

SNOOKER

THE AGILITY GAME

By Dave Hanson

There are two parts to the execution of a Snooker course:

- The opening sequence
- The closing sequence

The colored flags or marker cones next to each obstacle represent the number of points you receive if you *successfully* complete that obstacle. They also show the order in which the obstacles are to be taken during the closing sequence.

At the USDAA Advanced and Masters level, you need a minimum of 37 points to achieve a qualifying score in Snooker. Beginning in 2004, this qualifying requirement also applies to the Starters/Novice level.

The maximum score possible on a course that uses three red obstacles is 51 points. Maximum score with four red obstacles is 59 points.

A red obstacle is worth 1 point and is always a single bar jump, which usually can be performed in either direction. All the other colored obstacles are considered “bonus” obstacles.

The following table shows the individual points for the bonus obstacles. It also shows the cumulative points available in the closing sequence. For example, if you successfully get through the #4 (brown) obstacle in the closing, you will earn 9 points in the closing sequence (2+3+4).

Obstacle Point Values Chart

	Yellow	Green	Brown	Blue	Pink	Black
Obstacle Point Value	2	3	4	5	6	7
Closing Sequence Cumulative Score	2	5	9	14	20	27

The Opening Sequence

- You accumulate points in the opening sequence by taking: red-bonus obstacle, red-bonus obstacle, and red-bonus obstacle. A fourth red-bonus obstacle combination may be available, depending on the course.
- Once you have attempted a particular red, it is “retired” from the course and is not available for you to take a second time.
- Successfully completing a red jump earns you the right (and the obligation) to perform a bonus point (#2-#7) obstacle. If you fault that red, however, you have not yet earned the right to attempt an obstacle of higher point value.
- In the opening, there is the possibility of taking as many bonus point obstacles as there are reds available on that course. You may take the same bonus point obstacle after each red you perform successfully, or all of your bonus obstacles may be obstacles of different point values.
- If you commit to a particular bonus obstacle, you must perform that obstacle. Be aware that the “four-paws rule” defines being committed to an obstacle at the Starter/Novice and Advanced levels, while a single touch of the obstacle by the dog is all it takes at the Masters level.
- Refusals are not faulted in the opening sequence.
- If you fault a bonus obstacle, you must complete the obstacle, but you will not be awarded points for that obstacle.

Examples

- If you miss a weave pole in a set, you must go back and fix it. In Starters/Novice, you will be awarded the bonus points since a missed pole is not a fault at this level. In Advanced and Masters, however, you will not be awarded the bonus points since a missed pole is a fault at this level.
- If the dog commits to a contact obstacle and misses the up or down contact, you will not be awarded the points.

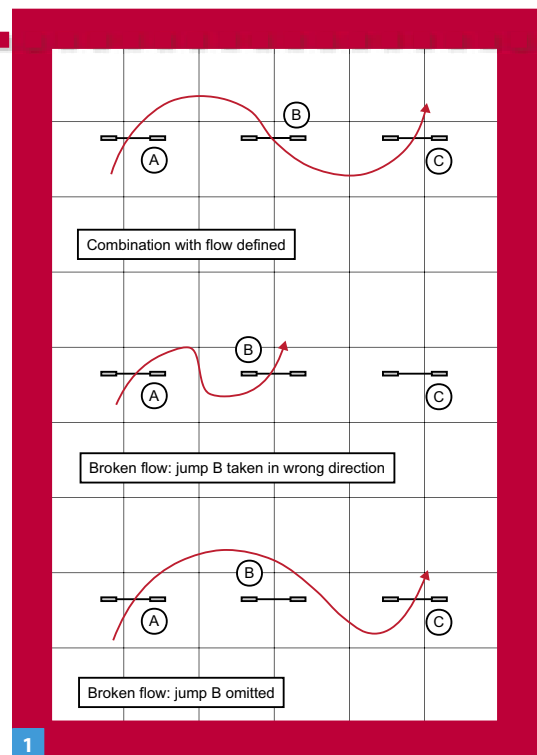
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- If a dog enters a tunnel and backs out, having committed to the obstacle, the dog must perform the obstacle and will be awarded points. (Backing out of the tunnel is a refusal, but it is not faulted in the opening sequence).

Combination Obstacles

- The judge may set up a combination of two or more obstacles that have to be completed as a unit for points. The judge may indicate an order and direction in which these obstacles must be performed.
- If you fault any single obstacle in the combination, you must complete all the obstacles in the combination to continue the opening. You will not be awarded the bonus points.
- If you break the order of the sequence, either by taking an obstacle in the wrong direction or by taking an obstacle out of order (see Figure 1), you must go back and complete the defined sequence of the combination to continue the opening. You will not be awarded the bonus points.



Opening Sequence Reference Chart

If...	Then...
Your dog drops the top bar on a red jump...	Move on to another red jump.
Your dog drops the top bar on the last red jump...	Start the closing sequence.
You do a red and two bonus obstacles in a row...	The whistle will blow. Run, don't walk, across the finish line to stop the clock.
You do the same red jump twice...	The whistle will blow. Run, don't walk, across the finish line to stop the clock.
Your dog faults a bonus obstacle (no refusals are counted in the opening; weave poles must be corrected before going on)...	Complete that obstacle and then continue with your planned opening sequence. You will not get the points for that obstacle.
Your dog performs a combination out of the prescribed sequence, (commonly referred to as "broken flow")...	Complete the sequence in the prescribed order, and continue with your planned opening sequence. You will not get the points for that obstacle.

Closing Sequence

Compared to the opening sequence, the closing sequence is relatively straightforward.

- Immediately following the completion of the opening sequence, you complete the “bonus” obstacles in numerical order, beginning with #2 and continuing through #7.
- If you fault an obstacle or commit to an obstacle out of the numeric sequence, the judge will blow the whistle to signal your opportunity to accumulate points is over. At this point, you keep all the points you have earned and must cross the finish line to stop the clock.

- Refusals are not faulted in the closing sequence at the Starters/Novice level. Refusals are faulted in the closing sequence at contact obstacles only in the Advanced level. Refusals are faulted at all obstacles in the closing sequence at the Masters level.
- Combinations are still active during the closing sequence. Be aware that the rules of performance may be more defined than in the opening sequence.

Closing Sequence Reference Chart

If...	Then...
Your dog faults an obstacle (drops a bar, misses a contact, misses a weave, earns a refusal)...	The whistle will blow. Run, don't walk, across the finish line to stop the clock.
You take obstacles out of numerical order...	The whistle will blow. Run, don't walk, across the finish line to stop the clock.
Your dog enters an obstacle from the opposite direction or performs a combination in the wrong order...	The whistle will blow. Run, don't walk, across the finish line to stop the clock.
Time expires...	The whistle will blow. Run, don't walk, across the finish line to stop the clock.

Strategy for Playing the Game

- At most events, judges prepare exhibitor handouts with course diagrams. Study the Snooker course and decide on your preferred sequence. You may take a timing device (such as a stopwatch or a kitchen timer) into the ring during the walk-through.
- Remember, at the Advanced and Masters level (and in 2004, at the Starters/Novice level), you need a minimum of 37 points to achieve a qualifying score.
- Verify which obstacles are used for the 7- and 6-point bonus obstacles. If your dog can perform these obstacles well, plan to attempt all the closing obstacles for points. If your dog is slow or has problems weaving, however, and weaves are the 7-point obstacle, plan to complete the course through the 6-point obstacle. The same strategy would apply if the 7-point obstacle is a contact, and you know your dog misses the down side of the contact at least 50% of the time.
- Consult the chart at the beginning of this article to see how many points you can expect to earn in the closing. Subtract this number from 37 and you will see how many points you need in the opening.
- During the walk-through, run the closing sequence to get an idea of how long it will take. Subtract this from the time allotted by the judge and plot your opening strategy.

- Know the direction in which obstacles must be taken. While sometimes obstacles are “bidirectional” and can be taken either way, often the judge will specify a direction in which they must be taken.

Points to Consider for Your Opening Strategy

- Taking the yellow (2-point obstacle) after the last red puts you in place for the closing sequence. Remember, however, that you must perform the yellow again as the first obstacle of the closing sequence.
- Weaves take time to perform, as do contact obstacles.
- Unless you fail to complete them, tunnels and tires cannot be faulted in the opening sequence (the only fault possible on these particular obstacles is a refusal, and refusals are not faulted in the opening).
- If your dog regularly drops jump bars, stay away from jump combinations.

Good luck! And remember: Always smile... no matter what happens! 🐾

Dave Hanson is a Civil Engineer for the Texas Department of Transportation (Highway Department). He is originally from Hessle in Yorkshire, England. Dave's passion is dog agility. He is a competitor, a judge, a teacher, and a supervisor for other judges. He can be contacted at cdhanson@ktc.com.

Don't Get Snookered Again

Strategies for Three-Reds-Only Snooker

By Abbie Tamber

Learning the rules of Snooker is hard enough, but figuring out what strategy to use in order to qualify is a bit more mystifying. Some time ago, I found myself in just such a predicament when Steve Medved saved the day by giving me the chart shown on the left side of the card. The chart is small enough to be carried in a wallet and the one he handed me was laminated.

The important information abbreviated on the card is: finishing the closing sequence is worth 27 points. A second chart that I added on the back of my card (see the right side of the card) indicates the point value if you conclude your closing sequence at a particular numbered obstacle. These charts can help you make wiser decisions when looking at ways to accumulate the needed 37 points to qualify (not for a Super-Q though) on any Snooker course that has only three reds.

When deciding on a strategy, you need to look at two things:

1. Whether your dog can make it through the closing sequence—performing those obstacles correctly and in time
2. What your options are in the opening

For example, if you know that your dog can complete all the obstacles in the closing sequence, you will earn 27 points: $2 + 3 + 4 + 5 + 6 + 7$. That means all you need is 10 points in the opening.

If you cannot do the closing sequence all the way through, however, the back of the card gives you the total points you will earn as you complete each closing obstacle.

Example 1: Suppose you want to try two 2-point obstacles and one 3-point obstacle in the opening sequence. What must you do in the closing to qualify?

- Two 2-point obstacles ($2 \times 2 = 4$), one 3-point obstacle ($1 \times 3 = 3$), and 3 reds ($1 \times 3 = 3$) makes a total of 10 points in the opening.
- Completing #2 through #7 ($2 + 3 + 4 + 5 + 6 + 7$) earns 27 points in the closing.
- Your total is 37 points.

Example 2: On the other hand, if you take all 7-point obstacles in the opening, to qualify you only have to make it through #5 in the closing.

- Three 7-point obstacles ($7 \times 3 = 21$) and 3 reds ($1 \times 3 = 3$) makes a total of 24 points in the opening.
- Completing #2 through #5 ($2 + 3 + 4 + 5$) earns 14 points in the closing.
- Your total is 38 points.

I hope this helps others who get stressed in Snooker as well as those who are mathematically challenged. Don't let yourself get snookered again!

Here's your own wallet size Snooker card. Make a copy of it then cut to size and fold in half.

Snooker Scoring

Need 37 points to qualify
Closing sequence = 27 points

Opening	Closing	Total Value
10 pts.	Through #7	= 37 pts.
17 pts.	Through #6	= 37 pts.
23 pts.	Through #5	= 37 pts.
28 pts.	Through #4	= 37 pts.

Super-Q: Top 15%

Closing Sequence

#7 =	27
#6 =	20
#5 =	14
#4 =	9
#3 =	5

Abbie Tamber and her JRT, MicroBurst, attained their ADCH in 2002 and have been named to the USDAA/USA team to compete at the second IFCS Agility World Championships. Abbie owns and operates Dogs on the Run, LLC in Oxford, New York and can be reached at tamberra@ascent.net.