

Patrick Baumann

Playing Pool

The Missing Manual



20 things that every
pool player should know

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20 things that every pool player should know

Translated by Robert Van Sant

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INTRODUCTION

Over the years in which I have helped beginners and advanced players to improve their game, I always noticed the same points at which people would have problems with their game. Even in my own game, I also keep meeting up with the same obstacles. There are very simple things that improve our game, but which we always lose sight of. These things I wanted to put together, in order to help more players with these basics. The game still remains complex, even when we have understood the basic principles.

These basics I would like to offer to you in the form of concepts which can be easily remembered when the going gets tough. Ideally, each concept should be so clear that you can easily remember it and, most importantly, be able to recall it at the pool table and put it into practice.

This book is addressed to almost every pool player, from the total greenhorn right up to the professional. This means that for each individual player different sections of the book will be of varying interest. For the beginner, I've included basics, so that they won't be left out. Advanced players and professionals will already know some of these concepts, but will surely discover something new. Whether beginner or advanced player: If you have questions or suggestions, I would be happy if you e-mail me at info@playing-pool.com.

This book should not be the last that you read about playing pool; there's just too much on this subject. Throughout this book, I have made references to videos, texts, exercises, and other books, which should help you to

deepen your understanding of the ideas. At the end, you will find numerous references and an overview of resources that will take you further.

Why I wrote this book

Playing pool is not a simple matter. You can know a lot about it, but that doesn't mean you know how to play. I love pool and I want to show you the quickest way how to become a decent pool player. I started at the age of 14, playing pool in a club. However, it took until I was 26 before I got my first structured lessons on how to play pool the right way. During these twelve years, I had a lot of fun and I also improved. However, in the following two years, I learned more than in the previous twelve years. I want to help you to start off the right way from the beginning.

There is one thing that is important here: You have to practice. You have to work with this book. Too bad we can't sink the balls with knowledge alone, but only with skill. For this we need to practice, and not just a little bit. This book is not going to replace practice, but hopefully it will guide your exercises and progress in the right direction.

Why you're reading this book

Maybe you have been playing pool for a while, or you've seen pros play on TV or on YouTube. You're interested and fascinated by the game. You get a kick out of moving balls around a table with a stick of wood. You now want to know how to do this. Great! Maybe you're already an advanced player who has been playing at a certain level, but you also are looking to get better. Way to go!

No matter where you are now: You should have an honest interest to learn the game. But if you think that after reading this book you will be able to beat everybody, forget it, put away the book and go play an online game of pool. Playing pool is a never-ending process and you will never be the perfect pool player. Never. Acknowledge this fact, and we will have loads of fun together.



In the same way that a book can't replace practice, it can't replace a coach. A coach can look at your particular playing style and correct you immediately. I therefore would recommend to anybody who wants to play better pool to treat themselves to a few hours with a qualified pool coach.

Thank You!

I thank all pool coaches from whom I was privileged to learn. First of all, my teachers in order of appearance: Daniel Alvarez, Andreas Huber, Thomas Hein, Martin Horn and Thomas Damm. I also wish to thank my fellow students at the coaching school and all other colleagues with whom I love to talk shop.

Thanks also to my students for their trust and their readiness to try new things and to get down to some serious practice, especially when you could be playing a game for a beer instead.

I would also like to thank my test readers for their encouraging and remorseless feedback to a previous version of this book. Without them, this book would be considerably worse, but much better if I had given it to them to peruse

more than once. But then you would have to wait another five years for it.

I used the freeware software “Cuetable” to create the pool graphics in this book. I thank the people at pool.bz that I can use the graphics royalty-free in this book.

Finally, I wish to thank those countless crazies who invented and developed this game. How did you ever think of it?

4. FORWARD!



The stroke in pool is like a throw: You slowly pull back and then accelerate the motion forward. The cue moves as straight and parallel to the table top as possible.

The stroke is the deciding factor in pool. You can plan whatever you wish before and after the stroke, but it is only the stroke that moves the ball. Sounds banal, but it is important to remind oneself of this now and again. Often we concentrate so hard in planning the stroke, but then carry out the stroke any old way. We forget that this is the deciding moment. This doesn't mean that you should worry your head off and plan and micromanage the stroke. That is not what is meant by concentration.

The stroke in pool is like a throw: You slowly pull back and then accelerate the object or equipment forward. In pool this means that the cue is slowly pulled back until it reaches the end of the bridge hand. There is a slight delay in reversal and it is then accelerated forward without pause in a smooth motion. You also don't purposely slow down this motion of the cue at the end of the stroke – this happens automatically when your arm can't reach any further. Give it a try. Note especially how your cue comes to rest by itself. The cue goes "through" the cue ball as if you wanted to spear it and only comes to rest after some distance. This distance is about as long as the distance between the cue ball and your bridge hand.



Start position



Draw back



Follow through

Keep the cue straight, kiddo

It's important that the cue runs as straight and as parallel as possible above the table during the whole stroke. You should never hold the cue at a steeper angle than necessary. The reason for this? When you hold the cue at a high angle the cue ball will curve an unnoticeable amount. This slight curve

means that you will not hit the object ball where you want to hit it.

Many beginners will hold the cue at a high angle in order to change the point of impact of the cue on the cue ball. However, its better to adjust the height of your bridge hand, as described for the bridge in Chapter 3.

Also, you don't pull back the cue once you have started your stroke. The cue stick knows only one direction: forward! That is: Draw back slowly, give it a slight pause, and then accelerate forward until your arm can't go any further (but do not stretch past this). The upper arm can (unlike some training manuals teach) be slightly lowered (an inch or so). This allows you to go through the cue ball and at the same time hold the cue as parallel as possible in relation to the table top.

Acceleration means that the cue stick is going fastest at the *end of the stroke* when the cue ball is already gone. Try to imagine “pulling” instead of “stroking”, as if something heavy were hanging from the back of the cue stick which you are trying to pull forward with it. You're pulling the cue forward until your arm says “stop” and the cue ball is already on the way toward the target.

Why am I going on and on about this? First, the energy of your stroke is transferred optimally to the cue ball. The desired speed of the cue ball is best achieved through the least energy, which will result in higher precision. Second, only with this technique can you have the optimum action on the cue ball. With action, I mean the horizontal and vertical rotation with which you control the cue ball. This is as important in pool as sinking balls.