

Fuzzy Results

by Tom Simpson © September 2002

A handful of factors combine to make one player better than another. Some factors are things we have no real control over, such as perception, shot memory, and natural physical ability. In some vital areas though, appropriate knowledge and effort can lead to real improvements. So it makes sense to work on things we can actually improve, things such as quality and consistency of stroke, degree of precision, solidity of concentration, and level of pool knowledge.

Let's talk about Precision. Pool is perhaps the most precise game on the planet. That's part of why we like it so much. **One player can become significantly better than another through being aware of a higher level of precision and consciously intending to play with higher precision.** The first step is simply becoming aware of this fact – there is always a higher level of precision available to you. It's up to you to make the commitment to focus more precisely on every shot. It's up to you to take that responsibility seriously, on every shot. It's up to you to put forth the mental effort to make and execute more precise plans.

This is one way better players beat us. They have accepted the requirement to focus at a higher level of precision, and are willingly carrying that load. To get better, we have to give up our laziness. Playing more precisely requires us to go to the bother of thinking our way to an *Achievable Clear Intention* and then supplying the resolve and energy to sustain that intent and make it happen. Clear Intention? We all know we have to do this, but it takes energy, courage, and discipline to forge clear intent and commit to it. To the extent we are lazy and don't bother to do the things we need to do to shoot a shot with high precision, we limit our game. Great players don't take *any* shots for granted, and play every shot as precisely as they can.

One player's precision is another player's carelessness. You can choose to raise your game by *consciously intending to be more precise*. Beginning golfers hope to putt to a 3-foot diameter circle around the cup. Low handicappers visualize which *part* of the hole their ball will fall into. Pros sometimes plan which blade of grass they will roll over as their ball drops. Who has Achievable Clear Intent here? They all do. The difference is in how precisely that intent is imagined. Sure, "luck" is a factor, but it's not dependable. Overall, I believe you earn your results. And the really big point here is this: **Fuzzy plans produce fuzzy results.**

Let's switch to a pool example. How precisely do you attempt to play position? We're all guilty of fuzzy position plans such as "I'll just send the cueball down to the other end of the table," or "I'll draw back a bit," or "I'll go into that cluster." How precise is "the other end of the table" or "a bit"? Which part of that cluster? As the shot rolls to a stop, it dawns on us where we would have *preferred* the cueball to wind up, but it's too late now. We should have done that thinking *before* we shot. As our plans become more precise and complete, we have to bring more focus to our shooting. Doesn't it stand to reason that the more clear the intent we bring to a shot, the closer we'll come to achieving the plan? If you shoot a lag shot with the Clear Intent of coming to rest on the head rail, isn't it more likely you'll shoot a good lag than if you just planned to "get close to this end of the table"? Imagine the ball on the rail, and you're more likely to land it there.

To improve your precision, fully visualize every shot, in your imagination. See all the ball collisions, rail bounces, and ball pocketing, in your mind, as completely and as precisely as your current grasp of the game allows. When you're satisfied that your plan is 1) clear & precise, 2) is a reasonable plan strategically, and 3) is achievable with your current skill levels, commit to the plan and clearly intend the results you want. Step up and shoot. **More precise plans produce more precise results.**

Let's get practical now. Here's a powerful practice that will dramatically improve your position play. Unless you're already a very strong player, do this one without witnesses, because it will be embarrassing. Make a paper bulls-eye target. You can buy a lifetime supply of rifle targets for a couple of bucks, or print something out through your computer. I like rifle targets because they are printed on very thin paper that allows balls to roll across the target accurately. I trim the rifle targets down to a 6" circle. Use whatever size you like.

Now, let's put in a little quality practice time at the table. Play whatever game you like, or work a practice drill of your choosing. The kicker is that before every shot, you study the table, make the clearest achievable plan you can, and then place your bulls-eye target where you intend the cueball to stop. Shoot the shot with Clear Intent, and try to land on your bulls-eye. You'll find it's very gratifying to land on the target. If you missed the target, what should you have done differently? Was the plan off, or was it the shooting? This drill is humbling, but very productive. It will teach you where your beliefs about position play are not accurate, it will make you more precise, and it will do it right now. Lazy is for losers.