

How to Improve your Game!

Jay L. Carlton

So I'm knocking the balls around over at Starlite Sports Bar & Billiards when this guy gets on the next table. He racks the balls on the 9-footer then opens a cue case and brings out a somewhat innocuous looking stick. In fact it reminds me of a piece of wood concealed in plain brown wrapping paper. Some-thing you would send through the mail hoping it would get to its destination before being torn to shreds. It's not what you would call an eye-catcher, except what I've already described. But what it appears to be and what it really is, as I soon found out, is two very different things.

He lines up to break open the rack and ... WHAM; the balls scatter so fast I didn't know if they'd ever stop rolling. They flew around the table bouncing off cushion after cushion with the direct mission of finding a pocket to fall into. Two balls found pockets and two others came close.

The guy gathers the balls, returns them to the rack and... WHAM; off they go again. This time three balls found pockets and two lined up for an easy runout had he been in a game. This guy has such a sledgehammer sound-popping break that two patrons at the bar turned to see what the noise was about.

The guy doesn't bother to shoot the remaining balls as it's clear he is working on his '*break*' and from what I've witnessed he's got it down. After another dozen or so practice breaks he unscrews the butt-end of the handle, sets up a jump-shot situation and... KLUNK. The cue ball hops in the air, goes over the '2' ball and heads down table for the '9' ball that he had placed near the corner pocket. He missed the '9'- the first time. The next 14 times he didn't. Now, I'm not a 9-ball player per se, but that got my attention real fast. He laid the stick down, goes to the bar and returns with a drink. I figure that's my cue, pardon the pun, to do a Sherlock Holmes. The dialog was as follows:

"That's a heck of a stick you got there, a combination '*break & jump*'," I says. "Making that cue ball jump over and making that '9' ball that many times. Awesome! What kind is it?"

He looks at the stick, rolls it around on the felt and says, "I can't tell you."

"Why, because then you'd have to kill me, ha-ha!"

"Yeah, that was funny ten years ago. No, what I'm going to tell you is this - if too many players discover what a few local players already know... they'll want one, too. The competition would double and triple. I don't need any more headaches than I already have. These young players coming up today see too well and shoot too straight. Think what my chances would be if everyone had a Jerry Terbrock specially made combo '*Break & Jump*'? My chances would diminish 50-percent."

"Wait a minute. Did you say... Jerry Terbrock?"

"I *did*?"

"You did. You said Jerry Terbrock, plain as day."

"Well, I sure didn't mean to. Look, here's the deal... if it got out that the best combination break & jump sticks on both sides of the Mississippi River were made right here by Jerry Terbrock and they can be gotten within a reasonable time frame, how long do you think it would take before everybody and his brother ordered one? Not long, I'll tell you. If everyone knew that the Missouri State 8 Ball and 9 Ball

Champion Andy Quinn uses a Terbrock, wow! Or, how 'bout those kids in Illinois: Justine Bergman and Lars Vardaman knocking off tournament after tournament using Terbrock's. Or better still, Julia Gabriel, the former Missouri 8 Ball champion."

"Isn't that's the girl that plays the women's pro circuit on occasion?"

"That's the one. She cleared out the field at another tournament in Louisville earlier this year. She swears by the Terbrock cue. So you can understand why I'm reluctant to have this news spread around!"

"Now *you* look..." I said, "... here's the *new* deal; you get me an audience with Jerry Terbrock so I can check out his merchandise or I'll let it be known all over the internet, you dig! You think you got competition now, brother, just think how much you'll have later."

The guy pulls Jerry's business card out of his wallet. He hands it to me so I can write down the information. It goes like this:

Terbrock Cues

Phone numbers: 636-861-3350 and 314-520-3221

Email address: jterbrock@earthlink.net

Are you paying attention because this is a true story!

I phoned Jerry Terbrock. We set up a time when I can drop by his house as he does all his work from the basement of his home. I get there Friday around noon. Jerry invites me in and escorts me to the part of the basement that is his work room. He is currently in the middle of making a new cue. Then he shows me one of his 'JumpBreak' sticks.

There is a 9-foot table in the basement and he racks the balls. In my lifetime I have seldom gotten three or four balls past the side pockets on the break. The *break* has forever been a weak part of my game. That is about to be rectified. I lean over to break open the rack and... WHAM... the balls begin flying around the table. Six of the balls came past the side pockets and after two balls fall, the rest are wide open for the picking. After several practice breaks Jerry takes off the butt-end of the handle and that now becomes the 'jump' stick. He set up a few shots, executes, and then hands me the stick.

I set up a shot and immediately slid the cue ball into the ball I was supposed to be jumping over. After a couple of unsuccessful attempts I asked for help. Jerry not only explained to me what I was doing wrong but shows me by adjusting both my left arm and right elbow. After two more tries I was not only getting over the ball but felt relaxed and comfortable doing it. It was almost effortless.

Now, understand, I'm a practical type of person. I have never believed in the old bromide that you can't teach an old... an old... an old-er guy new tricks. I have been playing league pool 23 years and for all intents and purposes the only thing I ever want to do is to be able to compete locally. No TV fame for me. No guest shots on Billiards 'R' Us. No Vegas venues.

I play League pool and once in a blue moon enter a local bar tournament. And that's about it. But as a team player I do not want to be a liability to my teammates. Therefore, like most players, I am always looking for ways to improve my skills. And with the great assistance of Jerry Terbrock, I just did. And all it took was one 20-minute session and a new 'JumpBreak' cue stick. You read it right! Only 20 minutes and my thinking and game improved I'd say 50 percent. If he can do it for me I know he can do it for you. Now, if only I can remember everything he showed me when next week's matches begin. My memory isn't what it used to be.

Jerry's web address: <http://stlmissouri.com/terbrockcues>