

## What is Club 74?

Club 74 is just a clever variation of normal Snooker which, by its simple design, tends to create shorter frame times and improved player performance. The Rules of Club 74 are nearly identical to normal Snooker with just a handful of "exception rules" which are detailed in other documentation. Experience shows that to understand Club 74 well, about three or four "practice" frames will be required. After the Club 74 thought process is indoctrinated, the game is very easy to understand and the players will then begin to realize the benefits of this variation.

## How is Club 74 different from standard Snooker?

Up until the Reds are cleared from the table, Club 74 is nearly identical to normal Snooker. The concept of Club 74 at its simplest is that in order to win a frame, a player **MUST** score a minimum of 74 points. But in fact, while striving for 74 points in the end, there are other "targets" that must be reached first. Think of it like Tour de France, or perhaps the Iditarod dog sled race. There are several "legs" to cover before you reach the final destination. If one or both players fail to complete a "leg", they may not reach the final destination at all. The first target is a special scoreline that must be reached or exceeded by the time the Reds are cleared from the table. This target very simply is 47 points. If all Reds have been cleared and neither player is at or past 47, the frame is over and a draw is declared. This is the primary reason Club 74 plays at a faster rate...no time is wasted chasing what was really, let's face it, a poorly played frame by both players. The second target is what is commonly called the "snookers required" stage. Say that when Reds are cleared, the scoreline is Aaron 47, Bob 46. Think about the arithmetic....to reach 74 points (the final target) Aaron must score 27 points. That is, Aaron **MUST** get credit for all the Colours in order to win the frame. Bob, with only 46 points, **CANNOT** reach 74 with the balls on the table ( $46+27=73$  points, not enough); he is mathematically eliminated from a win. But Bob can continue to play on. He may attempt to win the frame in laying a snooker and gaining a few penalty points. Or he may simply play to "snatch" the frame from Aaron, i.e., taking balls off the table so Aaron cannot reach 74. The frame continues with Aaron having a one point lead at the moment. If Bob scores the Yellow, then he is at 48 points and Aaron is still at 47 points.....both are now mathematically eliminated, the frame has been "snatched". That is, neither of them can possibly reach 74 with the balls on the table so neither of them can win (in the strictest sense, we are at the "snookers required" stage because *either* player would "require snookers" to score 74). Again, it is a draw. But let's say instead that Aaron scores the Yellow. He is now at 49 points to Bob's 46. Then Aaron goes on to score the Green, Brown, and Blue. Adding the score up, Aaron now has 61 points to Bob's 46...a 15 point difference with only 13 (Pink and Black) remaining. Because we have now reached "snookers required" (the second target), Bob is now forced to concede the remaining points to Aaron. Bob is **NOT** allowed to play on trying to snooker Aaron. This is the biggest difference of Club 74 Snooker..... "snookers required" means the immediate end of the frame, it's over. The striker may then play on as "exhibition snooker"....for instance, by potting the remaining balls, he may reach a high break.....but the frame officially ended when "snookers required" was reached in that one player could mathematically reach 74 while the other player has a deficit of more points than remaining on the table. The final score? Well, it doesn't really matter anymore but in fact Aaron's final score was 74 to Bob's 46. Based on the precedent of Aggregate Score Snooker, when a frame is conceded (including forced concession), the leading player is credited with all points remaining. Hence, Aaron is credited with the Pink and Black without having to actually pot them at all. A score of 74 was reached and a win is posted for Aaron.

## Any other Rules differences for Club 74?

The other significant difference is in how fouls are scored. Club 74 discourages repeated attempts to gain points from forced or unforced errors. Snooker scoring should primarily be in potting balls. With this in mind, Miss Fouls are treated differently in Club 74. The Miss Rule of standard snooker is applied differently in Club 74. Firstly, in Club 74, *every* Miss Foul will be called as "Foul and a Miss" (FAAM). This is true even in an "*impossible snooker*" situation. In standard snooker, Miss Fouls may be called as FAAM at the Referee's discretion. Not so for Club 74; *every* Miss is a FAAM. However, in Club 74, penalty scoring is very, very different for FAAM. To state as simply as possible, in Club 74, FAAM will *only* result in penalty points *if* the incoming striker allows the frame to continue. In other words, for a particularly difficult snooker, the striker may Miss ten times while the opponent may choose to replace to original position. Whenever the balls are replaced, *NO PENALTY POINTS* will be given. The only time the incoming player will be awarded with penalty points will be when he accepts the table in its current position after a Miss foul and he either plays the next stroke himself or he can choose to put the fouling player back in to play the current stroke. At this time (when he allows the frame to continue), he will be awarded the penalty value of the most recent foul. So only one penalty *might* be awarded no matter how many times the table is reset by FAAM. In fact, if the incoming player chooses to reset the position to allow the fouling player another attempt, the incoming player may receive no penalty points at all if the formerly fouling player now succeeds to contact. The incoming player must always weigh his options....does he want to grab those penalty points while he can? Or should he instead reset hoping the next attempt may leave him a better table position (even though this may result in an escape with no penalty points at all)? It is another level of decision strategy.

Another minor rule variation is in the breakoff after a draw is declared. This is handled basically the same as "stalemate" with a table reset but with the exception that the players will alternate the breakoff stroke from the previous frame.

## Why Club 74 Snooker?

A whole bunch of reasons.....

- 1) Club 74 is pretty much the game played by the Professionals. It is just that no one actually talks about it. How many professional frames occur which, by the rules of Club 74, would result in a draw? The answer is very nearly zero. They happen on rare occasion but the only one that comes to mind for me is the famous Black Ball Final at the World Championship in 1985. That is over thirty years ago now. When you watch professional snooker with Club 74 in mind, virtually every frame results in a win with a final score by one player surpassing 74 points. (Remember, even a professional frame score such as 65-15 with Pink and Black left on table concedes those 13 points added to the 65...score is now greater than 74.)
- 2) Club 74 promotes high offensive scoring and ultimately improves players' performance. This is not just theory; it is proven with quite a few ACES Snooker Club members already. With the primary focus on break building, not defensive maneuvering, and the additional mental pressure of many "frame ball" type situations, one really just cannot help but improve one's game play using the innovation built directly into Club 74 Snooker.
- 3) Club 74 encourages defensive play but not as a scoring tactic. Instead, defensive moves are targeted to improving the odds of offensive scoring, not simply to score penalty points. With Club 74, defensive moves such as laying a well placed snooker take their rightful perspective; the reason for this stroke is to gain an advantage. As with the professional game, to "gain an advantage" does not necessarily mean to gain penalty points directly, but instead to improve

- table position toward the reward of aggressive offensive scoring.
- 4) Club 74 Snooker by its very design results in individual frames finishing more quickly allowing for longer format league and tournament play. "Normal" snooker at the amateur level usually results in frame lengths of 45 minutes to an hour, sometimes even more. That is fine but often tedious and can cause improper tournament results. With good fortune, *anyone* can win a Best of Three, but with longer format Best of Nine, the better player on the match is much more likely to advance. Club 74 frames on average last 25 minutes, about half the expected time of normal amateur snooker. This means that within an equal length session, about double the number of frames will be played. Club 74 frames sometimes finish in 15 or 20 minutes and a long frame tends to be no more than about 30 minutes.
  - 5) Club 74 league and tournament results reflect a more accurate portrayal of players' head-to-head abilities. For instance, in a "normal" snooker five frame league match, a player may win all five frames, or perhaps dominate with a 4 to 1 scoreline. This would be true even if *every* frame came down to the final Black Ball. One player rattling off 5 147's on the spin would have exactly the same result as 5 Black Ball wins. That is hardly an accurate portrayal of the true match head-to-head comparison. To actually WIN a Club 74 frame is quite a difficult thing to do. And the match scoring will accurately reflect this. When players' abilities and standards of play are similar, the scoreline should show it. A baseball team does not win by a score of 20 to 2 when each team only had 3 or 4 hits in nine innings. If the game was close, the score should reflect that the game was close. Club 74 Snooker will have 5 frame matches which will likely only see one or two "*wins*" posted and the scoreline will accurately reflect which player won the match, and the scoreline will also reflect whether the match was close or was indeed a thumping.
  - 6) Club 74 Snooker is very easy to handicap. Let's face it, to score 74 points in a single frame is a difficult thing to do. If it were easy, we would all be professionals. But with a headstart handicap, any player can properly be positioned such that 74 points (or more importantly when you understand the game, 47 points) can be within reach of any player of any standard. All that is required for any given player to have a chance to win is to play any given frame toward the top end of his or her "usual" standard. With "normal" snooker, any player can win a frame even when playing poorly. With Club 74, a poor standard of play will at best result in a draw and this is a just and fitting end.
  - 7) Lastly, and very probably most importantly, playing "normal" snooker, players tend to justify their actions. Maybe they play quite poorly, but win a Best of Five by 3 and 2 or even 4 and 1. Happy with the result, status quo continues indefinitely. It is often said that one should "play the table, not the opponent", but let's be real...that rarely truly happens. If we win a match 4 and 1 playing admittedly below our "usual standard", we must be doing pretty good, am I right? No, of course I am very wrong in that statement. Club 74 actually FORCES US to "play the table". The opponent doesn't actually matter all that much. All the opponent can do is take away our scoring opportunities. But if we cannot score when the opportunity is there, then really, we should *not* be winning that frame. So with Club 74, by necessity, you will "play the table, not the opponent", you *must* take advantage of scoring opportunities when they present themselves. Meanwhile, the opponent is doing exactly the same thing. And if in the end, all he can do is to take a frame AWAY from you, he will fight tooth and nail to do it. It is a tough world out there. Club 74 will expose you to it and force you to become a better player.

### **Anything else to know about Club 74 Snooker?**

Like "normal" snooker, the final score of the frame does not really matter at all, only whether or not one of the players manage to surpass 74. As the end of the frame draws near, the players' focus on

either win, lose, or draw. The current table situation must be interpreted, arithmetic must be calculated, and strategic decisions must be made. As stated several times now, more important than 74 points at the end is point allocations after the Reds have been cleared. 47 is the most important number in the Game. If a player never manages to reach 47 at all by end of Reds, that player will NEVER win a frame. And that of course is where *handicaps* come in useful. For self correcting handicap purposes in a league environment, it will be important to document the State of the Frame Score exactly at the time of the last pot of Red (and corresponding Colour) prior to beginning to pot the Colours in sequence. Then, based on the cumulative average of this statistic over time, each player should receive headstart points such that the player will exceed 47 in about 25 to 33 percent of all frames played. This means that when properly handicapped, each player in a league should have a *chance* to win a frame in at least 1 out of 3 or 4 frames played. If a player is regularly reaching 47 points by this stage, the handicap should reduce. As a player inevitably improves, the handicap will eventually become zero.

This may sound strange... “each player...should have a *chance* to win...in...1 out of 3 or 4 frames”??? You will probably think, “But shouldn't I have a chance to win EVERY frame?” Well, yes....and no. A player, any player, will only improve if they suffer the consequence of poor play. Only by losing (or in the case of Club 74, drawing) frames, will a player actually learn what it takes to *win* frames. Look at a professional scenario: two equally talented players, call them Judd and John perhaps. After any frame begins, generally one of those players gets opportunity to score and does so heavily, often leaving the other with no chance of a win at all. At best, a professional player really only has a chance to win in a bit more than 50 percent of the frames played because the opponent is an equally talented player so one of them will simply dominate any given frame. The best “win percentages” at the top level of play are only mid-60's percentage; Ronnie O'Sullivan's frame wins was only 61% last season, that is just six frames won to four lost of every ten. And that is someone generally considered to be the best player of all time.

No one can or should come anywhere close to winning every frame they play, handicaps or no. The trap set by “normal” Snooker is that, as long as your score is better than the other player, you fool yourself into believing that you played well. So you never get any better. Club 74 sets a high bar. Truthfully, at the amateur level, most frames will indeed simply end in a draw. As you see, at the professional level, nearly every frame ends in a win for the proper player. But you should take specific note of what that means.....most of the time at the amateur level, neither player really *deserves* to win. Level of play is usually poor to mediocre. Only when playing very well can a player win Club 74. Every frame of Club 74 that I win (perhaps 1 out of 7 or 8 frames played at this time), I am euphoric that I have truly accomplished something. As for the other frames, the ones I occasionally lose or of course most often draw, I almost always learn something. There is never an excuse, but there is often a reason.... “I only reached 44 rather than 49...missed my pressure pot of the Blue trying to overwork the position. Cannot do that when the pot is so critical.” With Club 74, those pressure pots come up regularly; you will begin to cope much better with mental pressure due to simple necessity. With “normal” Snooker, when I missed that Blue pot, I probably would have “won” the frame anyway and I would not have learned anything.

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Play well!