

# Selecting the **Right** Rack

*An inside look on the billiard break with Allison Fisher*

**Everybody knows “the break” is the most important shot in the game, and as such, it is also the most difficult shot to perfect.**

Let's first define what a great break is. In 9-ball, that means the balls are spread over the entire table and the 9-ball has not moved from its original rack location. Similarly, in 8-ball, you do not want to see the balls in clusters but rather spread out so you have several shot possibilities.

There are many tangibles that can impact the break, cloth quality, break cue, table levelness, your stroke, the angle of the shot, etc. Probably the most important component is the quality of balls. Playing with irregular sized balls will have a huge negative impact on the break. Although its rarely talked about, the quality of the ball rack can impact your ability to get a tight rack.

I've traveled over the world playing in tournaments, exhibitions, and performing untold clinics and that means I have played with hundreds of different racks. **I can assure you that there are certain rack features or qualities that help me achieve a better break.**

**1. While racking the balls, can I identify balls that are undersized?" Absolutely, if you are using a rack that is not warped and is manufactured with a tight tolerance.** You can see the smaller balls spin in the rack when you position the rack. If you cannot change out the balls, I suggest you move those balls to the back of the rack where your hands are.

The key here is that a quality rack can help you identify poor ball quality.

**2. Rack separation from the balls takes a lot of practice, but its much easier with a rack that has some type of a grip or ability to lift the rack up.** If you are disturbing the “frozen balls,” as you are removing the rack, then you have just defeated the purpose of the rack which is to get the balls compressed tightly so they are touching one another.

**3.** The term “tight rack” is used to describe balls that are touching. We all know a tight rack will help the balls explode and separate on the break. What we don't know is how the person that is racking may be negatively impacting the break. If they are racking with a plastic rack or a rack that has play in it, then your breaks may be impacted. **Higher quality racks will minimize the play or ability for “the racker” to make the balls loose in the rack.**

**4.** Moisture and dryness can really warp a rack. With use, the polyurethane or sealant on a wood rack breaks down over time due to the acidity from people's hands. Once this happens, a rack will begin to loose its shape and can even splinter. Does a perfect triangle provide a better break than a rack this is warped? **My experience tells me that a rack that provides a near perfect triangle to fit near perfect sized balls will definitely help the balls explode at cue ball impact.**

*Allison Fisher*

