

Pool and Snooker Table Felt and Cloth- Look after your Tables

Pool & Snooker Table cloth, or felt, has been around for many years. The cloth not only makes the table look nicer it also helps the balls roll true, the wear and tear on the table itself is reduced and the sound of the balls on the table is reduced. Most people refer to cloth as felt because most of the early cloth was very “nappy”. This is the difference in the two styles of cloth that exist. The two styles are directional and non-directional. Directional cloth is very fuzzy where non-directional cloth is not.

Directional cloth gets its name because of the way it plays and the way it’s cleaned. With directional cloth, the “nap” is designed to lay in one direction. It will actually cause balls to roll slightly off and even make the table appear not to be level because the nap can raise the playing surface up a few thousandths of an inch, which will redirect a slow rolling ball ever so slightly.

Players will often notice a different color or color pattern from the cloth being touched during play. The Cloth will have two different shades of green depending on whether the nap is raised or not. When a player runs his hand along the cloth, he raises the nap or lowers the already raised nap depending on the direction they move. In the past, because this phenomenon was present, it was an element of the game.

A cloth should always be installed with the nap lying down if it is brushed towards the area where you rack the balls.

Thus, the cloth should always be brushed towards the racking end of the table if it is non-directional pool table felt. The benefits to directional cloth are very simple. It costs less and generally lasts longer than non-directional cloth. The Nap should then be ironed using a Thermostatic Billiard Iron- never use a domestic iron. The Iron should be placed onto the table while keeping it moving in the direction from the baulk line towards the opposite end of the table. Then lift the iron up and bring it back to the starting position and run the iron down the table again- each time overlapping the previous run.

There are different weights of cloth. The heavier a weight, the slower a cloth will play meaning the balls will slow down faster. The heavier cloth will last longer and is generally the cloth used in most bars around the world. Pool rooms generally use a lighter directional cloth as one of the tools to enhance the playing experience.

Non-directional cloth is the most popular cloth used by serious players. The reason is the playability. This type of cloth rolls very consistent because there is no nap present to redirect the course of a moving ball. The cue ball direction and even distance traveled can be controlled much more accurately. Generally this type of cloth is considered “fast” because the balls seem to roll farther and smaller amounts of spin can allow a player to experience draw, follow and

English (side spin.) The setback with non-directional cloth is that it is generally more expensive and doesn't wear as well. Both types of cloth have their advantages and uses. The choice is up to the owner of the table ultimately. If the owner wants to play but doesn't want to be a professional then directional cloth can suffice. If the table owner wants to experience more cue ball reaction to spin and is more particular to the rolling of balls, then they should invest in a non-directional cloth.