



Dear Team:

Over the past several months it has come to light that there may be some confusion as to exactly what is a Defensive Shot and the importance of marking them properly. It is of the utmost importance that this aspect of scorekeeping be completely understood by all players and scorekeepers. Without proper scorekeeping it is impossible for *The Equalizer*® system to be 100% effective and accurate.

In the perfect world of pool, all players would call their opponent's attention to defensive shots, even before shooting them. Unfortunately, in the real world of pool that doesn't always happen. When keeping score, be sure to mark a defensive shot if you believe your teammate, or his opponent, did not intend to pocket a ball. Remember that it is not necessary for the scoresheets of both teams to agree on the number of defensive shots.

Some players misunderstand what constitutes a defensive shot (also called a safety). A defensive shot occurs when there is no intent to pocket a ball. *Intent* is the key word, and certainly leaves room for judgment. In order to protect the integrity of *The Equalizer*® handicap system, it's important for Team Captains and higher-skilled players to educate lower-skilled players on what a defensive shot is. To help understand what constitutes a defensive shot let's review some examples, keeping in mind that *intent* is the determining factor:

Example 1: A player is left “hooked” and unable to shoot directly at one of his object balls. He “kicks” at a ball sitting midway between the side and corner pockets, almost touching the rail. He hits the object ball just hard enough for it to contact the rail, making a legal hit and not giving up ball-in-hand. *Was there intent to make the ball? No. A defensive shot should be marked. (If the player had hit the object ball at least hard enough to drive it away from that rail, it would then be a judgment call on his intent.)*

Example 2: A player does not have a “makeable” or “high percentage” shot and decides to leave his opponent in a difficult situation, rather than attempt a difficult shot. He shoots one of his object balls softly to the rail and makes the cue ball roll in behind his object ball, leaving his opponent with no shot—or a difficult one at best. *This is an obvious defensive shot (also called a safety).*

Example 3: A Player is on the 8-ball and is “hooked” and unable to shoot directly at the 8-ball. Because his opponenet has several balls left on the table, or a couple of his balls “tied up”, the player decides to pick up the cue ball and give his opponent ball-in-hand rather than kicking at the 8-ball and taking the chance of scratching. *Was there any intent to make a ball? No, of course not. This is the most obvious defensive shot.*

Example 4: A player has three balls left on the table. One ball is makeable but the remaining two balls are tied up. He shoots the open object ball but misses it, leaving the object ball in a still open position on the table (possibly close to a pocket), and leaves the cue ball in a position on the table resulting in no shot for his opponent—or a difficult one at best. *Was there intent to pocket a ball? This is another judgment call and should be marked as a defensive shot if you believe the intent was to not pocket the ball due to the remaining tied up balls on the table.*

Example 5: A player is ahead in a game or match and decides to purposely miss a few shots. This is unethical and a form of cheating, better known as sandbagging, that could disqualify a player or team in Local League play or at an APA National Tournament. The way to prevent sandbagging is to **mark a defensive shot when you believe there is no intent by a player to make a ball**. This is obviously a judgment call. If every scorekeeper marked *defensive shots* when they believed sandbagging was taking place, it would be pointless for players to attempt sandbagging. In order for sandbagging to occur, BOTH teams must fail to follow the rules. The shooter must deliberately cheat, and his/her team and the opposing team must fail to mark the deliberate misses as *defensive shots*. It is hard to design a system more secure than one that requires the deliberate cheating by one team, and the negligence of the other team, in order for sandbagging to occur. *If it is the scorekeeper's opinion that a player did not **intend** to pocket a ball, a defensive shot should be marked.*

We would also like to take this opportunity to remind you that marking defensive shots never hurts the honest player. The only person that will be affected by accurate scorekeeping is the player that is intentionally trying to hold their skill level down. It takes a minimum of two people to allow someone to cheat our system, the player that is trying to hide something and the scorekeeper for allowing them to get away with it.

We need your help to protect the integrity of *The Equalizer*® handicap system. Improper scorekeeping contributes to inaccurate skill levels. It may not be noticed on a weekly basis during Local League play if everyone is marking it the same. However, upon entry to Higher Level Tournaments everyone pays more attention to detail and scorekeeping. This is where we see the difference come through. Often times, that is why skill levels increase and teams can be disqualified. If defensive shots were accurately marked at all times, those players' skill levels would not likely change during Higher Level Tournaments.

Please display good sportsmanship by announcing your *defensive shots* and help others recognize them. Your passion to win should never be compromised by sandbagging!

Best Regards,

AMERICAN POOLPLAYERS ASSOCIATION, INC.



Renée Poehlman
President