

# Russian Billiards

[Standardized World Rules 1997]

Except when clearly contradicted by these additional rules, the General Rules of Pocket Billiards apply.

Russian Billiards is an unusual game, painstakingly developed over time, and to the best of our knowledge unique to the games room of the University Club of Queen's University at Kingston. However, since the rules were posted on the web, I've had feedback from players all over the world who have tried playing this fine game. It is ideally suited for varying numbers of players who may come and go at random. Although it has a clear beginning, there is no clearly defined end, and no objectives, other than those the players themselves bring to the game.

Violation of any rule is considered a scratch, regardless of intent.

## Balls

Six or more colored balls (red, pink, blue, yellow, black and green) and one white ball may be present on the table. Except as noted below, all of the balls must be present at the start of each shot. Each ball is associated with (a) particular pocket(s) and spotting location. Viewed from the bottom of the table:

- The white ball is spotted within the D at the discretion of the active player and associated with none of the pockets.
- The red ball is spotted on the first central spot and associated with both bottom pockets. Its value is one point.
- The pink ball is spotted on the second central spot and has special associative properties described under Declaration. Its value is dependent on declaration.
- The blue ball is spotted on the middle spot and is associated with both of the side pockets. Its value is nine points
- The yellow ball is spotted on the top left spot and associated with the top left pocket. Its value is six points.
- One black ball may be spotted on the top center spot for each of the of the players that has a posted score of more than 90 points. It has no value, but has special properties as described under Black Ball.
- The green ball is spotted on the top right spot and associated with the top right pocket. Its value is three points.
- The figure shows the placement of each of the balls on the table. The spots referred to are the standard Snooker spots. When it is not possible to spot a ball in its assigned location it will be spotted as directed by the second player following the current player, or by the other player in the case where there are only two players.

## Play

Play will begin with all balls spotted on their associated spots, when the first player strikes the white ball.

After the first shot either the white ball or the pink ball may be the cue ball. see Declaration.

A shot consists of striking the cue ball with a cue in such a way as to put it in motion, and continues until all the balls have come to rest.

A turn consists of one or more shots by the same player. A player may continue shooting indefinitely until a given shot yields either zero points or a scratch, at which point play rotates to the next player in the sequence.

When any ball is first placed on the table, or returned to the table after leaving the table in such a way as not to return of its own accord, it shall be placed on its associated spot. If that spot is blocked, the ball shall be spotted to any vacant spot on the table, at the discretion of the player whose turn precedes the current player.

When the white ball is returned to the table and used as the cue ball, the next shot must direct it so that it does not strike a ball that rests on the D line, or on the same side of the D line as the cue ball, before the cue ball has struck a ball or cushion on the opposite side of the D line.

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When, at the end of a shot, the cue ball is in direct contact with another ball, that ball shall be considered to be the first ball contacted by the cue ball on the next shot, regardless of the direction of the shot.

Players may enter and leave the sequence at any vacant position, however, a player's score shall remain active until that player has died; the game has been discontinued; or for one full rotation after that player has declared said player's withdrawal from the game. (Returning one's cue to the storage rack shall be considered a declaration of withdrawal from the game.)

### **Scoring**

Scoring from a single shot is cumulative and is treated as being without order of accumulation. A player shall keep a running tally of points scored. These points will be posted to the player's score only at the end of a turn, or when a star or planetary body is scored. In the event of a scratch all points scored during that turn vaporize, and penalties are applied to the player's score, if any, as it was at the start of the turn.

A player who has no stars shall accumulate points in two tallies, above and below a horizontal line, adding all newly scored points to the tally above the line. In the event of a scratch, the tally above the line will be eliminated and half its value (rounding down) will be added to the tally below the line. If a scratch occurs when there is no score above the line, the score below the line shall be halved (rounding down).

A player with one star shall accumulate points in a single tally. In the event of a scratch that tally shall be halved (rounding down).

A player with two stars shall accumulate points in a single tally. In the event of a scratch that tally shall be reduced to zero.

A player with three stars shall accumulate points in a single tally. In the event of a scratch that tally shall be multiplied by negative one or, if it is already negative, shall be doubled.

A player with more than three stars shall be subject to more severe penalties, declared at the whim of his or her opponent(s).

In the special case where a player scratches in the same turn during which that player claimed another player's score (see Stars), the full value of the penalty assessed shall revert to the aggrieved player.

When the black ball is on the table and a player whose posted score exceeds 90 points scratches, the penalty points must be divided between the other players. The distribution is at the discretion of the scratching player.

### **Cannons**

When the cue ball contacts more than one ball, two points are awarded for each successive color of ball that is contacted, provided that color has not been previously contacted by the cue ball during that shot.

Hitting the same ball more than once counts zero. Hitting two different balls declared to be the same color counts zero.

### **In Off**

When the cue ball is sunk in a pocket associated with the first ball that it contacted, points are scored according to the value of that ball.

### **Pot**

When a colored ball is sunk in a pocket with which it is associated points are scored according to the value of that ball, except that no ball may be potted off it's spot on more than three successive shots.

### **Scratch**

A scratch is assessed immediately against any player who violates any of the rules, or against the active player when, during a shot:

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- the cue ball does not contact any other ball.
- any ball leaves the table entirely (that is, without being pocketed) and fails to return to the table of its own accord.
- a ball is sunk in a pocket with which it is not associated.
- the cue ball is sunk in a pocket with which the first ball it struck is not associated.
- a black ball is contacted or put in motion during the shot of a player who has a posted score of over 90 points.
- a player's accumulated score, including points not yet posted, exceeds one hundred points, or reaches one hundred points as the result of a shot that scored more than a single point.

In addition, any player who shoots when a required ball is missing from the table is assessed a scratch. Any player who incorrectly spots a ball is assessed a scratch.

### **Stars**

Stars are for display purposes only, and once awarded lose all but symbolic value. (Although previous versions of these rules have permitted chicken stars and stars with honor, as we move to a market economy it becomes clear that these stars are entirely artificial and contrary to the spirit of the game. Hence, they have been purged.)

A Real Star is scored whenever a player reaches a total score of exactly one hundred points by scoring a single point on her or his final shot leading to the star. At that point the player must claim and post to his or her own score the accumulated points of any other player and a 'red ball star'. In either case, the player continues shooting and accumulating points. Note that any single point shot is valid for obtaining a real star, whether the red ball is involved or not.

### **Declaration**

At the start of any player's turn that player may choose to declare the pink ball to have another color. For example: "The pink is green." This declaration associates the pink ball with the same pocket(s) as the named ball and gives it the same point value. If no declaration is made, the pink remains pink and has no associated pocket. Following either the declaration or the player's first shot of the turn the color of the pink ball remains fixed for the duration of that player's turn.

Declaration must be explicit, as the only obvious (Shorter Oxford: Plain and open to the eye) color of the pink ball is pink.

In the special case where the pink ball is declared to be white, the player may choose to shoot either the white ball or the pink ball as the cue ball, and may use either one in subsequent shots in that turn. While the pink is in use as the cue ball, the white ball is deemed to be black, and while the white ball is in use as the cue ball, the pink ball is deemed to be black. In addition a player may not make more than five cannons in any sequence of shots without including another scoring play.

### **Black Ball**

A black ball is not spotted to the table unless all conditions specified under Balls have been met. If there are fewer black balls on the table than are permitted by the conditions, any player may spot a black ball to the table.

Once the conditions would no longer permit the spotting to the table of the number of black balls present, any black ball may be removed from the table by any player, before any shot.

Where multiple black balls are not available, other balls, such as the brown ball may be substituted for the second and additional black balls, but for the purposes of these rules, they shall be considered indistinguishable from one another.

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