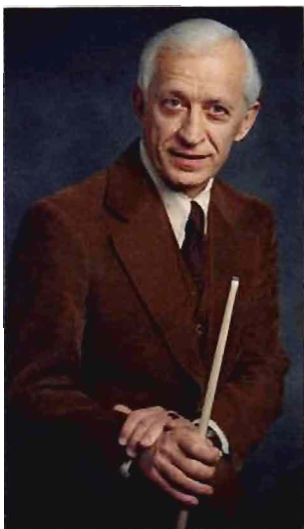


# Let's Talk Billiards

by Don "Preacher" Feeney

## It's Time to Draw the Line



The second most important skill in billiards, next to a straight stroke, is knowing where the vertical axis of the cue ball is.

As I find very few players in this country who can generate a stroke, I find it equally hard to find a player who can address the cue ball directly in the center, even when they try! I feel its a habit developed to compensate for an imperfect stroke. They do indeed hit the the cue ball in the middle but always with a little spin imparted to it because of the sidewise motion of the cue at contact.

This is not to say that the cue ball should always be struck on it's vertical axis. Far from it. In some games the cue ball is rarely struck center, but the good cueman does not hit to the right or left at random. He strikes the cue ball precisely to the right or left depending on the exact amount of spin desired.

If you have been working on developing a straight stroke then it is time to concentrate on finding the exact center of the cue ball. This can be done best by starting from a perfect frame of reference, that is, the vertical center of the cue ball. As you take your stance, scan your eye across the equator of the cue ball and find the exact middle. Now look up and find the exact top of the cue ball. This will take some training, but you will develop a sense for it.

The next step is to connect these two points with a mental line. Although Albert Einstein insisted that lines are really not straight, this little line of no more than an inch is straight enough for our purpose.

Now that you have identified the exact vertical axis of the cue ball with a mental line, you can align it to the direction you want the cue ball to go. Take your straight stroke and execute. Unless the cue ball hits a rock, it should go exactly in the direction you intended.