

Section 3 Rule 12.

Snookered after a Foul.

Section 2 rule 13 defines a Free Ball as one which the striker nominates as the ball on when snookered after a foul.

This rule has been touched on in passing in a few of the previous articles, and specific questions have been asked, so I think a full explanation is due.

The first thing to say is that the referee must take a view after any foul, including when the cue ball is then in hand, to ascertain whether a ball on may be struck at both extreme edges without obstruction unless obstructed by a cushion. In the case of in hand this means from any possible position within the 'D'.

If he is not of that opinion he must state "Free Ball" clearly to the striker. If he is unsure or questioned, he must then take measurements, either with a pocketed ball or balls, or with his ball marker if he has one or can borrow one.

Naturally, all the rules about what is allowed after any foul are still 'in play' and if the striker exercises his option to have the offender play again then the Free Ball becomes null and void and is not passed on to the offender.

The striker can also play at a ball on, directly or indirectly if he so wishes without nominating a Free Ball.

He cannot however take both options and nominate the ball on as a free ball. So on being awarded a free ball with just the colours remaining he can play any other colour as the free ball or play the yellow. He cannot expect the yellow to be re-spotted if he pots it.

If the striker takes up his option of a Free Ball he may nominate any ball on the table as the one he will strike first with the cue ball. Remember that all nominating options are open to the striker as with any other stroke.

'Any such nominated ball will be regarded as, and acquire the value of the ball on', is the one of the first instructions of this rule, which goes on to say that if potted it must then be spotted.

Therefore, if red is the ball on and one is potted along with the Free Ball then the red stays in the pocket and the nominated Free Ball is spotted. Similarly, if the ball on is a colour and is potted along with the Free Ball then it must remain in the pocket and the Free Ball is again, to be spotted.

The only difference, and one that is specifically covered in this rule, is that if the ball on is a red and is potted it will score as well as the Free Ball and count as an extra red. If the ball on is a colour then only the value of the ball on is scored but not the Free Ball as well.

This in essence, is the question I was asked recently. In

answer, I would ask that imagining the striker was not snookered after the foul, *which ball or balls would it be legal for him to pot*. (The reply to which is the ball or balls on). The answer to this consideration must be the same if he were snookered, namely the ball or balls on but now also adding the Free Ball. So potting a Free Ball is allowed, potting a ball on but not the Free Ball, is allowed as long as the nominated Free Ball is struck first or first simultaneously with the ball on and potting both the Free Ball and the ball on, with the same proviso, is also allowed.

Don't be fooled here. I have often heard it said that "all the balls are red". This is not the case and if no nomination is made and the cue ball strikes a ball not on or a ball not on is pocketed, then the striker must be penalised.

As stated it is a foul if the Free Ball is not struck first or first simultaneously with a ball on. It is also a foul to play a snooker on all the reds or any other ball on, behind the nominated Free Ball and the prescribed penalty for these fouls is the value of the ball on. This means four penalty points if there are still reds, or Yellow, Green or Brown available or 5, 6 or 7 if just Blue, Pink or Black remain. It does not mean that if the Free Ball nominated is, for instance the Black, that any foul committed would forfeit seven points.

If the Pink and Black are the only object balls remaining on the table and a Free Ball is awarded, then playing a

snooker IS allowable and no foul can be called or penalty points given for such an action.

Finally, an interesting fact about this rule. If a Free Ball were to be awarded whilst all 15 reds remain on the table, a break of 155 could then be made, with the extra red and the subsequent choice of the black ball as the nominated colour adding 8 points to the 147 maximum that is otherwise possible.