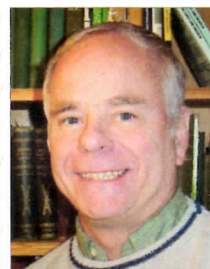▮ BY Bob Jewett

THE RUN-30 DRILL FAMILY

## Here's a sequence of drills that will test your abilities.

USUALLY I'M a strong advocate of putting yourself close to the edge of your comfort zone during practice. I think that's the quickest way to increase the size of that zone. This time though we'll be looking at a family of drills in which the goal is to make 30 consecutive successful shots in a row. The easiest in the set will allow even a brand new player to succeed with a little concentration while the hardest will be a challenge for professional players. There are 18 family members of gradually increasing difficulty so any player should be able to find a good match.

General format: Each rack begins with six, 10 or 15 balls in the standard triangle shape and the rack is broken from the kitchen. Scratches on the break are ignored. Each ball pocketed on the break is placed on the table wherever the player chooses. The cue ball begins where the player chooses. If an extra ball is pocketed during a shot, the player can take credit for pocketing it any time in the rack. The goal is to make a total of 30 consecutive shots in five, three or two racks depending on how many balls rack.

DRILL 1 — This is for beginners who just learned that chalk goes on the tip. Six balls are racked and broken. An example break is in Diagram One. There is no cue ball shown because it is not used for this drill except for the break. The player simply shoots the object balls into pockets in any order. The 1 ball into the side is the easiest to start with. If the 6 is played next, the run should be easy except for the balls that are several diamonds from a pocket.

You may wonder how anyone could ever miss these shots, but there are beginners who will have a little trouble getting through five racks for a total of 30 shots. If you're helping such a person, you will probably be working on their open bridge and their stance, and these easy shots allow them to get used to the mechanics and gain some confidence.

Diagram One
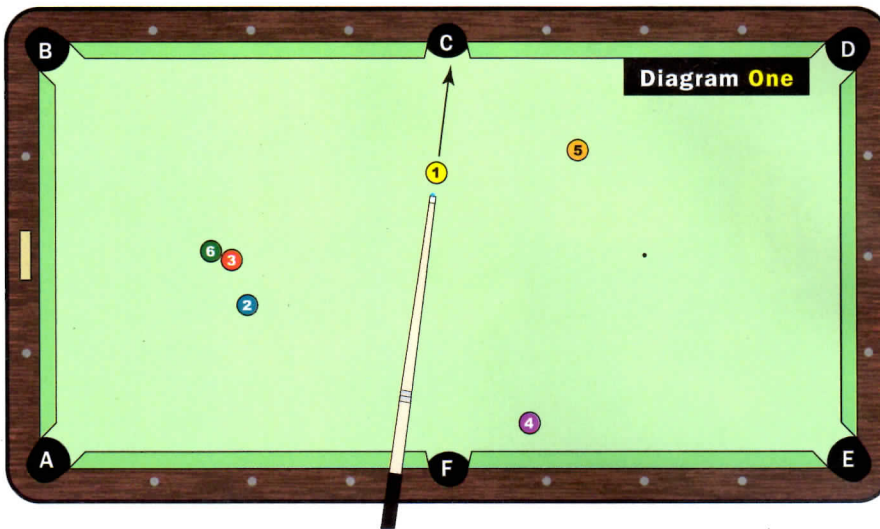
DRILL 2 — Pocket balls with normal shots. The cue ball is in hand for each shot. The layout in Diagram 1 presents no big problem since the 6 can be made in pocket A and that unblocks the 3.

DRILL 3 — The same as Drill 2 but with the added requirement that the cue ball must hit a cushion on the shot. The player must now add some angle to the shot and do real aiming. Still ball in hand for each shot.

DRILL 4 — Shoot the balls in pairs. After the second ball, take ball in hand before the next pair.

DRILL 5 — Shoot the balls in two sets of three balls, with ball in hand after the first set.

DRILL 6 — Shoot the balls in numeric order but take ball in hand after each pair. In the Diagram, the player should break out the 3 ball when shooting the 2. Since they will get ball in hand for the 3, the breakout doesn't need to be too careful.

DRILL 7 — Pocket all six in any order with no extra ball in hands.

DRILL 8 — Shoot in numeric order in groups of three with ball in hand after the first three. Now the player must get a shot on the 3 ball from the break out and the run is likely to end. They should have broken better.

DRILL 9 — Now we switch to ten balls per rack. This drill requires the balls to be shot in color pairs, so the balls used are 1-5 and 9-13. Take ball in hand after each pair is pocketed. With this drill the player will start to think about the easiest order to clear the table and unblocking paths. Which color would you start with?

I like the 10-2 first. I would be tempted to bump the 5 towards the pocket when shooting 2 ball to make the 13-5 pair easier. If I move the 5 to where it blocks the 13 to the corner, I can play the 13 in the side for the start of that pair.

DRILL 10 — Shoot the balls in any order with no added ball in hands.

DRILL 11 — Shoot the balls in numeric order in pairs.

DRILL 12 — Shoot the balls in numeric order in sets of three. The last group will be four. In the position shown, the hardest group will probably be the first group since getting a good shot on the 2 from the 1 is tricky.

DRILL 13 — Shoot the balls in numeric order in two groups of five.

DRILL 14 — Now we change to a full 15-ball rack. Run all 15 balls in any order without ball in hand.

DRILL 15 — Shoot the balls as color

pairs with ball in hand for each pair. The 8 ball can be played at any time with a pair.

DRILL 16 — Numeric order in groups of 3.

DRILL 17 — Numeric order in groups of 5.

DRILL 18 — Numeric order for all 15 balls.

Do you think you can do any of the above drills — 30 good shots in a row — 90% of the time? To do that you have to be so accurate that you miss only about one shot in 300. To be 50% on a drill, the individual shots have to be about 98%. To be 5% on a drill, which I think is about the right level of success to make the drill really rewarding, you need 90% single-shot accuracy.

Of course, when you have ball in hand for the shot, your percentage should be pretty high, and with a little ability at position play, the shot after a ball in hand should be high. When you get to the third and later shots in a run, your shot making and cue ball control both need to click.

Diagram Two

Which color pair first?
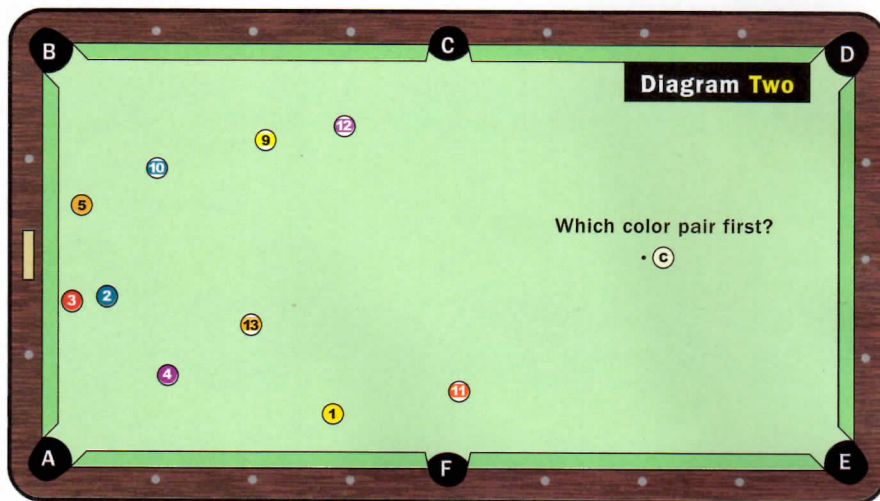
You may have noticed that there is a lot of ball in hand. That's intended to give the player a lot of practice at thinking about the best place to have the cue ball to continue the run. A very common problem I see among intermediate league players — up to players who occasionally run out the rack — is that they never maximize the benefit of ball in hand. Squeeze the last drop of goodness out of each placement.

I'm not sure all of the drills are in order of difficulty, although I'd bet the first and last are placed right. If you try them, please let me know if you feel you have a different order. And let me know if you think of another drill that fits with these and seems to fill a gap.