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Chop Cup Know How

(Everything you ever wanted to know about
the chop cup but were too afraid to ask!)



by Brian Watson

**Cups
and
Balls
Magic
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Foreword

The internet is an amazing thing; just type in what you are interested in and boom there it pops up. It is through the internet that I found others inflicted with the illness of “Cup Fever.” ... it is there that I found Brian Watson.

Over the years Bri and I have written many e-mails and PM's sharing our love for all things Cups and Balls. Early on I came to the conclusion that Bri is a very special individual; that he is very talented, very knowledgeable as it pertains to Cups and most things magic and that he is very giving; sharing whatever he can offer to assist someone that he has never met in person, such as myself.

It was also early on in our relationship that I came to realize that Bri has much to offer the “Magic World” and that when all is said and done Brian Watson will make his mark in that “Magic World.”

I have collected a large amount of writings, books, pamphlets and such regarding the Cups and Balls both old and new. Some are good some are bad, but even within the good there seems to be a lacking of detail.

Those small yet important details that goes beyond moves and routines... where is the history, the why as to this cup or another and the balls and loads to be used... yes the small details? Look no further and check out the writings of Brian Watson, where you will find clear and precise information that is easy to relate to and best of all, easy to learn from.

I believe that Bri has only begun to scratch the surface of his wealth of Cups and Balls knowledge and look forward to his future offerings. Thanks Bri for sharing and most of all, thank you Bri for your friendship.

Bruce Smith
Denver, Colorado 2013

Introduction

While my first love will always be the cups and balls, a close second is the chop cup. I think the reason I particularly love the cups and balls because it teaches me so much about performance, sleights, timing, handling, psychology and much more every single time I perform or practice it. I look upon the chop cup as a much stripped down, performance friendly version of the cups.

It really does have a lot going for it, there's less to carry, it's easier for an audience to follow (1 cup instead of 3 and 1 ball instead of 3) and it gets to the final loads a lot quicker than a regular cups and balls routine which makes it a lot more commercial. It's also very adaptable to being performed in many situations and conditions and it needs a lot less table space.

While many people would opt for only ever performing the chop cup I do believe that solid grounding in the cups and balls is a good place to start before switching to the chop cup and also applying that knowledge to the cup. Just like learning to play an acoustic guitar and learning your theory first before taking up the electric guitar; a good, solid grounding works wonders.

With some background in the cups and balls and utilising basic sleights the effect of the chop cup can be replicated allowing you to perform a 1 cup routine anywhere you have a cup and a simple object to place underneath it. Whether that object is a rolled up napkin, a grape or a balled up £10 note. The advantages to a gaffed cup however, are many and those are discussed in this book.

In short, the chop cup is a highly commercial piece of magic that is a blank canvas and can be presented in many ways. I've seen it done to rhyming patter, as a challenge effect, close up, on stage, in bars, highly gaffed and set up and totally impromptu. For me, the chop cup is a beautiful piece of magic that has so much potential.

This book is designed to be a guide to the chop cup, balls and final loads; to take someone from not knowing what a chop cup is, to knowing all the ins and outs, how to select one, what type of balls to use, setting up the cup and balls, final loads etc.

With that in mind, I sincerely hope you enjoy it.

Kindest,

Brian Watson

A Little History

Before we get into the basic information of the chop cup it is important to give credit where credit is due because we stand on the shoulders of giants.

They say (whoever they are?) that there is nothing new in this world and so it is important that we take a moment to acknowledge those who have trodden our path beforehand. I must thank my friend the very knowledgeable gentleman Etienne Lorenceau for the research and facts related to the history of the chop cup

It is widely accepted that Al Wheatley created the chop cup in 1954 and that Al named the cup after his Asian stage persona of "Chop Chop." It's also been said that Al wanted to perform cups and balls effects but with less props and so he looked at 1 cup routines and then created his gaff that revolutionized the art.

Of course it is very common place for people on different continents to create things independently, which may possibly have been the case with the chop cup as there was a reference to the mechanics of a magnetic cup as far back as the 1930's.

In actual fact the method of making a ball stick (with pork fat and wax no less) to the roof of a cup goes as far back as the 1700's (1759 : Geneve chez Henri-Albert Gosse & Comp.)

However, with reference to a ball being faked with a magnet, Fred Lodge published (1936) "A Novel Cup and Ball Effect" in a book titled The Mysteries of the Mystic Seven. It was a 2 cup routine (one of the cups being chopped, so it was also a reference to a

combo set too.)

Since Al Wheatley there have been many magicians who have featured the chop cup (in no particular order) including Don Alan, Paul Daniels, Ken Brooke and Larry Jennings and every time I perform it I think all those who have gone before me as far back as the 1700's for everything they have contributed.

What is a Chop Cup?

In the spirit of being fully transparent and covering every angle I shall explain exactly what a chop cup actually is.

While there are a few variations using outside gaffs, variations on the theme etc., the regular chop cup shall be described here. In its simplest of terms a chop cup is a cup containing a magnet that attracts a magnetic ball in order to hold it inside the base of the cup.

The cup can then be held mouth down on a table and lifted to show there is nothing underneath. If the cup is gently tapped against a table while placing it back down the ball is dislodged and drops onto the table allowing it to be shown to have appeared under the cup.

Of course all of the above (and more) can also be performed using sleight of hand, however most people prefer the chop cup for ease of use and simplicity.

Bags and Accessories

Most chop cups come with a bag to carry them in and 2 balls. 1 ball is magnetic and 1 is a regular non gaffed ball. If you buy a Ken Brooke Master Cup you will also receive 3 balls, however most cups use only 2.

Another accessory I like to use is a holder for my final loads. I prefer to use a holder when working with anything larger than Fab Fruit because I don't like to stuff my pockets. Not only does it look unsightly, it also makes handling unnatural and awkward. However we are jumping the gun here and you can read more about this on pages 60 – 61.

Some specialist chop cups also come with inserts from Colin Rose's Loose Change or Tim Star's liquid production gaff to BUMA's triple inserts (for his cups and balls which add either a chop function, a ball stealer or a liquid production to a cup) to Fantasma's Buddha final load chop cup which is also gaffed to hold out a ball underneath.

Shot Glass and Silk

Some sets also come with a shot glass and a silk for a sequence such as is performed in the Larry Jennings' routines (which was included with the Ken Brooke chop cup.)

The idea being that the shot glass is placed onto the table and covered with a silk. The ball is placed on top of the silk, the premise being that the ball will penetrate the silk and end up in the glass.

The cup is placed on top and lifted and the ball is no longer there. It is presumed that it is now in the glass below the silk, however when the silk is lifted there is no sign of the ball and so the cup is dropped on top. The ball either appearing again inside the glass when the ball is placed away or the silk placed over the cup and the ball penetrating the silk and cup to end in the glass.

Many people have used a sequence like this and it can be used as a prelude to the final load (in Jennings' case.) If you plan to use a sequence like this you need to ensure that the silk is large enough to exceed the cups mouth when covering the shot glass and the shot glass is of such a height that it allows the ball to be picked up by the magnet in the chop cup as it is placed mouth down on top down.

Wand Work

Not too many people use a wand with a chop cup as it is not needed so much. If you think about the real use of the wand in a cups and balls routine it is to allow for better handling, blocking and misdirection when using 6 objects (3 balls and 3 cups) and hiding a 7th (4th ball.) With a chop cup you are only dealing with 1 cup and 2 balls.

Having said that I often use a wand in order to create different effects such as a vanished ball appearing on top of the mouth down cup in plain sight or to steal a load while placing the wand aside and for affecting certain vanishes. So, don't discount the wand, who knows you may come up with something totally original yourself.

The Difference Between a Chop Cup and the Cups and Balls

The main difference between the chop cup (at least from the perspective of the audience) is that there is only 1 cup, instead of 2 or 3. This makes for a shorter, punchier (and some would say less sleep inducing) performance. Another difference is that the final load sequence usually (and should) come a lot sooner with the chop cup as there is a lot less by play and preceding sequences. Of course the major difference for a performer is that the chop cup is gaffed and allows the performer to use the gaff instead of sleight of hand and so concentrate fully on the presentation.

Advantages Over a Regular Cups and Balls Routine

The chop cup has a lot going for it in terms of a practical, workers effect which is probably why so many pro's chose to feature it and made their name with it. From Ken Brooke, Paul Daniels to Don Alan and Larry Jennings, all have made a great impact on the magic community with the chop cup.

There are many reasons why it has been (and will continue to be so) popular, such as:

1. The effect is streamlined compared to the cups and balls and there is much less for the audience to have to focus on and pay attention to.
2. There is very little sleight of hand needed to perform it.
3. The gaff is 100% reliable.

4. It gets to the final load sequence much quicker than the cups and balls.
5. It play big and packs small.
6. The footprint of the chop cup means that it needs very little table space to be performed. In fact less than a 1/3rd of the space needed for 3 cups, a wand and 3 balls because 99% of the time if the ball is not in the hand it is sat on top of the cup (instead of in front of it as in some cups and balls routines.)

Is it a Magic Prop?

The general aversion to items which look like magic props is always an ongoing argument with as many opinions as there are magicians. While I am not keen on props covered in glitter and dragons, a simple brass or copper cup needs no explanation other than it is a cup. I've never been questioned on it.

There are many types of chop cup available from gaffs which work through the wall of a regular cup to engraved solid silver chop cups. The important thing to think about is context. Do you want to appear to be able to do magic with anything? Is it a formal show performed while wearing a Tuxedo? Is the cup you are using normally sitting on your desk holding pencils (if performing it impromptu at home.)

All in all, in my humble opinion, to an average person a cup is a cup is a cup. Let's be brutally honest, they don't care as much as we think they do! In my own routine I ask the spectator to hold

the cup and I demonstrate what is going to happen. I am not asking them to examine the cup and the ball, I am clarifying what I am about to do and they are holding the cup and the (non gaffed) ball and nothing more.

I've performed with wooden, silver, brass, ceramic, paper (and many more) cups and never been questioned. It's a matter of attitude, that's all. The only time audience members request to look at any cups I use are the silver engraved Sherwood and my segmented wooden cup and the only reason for that is because people think they are beautiful and appreciate them for what they are, objects of beauty.

The Anatomy of a Cup

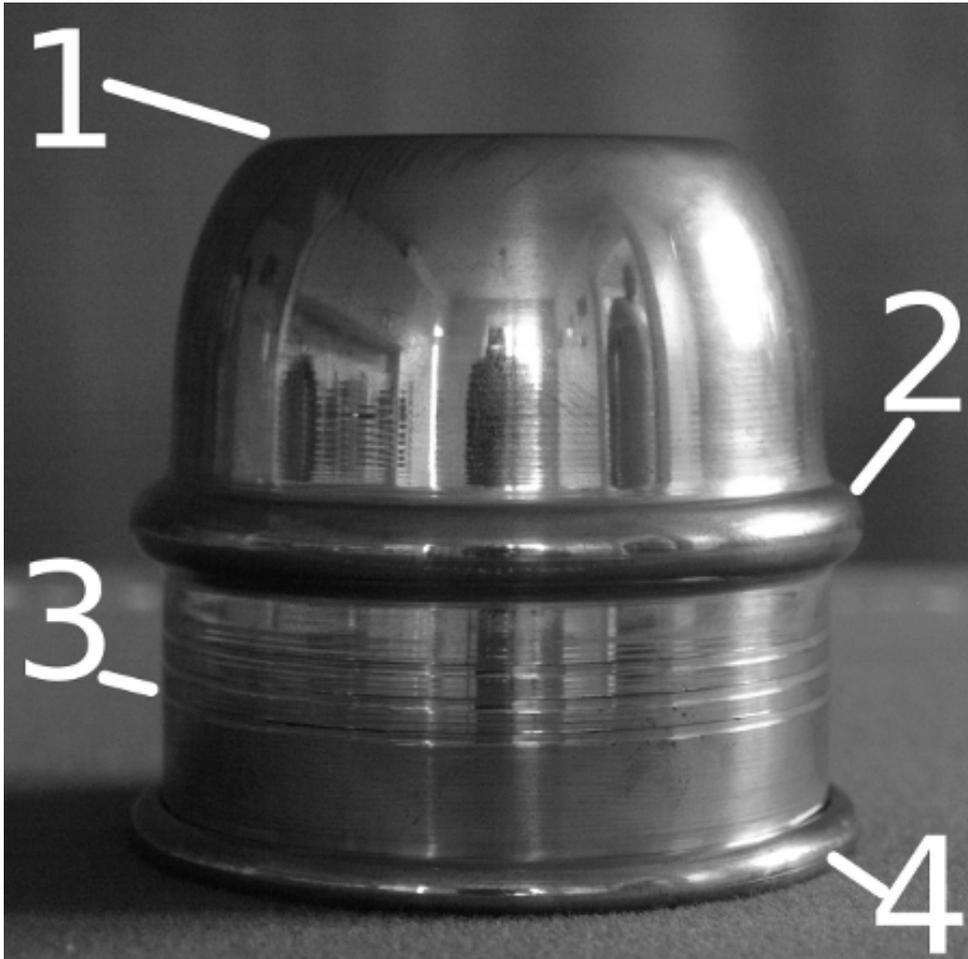
While there are many sizes, styles and shapes of chop cup I think it is important to clarify the parts of the cup we are going to be discussing throughout the course of this book so we are singing from the same hymn sheet. Of course one thing to bear in mind is the biggest difference between a magic prop and a real cup and that is the way the cup is designed to be sat.

In the real world a cup is designed to be mouth up on the table because it will be holding liquid, however when a magician designs a cup it is made to be placed mouth down on a table to conceal something, not hold liquid.

With this in mind it should be assumed that throughout this book we will predominantly be referring to the cup as being mouth down on the table. Therefore when we say (for instance) "with a ball on top of the cup" we are referring to a cup mouth down on

the table with a ball on top of the upturned base (or saddle.)

The following illustration shows the various parts of a chop cup. Some cups have all of them, others do not, however all the terms are included here for completeness.



1. The Saddle

The saddle is the part of the cup that the ball sits on while the cup is mouth down on a table. It really should be recessed to stop the ball from rolling off and falling to the floor.

2. The Shoulder Bead

Many chop cups do not have shoulder beads as a shoulder bead normally acts as a stop when you stack one cup on top of another. Because of this you will usually only find shoulder beads on chop cups that were designed to match a regular set of cups and balls or are part of a combo set (2 regular cups and 1 matching chop cup.)

The photo below shows a chop cup with no shoulder bead.



3. The Skirt

This is the area above the mouth bead and before the shoulder bead (where a cup has a shoulder bead.)

4. The Mouth Bead

Some cups have a regular edge to the open mouth while others have a rolled back mouth bead. In general a cup that has been spun on a lathe will have a mouth bead as a way of finishing the cup off nicely.

The Mouth

Obviously the open mouth of the cup where the ball is dropped into when sat mouth up on the table.

The Importance of a Saddle

Having a decent saddle on a cup is very important when working professionally. I have seen a great deal of cups produced that have a tiny bit of material shaved off or a very small imprint instead of an actual saddle (with a raised edge.) The problem with the lack of a decent saddle is that with the chop cup, a lot of the time the non gaffed ball is placed onto the saddle to display it and while working in different environments / stages etc. you can often be working on a less than perfectly level surface. A decent saddle will stop the ball from constantly rolling off onto the table or floor.

One argument I have heard as an advantage of a flatter saddle is that it exaggerates the size of the final load as more of it can be

seen, however I'm not convinced that the extra 1/8th of an inch is worth it. In the real world; in real performing conditions it is preferable to have a saddle which is recessed to stop the ball from rolling off. The photo below cup with a very workable saddle.



Thanks for downloading this sampler of Chop Cup Know How. If you enjoyed what you have read so far then please support this (and future work) by purchasing the fully photo illustrated 80 page perfect bound book here:

<http://www.cupsandballsmagic.com/Chop-Cup-Know-How.html>

Also, if you like the cups and balls, there are a few items on the following pages that may take your interest, all of which are available at: <http://www.cupsandballsmagic.com/Products.html>

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Here's what they are saying about it;

Robert K Lew Jr

I got it!! And the kit is AWESOME!!!
Thank you for all the great work and how up to date the book is.
Really Great Wand for busking. Wow.

I am lucky to have jumped on this opportunity. The way the book is written feels like I'm attending a lecture in person.

Cheers,
Robert

Derek Gustard

"The chop cup and cups & balls have been a mainstay of my close-up and stage routines for a number of years now, and like many other magicians out there I studied and learnt the rudiments of this genre from various tutorial materials on the market, most notably the Lewis Ganson and Michael Ammar instructional books and DVDs.

Few magicians sail through the cups and balls without finding the Vernon-Mora Wand Spin a sticking point at some point in the development of a routine. Most magicians learn a passable version from the Michael Ammar DVDs then stop there feeling that it would be impossible to better such tuition. Well guess what guys...Brian Watson has in my humble opinion done the impossible!

I was fortunate enough to attend his lecture on the Vernon - Mora wand spin and was astounded by the speed with which he had total beginners doing a passable wand spin and experienced magicians improving on their existing efforts!

His lecture style was relaxed, straight forward, instructive, insightful and the best I have attended on this aspect of cups and balls! While at the lecture I was lucky enough to glance through the booklet he has produced on the sleight and realised that I was holding THE most comprehensive, well produced and incredibly detailed treatise on this sleight.

In essence, it is the last word on the Vernon-Mora Wand Spin which comes with a special ball and wand with which to practice. Certainly on my list of must-haves!"

Doug James

I've always liked it when a topic was broken down to its essence and then presented in an easily digestible manner. You've done that with this package.

I truly believe that anyone who follows the steps in the package will have no problem learning the wand spin.

Brian Watson is a very clever man. It is my firm conviction that in studying the material presented here you will come to agree wholeheartedly with that statement.

More than a flourish; the Vernon / Mora Wand Spin vanish is of the most deceptive and magical moves ever created with a wand. The serious student will not only learn this effect, but will also garner many of the key components to presenting powerful magic.

Misdirection, framing, inner dialogue, and motivation are all critical for the successful presentation of our craft. These vital elements of successful magic are not spoken of nearly enough and are presented herein professionally and concisely.

I am honoured to count Brian Watson as a friend and it has been my distinct privilege to be allowed behind the scene peeks into his many creative endeavours.

Bri's knowledge, passion for detail, and incredibly innovative mind are a joy to behold and I am so excited to know that he has even more good things coming our way soon!

Sincerest wishes for your every success,

Doug James

29 June 2011

11:54 PM

Hickory, North Carolina

David Nicholson

I owned this book for all of an hour before I had the basic principles of the wand spin down. Even though I have seen this spin done before, I have never tried to learn it because on tape it looks impossible.

The moves are broken down into clear, easy to understand, concise steps. I can see it's going to take some practice. But I am excited I have expert instruction at the ready for learning this amazing sleight.

If you buy this package and you cant understand the moves from what's inside the front and back cover, there was no helping you.

The wand is nice. I emailed the team with a question about the package, within half an hour I had an answer. Based on this principle alone I would not hesitate in anything from you in the future.

A brilliant first impression. I do pose one question to Brian and the team though - I live in Brisbane Australia, How the hell did you get it here so fast?

Bruce Smith

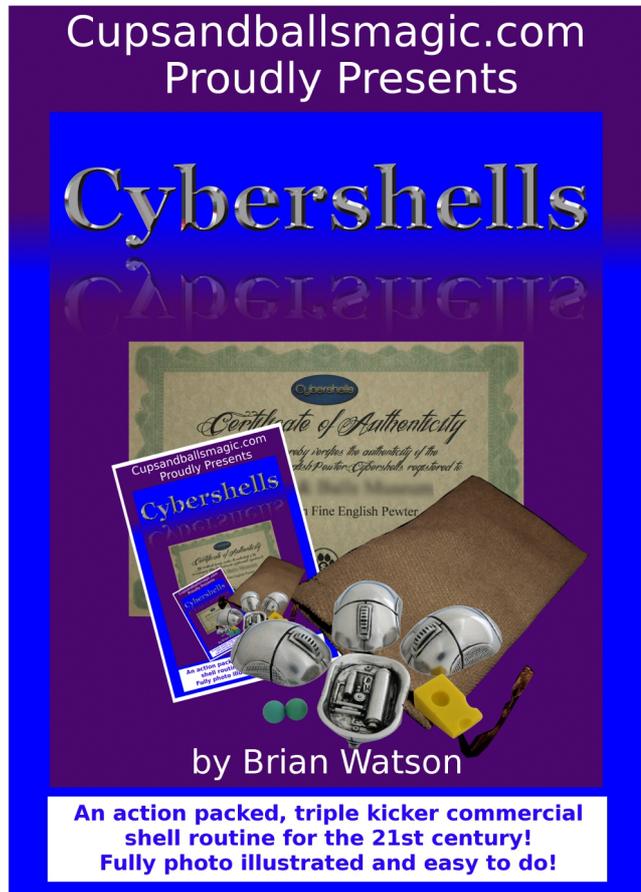
Brian's "Vernon Mora Workshop" has enabled me to learn the wand spin vanish... something the Vernon / Ganson and Ammar books have not.

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John Mac

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They look and feel great... Even though I have never used shells before the ease with which I was able to pick up the moves can only be down to the well thought out design, and the years of experience Bri has collected and presented in the wonderful accompanying booklet.

The routine as it is described is a great springboard for creating your own story, the tips and psychological explanations of the triple kicker finish allows you to concentrate on your presentation.

This is not another hype or scam... This is a professional toolbox ready to put your individual stamp on a classic... Although one of the stories talks about the 3 shell game brought into the twenty first century, I see computer mouse with a ball the pinnacle of the twentieth century, and this is what happened to them...

I will treasure my set in the knowledge that I belong to an exclusive group, the workmanship, thought and certificate of

authenticity which accompanies the first 250 sets is well worth the investment...”

Timothy Dowd

“Guess what Mr Mailman just delivered... yep, the coolest set of shell I have ever seen and touched. Bri the Cybershells are beautiful, they are beyond what I imagined; the booklet is also chock full of detailed information (you do great work). I can't wait to get home and try them out without anyone bothering me. “

Bruce Smith

“Today I received your fantastic Cybershells, they look amazing!”

Sam Brooks