

In reality a fairly simple set of questions and easily answered by any competent referee or any player with a good basic knowledge of the game. They do however, throw up some interesting discussion items which I have included in my book and that I reproduce here and is mainly aimed at those less experienced with the rules. I do believe that there are also some things that will be of value to all.

Ball on.

The rule states that a ball on is a ball which may be lawfully struck with the first impact of the cue ball, or a ball which may be potted without being so struck.

This also brings us to the difference between a ball on and an object ball which has also been the cause of some confusion. A set of snooker balls is made up of 21 object balls and 1 cue ball. Therefore object balls are not necessarily all balls on, but a ball or balls on are always object balls.

Also the difference between 'potted', which is causing a ball to enter a pocket lawfully and 'pocketed' which is the unlawful equivalent.

Now going back to the rule, the first part is easily understandable and needs no explanation. It is the latter part of this rule that could use some clarification.

What it basically means is that any object ball may be propelled into a pocket and count on the score board as long as it is lawful to strike it with the first impact of the cue ball.

So to first strike a red or a Free Ball when coming to the table or a red after potting a colour, which then strikes another red and enters a pocket, is legal. (A Plant). Similarly striking a red or a Free Ball then going on to strike another red which is then potted is also legal. (A Canon). Also potting two or more reds or a Free ball and reds is acceptable. Even first striking a red then striking a colour which is not pocketed and then striking another red which is potted is O.K. (In the poser this would be the sequence of – 1st ball struck, the touching ball. 2nd ball struck, the blue, 3rd ball struck, the potted red). Any combination stroke that can be thought of and executed which legally strikes a ball with first impact and then either pots it or pots another that could also have been struck first legally, is allowed.

Causing a ball not on to enter a pocket is a foul even if a ball on was struck first. So potting say, two reds and black in combination is not allowed even if one or both of the reds were struck first and they enter pockets in the correct sequence of red, black, red.

Section 2 Rule 12

(a) A nominated ball is the object ball which the striker declares, or indicates to the satisfaction of the referee, he undertakes to hit with the first impact of the cue-ball.

(b) If requested by the referee, the striker must declare which ball he is on.

This rule deals with nominating a ball, which always means a coloured ball after potting a red, or a ball of the strikers' choice after being awarded a free ball. It is never necessary to nominate a red. It is also unnecessary to nominate the colours during the final sequence when no reds are left and a stroke has been played, or a foul committed, after potting the last one.

The rule states that the striker must declare, OR indicate to the satisfaction of the referee which ball he intends the cue ball to hit with first impact.

Of course the striker may verbally declare with every stroke he makes but this is not really necessary.

There are two ways to indicate which ball a striker intends to hit.

1. By stating it verbally, and
2. By cueing in the obvious direction of an isolated ball on.

The striker can also point to his intended target with his cue, but this is not advised even though there is no rule against it, as the possibility of fouling is increased with such an action. If however, a person has a disability where pointing is the only option available, it then becomes not just an option but a necessity.

If a ball on is in a clear area of the table and the striker is cueing in its direction this is taken to mean that he is nominating that particular ball and the referee will not ask him to nominate verbally. (nor should he need to if he is in the correct position).

If there is the slightest possibility in the mind of the striker that the referee could misconstrue his intentions he would be best advised to make them known to him.

If there is the slightest doubt in the mind of the referee he MUST ask the striker to declare and the striker MUST comply as demanded by the second clause of this rule.

Please also bear in mind here that an unnecessary request for nomination by the referee to the striker could upset his concentration and would be unfair. Get into the correct position behind the striker's arm and most times such a request will be unnecessary.

There is also one instance when it could be obvious which direction he intends to send the cue ball, but when the referee MUST ask the striker to declare and the striker MUST comply.

This is when the cue ball is touching a coloured ball after the striker has potted a red.

The referee will state "Touching ball, declare please" to which the striker MUST reply. (See Section 3 Rule 8a - Touching Ball) He can of course nominate the touching ball if he so desires and play away to a safe area. He could also nominate any other coloured ball to either play safe or continue his break.

The referee however, cannot know what is in the player's mind and must call a foul if he fails to declare. (This is one of the seven fouls not necessarily involving the Black that is penalised by 7 points)

The referee also has a duty to the players, which is to ensure that no misconceptions are in place in the strikers stated intentions. This can be facilitated by the referee repeating the nomination verbally, back to the players.

In the case of nominating a Free Ball, it has become the practice to do this verbally. The rule regarding nomination is exactly the same in this situation of course, but I believe that it is a good idea to speak in this instance as the Free Ball must be struck first or first simultaneously with a ball on and failure to do so, even if a ball on other than the Free Ball was struck first, a foul has been committed.