

# A Change of Perspective

by Tom Simpson © July 2003

It's gonna sound corny, but too bad. It's a serious suggestion. You've heard it from everyone from coaches and sports psychologists to Chevy Chase in *Caddyshack*.

**"Be the ball."** There. I said it. Be the ball. When you stop snickering, read on.

The suggestion here is to change your perspective. Chances are, unless you are already a high-level player, you are watching your object balls fall in pockets. It's fun. It's gratifying. But is it necessary? Is it the best approach? Maybe not.

When you are a beginner or intermediate level player, it *is* important to watch the object ball. Keeping an eye on the object ball will teach you how cut shots work, and give you the necessary thousands of memories of how much cut & speed produces which results. Watching the object ball will also tend to help you stay down after your hit stroke, which is good form. Staying down on the shot shows confidence and commitment, even if you miss. As you get better, it's also valuable to start to see which part of the pocket your shot is hitting (left point, left side, center, right side, or right point). This feedback is important to the learning process.

So, if not the object ball, what should you watch? *The cueball!*

Yes, the cueball. After all, what's the game really about, once you can sink balls? Controlling the rock. What makes one player better than another? A big part of it is how well – and how consistently – they can position that cueball. If you're pocketing balls pretty well, do you really need to watch the object ball? You'll hear it, if it falls in the pocket. Assume the object ball is going down. **Watch the cueball, and learn the important stuff.**

This is a really simple idea, but if you're not doing it, you're in for a big improvement. Watching the cueball gives you helpful feedback on the reality of how the ball behaves. It also improves your focus and feel.

You should be looking down the shot line when you hit the cueball. Most instructors agree you should only look at the cueball last if you're breaking or shooting an elevated shot such as a swerve, jump, or massé. If you're looking at the cueball during the hit moment, it will take an act of faith on your part to make this change. Try closing your eyes. You'll probably still make the shot, and maybe you'll begin to believe you don't have to be looking at the cueball when you hit it.

Before you go down on the shot, think about where you want the cueball to go, and what it will have to do to get there when it leaves the object ball collision. Try watching the cueball as it comes into your field of view and approaches and hits the target. Focus on seeing it bounce off the object ball. You may find this actually enables you to see the target spot more precisely. Many players visualize the target line as *slicing* through the object ball. When you switch to watching the cueball, you may start seeing the *spot* where the cueball will be when it strikes the object ball. As you begin to see in this new way, your focus should improve. Better focus brings better feel. Better feel gets better position. Better position wins more games.

This shift will liberate you from worrying so much about sinking the object ball. Ya got that already. **Associate with the cueball.** Give it your attention. Have a plan, and believe in it. Be the ball. See it happen. Thank me later.