

Snooker Tables: 6 Myths Debunked...

The truth about tables and the myths, exposed...

Hi there,

Chris Gaynor here

Imagine...

Going to play on a "snooker table" for the first time...

Seeing how huge it is, shocked by its size.

Overwhelmed by the task that lies in front of you.

I know when I first played on a table all those years ago, it felt...

- intimidating,
- scary,
- and very frustrating.

Fast forward now, and it's lost that intimidating and scary factor, but, it's still, at times, very frustrating!

You'll feel it, believe me.

Your cue action when you first play is swinging everywhere bar straight, and, even when you roll a ball along the table you can't pot it.

You're frustrated.

You're exasperated...

And, you're wondering why nothing is going right!

Hold on though...This is where SnookerZone can help!

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Here, we debunk a few myths, and, more importantly, give you the confidence to understand what's going on and how the table affects how you play on it!

Understanding table mechanics will help you adapt to each table you play on, through trial and error.

No two tables are the same, and this is where your powers of adaptation come into play! You need to adapt to each table you play on, and, in some cases, quickly! Especially if you're in a match!

Let's dive right in.



The match table at Woking with a “faster match cloth” and “tighter” pockets!

MYTH 1: SNOOKER TABLE OR BILLIARD TABLE?

The first IMPORTANT myth to debunk is that the tables you and I play on are not called "snooker" tables, they are called billiard tables.

It's a bit like using the word hoover when it's vacuuming. Hoover is a brand, but has become synonymous with being used as the term, "I'm getting the hoover out to do the hoovering!! When you might be using a Dyson or Vax!

If you want to avoid being lambasted by hardcore fans, then, just say tables. We know what you mean!

Why?

Billiards was the first game played on a table and the great game snooker, now played worldwide, developed from billiards.

Snooker grew because it was "faster" than billiards and good for TV. And, now, more interesting for the viewing public!

Now, moving on, you'll also learn:

- Why one table isn't necessarily better than another.
- Why professionals prefer faster cloths.
- What cloths there are out there.
- What the differences are between pockets on match and club tables.
- And much more...

OK, let's continue...

MYTH 2: THIS TABLE'S BETTER?

On the professional circuit, they use the Star brand, a table which looks great on the surface, but is it "better" than an ordinary table in a club? Well, "Yes," and "No". What makes the table play better is the cloth that is used on the professional match table.

The real star of the show is...

NO 10 STRACHAN CLOTH!

World Snooker use No 10 Strachan Championship cloth and have used Strachan cloths since 1980.

What is it? The cloths are made from fine merino wool and offer longer-lasting resistance. The problem is, on the professional tour, the cloths do not last very long. If these "super" cloths were to be used in clubs, you'd have to change them very regularly. That would be costly indeed! In the days of the Alex Higgins and Steve Davis era, the cloths were much slower. Technology has moved on a lot and now brands such as Strachan have developed cloths with anti-kick technology to help prevent kicks for players in matches.

EVEN CLUB TABLES CAN HAVE EXPENSIVE RE-FITS!

Refitting cloths can be expensive. In the club where SnookerZone plays, he was told that the match cloth used in the club was around £700. A lot of money! Hence, you don't want any Tom, Dick, or Harry going on it and potentially ripping it up! Match tables need to be used sparingly! All tables need to be covered up.

[Here's a range of Strachan cloths...](#)

Even at the lower end of the re-fit, it is still expensive, so, as a beginner snooker player, it would pay if you invested in a coach, so that you know what you're doing on the table and don't give the snooker club owner a nightmare and a cost to need to re-fit, AND, also, a headache to boot!

Give the table some respect!

[GET A COACH NOW!](#)

ANOTHER CLOTH MANUFACTURER: HAINSWORTH

Hainsworth is another cloth manufacturer and they have three types of cloth. They are...

- Smart
- Precision
- Match

Some clubs will often go for a slightly "cheaper" cloth on most tables but they are still great quality and long-lasting but they must be looked after properly! The important thing is to brush the cloths regularly and ironing helps to make the table run faster.

MYTH 3: PRO MATCH TABLE POCKETS ARE LIKE BUCKETS!

No. Certainly not!

Professional match pockets are templated differently to club tables. If you cue and have a nice pendulum cue action and don't hit the ball too hard, and play the balls at pocket speed, they are more likely to accept the bags. There is also a narrower drop in the corners of the bag on some tables (especially match tables), which help the balls go in. On a new cloth on a match table, the balls may well accept the pockets easier initially, due to the newness. But, once the cloth has worn in a bit, they won't be quite so forgiving or generous!

TIP: On any table, don't hit the ball too hard! You should have a nice consistent pendulum style cue action.

[Want a smooth measured cue action? Then seek a coach to show you how to start - now!](#)

MYTH 4: CUSHIONS AND BIG BOUNCES

Big bounces can be down to anything! Chalk marks on the cushions. Dust. finger marks.

Basically, anything that gets on the table can cause either kicks or big bounces.

On the Snookermania site, it [reads...](#)

“Steel block cushions are used on all tournament tables to provide a more consistent rebound for snooker professionals. Galvanised steel is a more rigid material than wood and will not “give” under impact of the balls, no matter at what speed they are played into the cushion. The ball energy and direction are determined by the angle and speed at which they hit the cushion rubber surface. With a wooden cushion, the wood base of the cushion can sometimes give a little under impact, altering slightly the angle of the face of the cushion rubber and giving a slightly less than true bounce. The sound from the impact and bounce is also a slight give away as a wooden cushion gives a more hollow, dull thud than the steel cushion that gives an almost silent bounce.”

HOT TIP:

Practice striking the cue ball off the cushion dead centre at different angles, and see what reaction happens with the cue ball.

Then, try using side and see what reactions the cue ball has with the cushions.

Generally, (with side), if you use running side, the angle will widen and when using check side, the angle will narrow. Test this out for yourself.

Different tables, especially with varying cloths will react differently.

So, test, and adapt!

MYTH 5: THERE'S NO NAP ON PRO TABLES?

Untrue!

On a professional table there is still a nap but it's very fine, indeed.

WHAT IS THE NAP?

The nap of the cloth is how the cloth runs (and feels).

As you get better as a player, you will use your knowledge of the nap to adapt to how the cue ball runs when rolling balls into pockets at pocket speed.

The nap is like the tiny bristles standing on the end of a fine brush.

If you run your hands down it one way, it will feel smooth. Rub them the other way, and they are very coarse.

Professionals and top amateurs prefer a short nap because it helps with positional play better.

Dennis Taylor explains the nap in his “Play Snooker with Dennis Taylor” video very well by quoting another player.

Basically, if you run your hands down it one way, it's very smooth. Run the other, and it's rough. It's like running your hands down the fur on a pussy cat's back!

Lovely description.

HOW TO USE THE NAP TO YOUR ADVANTAGE ON CLUB TABLES...

Well, this is really through trial and error. On an older club table where the cloth is worn, you will have to adjust your aiming to cater for the roll on the table.

On table 13 that SnookerZone plays on at Woking in Surrey, when playing a ball to the middle from the bottom of the table (black spot area), per se, the object ball normally drifts off slightly to the left when aiming to strike the ball to the right when attempting to pot it left to right.

Vice versa, it's the other way when playing right to left.

As a player, you must compensate for the roll and recognize this in your diagnosis. This is why staying down on the shot and gaining feedback on what the object ball is doing is so vital! This is what we mentioned earlier about adapting to tables.

On pro tables, on superfine cloths, there is hardly any nap, so you don't need to allow much for it.

To summarise,

Here's a checklist...

- Be aware of how the table runs and test: Roll the cue ball up and down the spots to see if it's straight and not rolling off.
- Get involved in maintaining the table you play on at a club. If at a club, ask the owner if you can learn about brushing, blocking and ironing...
- Ask about the tables to the owner or people working there, or, collar a table fitter. Be inquisitive...
- Practice developing a straight cue action so that you are precise with shots such as when the object ball is near the cushion. This is part of the process of improving by trial and error. And use your knowledge of the table to compensate for those little “nuances” you may find when experimenting.

Enjoy your snooker.

SnookerZone