to identify areas of weakness that are usually very difficult to identify on ones own.

An experienced instructor can also provide valuable information and training in substantive areas of the game. Alternative aiming systems, bank and kick systems, breaking techniques, collision physics and advanced shot techniques are just some of the areas in which a player may benefit from instruction.

Once any areas of weaknesses are identified the instructor should be able to suggest a practice regiment designed to effectively address those

issues. A good practice regiment not only identifies the areas of practice, but also defines the most effective methods of practice.

Most players make the mistake of confusing play with practice. Many league and social players will get together for a “practice” and play “King of the hill”. That is, whoever wins a game holds the table against the next challenger, until they themselves lose. This is not practice. The players in this kind of gathering are only reinforcing any bad habits and limitations that they bring to the table.

Practice should be approached with the appropriate understanding and appreciation of billiards as a sport. As is the case with any sport, there is a significant difference between “practice” and “play”. From a young age, any participant in a sport understands quickly that practice is what you do to prepare for a game. A baseball player, for example, does not practice “Baseball”. Players practice specific skills needed to play baseball. For instance, a pitcher might dedicate practice time to perfecting a curve ball. A fielder might practice catching ground balls. A batter may spend practice time on such things as grip, stance, body alignment or rhythm. By the time the game is played the player is no longer concentrating on perfecting certain skills, but instead is focusing on playing. The skills acquired during practice are performed without conscious thought.

The sport of billiards is no different. Every player should separate out practice from play. Identify weaknesses and work on improving specific skills, one at a time. Keep track of your practice time with specific goals in mind. Utilize drills designed to address the specific issues holding you back in the game. Identifying problems and addressing those issues in a clear and methodical manner will get you past that plateau and allow you to realize that next level of play.

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