

Snooker Overview

Care for a game of snooker? In America, many people haven't even heard of this variation on billiards. Players in other parts of the world opt for snooker as their game of choice at pool halls and billiards rooms. Snooker is actually the most widely watched television sports program in England, but Americans are only beginning to recognize the game.

Snooker started as a simple variation of pool. Called "pyramid pool" by regulars, the game was basically a variation on the "life" and "black" games of pool. The popularity of snooker really began to gain steam when Sir Neville Chamberlain, a regiment soldier in India, modified it around 1875. Soldiers in the English military enjoyed the game, and its popularity continued to grow until had reached its modern prestigious spot in England.

Learning to play snooker can seem complex to beginners, but the basic rules are fairly simple. The most complicated step is setting the table:

* Snooker requires a standard, full-size billiards table that measures 12 feet by 6 feet.

* A standard set of snooker balls is required. This set of 22 balls includes 15 red balls, 1 each of pink, yellow, brown, blue, black and green balls, and 1 white cue ball.

* The green, brown, and yellow balls are placed side by side (to remember the order, use the acronym "God Bless You") at one end of the table, approximately six inches apart. The blue ball is placed in the exact center of the table. The pink ball is set between the blue ball and the top cushion at the far end of the table. The black ball goes on a marked spot located at about 12 3/4 inches from the top cushion.

* The fifteen red balls are set in the triangle rack and placed immediately behind the pink ball. The apex ('point') of the red triangle should come as close as possible to the pink ball, without actually touching it.

Once the balls are properly set, the game can begin. The breaking player strikes the triangle of red balls. When a player sinks a red ball, he or she is then free to shoot and sink any one of the six coloured balls. The yellow ball is worth two points, the green is worth three, the brown ball is worth four, the blue is five, the pink is six, and the black is worth seven points. When a coloured ball has been sunk, the point is scored and the ball is retrieved and re-spotted on the table.

When you have mastered the basic rules of snooker, you can try one of the many varieties of game play. Although newcomers can easily play snooker, it is a game that's typically reserved for more experienced billiards players. Therefore, it's best to have an experienced snooker player explain the rules to you.

Snooker has been a popular sport in England and other parts of the world for more than a century, and with good reason. It's fun, skillful and relatively easy to play. If you have a regulation size table, consider investing in set of snooker balls, and add a whole new dimension to your game playing.