

Develop Better Focus for Pool Success

by Dr. Chris Stankovich

Dr. Chris Stankovich is a nationally acclaimed expert in sport performance science, and regularly teaches athletes (including pool players) how to improve mental toughness and maximize athletic abilities. Dr. Stankovich also offers an exclusive line of high performance products for pool players, including the world's first sport psychology app for pool (The Sport Performance Assessment – Pool), and the popular "Mind of Steel for Pool Success" DVD. You can learn more about these products by visiting www.drstankovich.com

18

Guest Instructor

very pool player has been in the following situation at some point in his pool playing career: Playing in a tight match, anxious nerves begin to take over and all of a sudden the player misses a relatively easy shot that he has made a million times before.

And if that's not bad enough, the player then carries the bad miss in his head as he approaches the table for his next shot, and guess what happens? The frustration and anger in his mind causes him to miss another shot (or make the shot but end up with lousy position for the following shot).

Has this ever happened to you?

Focus is an incredibly important skill that often impacts the success (or lack thereof) pool players experience. In the previous example, when a player continues to think about the last missed shot he actually puts himself in a position to miss his next shot. Think about that for a moment – when you are still upset about missing the last shot you are not putting your full attention toward the only shot that counts – the next shot.

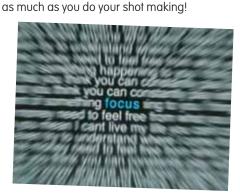
Focusing on relevant thoughts (the next shot) while completely letting go of irrelevant thoughts (the last missed shot) can make all the difference between average, good, and great players. It's also the reason why many players shoot great in practice situations as there is nothing to get nervous or upset about (miss a shot and you can just keep on practicing). When it comes to important matches and tournaments, however, many players struggle with quickly bouncing back from bad shots and poor position play, and what essentially happens is "the wheels fall off" and they play far below the level at which they are capable of playing.

Great pool players have very short memories, quickly letting go of missed shots and refocusing their energy toward the next shot. Sounds easy, right? Actually, developing a strong focus is a skill, similar to learning how to play draw shots, caroms, and successful safety shots. Maintaining a strong focus requires you to control your anxiety, increase your self-confidence, and quickly bounce back in those moments where you become completely frustrated.

Most pool players don't think much about the

importance of focus, and instead make the mistake of simply assuming that if they play more tournaments they will eventually learn how to improve their focus. My question is why work harder when you can work smarter? Instead of hoping to improve your focus, learn proven methods and techniques that can immediately improve your focus – thereby allowing you to win more games! Pool can be a very "mental" game when you think about how much of pool success depends on focus, concentration, visualization, and resiliency – making it all that much more

important that you work on your mental skills



Here are three ways to improve your focus:

Focus on relevant actions - Ignore irrelevant distractions

Focus on your mental preparation and the things you need to do in order to be successful (like being well rested and having your cue ready), while letting go of the things that are distractions (like the last missed shot).

Journal your progress

Get in the habit of keeping track of your practice schedule and tournament results.

Journaling is a skill that allows you to record your training, monitor your success, and continually develop new future goals to help you sustain your motivation and perseverance.

Focus on what you control, and let go of what you don't control

Similar to identifying what is relevant, identifying the things you control is important to your pool playing success. Focus on your mental preparation (you control) and don't worry about your opponent (not in your control).