Big Ball Position Shots

Before we embark together on this new billiards odyssey, I'd like to clarify two points, 1) The systems, concepts and methods you will read in these lessons are identical to those I apply in tournament play or anywhere else, I never teach anything I don't use myself. 2) The instructions you've been receiving in other publication are normally about how to score on a shot-by-shot basis, generally have been uniformly excellent, and my instructions should be extremely helpful to you too, but they're based on a different concept.

That concept is fairly simple, at least in writing. I believe that the correct primary focus, in advanced three-cushion billiards play, is the positioning of the first object ball. In other words, when I execute a shot, my main concern is to cut, drive, or carry that first ball to a high-percentage scoring zone (a corner), or a high-percentage scoring lane, (along either long rail).

The 3 Slate System Table
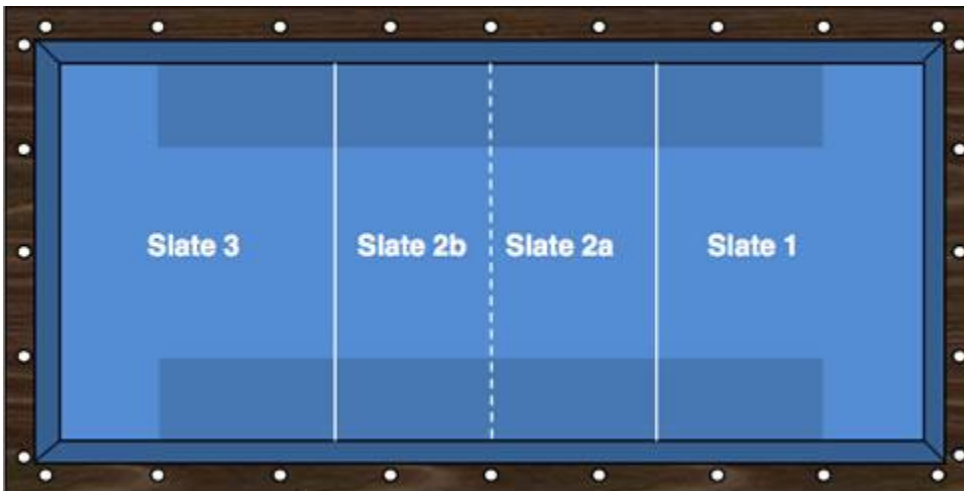
Least favorable is the center of the table, where the target becomes smaller. The correct secondary focus of a shot is to see the angle into the first cushion I need to score, along with the proper stroke and speed. Third, I determine whether to play a shot short or long, whether I want to /score off the right or left side of the second object ball, and perhaps whether I can drive that second ball into a high-percentage zone, or lane. Now to the system at hand, which I call The Three-Slate System. As you probably know, a billiard table is divided equally into three slates, The 3 Slate System Table diagram: shows you a visualization of these three sections.
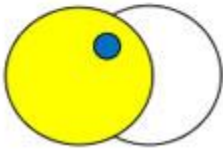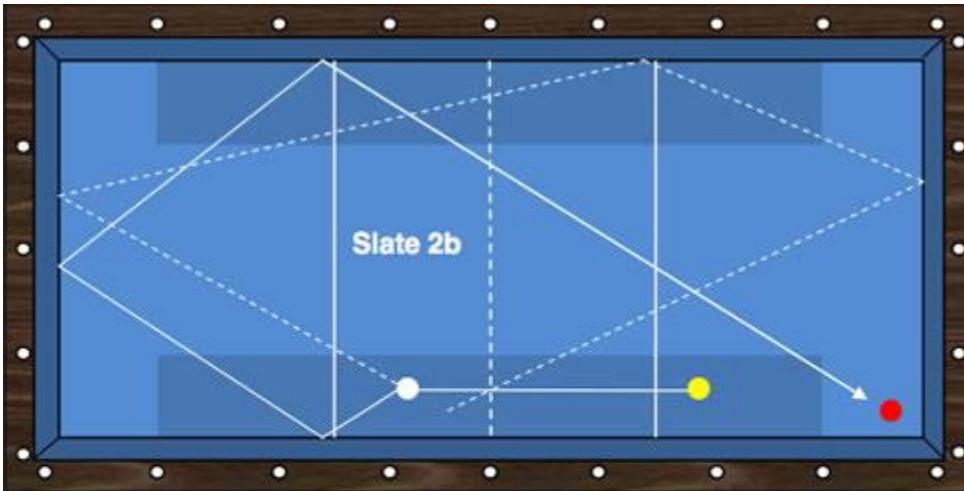
Diagram 1
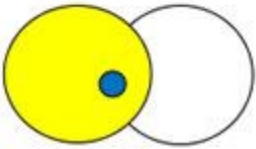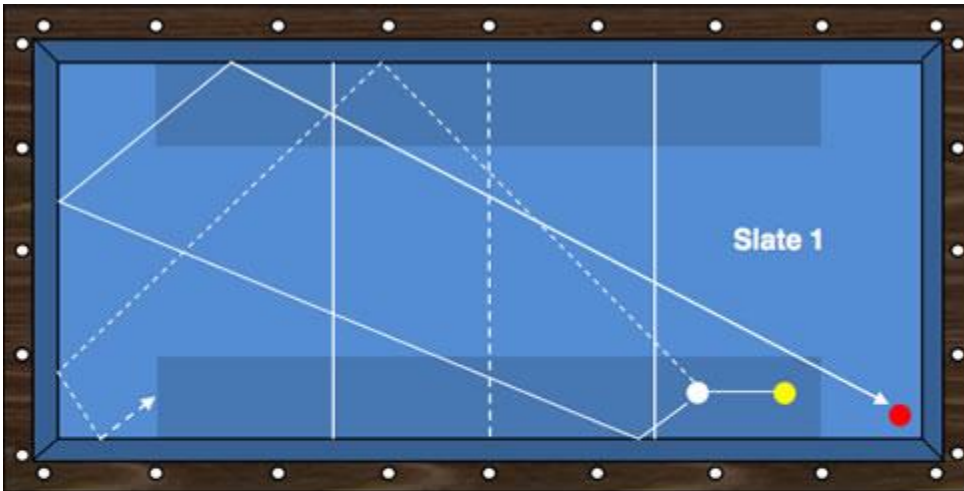
Slate 1

In Diagram1, your first object ball lies in the Slate 1 section, here we try to cut that ball into an area between the fourth and fifth diamonds on the opposite long rail, banking it cross corner into a high-percentage scoring zone (in all these diagrams the cue ball path is or should be, obvious). You must cut 1/8 of that first object ball, using 4 o'clock English if the shot lies on the other side of the table), and a short stroke; remember, you're cutting the object ball thin here, and a long stroke will impart too much speed to the cue ball.
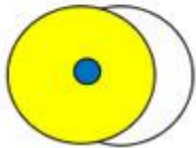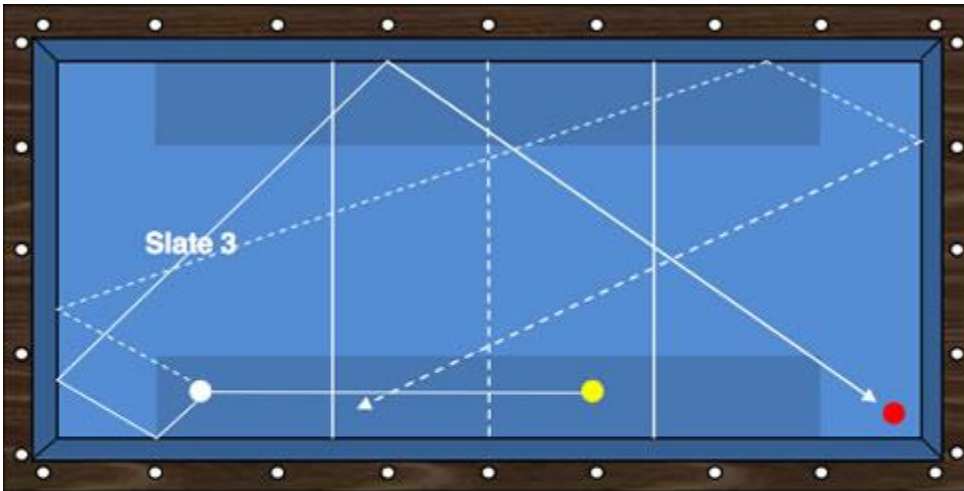
Diagram 2
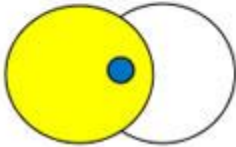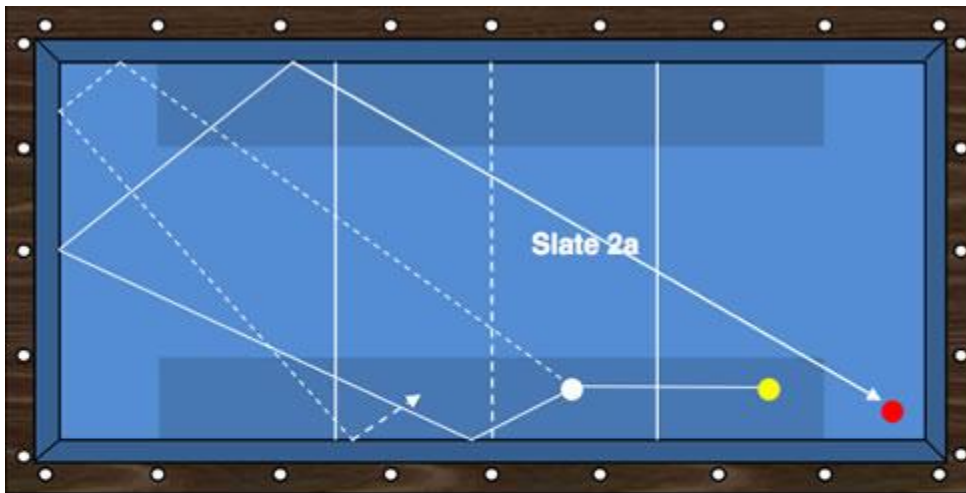
In Diagram 2, your first object ball is located in Slate 2a. Cut the first ball into the opposite corner, long rail first, with enough speed to bring it back to the other long cushion. Hit it 1 /3 full, with 3 o'clock English, and a normal stroke (that is, your follow-through is the same length as your bridge).

Diagram 3

In Diagram 3, the first object ball lies in the Slate 2b section, here instead of cutting the ball, we drive it to the short rail, between the first and second diamonds from the opposite corner. As diagrammed, that ball's route should take it to the opposite long rail, short rail and back to our high-percentage scoring lane. That ball should be hit half-full, with 3 o'clock English, use a bit more speed than usual, to drive the first ball properly.

Diagram 4

Finally, Diagram 4 shows you an object ball, lying in the Slate 3 section, this time drive that ball to the short cushion, between the first and second diamonds from the near corner. This is similar to a straight-back bank shot in pool, a two-thirds full hit will send it back to the opposite corner, then to the Slate 2b section and once again, a high-percentage scoring lane. Use minimum 1 o'clock English this time, with a (quick short stroke) to keep your cue ball from going forward and to long.