

A Referee's Guide to Positioning



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Introduction

It is often said that the best referees in any sport are not noticed by the players until they are needed to make a vital decision.

When the time arrives to make that decision, the referee must be in the right place to be able to view the incident fully and make an accurate decision based on what he has seen.

The art of positioning for a snooker referee is therefore vital to ensuring the smooth running of the game and to ensure that the correct decision is made the instant a situation arises that calls for the intervention of the referee.

This booklet has been designed to give the aspiring referee some basic guidelines, hints and tips to help to clarify the principles of positioning.

Striker, Cameras, Spectators

As a referee, it is important to remember that wherever you stand you will often find that you are blocking somebody's view.

Unless you stand at one end of the table constantly and don't move – you are always likely to be in the way of someone.

There are four groups of people who you must consider when deciding on the position you are going to stand in prior to a player making his stroke. These are...

- The Striker
- The Non-Striker
- Cameramen (if the match is being televised)
- Spectators

Ideally, you will position yourself in such a way that all three categories above have a completely unobstructed view.

However, as we will see later, there are various criteria you must follow in order to be in the correct position to be able to make a decision, which will mean that inevitably you will sometimes block out the view of perhaps a camera or some of the crowd.

The order of importance of the three groups of people is exactly as shown above; the striker, cameras and then the crowd.

We will look at each of these in turn...

The Striker

First and foremost, a referee should never stand in the line of sight of the striker.

Sometimes this can't be helped, in which case the referee should stand as still as possible with gloves behind his back (so that the white gloves are not visible to the player). That said, it is better if you try not to become statuesque.

There will often still be time for you to reposition yourself to a less conspicuous area by taking one or two steps to one side – indeed you will often find that the striker will allow time for you to do this before playing their stroke.

However, never move whilst the striker is down on his stroke and about to play. The sudden movement will distract the striker and could cause him to miss a vital shot. The very least you should do if you find you are in the striker's line of sight is to stay perfectly still.

The Non-Striker

Where possible, it is important to make sure that the non-striker's view of the table is not obstructed by the referee.

It should always be remembered that the non-striker is able to claim a foul by his opponent should this not be seen by the referee – so he will need to have a clear view of the table and will not appreciate having his view constantly blocked by the referee.

You should therefore take care to ensure you are not blocking the non-striker's line of sight.

Cameras

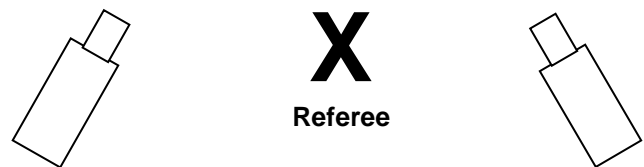
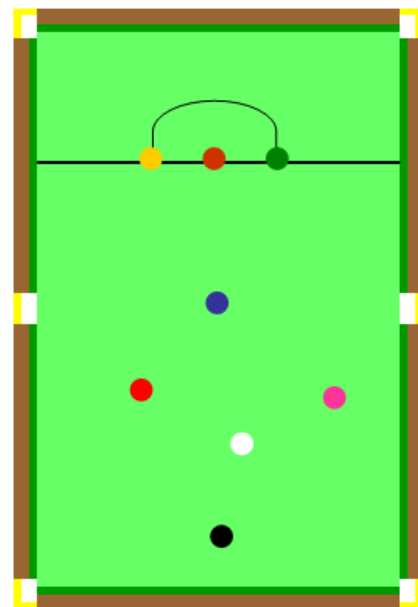
Should you find that you are refereeing a match which is being televised, you will need to take the position of the television cameras into account when deciding on your positioning.

Remember, your first consideration is the player – should you find it necessary to stand in a particular position so as to have a clear view to enable you to see everything you need to make a decision – then that is where you should stand - even if it means blocking the view of a TV camera.

However, should it be possible to have just as good a view (without being in the player's line of sight) from a different position that does not interfere with the cameras, then this should be your preferred position.

The general rule is...do not stand in front of a camera unless it is absolutely necessary.

You will, of course, need to walk around the table and this will mean you walking in front of the camera lens. This is fine. Just be conscious of where the cameras are situated and try not to stand in their way if at all possible.



If you watch professional referees at a televised tournament, they will often position themselves at the top end of the table in line with the black spot so that they are between the two cameras which are positioned in line with the two corner pockets.

Spectators

The crowd will have come to watch the match and may have paid for the privilege.

They do not want to spend most of the game looking at the referee's back!

However, as a referee, your primary concern is to referee the game accurately and efficiently. If this means that sometimes you will be in the way of the crowd, then so be it.

However, you should always appreciate that wherever possible, providing you are not in the player's line of sight and have a clear view of any possible infringements, then you should stand in a position which allows most if not all of the audience a clear view of proceedings.

Before commencing the match, it is worth seeing where the audience will be seated.

Often there may be one, two or even three sides of the table where there is no seating provided for the audience.

In cases where the audience are seated on several sides, try to make sure that you are not constantly blocking one particular section of the crowd.

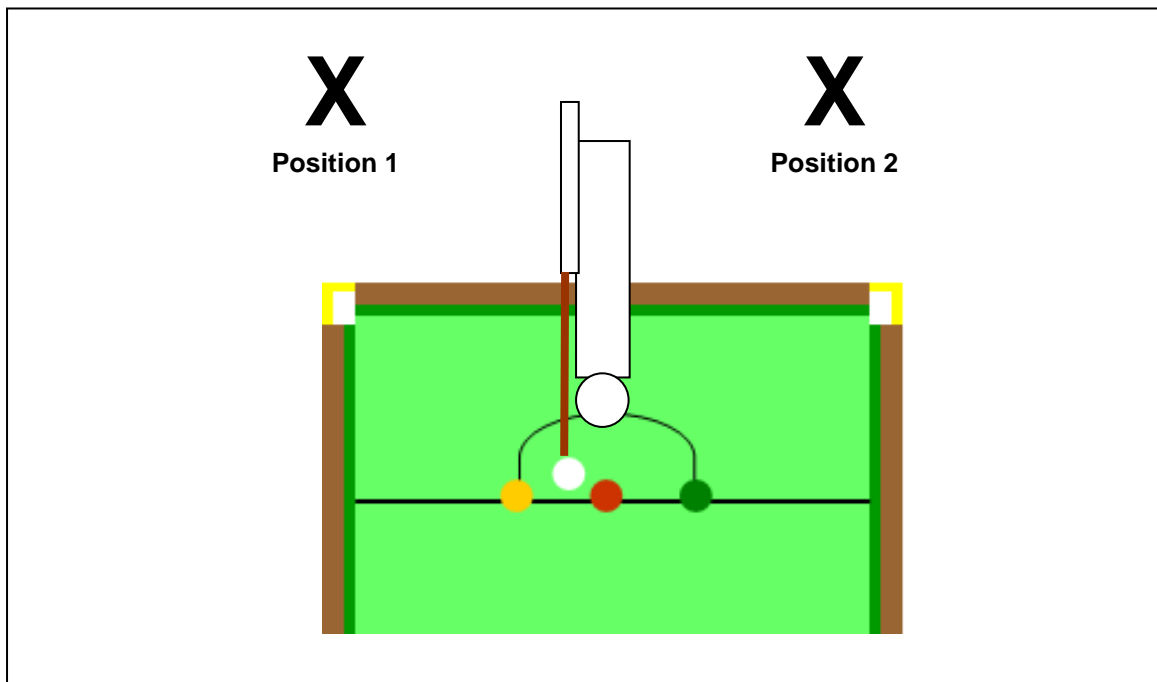
Summary

Always consider the following three groups of people when deciding how to position yourself...

The order of priority is as follows (the most important at the top)...

- The Striker
- The Non-Striker
- Cameras
- Spectators

Start of a Frame



At the start of a frame the referee should be positioned at the **baulk end** of the table – behind the baulk line.

Positions 1 and 2 are generally considered as the ideal positions at the start of a frame.

Take care, as the start of a frame is one area where an inexperienced referee can easily be caught out and find themselves standing by the centre pocket as the player breaks off!

This is because players will sometimes, quite innocently help to retrieve the balls from the pockets at the end of one frame and automatically roll the cue ball to the baulk end of the table.

It is therefore vital that when you re-set the balls, you make sure that you have control of the cue ball at all times.

Once you have finished setting up the balls, you should have the cue ball with you at the top end of the table.

You can then pick it up and as you walk towards the baulk end you can clean the cue ball as you start to announce “Frame X, Player A to break”.

You can then gently roll the cue ball to the player and get ready in the correct position for the start of the frame.

Position in relation to the player

We have already seen that a referee must never stand in the line of sight of the striker.

There are other considerations too which must be taken into account when the referee decides on the optimum position.

These are as follows...

- Follow the cue ball
- Move at a steady pace – do not rush
- Never stand in a player's line of sight
- If a player is stretching – remember to be in position to check that he has one foot touching the floor.
- If moving behind a player whilst he is preparing to play his shot – do so quietly
- Maximise your view of the playing area -make sure you are in position to see any possible fouls
- If the striker is attempting to pot a colour – make sure you are positioned so that you can retrieve the colour efficiently.
- If the striker is attempting a red or a safety stroke off a colour and is using the rest – make sure you are positioned to collect the rest from the player – unless you have something else to do (such as retrieving a colour that has been pocketed, in which case leave the player to replace the rest).

In each case **ANTICIPATION** is the key to good positioning.

If you correctly anticipate the striker's next stroke you can make sure you are positioned correctly with the minimum of fuss – thus going practically unnoticed by the players.

If you are in a position to see the best possible (fullest) view of the table without being in the player's line of sight – and can efficiently retrieve any colour potted or implements from the player – then you won't go far wrong!

One other very important point to remember is....

- Always remain still until the striker has actually played his stroke. The slightest movement can put the player off. (Also, it doesn't look good if you have started to move towards the pocket to retrieve a colour and the ball doesn't drop).

Follow the cue ball

A good referee will always arrive in the desired position before the player is there ready to play his next stroke.

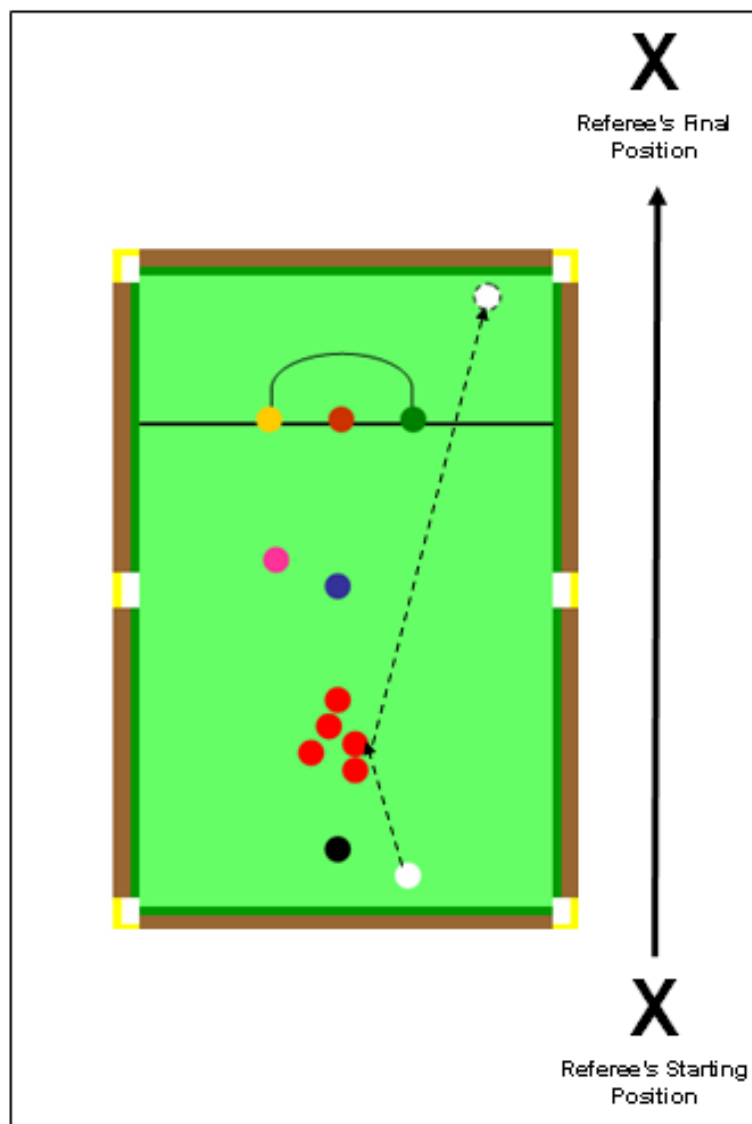
Whilst it is true that you will not always correctly anticipate the player's next choice of shot, you will often be able to make a reasonable guess.

One good way to make sure you are nearly always behind the player (especially with safety strokes) is to follow the path of the cue ball once the player has played the shot.

For example, if the striker is playing a safety stroke from the top end of the table by clipping off the pack of reds to leave his opponent on the baulk cushion, you would initially be positioned behind the player at the top of the table.

As soon as the player hits the cue ball, you should follow it towards the baulk end of the table, so that you are already in position when the opponent arrives to play his shot.

Be careful not to move too quickly to try to race against the cue ball – continue to walk at your normal pace!



Move around the table at a steady pace and learn to walk backwards

Take care to get the pace with which you walk around the table consistent with the overall game.

There can be a tendency for the referee to try to do things quickly so as not to slow down the players. However this gives the impression that you are not in control.

It is much better to move around the table efficiently – by making sure you have positioned yourself in such a way as to minimise the distance you need to walk to retrieve a ball from the pocket – rather than race around the table.

Take time too when spotting the balls.

Roll them gently over the spot and make sure you have spotted the ball in the correct place.

It is very easy to think that you must spot the balls quickly so as not to delay the striker playing his next shot – especially if he is a quick player.

However, the player must wait until the ball is correctly spotted before playing his next stroke – so if he has to wait a second or two longer, then so be it.

The crucial thing is to spot the ball correctly – you don't want the player having to ask you to re-spot the black for example!

You will also need to learn to walk backwards. This will enable you to keep the table in full view at all times – you don't want to turn your back on the table only for the non-striker to claim that the striker has committed a foul whilst you were not looking.

Line of Sight

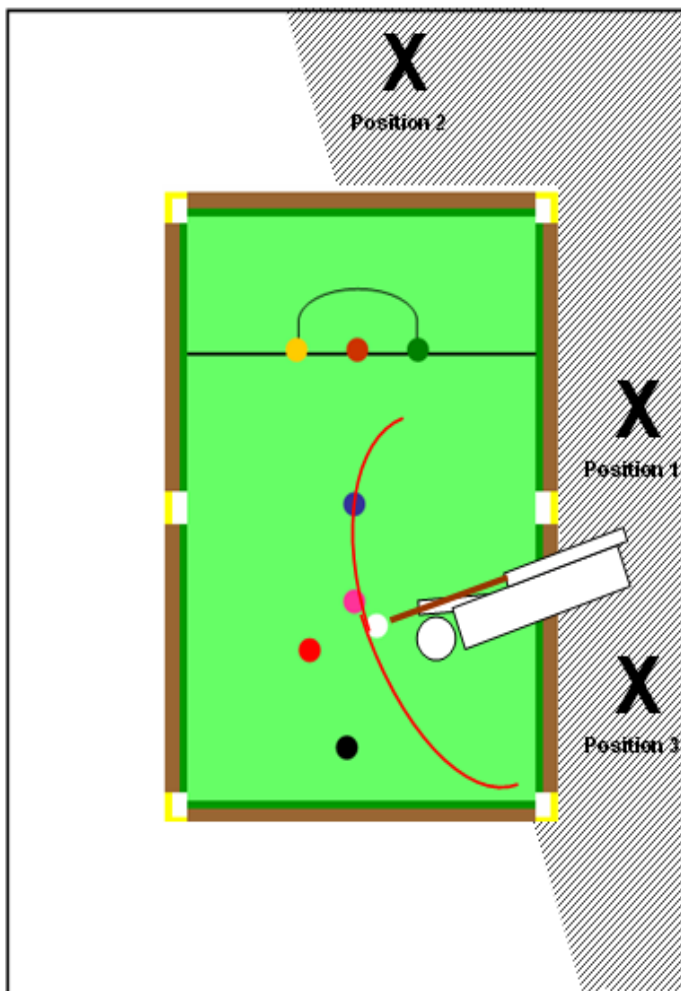
The striker's line of sight is described by the red arc in the diagram below.

The referee should not be positioned in front of this arc.

It would therefore be acceptable for the referee to be positioned anywhere in the grey shaded area as this is not within the striker's line of sight.

Position 1:

This would be acceptable and may in some instances be considered as the preferred position



This is because the referee is positioned behind and on the open side of the striker.

For a right handed player, the "open side" is to the player's right.

For a left handed player the "open side" is to the player's left.

The example opposite shows a right handed player.

It is preferable to stand on the "open side" of the striker as this allows the referee a good view should the striker be cueing over any intervening balls – in case he should foul one of them. This is not a hard and fast rule as there is a school of thought that suggests the better position is on the player's "closed" side (**Position 3**) as it is therefore impossible for him to see you!.

The optimum position is generally accepted as being behind the striker, at an angle of about 30 to 50 degrees on the "open side". But you must always be mindful to make sure you can see if the player is cueing over any balls which he is likely to foul and position yourself accordingly.

Position 2:

However, in the diagram above **Position 2** would actually be the optimum or preferred position because it is likely that the player will be potting the red and playing position on the blue into the right centre pocket.

By anticipating the player's next shot - and positioning yourself at **Position 2** - you will be ideally placed to take just a couple of steps to the side to be in position for the striker's next shot on the blue.

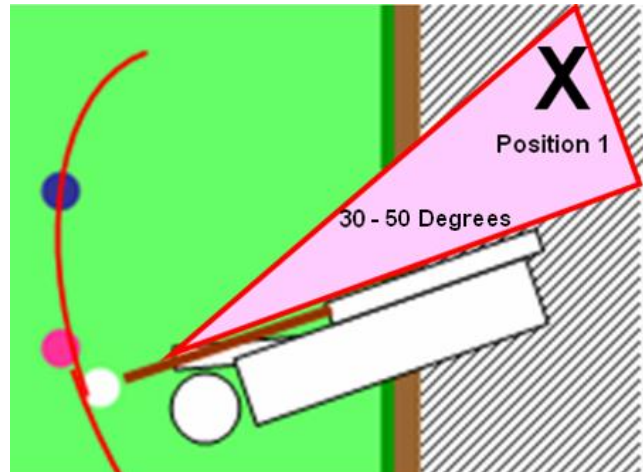
So, by taking into account the likely positional shot off the red, you can make sure you are perfectly placed not only for the shot on the red, but also close to where you need to be for the following stroke as well.

Position 3:

Position 3 could sometimes be the preferred option should this be the best position to see if the striker is touching a ball on his left side.

Notice also that the referee's position is usually a couple of feet behind the player.

As a referee you need to be far enough away from the player so that hopefully he doesn't even notice you are there – but also close enough to see the playing area clearly and be in a position to approach the table quickly if required.



You wouldn't want to be ten feet away when the player turns around looking for you in order to ask for the cue ball to be cleaned!

Move quietly behind the striker

Assuming you have positioned yourself behind the player, as a referee you will sometimes find that you are not quite in the right position and may feel that you need to move around the player whilst he is down on his shot so as to get into the right position.

It is advisable to think carefully about your positioning and stand in the correct position BEFORE the striker gets down to play a stroke

However this is not always possible and there will be occasions where you find you need to move directly behind the striker in order to obtain a better view – perhaps because he is cueing over a ball.

If you need to move from one side to the other, do so as quietly as possible so as not to disturb the player whilst he is preparing to play his stroke.

Make sure you can see any potential fouls

An additional consideration when positioning yourself is to make sure that you are in a good position to view any potential fouls.

This is particularly important when a player is cueing over a ball or balls or when a ball is either touching or almost touching an object ball. We will look at a few examples...

Example 1

CUEING OVER A BALL (1)

Here the striker is cueing over the pink whilst attempting to pot the red.

As the pink is to the striker's right, the referee should be positioned to the right of the player (as shown opposite) so as to have a clear view of whether the striker fouls the pink.

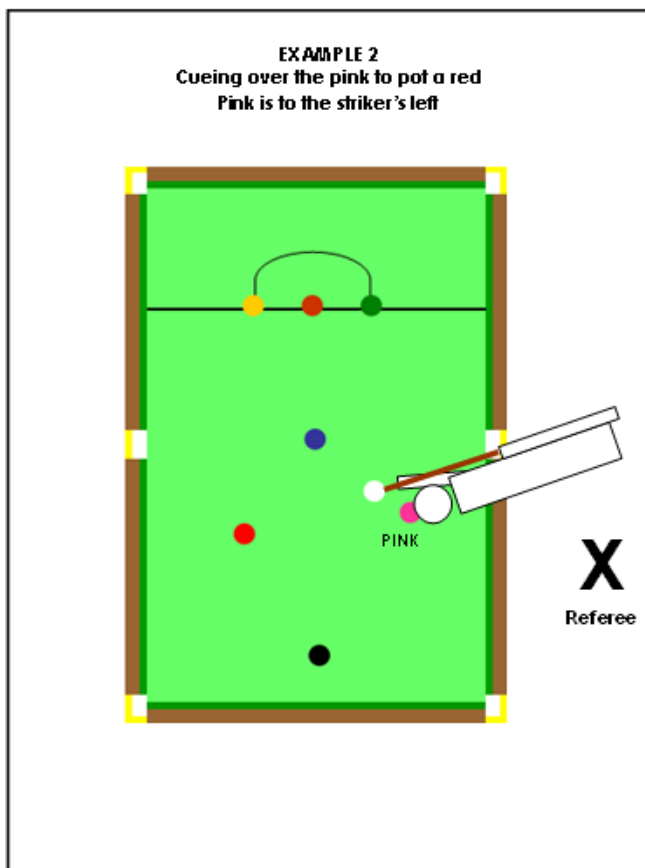
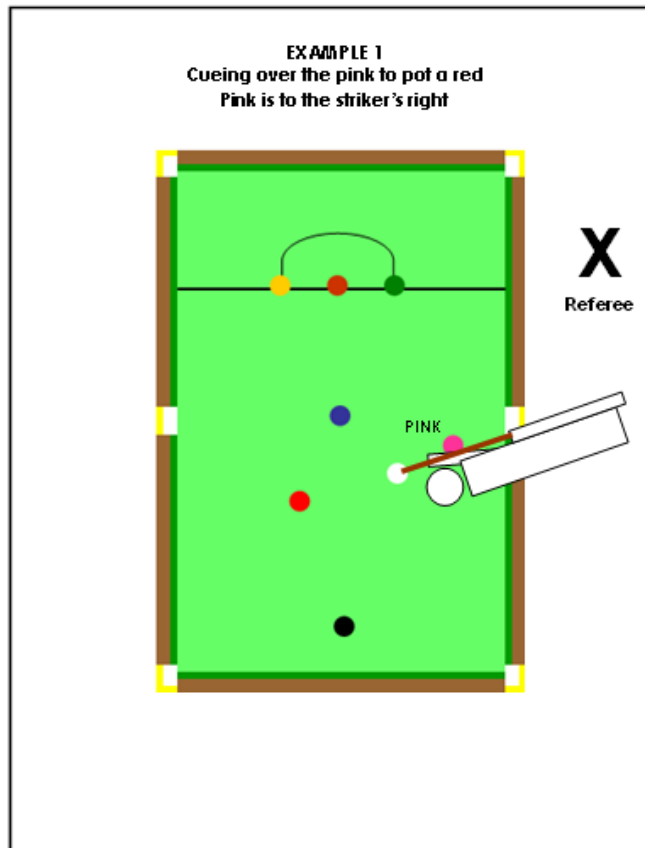
If the referee found himself positioned on the left side of the striker – he would be unable to see if the striker's sleeve touched the pink or not.

Example 2

CUEING OVER A BALL (2)

In this next example, the striker is cueing over the pink which is on the left side of his bridge hand.

In this situation, the referee should be positioned to the player's left (as shown opposite)



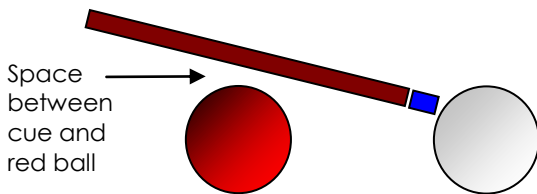
Example 3

BRIDGING OVER A BALL

Here the striker has to bridge over a red in order to play his stroke. There are two possible positions for the referee in this instance.

Position 1 has the benefit of being on the "open side" of the striker whilst **Position 2** possibly gives the referee a better viewpoint to see if the payer touches one of the other reds which are next to the red he is bridging over.

Both of these positions allow the referee to view the stroke from the side so as to see whether there is a clear space between the cue and the ball which is being bridged over (as shown below)



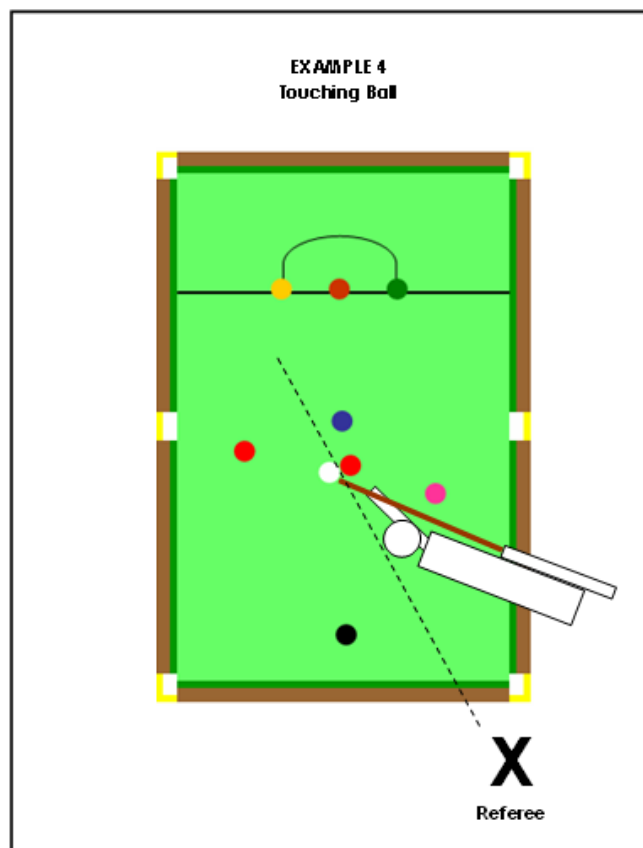
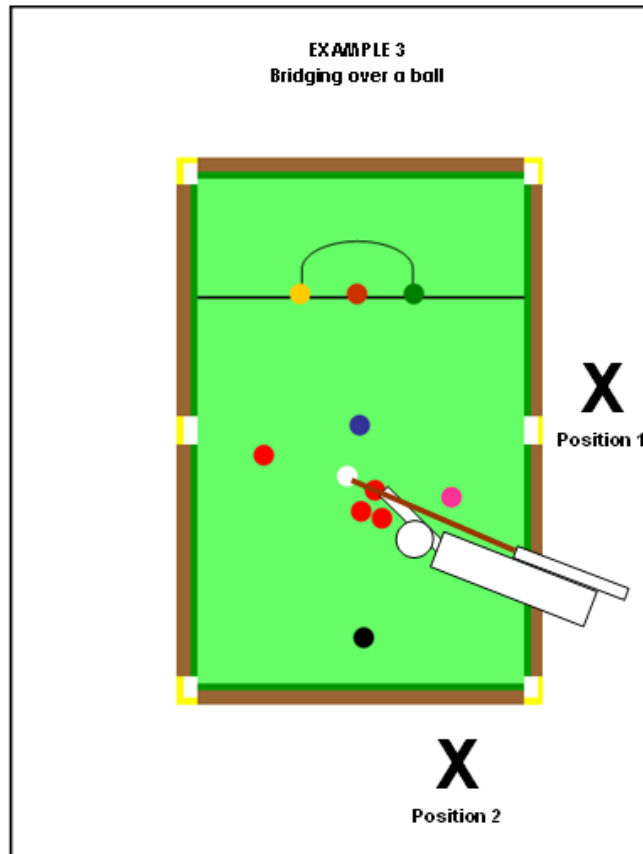
Example 4

TOUCHING BALL

Here the striker is playing away from a touching ball.

The ideal position for the referee to be in line with the tangent of cue ball and object ball to ensure that the player is "playing away" from the touching ball.

This will also allow the referee to see if the object ball moves.



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If the striker is attempting to pot a colour – make sure you can retrieve the colour from the pocket efficiently

It is essential that the referee keeps the game flowing and does not take too long walking around the table to retrieve a colour from a pocket once it has been potted.

Good positioning therefore takes into account the location of the pocket the striker is attempting to pot the colour into – and makes it easy for the referee to reach that pocket via the shortest possible route.

Often there are two positions which can be taken up when a player has potted a red and is about to pot a colour.

The desired position will take into account the colour to be potted and the player's position.

This is best explained using examples...

Example 5

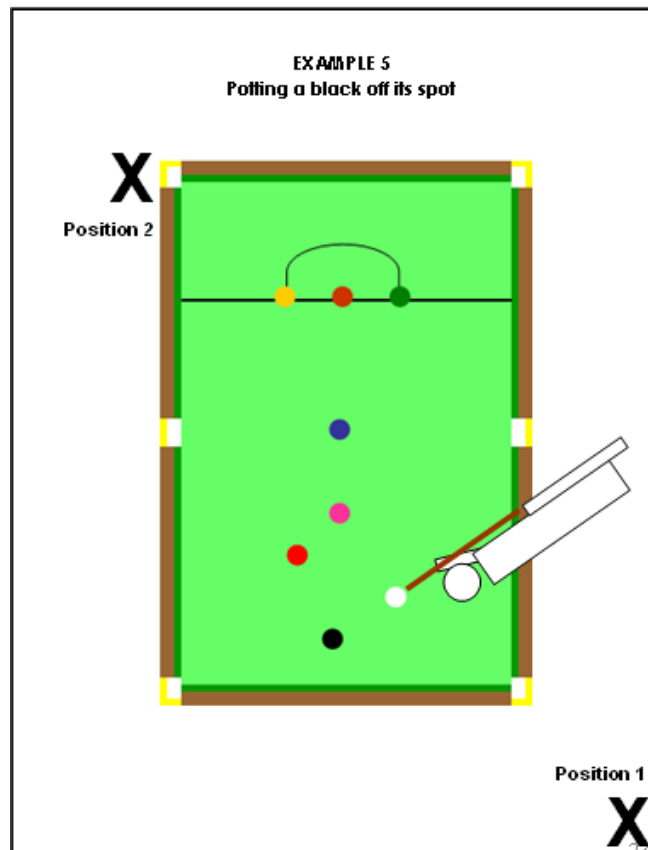
POTTING A BLACK OFF ITS SPOT

Position 1 is perhaps the best position as it is only a short walk for the referee to retrieve the black when it is potted into the opposite corner pocket.

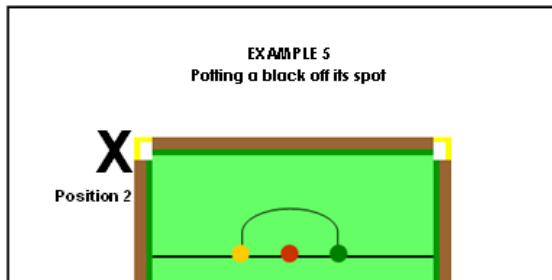
Notice that the referee is stood in the extreme corner of the playing arena so as to be out of the player's line of sight.

Position 2 is also a good starting point for the referee provided he stands as close to the yellow corner pocket as possible.

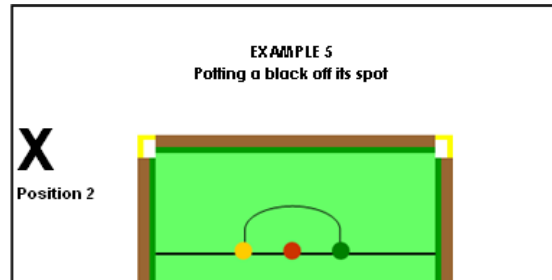
This is because the further away the referee is from the table, the more chance there is that he will be in the player's line of sight.



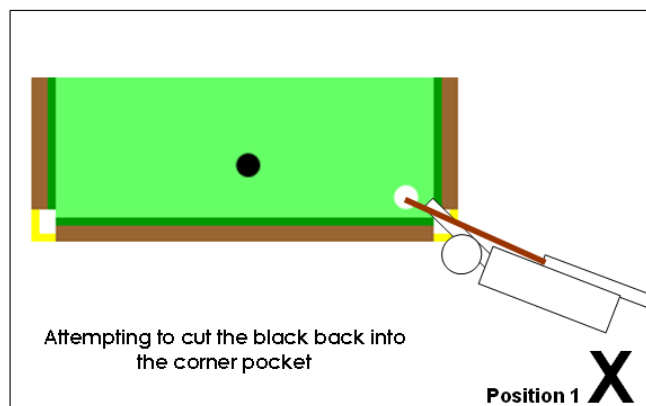
CORRECT:
The Referee is tight against the table



INCORRECT:
The referee is away from the table



There is one more advantage in using the yellow corner pocket as your position – that is that it allows you to retrieve red balls from the black corner pocket should the runner be getting full – and gives you an opportunity to gently place the reds into the yellow pocket without being noticed.



Note: If the player is playing to cut the black back into the same corner pocket – then position 2 would NOT be suitable as this would be directly in the player's line of sight.

Example 6

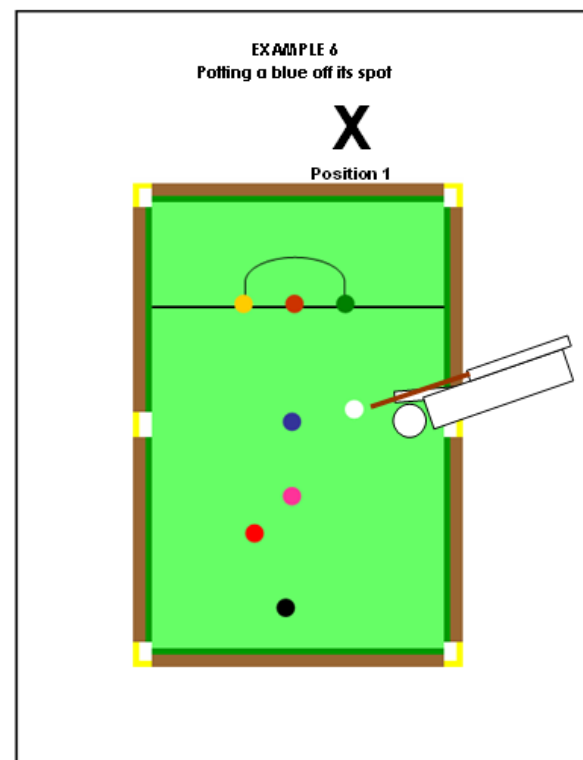
POTTING THE BLUE

In the next example, the player is attempting to pot the blue off its spot into the centre pocket on the yellow side of the table.

The striker is also playing towards the top end of the table (i.e. towards the black spot).

Therefore the referee should be positioned at the bottom end of the table (out of the player's line of sight).

Ideally, the referee should be about level with the green spot. This gives the referee only a short distance to walk to retrieve the blue from the pocket.



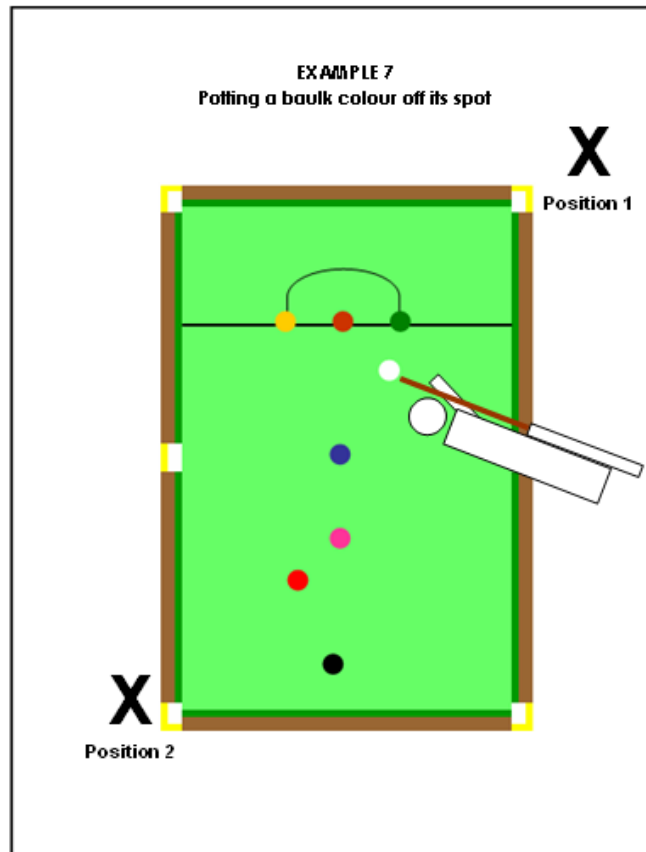
Example 7

POTTING A BAULK COLOUR

The ideal position when a player attempting to pot a baulk colour into a baulk pocket is to stand near to the opposite baulk pocket (**Position 1** opposite).

This leaves only a short walk to retrieve the object ball whilst keeping out of the player's line of sight.

Alternatively, **Position 2** may be adopted – again note that the referee should stand close to the side of the table so as to minimise the chances of being in the player's line of sight.



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Collecting the Rest

Whenever a player uses the rest to play a shot, they will often expect the referee to be on hand to collect the rest from them and replace it for them.

Therefore, whenever a player plays at a **red**, the referee must always position himself to be able to collect the rest from the player once he has completed his stroke.

The situation is slightly different however, if the player is playing at a **colour**.

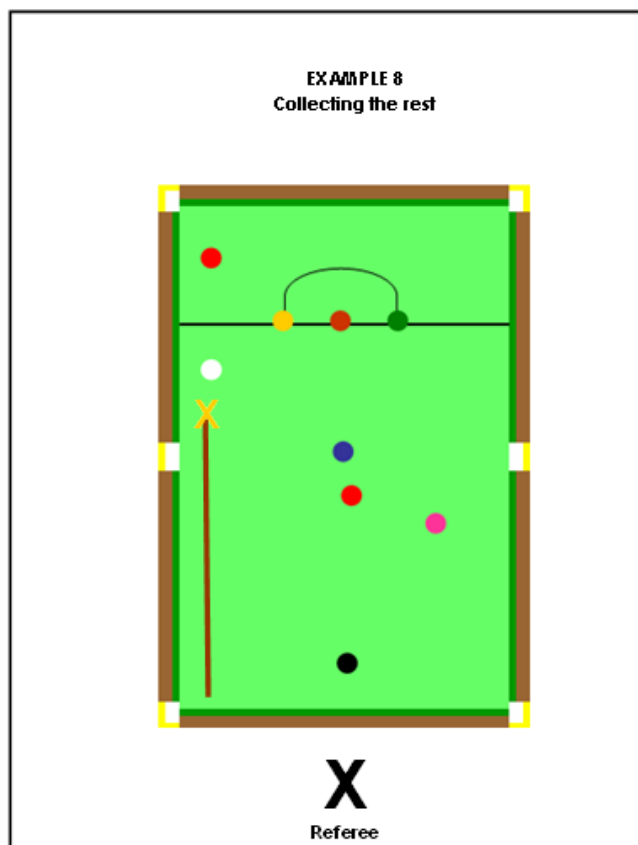
If the player pots the colour, then your primary concern as a referee is to spot the colour. The rules state that it is the player's responsibility to replace the rest – so it is quite acceptable to leave the rest for the player to replace whilst you re-spot the colour.

However, you should always bear in mind that should the player fail to pot the colour or opts to play a safety stroke instead, then you should be in a suitable position to accept the rest from the player.

Although the rules state it is the player's responsibility to replace the rest, it is good refereeing practice to collect the rest wherever possible in order to allow the game to flow. Indeed, players will expect you to do this for them.

Some players hand the rest to you whilst others will leave it on the table.

Remember though that if the rest placed in a tricky situation close several balls you should ask the player to remove the rest himself and hand it to you. The player cannot expect the referee to remove the rest just in case he was to accidentally touch a ball whilst removing it.



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Special Note re Extended Rest, Half butt etc.

Always be prepared to take the extended rest, half butt etc. from the player irrespective of whether you also need to retrieve a colour from a pocket.

Tips on how to anticipate the next shot

A good referee will always anticipate the striker's next shot and position himself accordingly.

Sometimes there may be two possible shots (perhaps two different reds or two colours). When this happens, see if there is one position that would be suitable if either shot was to be played next.

That way, you will not have to move irrespective of the shot the player chooses to play.

Let's look at some examples...

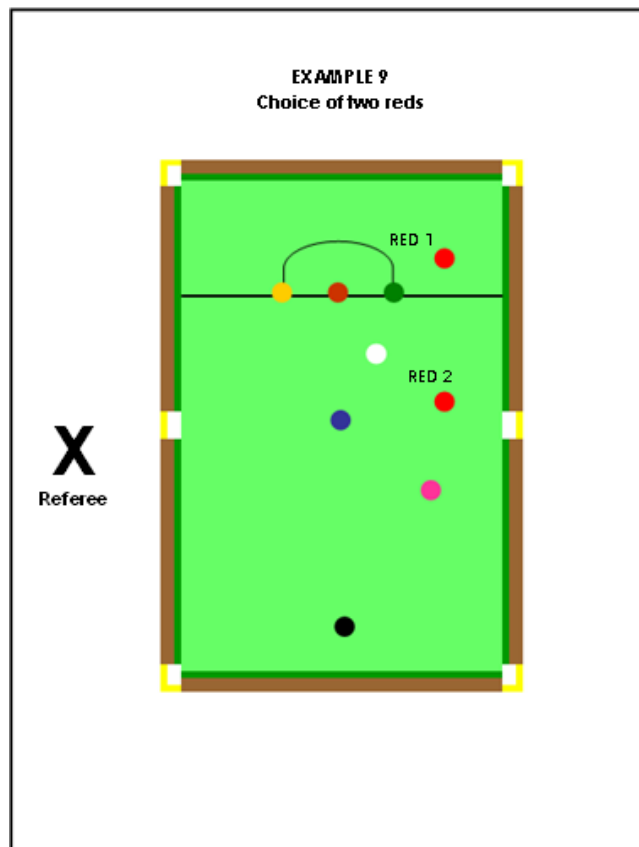
Example 9

Here the striker comes to the table and has a choice of two reds to play at.

He could opt to pot Red 1 in the green pocket or Red 2 in the centre pocket.

The ideal position for the referee as shown (near to the centre pocket on the yellow side of the table).

This way, the referee is ideally placed, whichever red the striker chooses to play.



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Example 10

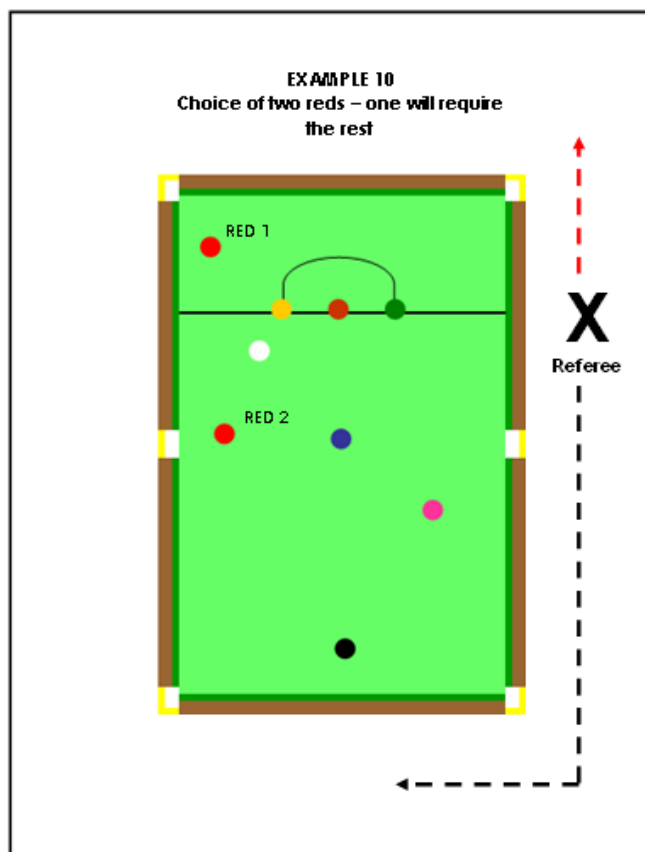
This is similar to the previous example, only this time the two possible options are to attempt to pot Red 1 into the yellow pocket or attempt Red 2 into the centre pocket.

Again, the ideal position for the referee would be as shown below.

However, it should be noted, that in this case, the striker would need to use the rest if he were to attempt to pot Red 1 – so the referee would then need to move towards the top end of the table should the player take out the rest and play at Red 1.

By standing in the position shown, the referee is ideally placed to walk to the top end of the table (as shown by the black dotted line) quite easily as soon as it is clear that the player is going to play Red 1.

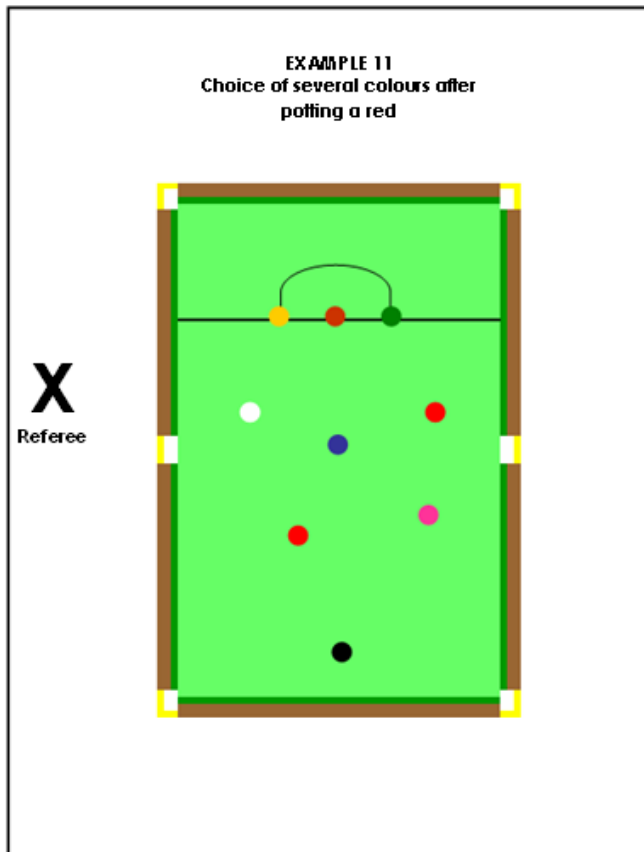
If the striker opts to play Red 2 into the centre pocket, the referee could easily take a few paces back towards the baulk end of the table to be in the ideal position (as shown by the red dotted line)



Example 11

In the example opposite, the player has just potted a red and there are three obvious colours he could attempt to pot – the green, brown or the blue.

In this case there is one position where the referee could stand which would be appropriate should the player attempt any of these three colours.

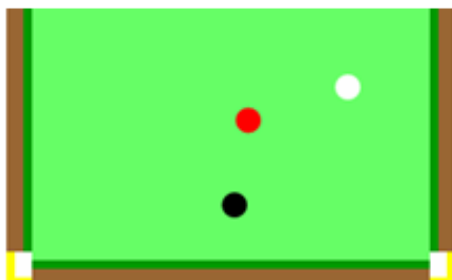


Example 12

This example deals with how to position yourself after re-spotting colour by anticipating the striker's next shot before you actually spot the colour.

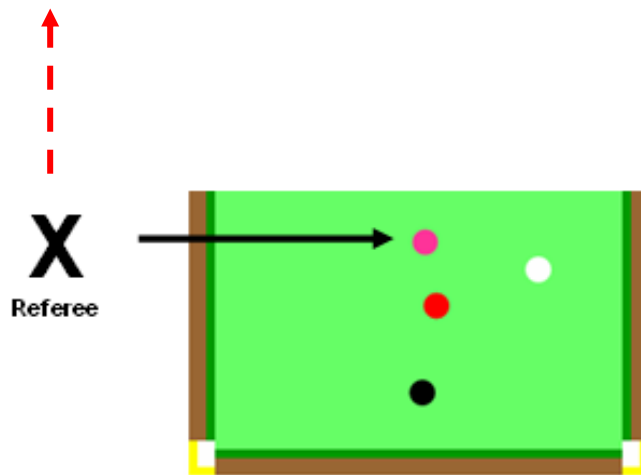
Using the example opposite, the striker is about to pot the pink into the top corner pocket.

In potting the pink, he stuns down to leave his next shot as the red into the same pocket as the pink (as shown below)



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The referee now has to spot the pink – the most efficient position to re-spot the pink from is from the side of the table from where the referee has taken the pink out of the pocket...



Having spotted the pink, the referee can then walk backwards towards the yellow spot so that he is positioned out of the player's line of sight for the next shot on the red.

Escaping from a Snooker

This is perhaps one of the most difficult scenarios facing a referee.

Where to stand when a player is attempting to escape from a snooker is not always straight forward as the referee has to consider two things...

- Where to stand so that he is not in the player's line of sight
- Where to stand so that it will be easy to see whether or not the cue-ball hits the ball on

These two positions are often at different ends of the table – and it is impossible to be in two places at once.

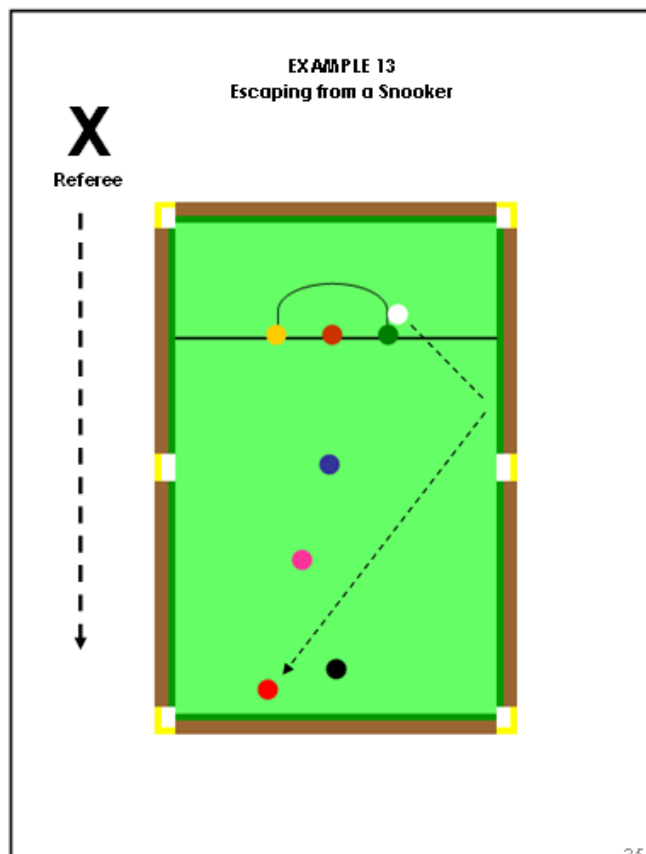
You must therefore establish a starting position and have it in your mind where you are going to move once the cue ball has been struck.

In addition, many snookers involve the cue-ball being in a position close to an object ball – and you will need to be in position to make sure the object ball is not fouled when the stroke is played.

Example 13 shows the striker snookered behind the green.

The referee must position himself so that he is behind the player and out of his line of sight – but also so that he can see if the player fouls the green with his cue.

Once the stroke is played, the referee must be able to walk towards the object ball to be able to see if the cue ball reaches and hits it.



Anticipating a Miss

Great care needs to be taken when trying to remember the position of the balls in case you need to call a "foul and a Miss". It must also be noted that you must always be alert as often a miss will occur when the player is not snookered and you are not expecting them to miss!

There are a number of things to consider here; obviously the position of the cue ball needs to be memorised in relation to other balls and also in relation to the table markings.

However, it is just as important to remember the position of the colours – especially if there is a colour near to the ball on or in the way of the path of the cue ball.

The following points may help you to remember where to replace the cue ball...

- This may sound obvious but take care to remember the colour the cue ball is snookered behind. You would be surprised the number of times the referee attempts to replace the cue ball behind the brown instead of the green for example.
- Check if the ball snookered behind is actually on its spot – take particular care to note the position of the colour the player is snookered behind if it is not actually on a spot.
- Check if the cue ball, the snookering ball and any other balls are in a straight line – or if the cue ball and snookering ball are in a direct line with a pocket.
- Check if the cue ball is touching the ball it is snookered behind – if not make a mental note of how many millimetres or inches it is away from touching it. It is useful here to estimate the distance using millimetres or centimetres if the two balls are close together or inches if they are further away.
- Is the cue ball directly behind the ball it is snookered by or is it approximately half ball to the left (looking from the baulk end) or to the right? Check if it is full ball, half ball and remember if it is perhaps slightly thicker than half ball or slightly thinner. If, for example, it is half ball – remember which side it is on (looking from the baulk end).
- Check if it is possible to hit any other colours – for example, can the cue ball clip the edge of the brown or the yellow or hit one of these balls full or half ball.
- Go to the side of the table and check if the cue ball is in line with any other colours and make a mental note of its position – is it in front of the yellow, behind it, half ball etc?
- Check where on the cushion the cue ball can hit – here it is often useful to use the point where the baulk line intercepts the cushion – can the cue ball hit the cushion above or below this point? And by how much?
- Check if it is possible for the cue ball to hit another colour or to be played directly into a specific pocket

- Check if the natural angle of the escape would be hampered by a middle pocket and decide whether the player will need to play the shot with side.
- Check which of the colours are on their spots – or perhaps more particularly, which of them are not on their spots (as usually this will be a lesser number).
- Check if any balls are potentially in the path of the cue ball when the player attempts his escape – if you think a ball may be struck should the player be slightly off the correct line, make a mental note of its position in relation to other balls and the spots.
- If there are any other reds on the table – try to remember their positions in relation to each other and the spots on the table.
- Are there any finger marks on the table? These can often help you to accurately re-position the cue ball
- Especially if the cue ball is near to the baulk cushion – is there any marking on the side of the rail (e.g. maker's name) that will help you to identify the correct position – e.g. is the cue ball directly above the letter "R" in "Rileys".
- Don't forget to remember the position of the ball on – although it may not be struck by the first impact of the cue ball, it may be moved in course of the shot being played and may need replacing.

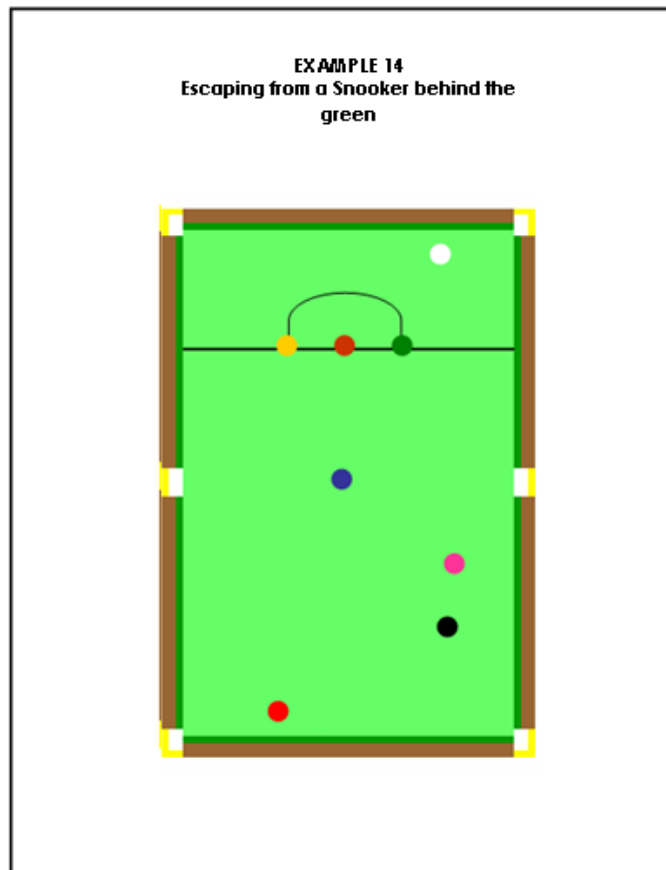
Example 14

Here, the cue ball is behind the green. As the referee you must make sure you can replace the balls back to their original position should a "Foul and a Miss" be called.

Points to note:

- The cue ball is snookered behind the green
- The cue ball is approximately half ball to the left (looking from the baulk end)
- It is not touching the green (it is approximately 2 millimetres away)
- The cue ball can hit the side cushion approximately 3 inches up from the baulk line

- The cue ball, green and blue are all in a direct line – if the green was played full ball it would hit the blue full ball.
- The pink is not on its spot, it is level with it and about six inches to the right (when looking from the baulk end)
- It is worth checking that the pink could be played past the blue directly into the green corner pocket (to help remember the position of the pink).
- The red is positioned such that it could be played directly into the green corner pocket, it would also go past the black if it was played parallel to the top cushion



Rolling up behind a colour

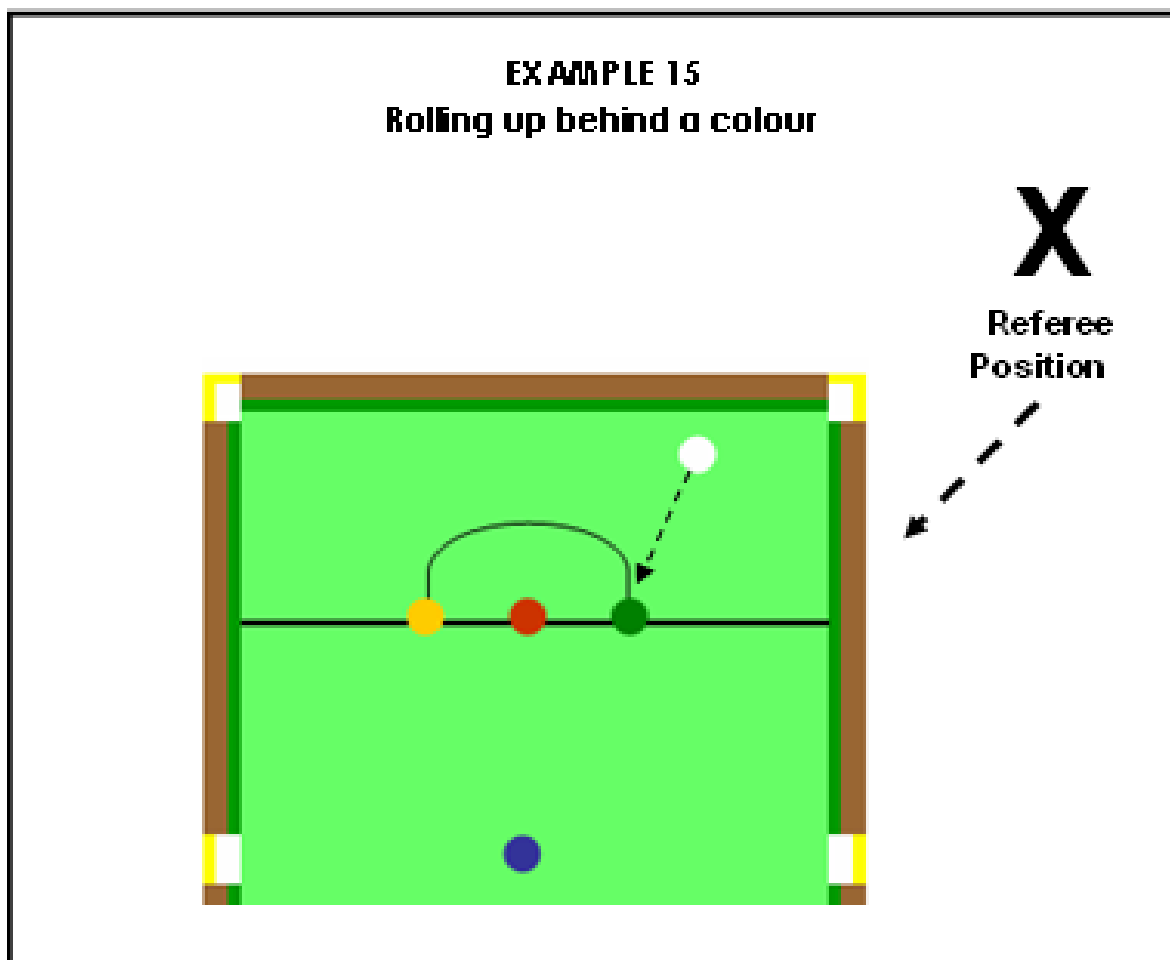
After potting a red, the player may decide to roll up behind a colour to snooker his opponent.

It is therefore important for the referee to be in a position to check that the cue-ball actually reaches the nominated ball so that a foul can be identified should the player fail to hit the relevant colour.

The example below shows the best position for the referee to stand if the player is going to roll up behind the green...

This will allow the referee to be behind the player as he plays the shot and then move forward to get a better view of whether the cue ball actually reaches the nominated ball.

Note that the referee should not move until the striker has played the shot.



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Steve Fletcher