

Billiards Buzz

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AND YET AGAIN

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FROM THE Head Rail

MIKE HOWERTON

Happy belated New Year everyone. As we were posting the December issue, Mosconi Cup was fresh in everyone's mind after another one sided performance by Team Europe.

While the event is always a circus, I was especially distracted by the pre event hype at the press conference. Look, I know that Mosconi Cup is an "exhibition" instead of a "tournament" and I remember some boasting between teams in the past that came very close to crossing the line. (I'm not sure why Daryl Peach would have forgotten that he accidentally left a pacifier in his pocket back in 07, but who am I to guess at something like that.

Even more striking than the pacifier incident was the amount of digging at raw nerves that was attempted and achieved by the two teams during the press conference.

Tossing a pacifier into the arena, (presumably) to point out how childish an opponent is, is a lot different than bringing the drama that has always gone on behind the scenes at events like this into the public eye. Accusations of players being afraid of certain opponents and even worse, comments about players not being wanted on the team by other members is surely talked about behind the scenes by players and fans, but "behind the scenes" is where it belongs.

I just think it demeans the game that we all love and honestly, if I have to accuse my opponent of crap like that to get an edge over them, then maybe I need to work on my own self confidence instead of worrying about what is going on behind the curtain with his team.

Oh well, just my opinion.

Until next month,

Mike



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I'M A POOL WATCHER ...

Even in my days playing pool competitively, I never missed a chance to watch great players. Indeed, in those pre Accu-Stats days, pool telecasts on TV were few and far between, so I was stuck with watching the pros in live action. Poor me!

For the last quarter century I have watched tons of matches for the pure enjoyment they deliver, and to learn things about the game which I could add to my body of knowledge, and then pass on to my fellow enthusiasts.

In addition to learning about the sport, I have created a body of knowledge that appears in a 32 page chapter, *Becoming A World Class Pool Watcher*, that is featured in my upcoming book, *Pool Is The Answer*.

A big part of the skill of pool watching is simply observing, closely, what is taking place on the table, and then writing down any thoughts that come to mind. In many cases my notes will include a diagram that illustrates some key principle, or perhaps a great shot.

In this and next month's columns I am going to share with you some of my notes from a series of pro events that took place during the last couple of months of last year. I hope you learn some things of value, and are inspired to become a note-talking pool watcher, if you are not already one.

BYPASS POSITION ROUTES

There are times when you will be sending the cue ball relatively close to the object ball and then past it for

position. I have now call these shots Bypass Position Routes because this name tells you what's going on. A couple of examples should help you to quickly grasp this idea.

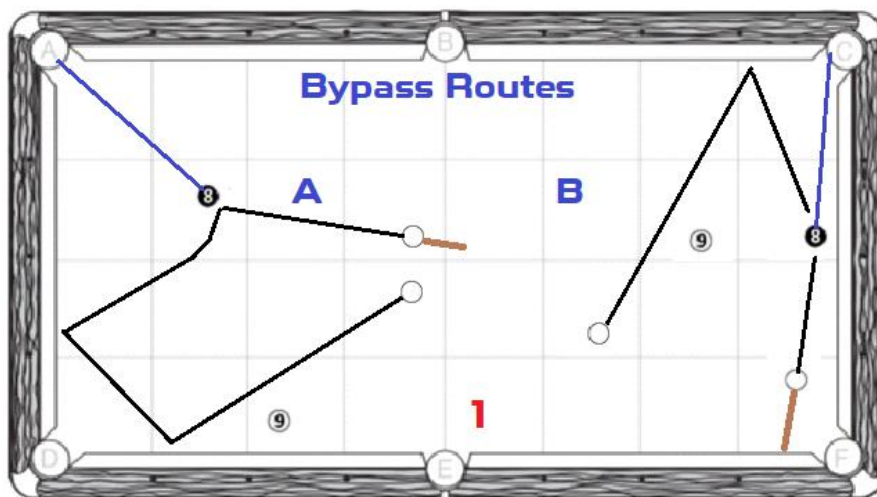
In **Diagram 1**, Route A shows the cue ball is going two-rails and then past the 9-ball for position on it. This route takes advantage of the cue ball's natural path while avoiding the one rail route that requires the use of inside english in attempt to have a straighter shot on the 9-ball. Yes, you are purposefully playing for about a 35 degree cut on the 9-ball, but from this position this shot is easy.

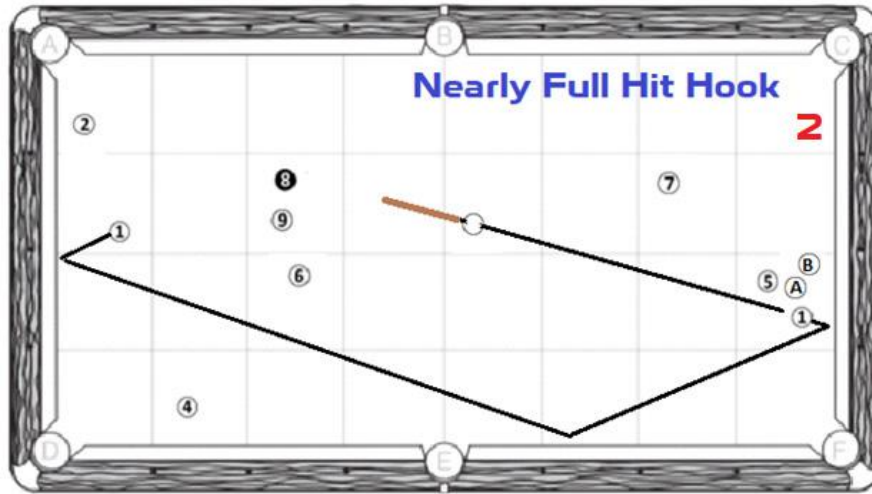
Route B is a two railer on the 8-ball where the cue ball, once again, rolls

past the next ball, which it the 9. While these two examples are simple to see routes once you know them, they are the kind that can be easily overlooked if they are not in you arsenal.

SIGEL SHARES CRANE'S TECHNIQUE

I really enjoyed Mike Sigel's commentary during the International 9-Ball Open. He really gets into talking about angles, good, bad, and when acceptable position could be better. During one match a player came across a cut of about 30-degrees where the balls were close together, and took advantage of the situation as he passed on a lesson from Irving Crane, the great 14.1 player. According to Crane, and





Sigel, you can get a better perspective if you stand a little taller than normal when the cue ball is close together.

A NEARLY FULL HIT HOOK SAFETY

On some safeties you need to send the cue ball a short distance sideways after contacting the object ball. To do this you have to have a feel for how much to cut the object ball. A full hit obviously won't work, but a nearly full hit will. Instead of saying you need to cut the ball 1 or 2 degrees, you have to use these aim safeties by feel.

This is far more difficult than it seems because even the pros will often let the cue ball leak out to the other side of the blocker. In **Diagram 2** the goal is to send the cue ball behind the 5-ball. You have to hit the ball with a medium speed to send the object ball far down the table behind that wall of blockers – and to play a near stop shot with a small sideways drift. Cue Ball A shows a nearly perfect hook, while Cue Ball B could lead to disaster depending on where the 1-ball stopped.

STRETCHING

Stretching can easily cause you to miss a shot that, with the same specs but in another location, you would

never miss. This happens because the stretch combined with the speed you are trying to employ on the final stroke, which causes your action to break down just enough to create a miss. One antidote is to take a position next to where you will stand and do a few WUS to get a feel for the shot. Then, when playing the actual shot, take a few more WUS to ingrain the feel of your stroke before making your final one.

A NEW VIEW ON RAIL SHOTS

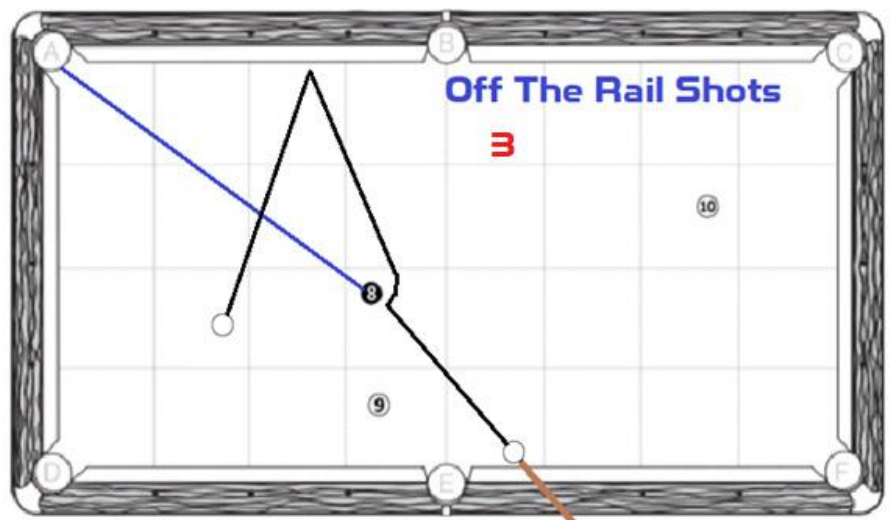
Many players dread playing shots when the cue ball is on or right next to the rail, a view that is reinforced time

and again. And yet the pros go ahead and routinely make these shots. A prime example came in the Little Monster Women's 10-Ball when Seo Seo left herself with the shot in **Diagram 3**. She calmly pocketed and got ideal shape on the 8-ball.

So, perhaps it's time to take a new view towards these shots, one that will up your success rate. When you are shooting off the rail, your cue is in a very solid position resting on the rail. Your cueing is not an issue as you are (or should be) cueing on the vertical axis. And a level cue ensures that you will consistently hit the cue ball in the same spot.

On the vast majority of rail shots your stroke will almost certainly be in the soft (3) to medium (5) range on the Spectrum of Speeds, which makes it easier to make a high quality stroke.

With all of these pluses in mind, it seems to me that they far outweigh the potentially shot ruining thought that these are such tough shots, and that a miss is very possible. They are not as long as you stick to my new view. And, of course, having a positive attitude towards how you approach each shot should do wonders for your game.



BELIEVING IN YOUR KNOWLEDGE

When watching the pros on video try your hand at planning each shot before they play it rather than passively waiting to see what they do. As your pool knowledge grows and you begin to make an ever higher percentage of good calls, your confidence in your knowledge grow should grow as well. When you are then playing a match, you have all the more reason to believe in your game and yourself, which will, of course, propel you much more often into the winner's circle.

JUMP SHOT FOLLOW THROUGH

Fedor Gorst is known for his superb fundamentals on "regular" shots, and he is also widely recognized as the world's best at jump shots. He takes great care in aiming, then elevates his cue as needed to achieve the cue ball's required elevation over the obstructer(s). He employs a sidarm stroke with pronounced wrist action.

On "regular" shots a player's follow through is thoroughly analyzed for direction, length, and levelness. In contrast, on jump shots the cue is going into the cloth an inch or so after contact, then the cue is bounces off to the side. Because of this, there is little arm action to examine after contact, so the emphasis shifts to evaluating the results of the jump shot.

GENERATING LOTS OF ACTION

I heard a commentator say that Seo Seo "gets a lot of action on the cue ball without much effort." To that I would add a much needed word so that his description now reads that she "gets a lot of action with not much apparent effort." This means that she is making a power move with her arm

swing and the release of her wrist – but because she does it so smoothly, it looks like it is effortless when it is actually anything but.

TWO NEW DESCRIPTIVE TERMS

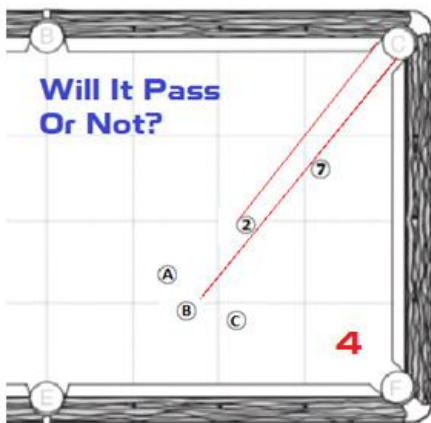
I am proposing that cut shots be described as a cut to the left, or a cut to the right. When watching pool and engaged in participatory watching I will be planning the pros next shot – or at least what I think they will or should do.

I have never heard a commentator use these terms – a cut to the left or right. Instead, they will say things like the cue ball is above or below the ball. This may confuse some less knowledgeable fans, but there can be no mistaking a cut to the left or a cut to the right. Then you can fine tune your observation a bit further by saying it's a thin cut to the right, or a moderate cut to the left.

FINDING THE TRUE POCKET OPENING

Your cue is a useful tool for determining if a ball will go and, if so, what is the effective pocket opening when a ball is blocking part of the object ball's path to the pocket.

Diagram 4 demonstrates how you can use your cue to discover the effective



size of the pocket, and if the ball will even go. In this case, hold your cue along a line that runs from the right edge of the 2-ball (the object ball), and the left edge of the 7-ball (the blocker) and extend your cue from the edge of the blocker to the pocket.

In our example about a quarter of the pocket is blocked, so you would have three quarters as you're the pocket as a target. With a 4.5" pocket, this would be about 3.38". The ball is only 2.25", so your margin for error is 1.13". Knowing this should give your confidence a boost.

Once you have committed to playing the shot, you must zero in on the small pocket opening and not be sharked into missing by the presence of that pesky obstructor.

The diagram shows three cue ball locations. Cue Ball A is the easiest followed by Cue Ball B. The shot is toughest from Cue Ball C because the 7-ball is far more visible and presents a bigger challenge to your concentration on the 2-ball and the pocket.

COMING TO TERMS

While watching the pros this year I have noticed the use of certain terms that give me an instant pain in my ear when I hear them. Here are some of the culprits.

MIDDLE POCKET or CENTER POCKET - The side pocket is NOT the middle pocket or the center pocket. It is the side pocket. Period. And yes, I have a vested interest in calling it by the correct name, because that that's how it appears in the hundreds of thousands of my books in print. Besides, The Side Pocket is the name of so many poolrooms.

THE 50-YARD LINE - The 50 yard line in football is a good thing – it is good field position, and it's where the best seats are located. In pool, however, a



Shane Van Boening
GENERATION II

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for playing position on the 10-ball, and this margin for error would help him to avoid scratching.

After playing the shot, Maciol ended up with a larger cut angle than the one he planned for, but happily he was still able to run out. The lesson: watch carefully as players survey the table and show you their target. Why, you might ask, do they want the cue ball at that position? Then compare this with their results to see why their actual position is less than ideal – or if it might even be better than they planned for!

FILLER'S 4-RAIL GEM

A critical juncture came in Match 5, game 7 of the Mosconi Cup. Europe held a 3-1 lead in matches won, but was losing this match by a score of 4-2. So, if Team USA won, they would close the gap to 2-3. In close pressure filled

contests like this one, Joshua Filler (FargoRate of 857) has been known to come up with a big shot, and this one was no exception.

In this case, he was in the midst of a runout, but left himself with the awkward position on the 6-ball as shown in **Diagram 6**. I had no idea what he would do on this shot, and neither did the commentators. But all that matters is the Filler did, and on this super missable 50 degree cut with the cue ball close to the rail he speared it into the right side of the pocket and sent

the cue ball on its incredible four rail journey to the other end of the table and back for excellent position on the 7-ball.

Filler, of course, completed the run out, and Team Europe went on to win the match, taking a commanding 4-1 lead, and the rest is history as they coasted to an celebration filled 11-3 rout of the Americans.

This concluded part 1 of my series on Watching Pool. Please check back in February for part 2. Happy New Year!

ABOUT PHIL CAPELLE

Beginning in 1968, Capelle spent 27 years competing in money games, leagues, and tournaments. In late 1994 he founded Billiards Press, and has since written 12 instructional books on pool. Over the last eight years he has conducted extensive research in preparation for his upcoming book, *Pool Is The Answer*. For a detailed profile of Phil Capelle, see his interview with Melinda Bailey in the April 2019 issue of the Billiards Buzz.

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PLAY YOUR BEST POOL
Ming Massey's WORLD OF TRICK SHOTS

Less Is More: How Minimal Cue Ball Movement Wins Racks

ANTHONY BEELER

One of the most important—and most misunderstood—concepts in high-level pool is what I refer to as “owning the circle.”

Around every object ball on the table, imagine an invisible circle approximately two feet in diameter. This circle represents a *manageable position zone* for the cue ball.

Professional players do not simply land the cue ball *somewhere* in this circle. They consistently land it in a *specific, targeted section* of the circle that provides the ideal angle for the next shot. This is often the difference between merely running a few balls or running several racks. Precision within the circle allows players to shoot with a controlled stroke, minimize cue ball travel, and maintain precise cue ball placement.

Cue Ball Control: The Key to Owing the Circle

The first thing you need to understand is that position play is built on restraint, simplicity, and understanding natural cue ball paths.

1. Minimal Movement

Effective position play usually requires *very little* cue ball movement. Many amateurs fall into the trap of sending the cue ball two or three rails when a few inches of controlled movement would have been far more reliable. The goal is not distance—it's angle.

By limiting cue ball travel and stopping at the correct angle, you reduce variables and increase consistency.

Small movements are easier to judge, easier to repeat, and far more forgiving under pressure.

2. The Tangent Line and Stop Shot Formula

The tangent line describes the natural 90-degree path a skidding cue ball takes immediately after contacting an object ball. Understanding this principle—and how it evolves with follow or draw—allows you to guide the cue ball into precise areas of the circle.

By mastering stop shots, stun shots, and soft draw or follow, you can place the cue ball exactly where it needs to be without unnecessary motion. These fundamentals are the backbone of elite position play and allow you to “dial in” specific parts of the circle with repeatable results.

3. Control Over Power

Precision in pool has far less to do with power than most players believe. Excessive speed magnifies errors and makes cue ball behavior unpredictable. Pocketing balls at optimal stroke speed allows players to pocket balls more accurately with a much more controlled stroke.

When you prioritize finesse over force, cue ball paths become clearer, angles become simpler, and the circle becomes easier to control.



Practical Example 1: The Short Follow Shot

Let's look at a practical run-out example to illustrate how the circle concept works in real play.

Step 1: Pocket the 2

The objective is to pocket the 2-ball and move the cue ball near the red circle for position on the 7-ball to get to the 9. The cue ball doesn't need to travel far—only enough to create the proper angle. Undershooting the circle complicates the next shot, while precise placement makes it routine. In this scenario, you are better off following a little too far rather than not following far enough. A controlled follow is used to move the cue ball forward into the red zone.

Step 2: Achieve the Correct Angle on the 7

Landing in the correct section of the circle gives you a natural angle on the 7-ball. This angle allows the cue ball to flow effortlessly toward the 9-ball without the use of excessive power. When the angle is right, the table



starts to “open up,” and the run becomes simpler.

Step 3: Finish with the 9

Good position on the 7 makes position on the 9 almost automatic. Instead of forcing the cue ball or guessing at speed, you simply follow the natural path. This reduces pressure, lowers the chance of error, and increases run-out consistency.

Practical Example 2: The Short Draw Shot

1. Visualize the Circle

Before pulling the trigger, clearly picture where the cue ball must land inside the circle to create the ideal angle (small red circle). Visualization sharpens intent and improves execution.

2. Set Up the Draw

Strike the cue ball below center with a smooth, controlled stroke. Tip placement and stroke length should match the distance the cue ball needs to travel. The goal is not maximum draw—it's *exact draw*.



3. Focus on Accuracy

A slight under-draw can dramatically flatten the angle on the 7, turning a simple transition into a difficult one. Ask yourself a critical question before shooting: *Is it better to land short or long?* In this situation, landing slightly long is clearly preferable, as it preserves a more natural path to the 9.

Why Less Cue Ball Movement Is Better

1. Increased Accuracy

Shorter cue ball paths reduce the chances of misjudging angle, speed, and spin.

2. Better Control

Compact movements are easier to predict, easier to repeat, and far more reliable under pressure.

Final Thought

Owning the circle requires discipline. Precise cue ball placement simplifies patterns, slows the game down, and makes run-outs far more predictable. In pool, less cue ball movement always leads to greater control.

Anthony Beeler is the current *Billiards Instructor of the Decade* and is a former BCAPL National Champion. He has numerous “Top 25” national finishes and is the primary author of the *ACS National Billiards Instructor’s Manual*. He has also authored the book *Unstoppable! Positive Thinking for Pool Players*. Anthony currently has the highest established Fargo Rating of any Master Instructor. He has won over 300 tournaments and has defeated numerous professional players in tournament competition.

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CHALKIN' UP THE MEMORIES...



ROAD TRIP!

Bright and early the next morning, I hit the road. Although I knew it would take me hours longer, I decided to take the scenic route down to Los Angeles – the Pacific Coast Highway. The PCH is one of the most scenic roads in the world and it hugged the rugged California coast and had stunning ocean views, dramatic cliffs, redwoods and beaches. I'd never seen it before so off I went.

It was a beautiful fall day and I had the windows rolled down. Rusty had his head out the window with the wind in his face as he enjoyed the ride. We traveled through meadows, mountains and forests as we cruised past Half Moon Bay, the Pigeon Point Lighthouse and the Big Basin Redwoods State Park. We decided to stop in Santa Cruz for an early lunch.

Spotting the boardwalk, Rusty and I meandered along until I found a sandwich shop with outdoor seating. We could've sat there all day people watching and enjoying the view but soon it was time to hit the road again.

Monterey Bay was on our right as we hugged the coast and soon it was time to make another stop in Monterey itself. As a teenager I'd read all of John Steinbeck's books including Cannery Row – a street in Monterey telling of the sardine canneries, bordellos and flophouses during the Great Depression. I had to see it for myself.

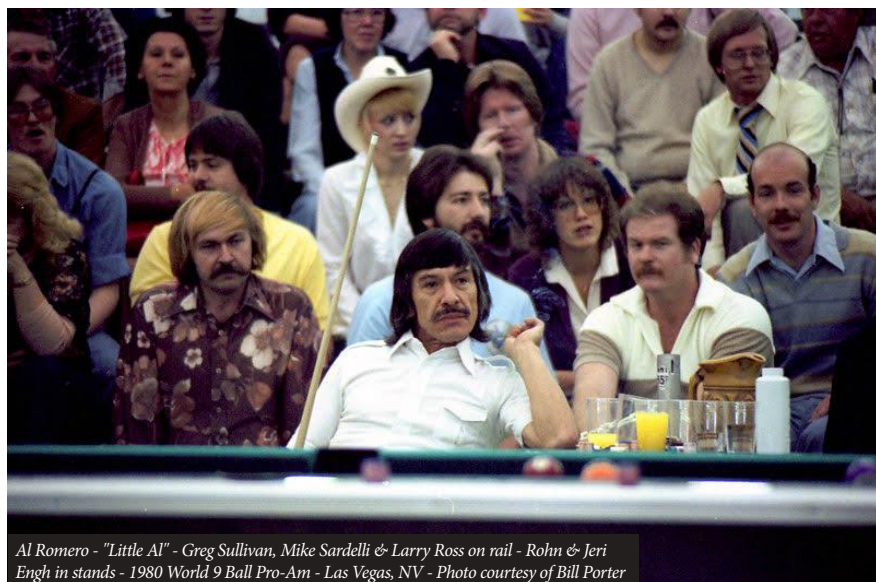
Rusty and I hopped out of the car and walked along Cannery Row. Unfor-

tunately, most of the old canneries had been demolished or refurbished as shops, galleries or restaurants. As we walked, I'd overheard people talking about the sea lions and seals off the end of Fisherman's wharf so we headed on over there. They were both noisy and smelly as hundreds of them lounged on the rocks or swam in the water. Rusty's tail was wagging furiously as he strained at the leash. I loved watching them as they lumbered around on the rocks but as soon as they dove into the water they were as graceful as can be.

We hopped back in the car and soon we were in Carmel By-The-Sea. We got off the PCH again to drive around the beautiful city on its cobblestone streets. Soon we saw signs pointing to Pebble Beach and the world famous

17-Mile Drive so it was there we headed.

We had to pay admission to the 17-Mile Drive but it was well worth it. We drove through forests, passed golf courses, beautiful lodgings and homes, a view of Monterey Bay and Santa Cruz, beaches, Bird Rock, Seal Rock and stopped at the Cypress Point Lookout to admire the fabulous views. We then drove through a grove of large old cypress trees and stopped to admire the iconic Lone Cypress – over 250 years old and the most famous image depicting Pebble Beach. We then passed the Ghost Trees at Pescadero Point full of spooky sun-bleached Cypress trees. We then drove through the world famous Pebble Beach Golf Links. The drive was both majestic and spectacular – I hat-



Al Romero - "Little Al" - Greg Sullivan, Mike Sardelli & Larry Ross on rail - Rohn & Jeri Eng in stands - 1980 World 9 Ball Pro-Am - Las Vegas, NV - Photo courtesy of Bill Porter

ed to see it end but back on the road we went.

It wasn't long before we approached one of the most photographed spots along the PCH - the famous Bixby Bridge. Built in 1932 during the Great Depression, it spans a rugged canyon. We stopped just before the bridge at one of the turnouts to admire the sweeping views of the ocean, dramatic cliffs and rolling hills. It was pretty windy there so even though it was beautiful, I was glad to hop back into the car.

After we crossed the bridge, we soon found ourselves driving through the natural beauty of the Big Sur coastal area. My stomach was growling and we soon found a place to eat in one of the small roadside cafes. Stomach full, we got back in the car and started looking for a relatively inexpensive place to sleep.

We passed through San Simeon and by the Hearst Castle and soon arrived in San Luis Obispo where we found a place to spend the night.

After an early breakfast the next morning, we hit the road and found ourselves heading inland through rolling hills and forests. I wondered why until I saw the signs for Vandenburg Air Force Base - mystery solved.

An hour or so had passed and soon we were back hugging a couple state beaches and soon pulled into the

small Danish town of Solvang. Featuring Danish architecture, I soon spotted a bakery. Finding a parking spot nearby, I ran into the bakery and loaded up on strudel, assorted treats and a few homemade doggie biscuits for the drive.

Back on the highway, we soon entered the city limits of Santa Barbara. Known as the "American Riviera" with mountains meeting the ocean, it was filled with Spanish Colonial architecture. As we drove around the city, I soon saw a sign for a dog-friendly beach so that's where we headed.

Rusty had been cooped up in the car with only a few stops along the way so I stopped at a hardware store and bought about thirty feet of rope. I attached the rope to Rusty's leash and we spent about an hour letting him sniff and run around. He loved digging for the crabs that popped up when the waves receded and racing back to the beach as the waves rushed back in.

Sandy and wet, I towed him off as best I could and got him back in the car. He'd worn himself out so there was no more hanging out the window for him! He curled up on the seat and soon was sound asleep.

Now nearing the Los Angeles area, we passed through Ventura, Oxnard and then the Getty Center as we approached Malibu. Known for its celebrity homes and beaches, I was both surprised and disappointed to see that most of the homes were not visible from the PCH. For privacy reasons, most only had garages that faced the highway with the houses themselves accessed from the garages.

As soon as I could, I jumped onto the 405 and before I knew it, I was in the belly of the beast - the greater Los Angeles area. I worked my way on highway after highway and after another hour or two, I finally pulled up in front of the Stagger Inn.

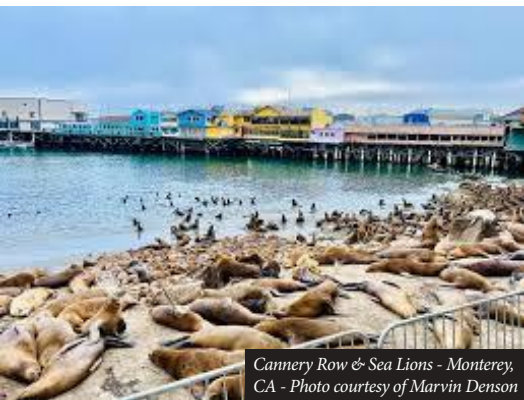


Bixby Bridge - Big Sur, CA - Photo by Ershov Maks - Photo courtesy of Getty Images

In my absence, the Stagger Inn had gone from a small bar to five or six times its size encompassing most of the shopping center. It was still early evening so after I let Rusty out for a bit, I put him back in the car and walked into the new place. Featuring a long bar against the back wall, the place now had about twelve bar tables. I didn't see anyone I knew so I asked the bartender if Ray Hogan, the owner, was around. He pointed me to a door and told me Ray was inside.

I knocked on the door and I heard Ray holler to come on in. I walked into a pretty large space that housed the office for his Southern California Pool League and his office. A big man - about 6'4" - Ray rose from his desk to greet me with a big smile and a hug.

"Mare, we missed you around here! Are you just back for a visit or for good?" I started to tell him my story and told him I had a dog in my car so couldn't stay long. Ray told me to go get him and bring him inside to his office.



Cannery Row & Sea Lions - Monterey, CA - Photo courtesy of Marvin Denson

Mary Kenniston

While I was getting Rusty, Ray had gotten a bowl of water and a few treats for him from the kitchen. Hard to believe, I know, but Rusty immediately made Ray his friend!

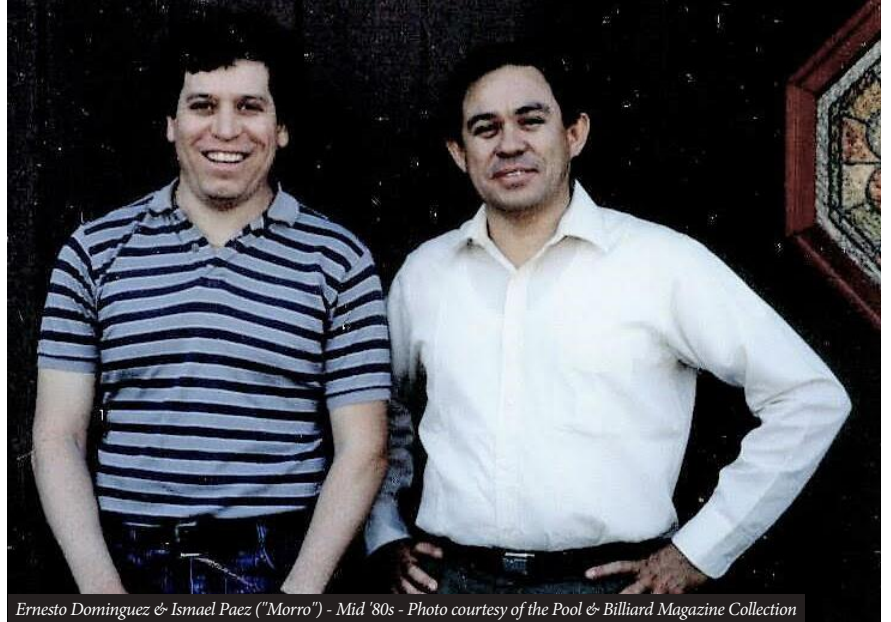
After Rusty was taken care of and exploring the large space, Ray & I sat down and I filled him in on what had happened in the few years I was gone. I told him I was looking for a dog-friendly place to live and within a few hours, someone I'd known previously offered us a place to stay in Long Beach. We headed over to her house, she showed me my room and I let Rusty out in her backyard which was enclosed by a six foot high block wall. It was perfect!

Tired from our long trip, I brought Rusty back in and fell asleep in front of the TV in the room.

The next day I made the rounds stopping at Bellflower Billiards and some of my other old haunts. At Bellflower Billiards, the place was empty except for the private room where Big Bertha hosted the liability game. Room owner Jim Morgan, "Little Al" Romero, John Henderson, Grady Mathews and a few of the regulars like Tweedy and Jimmy Vann were there.



Lou Butera - "Machine Gun Lou" - 1980 Rocky Mountain Open - Colorado Springs, CO - Courtesy of Mike Haines & Bill Porter



Ernesto Dominguez & Ismael Paez ("Morro") - Mid '80s - Photo courtesy of the Pool & Billiard Magazine Collection

After telling Little Al that I was back for good, he invited me to resume our afternoon sparring sessions at this house in Norwalk. He lived with his brother and family and had a perfect Gold Crown that shared space with the family guinea pigs. When I had lived in Bellflower previously, our afternoon practice consisted of several races to nine with instruction from NY Blackie and Little Al thrown in. I had learned so much and looked forward to working with Al again.

Later, I went back to the Stagger Inn and wandered over to Ray's office to see if he was around. He had just wrapped up a meeting with the other people who ran the Southern California Pool Leagues. He told me that one of the topics that had come up in the meeting was many players in the league were inquiring about instruction and Ray had told them about my return to the LA area. He asked me if I was interested.

Within days, Ray had moved a bar table into the league offices and I began giving either private instruction or working with groups of three. It wasn't long before I had quite a few students.

However, things weren't going so well at home. Somehow Rusty had unbelievably jumped over the six foot wall

and the dog catcher had picked him up. It cost me \$55 to get him out of the pound. Within a couple days, he did it again. Another \$55 out the window. Finally, the third time was too much. I paid the \$55 once again and asked Ray if he knew anyone he would take the dog. He made a few phone calls and later that night, he told me his son out in Fontana would take him. He and his wife had a young son and they had been thinking about getting him a dog.

The following day I drove out to Fontana and discovered that Rusty's new home was a small working ranch complete with horses, cows, goats and chickens to keep him company. Their five year old son was ecstatic and although I cried all the way back to Long Beach, I knew I'd found him a good home.

Within a couple months, Ray told me that one of my friends from the Stag-



Santa Barbara, CA - Photo courtesy of Outlook Traveller

ger Inn had split from her husband and was looking for a roommate. Barb was a surgical nurse at the nearby Kaiser Permanente hospital and she lived in a small cottage close to the Stagger Inn. Within a few days, I had moved in and loved my new digs.

So, my days were filled between giving lessons and going around at night looking for action. Although I felt safe walking into most of the pool rooms alone, I was hesitant about going into the bars unless I was with someone. I decided to limit myself to Bellflower Billiards and the Stagger Inn when I wasn't in action at the pool room.

One night I drove over to the Stagger Inn – I hadn't been over there at night except once in a while. I saw Ray sitting at the bar so I walked over and sat down next to him.

He asked me why I hardly ever came by except for the lessons and I told him that I preferred playing on nine footers and there were none at the Stagger Inn.

Ray didn't miss a beat. He told me to find one, he'd put it in and if I was interested, he'd make me his house pro. Sounded good to me so the next day I called Lou Butera at the Golden West



The Lone Cypress - 17-Mile Drive - Pebble Beach, CA - Photo by Connie Cooper-Edwards

Showroom in Canoga Park. I told him what I was looking for and he told me he had just the table for me.

I drove out to the Valley and he brought me to the back and showed me a Brunswick table that had just come in. It wasn't a Gold Crown but was similar in construction and playability. It worked for me so I called Ray for him and Lou to make the arrangements for payment and delivery. Mission accomplished!

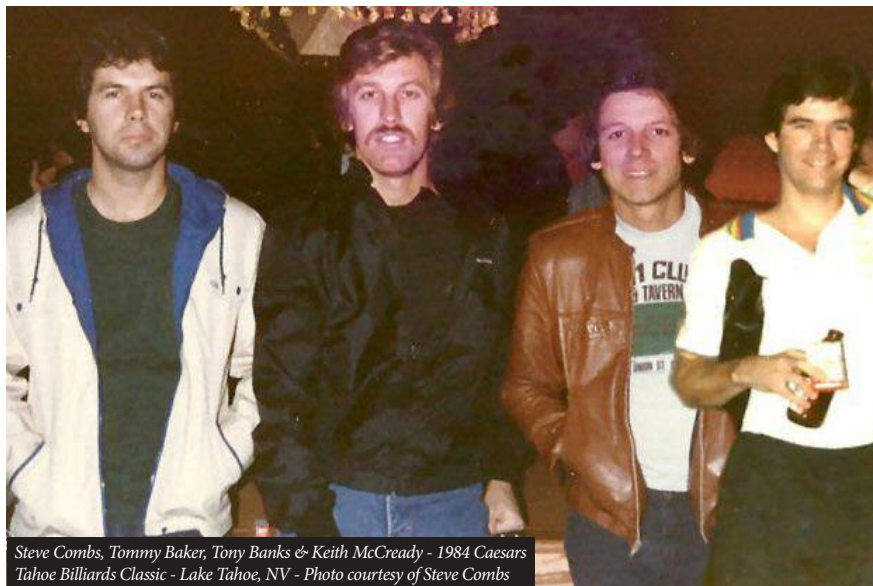
Within two days, the table was installed and it immediately got plenty

of action. I had been talking up the Stagger Inn to all the pool players I met in my travels and between Ray's involvement with his league as well as Miller Lite sponsoring qualifying events throughout Southern California, it soon became action central.

Players like Sergio Gandarilla and all the other Mexican stars like Ernesto Dominguez and Ismael Paez ("Morro") soon packed the place. Jerry Brunstetter, Frank Almanza, Jerry Matchin and the Orange County players like Keith McCready, Tommy Baker, Tony Banks, Dickie Renk and Jeff Patterson could be found there on any given night. On the weekends, there was action on every table and always something going on the rest of the week.

And the best part? Ray staked me whenever I got a game and I got to keep all the winnings. Didn't get much better than that.

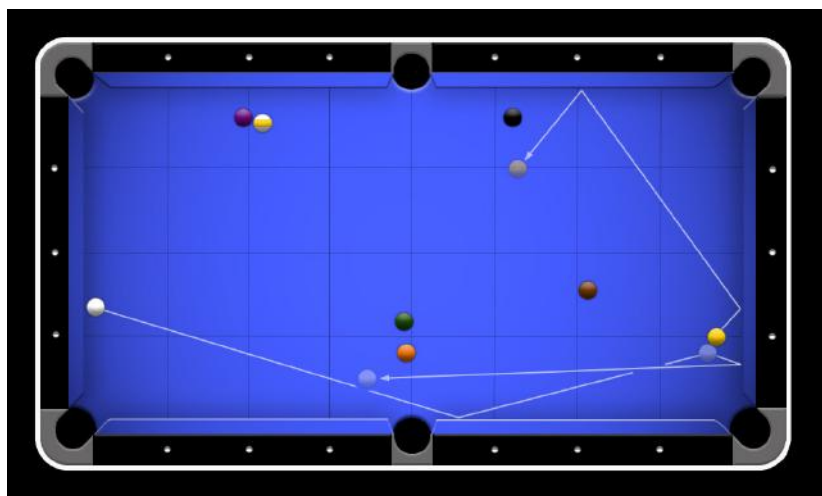
I'd found a home.



Steve Combs, Tommy Baker, Tony Banks & Keith McCready - 1984 Caesars Tahoe Billiards Classic - Lake Tahoe, NV - Photo courtesy of Steve Combs

Known in the pool world as "Nightmare," Mary is a former world & national champion, a WPBA Hall of Famer & owned Cue-Topia in Las Vegas, NV. She has thousands of billiard-related photos in her Facebook Wall of Fame.

F R O M



Accu-Stats Video Productions has been bringing us World Class Pool on video for the last 30 years. With this column, we hope to bring you some examples of the best shots that come up between the greatest players who play this game.

This month's shot is yet another from the cue of Efren Reyes.

It has been said that Reyes was the player to bring the idea of kick safes to the game, and this is a perfect example of aiming to kick the edge of the one and get safe, instead of blasting at the ball to hope things go your way.

Yet another lesson from The Magician.





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EUROPE REIGN SUPREME WITH SEVENTEENTH MOSCONI CUP TRIUMPH

Team Europe were crowned Mosconi Cup champions for a record-extending seventeenth time, delivering a ruthless final-day whitewash to seal an emphatic 11–3 victory over Team USA at Alexandra Palace.

2025 MOSCONI CUP RESULT

Team Europe 11 – 3 Team USA

European captain Jayson Shaw said: “The goal all week was simple: finish the job. And the boys delivered.

We believed from the first break shot that we would do it, but winning on home soil, with my family here, makes it even more special. I’m incredibly proud of this team—especially our rookies, Pijus and Moritz. I knew they

would rise to the moment, and Moritz being named MVP proves exactly that.”

In a moment reminiscent of Joshua Filler’s breakout MVP performance



Team Europe

in 2017, debutant Moritz Neuhausen claimed the MVP crown after a remarkable week that saw him deliver under pressure time and time again.

Neuhausen reflected: “It feels unbelievable. I’m honoured to be MVP, but it’s because of the team around me. Jayson has been a great leader, and being alongside David, Josh, and Pijus made everything easier. To win on my debut—it’s something I’ll never forget.”

Match One

Team Europe 5 – 1 Team USA

Shaw broke and ran the opener, before rookie Neuhausen captured the second after a tight safety exchange with Van Boening. Woodward responded by capitalising on Filler’s push-out, but Alcaide restored Europe’s momentum with a composed clearance over Styer.

A costly miss on the 9-ball from Thorpe allowed Labutis to push Europe to the hill, and a scratch from Gorst in

the last rack handed Shaw the chance to close out the first point of the tournament.

Match Two

Josh Filler & David Alcaide 5 – 3 Fedor Gorst & Shane Van Boening

Despite Team USA taking the first two racks, Filler and Alcaide—playing their first doubles match together—quickly levelled. Alcaide then produced a superb 4–9 combination to edge Europe ahead, though the Americans struck back immediately. The European duo broke and ran the seventh to extend their lead, and a failed safety escape from Gorst gifted the Europeans their second point of the day in the following rack.

Filler said afterwards: “We played our best doubles possible against Team USA, and when you start like this it shows how strong Europe really is. Being 2–0 up after the first two games couldn’t be any better. We took our chances—it was close, but we han-

dled the pressure. Let’s see what happens next.”

Match Three

Jayson Shaw 5 – 2 Skyler Woodward

Shaw edged the first rack with an impressive jump escape before breaking and running for 2–0. Woodward clawed one back, but Shaw maintained control with clinical potting to reach 3–1.

Both players traded push-outs, with Shaw converting his opportunity to reach the hill at 4–1. Woodward hit back to 4–2, but Shaw was unshakable, closing out the win to secure Europe’s third point—and backing up his pre-event confidence after telling Woodward in the press conference that their match would be “easy.”

Match Four

Moritz Neuhausen & Pijus Labutis 5 – 2 Tyler Styer & Billy Thorpe

Europe’s rookies made a confident start, taking the first two racks. A strong jump shot from Labutis was undone by a miss from Neuhausen, allowing USA onto the board, but an error from Styer soon restored Europe’s cushion. The Americans responded again, but another mistake from the German rookie appeared to give USA the chance to level—only for Styer to repeat the error, gifting Europe the hill.

A final miss from Styer on the 9-ball handed Neuhausen and Labutis the opportunity they needed, completing the day one whitewash and announcing themselves as genuine contenders on the Mosconi Cup stage.

Reflecting on his debut, Pijus Labutis said: “It gives us a little confidence, but we’re not relaxed—the job is not done. Now we have even more height to fall from. Who knows? They played bad today but could play great tomorrow. We have to play as good or better to keep the lead.”



Joshua Filler

Match Five

Team Europe 5 – 4 **Team USA**

Van Boening struck first after a fierce safety battle with Shaw, and World No.1 Gorst followed with a clinical break and run to give USA an early two-rack lead. Neuhausen responded with a break and run of his own, but Styer countered to restore the Americans' cushion at 3–1.

Thorpe's failed bank allowed Labutis to close the gap, before Van Boening once again edged Shaw to put USA on the hill at 4–2.

Filler broke and ran to keep Europe alive, and Neuhausen capitalised on Woodward's failed safety to force

hill-hill. A dry break from Alcaide looked set to hand Styer the winning chance—but a missed bank on the 9-ball allowed Alcaide to steal the rack and secure Europe a dramatic comeback victory.

Match Six

Joshua Filler 5 – 3 **Fedor Gorst**

Filler came flying out of the gate, storming to a 3–0 lead over the World No.1 before Gorst responded with two composed racks to narrow the deficit. Filler reached the hill in the following rack, but Gorst was gifted a golden break to make it 4–3. The comeback stopped there, however, as Gorst's failed safety opened the door for Filler to clear and extend Europe's commanding overall lead.

Filler said: "Happy to get the win against Fedor—he's a phenomenal player, so I'm proud of that result. We wanted another session sweep, but taking the session win and getting an early night feels great. I'm enjoying being back out in front of these European fans and appreciate all their support."

Match Seven

Jayson Shaw & Joshua Filler 2 – 5 **Skyler Woodward & Shane Van Boening**

After Shaw and Filler took the opening rack, the American pair produced their best pool of the tournament, stringing together four racks to reach the hill and put Europe under serious pressure. A sharp safety from Filler

gave Europe a lifeline to make it 4–2, but a miss from Shaw in the next rack handed USA the chance they needed, and Woodward–Van Boening duly converted to claim their first point.

Van Boening said: "It wasn't easy, but I'm glad we got the point. I felt like I played almost perfect. Skyler had my back in that match—he's been a solid teammate. Today's results might not fully show it, but USA played better, and I believe there's still hope. Despite a couple of mistakes, we're improving."

Day Two also saw Barry Hearn OBE in attendance, who reflected on this year's event: "All credit to team Europe. I think what we are seeing is hard-match players coming out of the European circuit. They're playing on the World Nineball Tour, they are playing everything. These guys are not going to give them anything, they are not going to give them room to breathe."

It's gone from strength to strength, it started in tenpin bowling allies in Romford and Basildon Festival Hall, and now it's a global event. It's got that magic of US v Europe."

Match Eight

Moritz Neuhausen 5 – 4 **Tyler Styer**

Styer countered Neuhausen's opener with a clinical three-rack run to take control, but the German youngster dug deep, stealing momentum late in the match. After levelling 4–4 with a brilliant jump escape, Neuhausen survived a tense final rack—Styer missing a decisive 9-ball under pressure—to steal a crucial point for Europe.

Neuhausen said: "I feel a little bad for Tyler—he's under a lot of pressure. But that may have been the biggest point of the night. On paper I was done, but I fought back. We set the tone again. Their spirits are broken, and we're feeling strong."



Jayson Shaw

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Match Nine

Pijus Labutis & David Alcaide 3 – 5 Fedor Gorst & Billy Thorpe

Gorst and Thorpe delivered one of USA's best performances of the tournament, surging to a 3-0 lead with aggressive shot-making and strong table control. Labutis and Alcaide rallied to pull within one, but a missed 6-9 combo from Europe allowed the Americans to reach the hill before Thorpe closed the match with conviction.

Thorpe commented: "That win felt unreal. Me and Fedor have become close over the last year, so taking a point with the world number one means a lot. I pulled off some big shots and it felt like things were finally rolling our way. We're fighting to make something special happen."

Match Ten

Team Europe 5 – 4 Team USA

A rollercoaster contest saw the USA storm ahead 2-0 through Van Boening and Gorst, before Europe fought back with composed clearances from Filler and Alcaide. Momentum shifted repeatedly, but Europe reached the hill at 4-3 after capitalising on American errors. USA levelled once more, but a missed 6-ball from Woodward in the decider opened the door for Alcaide to deliver another huge team victory.

Shaw said: "The team match is always 50/50, but that was massive. These last two points were unbelievable. The atmosphere is electric, this is why we play the Mosconi Cup."

“ I STILL HAVE THE FIRE WHEN I'M OUT THERE— THAT PASSION YOU NEED AT THE TABLE. ONE DAY WHEN THAT FIRE FADES, THAT'S WHEN I'LL KNOW. FOR NOW, I'M PROUD TO BE A SIX-TIME MOSCONI CUP CHAMPION. ”

David Alcaide



Moritz Neuhausen

This is why we always deliver at home."

Match Eleven

David Alcaide 3 – 5 **Shane Van Boening**

Van Boening delivered the composed, clinical performance USA desperately needed. After capitalising on early errors from Alcaide, the American great controlled the rhythm, withstanding a late push from the Spaniard before closing the match after a tactical exchange. Van Boening said: "I feel like I've been playing solid all week. David played well, but my job was to stay steady and take the chances when they came. We know the odds, but we're not out. Team USA still has

a fighting chance, and we're coming tomorrow with everything we've got."

Match Twelve

Joshua Filler & Moritz Neuhausen 5 – 2 Fedor Gorst & Skyler Woodward

The 2023 World Cup of Pool finalists, Filler and Neuhausen reunited in doubles and delivered Europe's first strike of the final day. USA jumped ahead early—Woodward escaping Filler's safety in rack one, followed by a scratch from Neuhausen—but momentum shifted sharply.

Filler produced a stunning escape of his own to narrow the gap before Woodward's missed cut allowed the Germans to level. A missed 9-ball from Woodward and a scratch from Gorst handed Europe control, and despite escaping a safety, Gorst's miss on the 3-ball sealed it for the Europeans.

Filler said: "USA had momentum last night, but today was a fresh start. Moritz is the perfect doubles partner—we've shown before we play great together, and we proved it again. I'm thrilled we got the point, but even

more impressed by how he's played all week."

Match Thirteen

Pijus Labutis 5 – 3 Billy Thorpe

Labutis opened strongly before Thorpe levelled, but a scratch from the American handed Labutis control, and the Lithuanian converted cleanly to build a two-rack lead. Thorpe responded by punishing a push-out, but a failed safety on the 5-ball helped Labutis reach the hill.

Thorpe produced a strong clearance to stay alive, but Labutis delivered a confident break-and-run to claim his first Mosconi Cup singles victory—and move Europe to the brink of lifting the Cup.

Labutis said: "I felt good out there—it was my first singles match and to win it was huge. But at that moment the job wasn't finished. The boys still had one more to get the Cup, and I trusted them completely."

Match Fourteen

Jayson Shaw & David Alcaide 5 – 2 Shane Van Boening & Tyler Styer



Jayson Shaw and David Alcaide

USA surged to a 2-0 lead after capitalising on a scratch from Alcaide, but errors soon crept in. Styer's miss on the 5-ball and a foul from Van Boening allowed Europe to level. Another miss from Styer gifted Shaw and Alcaide the lead.

With trademark flair, Shaw produced a superb 5-9 carom to put Europe on

the hill. Van Boening's miss on the 3-ball in the next rack opened the door, and Shaw stepped up to sink the tournament-winning 9-ball—crowning Europe champions for the sixth consecutive year.

Alcaide said: "When you look at the rankings, there are so many young players pushing through. But I still have the fire when I'm out there—that passion you need at the table. One day when that fire fades, that's when I'll know. For now, I'm proud to be a six-time Mosconi Cup champion."

Europe's victory at the iconic Alexandra Palace marks their seventeenth Mosconi Cup title and further cements their modern dominance in this transatlantic showdown. From debut brilliance to veteran composure, Europe proved once again why they remain the standard-bearers of the Mosconi Cup.

The Mosconi Cup returns next year, heading back to the stunning Caribe Royale Resort in Orlando, Florida from 27-30 November 2026, where Team Europe will attempt to defend their crown on American soil against a determined Team USA.



Pijus Labutis

Mosconi Cup Photo Gallery



Mosconi Cup Photo Gallery



Sky Woodward



Jaysom Shaw



Moritz Neuhausen

Shane Van Boening



Team USA Celebrates



Team USA makes their way to the arena



Tyler Styer



Team USA's Cheering Section



Billy Thorpe

REDEMPTION COMPLETE: SEOA SEO CROWNED WORLD CHAMPION IN EPIC REMATCH

The 2025 KAMUI WPA Women's 9-Ball World Championship delivered a final for the ages, as Korea's Seoa Seo completed her long-awaited redemption by defeating Kristina Tkach in a rematch that has become one of the defining rivalries in women's professional pool.

One year after suffering a heart-breaking defeat to Tkach in the final of the 2024 WPA Women's World 10-Ball Championship—a marathon match that lasted over four hours and spanned 30 fiercely contested racks—Seo returned to the world stage with one clear objective: revenge.

History repeated itself in intensity, but not in outcome.

Once again, Seo and Tkach met in a world championship final. Once again, the match pushed both players to their absolute limits for more than four hours. This time, however, the title was decided in the ultimate test of nerve: a shootout.

With remarkable composure under extreme pressure, Seoa Seo prevailed 3-2 in the shootout, capturing the 2025 KAMUI WPA Women's 9-Ball World Championship title. The final embodied everything that defines elite women's pool—precision, resilience, mental strength, and uncompromising competitive excellence.

This world title caps an exceptional 2025 season for Seo on the international circuit. In July, she claimed victory at the THE PREDATOR – PBC Indonesia International Women's Open, asserting her dominance in Southeast Asia. Later in the year, she also captured the 2025 Little Monster Women's International Open in Spain, confirming her authority on European soil. These major titles established Seo as one of the most consistent and formidable players of the season.

Beyond the world crown, this victory represents the culmination of a journey defined by perseverance and unfinished business. Seo's ability to return to the sport's biggest stage, face the same opponent, and reverse the

narrative speaks to her evolution as both an athlete and a competitor.

Kristina Tkach, the 2024 World 10-Ball Champion, once again proved why she remains one of the most dangerous forces in the game. Her performance throughout the tournament and in the final reaffirmed this rivalry as one of the most compelling storylines in modern women's billiards.

The 2025 KAMUI WPA Women's 9-Ball World Championship will be remembered not only for its dramatic conclusion, but for the story it told—a story of rivalry, resilience, and redemption at the highest level of the sport.

The Pro Billiard Series extends its sincere gratitude to KAMUI, the WPA, and all partners, sponsors, and supporters whose continued commitment helps elevate women's professional pool on the global stage. Their support makes moments like this possible moments that define champions and shape the future of the game.



Seoa Seo and Vincent Rochfort from Predator

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CHAMPION FILLER FINISHES THE SEASON STRONG!

December 21, 2025

Jacksonville, Florida — The 2025 season came to a close at the Hyatt Regency Jacksonville Riverfront, where Joshua Filler claimed the final title of the year at the Jax Men's 10-Ball Open, delivering a performance that capped off the calendar in memorable fashion.

Throughout the week, Filler demonstrated the skill, focus, and competitive edge that have made him one of the most accomplished players of his generation. His run concluded with a commanding victory over Robbie Capito, who earned a well-deserved runner-up finish after navigating a demanding field. The semifinals showcased two of the game's most compelling talents in Arseni Sevastyanov and Aloysius Yapp, both of whom produced standout performances that added depth and intrigue to the championship rounds.

Inside the Hyatt Regency Jacksonville Riverfront, the atmosphere reflected the significance of the moment as fans witnessed a fitting finale to the 2025 season. Among those in attendance was Pia Filler, Joshua's wife and a world-class competitor in her own right, whose presence and support brought a personal dimension to the championship evening.

As the final balls fell and the trophy was raised, the Jax Men's 10-Ball Open stood as a testament to excellence, resilience, and the international reach of professional pool. With the season officially complete, attention

now shifts toward 2026, where new challenges, expanded stages, and fresh storylines await.

The future is bright—and if this closing chapter was any indication, what comes next promises to be just as compelling.

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FISHER AND ATENCIO CROWNED JAX MIXED DOUBLES OPEN CHAMPIONS

December 20, 2025 – The Jax Mixed Doubles Open concluded after four unforgettable days of competition, emotion, and world-class pool, crowning Allison Fisher and Jesús Atencio as champions at the Hyatt Regency Jacksonville Riverfront.

The pair navigated a demanding field and delivered under pressure when it mattered most, capturing the title in front of an energized crowd along the St. Johns River.

Fisher and Atencio's run was defined by composure, trust, and a growing partnership that resonated throughout the week. Following the win, Atencio shared his gratitude, saying, "I got lucky to have the best partner in the world — it was a dream for me to be able to play with her," referring to Fisher, widely regarded as the most decorated female cueist of all time. Their connection on and off the table proved to be a defining factor in their championship performance.

Finishing as runners-up were Konrad Jusczyzyn and Chou Chieh-Yu, who

delivered a strong and disciplined showing throughout the event. Their consistency and teamwork carried them to the final match, where they pushed the champions and showcased why they are among the elite mixed doubles pairings on the international stage.

The semifinals featured two standout teams who left a lasting impression. Jayson Shaw and Savannah Easton captured the hearts of fans with a high-energy, fearless style of play that made them a crowd favorite, while Xinyu Hong and Sun Yi Hsuan demonstrated poise, precision, and resilience in a deep run that highlighted their chemistry and competitive spirit.

Across four days of intense matches, momentum swings, and emotional

highs and lows, the Jax Mixed Doubles Open delivered a compelling showcase of teamwork and elite performance. The Hyatt Regency Jacksonville Riverfront once again proved to be an exceptional host, providing a world-class setting that elevated the experience for players and fans alike, and solidifying Jacksonville's place as a premier destination for top-tier cue sports competition.

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Allison Fisher and Jesus Atencio with Vincent Rochfort from Predator



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SZOLNOKI & LIU TAKE SPANISH GOLD IN GANDIA

THE PREDATOR SPANISH Open came to an exciting conclusion today in Gandia as Oliver Szolnoki (Hungary) and Liu Shasha of China lifted the titles in the Spanish Open and Women's Spanish Open respectively.

Liu, a three-time WPA Women's World 9-Ball Champion, had too much for the field as she coasted to the title, defeating Jasmin Ouschan (AUT) 8-3 in the final.

Szolnoki also enjoyed a more leisurely victory in the final as he defeated Germany's Luca Menn 10-3. He nearly didn't get there after surviving a life-or-death semi-final against the tournament's surprise package, Hubert Lopotko (Poland).

The Hungarian claimed his second Predator Euro Tour victory, after winning in Turkey 12 months ago and will have fond memories of the Spanish seaside town, having also won the Little Monster Mixed Doubles Open just over a week ago in the company of Zhang Mu-Yan.

Commented Szolnoki, "It feels very good and I'm so happy because in the semi-final I was very close to winning and then I was very close to losing but I managed to win hill-hill. I missed the 10-ball at 2-2 in the final and I thought that might cause me a hard time for the whole game but I went on a run and won eight racks in a row.

"The semi-final was my strongest match of the whole tournament. I went 9-5 up and played a perfect safety on the 8, behind the 9, but the ball just went in three rails into the corner pocket and I couldn't finish the match. And then he made two break and runs and my break didn't work so it was 9-9 all of a sudden. But luckily, I could



Sha Sha Liu and Oliver Szolnoki

keep it together and win it there. And then 20 minutes later I was playing on a different table, different balls, different conditions but I'm very happy that I survived it somehow.

"I won the Mixed Doubles here with Zhang Muyan, which was amazing, and in the Pro Billiard Series I finished in ninth place so I think I played pretty strong these past two weeks so I'm pretty proud of that," he concluded.

In the Predator Women's Spanish Open, Liu Shasha was untouchable as she strolled to victory, gathering up seven wins in total, as she cut a swathe through the field. An 8-2 win over Chinese Taipei's Tsai Peichun in the semi-final was followed up with her 8-3 championship win over Ouschan and she can look ahead to the

forthcoming World 9-Ball Championship with renewed hope.

She said, "I'm so excited to have won another championship and it was an honour to play against Jasmin because when I was a young player, she was already a superstar of the game, so it was exciting to play against her. I thought my pocketing and safety were good but I'll need to improve my break. It was a stressful match so I felt a bit lucky. Looking ahead to the World Championship, I hope I can play well every match when I'm there and I hope I can bring my luck to the United States."

The Predator Pro Billiard Series is next in action in Jacksonville, Florida from 16th to 21st December with three major events, including the WPA Women's World 9-Ball Championship. Streaming of all events can be found on YouTube, via the Pro Billiard TV channel - <https://www.youtube.com/@ProBilliardTV>

The Predator Euro Tour returns in March 2026 in Antalya, Turkey and for all results, live scoring and draw, visit <https://www.epbf.com/tournaments/eurotour/information/>

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GOES UNDEFEATED TO WIN 2025 BOB STOCKS MEMORIAL

Memorial will be held again this coming spring as a WNT event

The (sort of) annual Bob Stocks Memorial Tournament began as an independent event a few months after Stocks had passed away in June 2006. Originally held under the auspices of the Tiger Tour, it was hosted by a number of tour representatives, as well as a lot of personal friends of Bob Stocks. Among them were Ceci Strain, Andy Lincoln, Nick Prinsloo and both past and current owners of the First Break Sports Bar in Sterling, VA, which hosted the event in its early years; Stefano Ariavakis, Larry Zable, Mike Veve and current owner, Anthony Luong. Other notable friends of Stocks – Jerry Pierson (who has also passed away, since), RB Nance, and “Pooky” Grai Rasmussen all helped contribute to the launch of the Stocks Memorial.

One of its primary ‘movers and shakers’ at the time was Brandon Shuff, who would win the event in 2015 and just this past weekend (Nov. 29-30), become runner-up to Lee Vann Corteza in the \$3,500-added, latest edition of the Bob Stocks Memorial, hosted by On Cue Sports Bar & Grill in Fort Royal, VA. If the few years in which it wasn’t held were to be added, this would have been its 20th anniversary. Shuff had run it for a few years following the inaugural tournament, and later, when Shuff got busy travelling, ahead of his being selected for the USA Mosconi Cup team in 2012, it was brought under the wing of the Action Pool Tour in 2011.

Shuff’s association with the event was personal then and still just as personal

today. Stocks was a mentor to Shuff in those ‘rough and tumble’ days when pool was mostly all about ‘action’ and ‘stake horses.’

“Stocks was the stake horse, making all the action happen at First Break,” said Shuff, “and it was real heavy at the time. When I was graduating high school (2001), I started to frequent First Break, which is how I came to know ‘Whitey’ (Stock’s nickname), “Big” Jerry (Pierson) and (Grai) “Pooky” Rasmussen.”

“Stocks was the guy who’d put people in the action,” he added. “It’s the reason, in those early years, that people like Bustamante, Chohan, Amar Kang, Jose Parica and Keith McCready, just to name a few would fly in to play, along with staples of the area’s pool community like John T. Hooker and “Big” Jerry Pierson.”

“Stocks staked me one time against Jose Parica,” Shuff went on to explain. “He (Stocks) and I were in First Break, playing gin at the time, when this group of Filipinos walked in and I noticed that on the back of their jackets, it said ‘Team Parica.’ So Bob told me to go on over and ask him if he wanted to play; \$50 per game and I got a heavy ‘spot,’ though I don’t remember exactly what it was.

“I held my own for about four hours,” he added, “and then we called it quits.”

Over the years, the tournament has drawn its share of big-name players.



Lee Vann Corteza and Brandon Shuff

Adam Smith won the first one ('06) and the following year, Dennis Hatch claimed the title. Shaun Wilkie won it in 2008 and would win it again in 2014; the only player, to date, to win it twice. Ryan McCreesh won it in 2009 and in 2010, Mike Sigel stepped up and grabbed the title. In the last three years, it's been won by, in order Fedor Gorst ('22), BJ Ussery ('23) and this past weekend, Lee Vann Corteza. The event wasn't held in 2024

Through all the years, including ones in which it wasn't held for one reason or another (like 'unknown' and two COVID years), the Bob Stocks Memorial has evidenced a 'staying power' that reflects the influence that its namesake had on players in the Northern Virginia pool community and more broadly, the D.C. Metro Billiards area. It's an event that Shuff, in particular, is personally invested in maintaining, not only expanding its reach, but its meaning, as well.

"It's named The Bob Stocks Memorial 9-Ball," he said, "but we've lost a lot of people around here. We'd like this to be a remembrance of everybody that's passed in this region; a flagship memorial for all of them."

"We've had some really awesome pool here," he added, "like Stock, himself, an old-school player and (in attendance this year) Matt Clatterbuck, who was the local legend when I was coming up, Kevin West (winner in '19) and Stefano Ariavakis (the original owner of First Break)."

Plagued by conflicting events, which necessitated specific dates for this most recent Stocks Memorial, it was a small field (21) that took to the tables this past weekend. But it was a strong field with three previous champions (Shuff, Ussery and West). It played out in two stages; an original 32-player bracket (Stage 1) was narrowed down to four on each side of it that advanced to a single-elimination Stage 2.



The three former winners of the Stocks Memorial made it to single elimination. Shuff and Vann Corteza, advanced to Stage 2 from the winners' side, along with Brandon Gordon and Roland Garcia. From the loss side of the double-elimination bracket, Ussery and West advanced, as did Matt Clatterbuck and Chris Hanson.

Shuff opened up his Stage 2 campaign with an 11-4 win over Ussery and advanced to the semifinals. He was joined by Clatterbuck, who'd eliminated Gordon 11-1. From the other end of the 8-player, single-elimination bracket, Vann Corteza punched his ticket to the semifinals with a shutout over Chris Hansen, while Roland Garcia was at work defeating West 11-7.

Corteza moved into the final 11-7 over Garcia, as Brandon Shuff and Matt Clatterbuck, two opponents with a lot of history between them, battled to double hill. Vann Corteza claimed the title with an 11-2 win over Shuff.

The trio of Brandon Shuff, Chris Wilburn and Cole Haas, owner of On Cue Sports Bar & Grill in Front Royal, VA are at the forefront of the effort to revitalize the Bob (Whitey) Stocks Memorial,

and were right in the middle of things for this latest edition. In a way, they thanked each other for the effort and support that each put into it, to include Haas' On Cue staff and sponsors Universal Cues, CPBA Cloth, Taom Billiards, Diamond Tables, CW Designs, LLC, and streamworks.gg (the all-table streaming system). They will return to Fort Royal in the spring (dates to be announced) for the next Bob Stocks Memorial, which will once again become a World 9-Ball Tour event.

The most important influence that Bob Stocks exerted on Shuff, back when being a member of the Mosconi Cup was little more than a long-distance dream, has served him well in the intervening years. Not only does it continue to inspire his play, but it fuels the dedication and determination he's continuing to exert to maintain the Memorial, in honor of Stocks and all the other regional competitors the community has lost over the years.

"He encouraged me to always challenge myself and play better players," said Shuff. "He made me appreciate the 'action' and challenge myself as I was growing up."

THE BEAST TAKES KENNESAW

KB's Grill & Pub in Kennesaw, GA – a suburb northwest of Atlanta – was the site of the second stop on the Making It In America One Pocket Tour on December 4-7.

KB's owner Robert Finley and his staff laid out the welcome mat for all the players and fans.

Also known as Kennesaw Billiards, they and PoolActionTV.com were the presenting sponsors of this event.

BCA Hall of Famer and current Senior One Pocket Classic champ Kim Dav-

enport and One Pocket Hall of Famer Cliff Joyner were spotted as well as Buffalo's house pro Sergio Rivas, one pocket specialist Josh Roberts, 2024 Music City Classic champ Johnathan Pinegar ("Hennessee") and OnePocket.org's Redgie Cutler.

Before the event began, PoolActionTV's Ray Hansen announced that Mike Durbin of Durbin Custom Cues had made a \$4,500 cue to be raffled off at the finals of the closing event of the tour. With the proceeds, the player who has accumulated the most points will be awarded a free entry into the Buffalo's Pro One Pocket Championship, a \$1,000 room credit and a \$500 travel credit. The runner-up will receive a \$500 travel allowance.

Kicking off the event was the \$500 added One Ball One Pocket Mini. The format was single elimination, race to three with a \$100 entry fee. Hunter White took it down after defeating the always tough Josh Roberts in the final match.

The main event – the \$6,000 added one pocket championship – began after the players auction and meeting.

The entry fees for this event were modified according to each player's FargoRate – \$450 for 740 and over, \$300 for 620-739 and \$150 for 619

and below. Races were 3/3 with one extended race to four in the finals.

Players received 1,000 points for attending plus ten points for every dollar earned. All winners side matches received 20% of the lowest tier entry fee which was \$30 in this case plus closest to 25% of the field received additional payouts.

Forty players entered the tournament so there were many first round byes.

Sergio Rivas received one and then defeated both Rob Coleman and Brett Underwood 3-0 until running into Josh Roberts.

Roberts had torn through Tee Crosby 3-0 and then eked out a win against Hennessee 3-2. His next match was Cliff Joyner who went down 3-0. He then defeated Rivas 3-1.

In the lower portion of the bracket, Kim Davenport also received a bye and then went on to victories over David Cantrell 3-1 and Ivan Riley 3-0 before his match with Redgie Cutler. They went down to the wire with Davenport taking the win 3-2.

Roberts then defeated Tim Orange 3-1 while Davenport beat Chris Freeman 3-0 setting up the hot seat match.

Roberts took that match 3-1. He locked up a seat in the finals as Davenport went west to await an opponent.

On the one loss side, Cutler defeated Orange 3-1 and Rivas dismantled Freeman 3-0. Word has it that Rivas has been on the improve and he showed it with a 3-0 drubbing of Cutler – he finished in fourth place. He then moved



Josh Roberts

on take Davenport 3-1 and found himself in the finals. Kim came in third.

The finals began with Josh & Sergio trading games making it one apiece. Although Sergio made a charge from down 7-2 in game three, he scratched trying to tie up the ball count. Josh fired in the spot shot to take the game 8-6. Score 2-1.

Now Sergio's break, he & and Josh traded shots until Sergio got an opportunity to pocket a ball. He made that one and followed it with a run of eight and out to make it two apiece.

Looking to be the first to get on the hill, they traded safeties for a bit until Josh pulled away 3-1. They then went back and forth until they tied at five each and then Sergio made two more to get to the hill first – 7-5. Back and forth it went until it was tied again at seven apiece. Sergio hung the case ball so Josh pocketed and followed it in – now 7-6. A few more shots and

then Sergio two-railed his case ball to take the lead 3-2.

The sixth game began with a scratch by Sergio and a ball pocketed by Josh. Trading safeties again, it was Josh who got the first open shot to run seven and out to make it 3-3! One more game to decide the title!

It was Josh's break and he laid down a good one. After a few minutes looking over the rack, Sergio came with a shot freezing Josh to the top of the rack. Within a short time, Sergio had made one and turned it around and now Josh was on the defensive.

However, a few shots later, Josh had turned it around. He soon had an opening and ran enough balls to put him on the hill 7-1! Two shots later, Josh fired in a straight back for the match and the title! What a match!

Congratulations to Josh! Great tournament, Sergio!



Sergio Rivas

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BENOIT

GOES UNDEFEATED TO CLAIM QUEEN OF THE SLATE TITLE AT FOREST CITY BILLIARDS IN ME

The woman is chalkin' up them frequent flyer miles. Or single-handedly trying to keep gasoline stations busy.

In a 10-day, spread-out voyage from (in order and not counting from wherever she was before) Philadelphia to Jacksonville, FL and then, to Portland, ME (likely to have led to some seriously different choices for clothes), Ashley Benoit travelled just over 2,000 miles. She won this past weekend's (Dec. 20-21) event in Portland, ME (more on this in a minute), split the top two prizes with Eylul Kibaroglu the week before (Dec. 12-14) at the Integrity Cues Women's 9-Ball Barbox Classic in Philadelphia and finished out of the money at the Kamui WPA Women's 9-Ball World Championships earlier this week. By the time you read this, she'll be either still on her way, competing in or having already competed in a regularly-scheduled, Monday night event, hosted by the Carom Café in Queens, NY, adding another 300 miles to her journeys over the past two weeks.

This past weekend (Dec. 20-21), in Portland, ME she signed on to battle for a Queen of the Slate title, a \$5,000-added Open Women's 9-Ball event that drew 63 entrants to Forest City Billiards in Portland. She went undefeated to claim that title in what was, prior to all three events, her best recorded earnings year of the four that's she's been in our AZBilliards database. She's won eight of the 16 events in which she's cashed (three of them on the JPNEWT) and climbed



to #25 on the WPBA's rankings list. Arguably, a meteoric 'rise through the ranks.'

In straight-up races to 7, Benoit won her first five matches in Maine by an aggregate game score of 35-12, downing Brittney Lucas (0), Erica Testa (2), Rebecca Simpson (2), Lonnie Fox-Raymond (5) and in a winners' side semifinal, Rachel Lang 7-3. From the other end of the bracket, her eventual opponent in the hot seat match and final, Nicole Albergaria, downed five by an aggregate game score of 35-19, thanks in part to two, double hill matches. An opening match against Bailey Card (1), was followed by one of the double-hill matches (vs. Rachelle Rainey), and then two 7-3 wins over Jane Im and Becca Ellis. Albergaria won her second double-hill match in a winners' side semifinal against Deborah Wyman and joined Benoit in the hot seat match.

They were fairly evenly matched in the winners' side final, separated by 24 FargoRate points; Benoit at 632, Albergaria at 608. It proved to be Albergaria's third double-hill match and her first loss, as Benoit claimed the hot seat.

Wyman and Lang headed on over to the loss side and picked up two long-standing veterans of the female pool community, Fox-Raymond and Joann Mason Parker, respectively. Fox-Raymond had followed her loss to Benoit with a double-hill victory over Donna Switzer and the elimination of Emily Duddy 7-3. JoAnn Mason Parker had lost her opening-round match to Amy Theriault 7-4 and headed out on a nine-match winning streak. None of her first six opponents during the streak was able to chalk up more than six racks against her and two of them (in a row, as it turned out) couldn't win any racks against her. The last two she faced and defeated before meeting up with Lang were Becca Ellis (3) and in a double-hill rematch, Theriault.

Parker downed Lang 7-1, while Fox-Raymond was eliminating Wyman 7-3. Fox-Raymond put a stop to Mason Parker's streak 7-4 in the quarterfinals, only to have her modest loss-side streak stopped 7-2 by Albergaria in the semifinals.

Same even-strength battle in the finals as had occurred in the hot seat match; Benoit with the slight, FargoRate edge in a straight-up race to 11

this time. Benoit's approximate two-hour wait for Albergaria to get back from the semifinals did not appear to dull the edge of her competitive 'blade,' as she got out in front and stayed there to become Queen of the Slate with an 11-6 win in the final.

ShipTheCash's Mike DeMarco thanked Tyson Trepanier and his Forest City Billiards staff for their hospitality, along with sponsors Perimeter, Brunswick, and DigitalPool.

Tyson Trepanier, owner of Forest City Billiards thanked tour director Greg Lamb, acknowledging "all of the endless hours of hard work behind the scenes in making this tournament a success. Mike DeMarco (ShipTheCash) did another great job with streaming all the action."

Trepanier also thanked his staff "for their hard work throughout the event, Lonnie Fox-Raymond "for additions to the stream alongside Mike" and Bob Raymond for his assistance as a referee. He also acknowledged Queen of the Slate sponsors: It's Tax Time, Excel Mechanical, Xpress Copy, and Seyberts.



DANIEL MACIOŁ AND OLIWIA ZALEWSKA CLAIM POLISH CHAMPIONSHIP MVP TITLES

Wojciech Szewczyk Wins the Men's Polish Ranking, while Oliwia Zalewska Triumphs in the Women's Category

This year's Polish Billiard Championships, held in Starachowice, have become history, at least in the Men's and Women's categories. After three disciplines, Daniel Macioł proved to be the best male player of the tournament, and Oliwia Zalewska the best female player.

As a reminder, the Polish Billiard Championships took place in Starachowice (Świętokrzyskie Voivode-

ship). The very best players, including the absolute world elite, gathered at the local Hotel Europa to compete not only for gold medals but also for financial support from the Polish Billiard Association, covering the costs of travel to competitions such as the European Cup, European Championships, and World Championships.

The Championships began with the 8-Ball discipline, the most popular

format among beginners and amateurs, for example. After nearly three days of play, Wojciech Szewczyk (GKS Katowice) came out on top, defeating Konrad Juszczyzyn (Royal Bytom) 8-3. Bronze medals were claimed by Mateusz Śniegocki (Strefa Łódź) and Karol Skowerski (Fortis Bilard Kielce). In the Women's category, Oliwia Zalewska (Akademia Bilardowa Rokietnica) dominated, defeating Monika Ząbek (GKS Katowice) in the final.



Oliwią Zalewska, Daniel Macioł, Wojciech Szewczyk and Katarzyna Wesolowska

Men's 8-Ball Podium:

1. Wojciech Szewczyk (GKS Katowice)
2. Konrad Juszczyszyn (Royal Bytom)
3. Mateusz Śniegocki (Strefa Łódź)
Karol Skowerski (Fortis Bilard Kielce)

Women's 8-Ball Podium:

1. Oliwia Zalewska (Akademia Bilar-dowa Rokietnica)
2. Monika Ząbek (GKS Katowice)
3. Oktawia Brodecka (UKS Pałuki Żnin)
Katarzyna Wesołowska (Fortis Bi-lard Kielce)

The second discipline was 10-Ball, in which Karol Skowerski was defending the gold medal from the previous year. The Fortis Kielce player finished this time in 9th place. In the semi-finals, Mateusz Śniegocki faced Radostaw Babica, and Daniel Macioł confronted Mieszko Fortuński. In the first match, the Strefa Łódź representative won 7-4, while in the second, the GKS Katowice player proved superior to his opponent. In the final, Macioł gave no chance to Śniegocki, defeating him 7-2. In the Women's category, Katarzyna Wesołowska (Fortis Bilard Kielce) triumphed, while Julia Tarka (Akademia Bilar-dowa Rokietnica) finished with a silver medal in 10-Ball.

Men's 10-Ball Podium:

1. Daniel Macioł (GKS Katowice)
2. Mateusz Śniegocki (Strefa Łódź)
3. Mieszko Fortuński (Baribal Lubin)
Radostaw Babica (Akademia Bilar-dowa Rokietnica)

Women's 10-Ball Podium:

1. Katarzyna Wesołowska (Fortis Bi-lard Kielce)
2. Julia Tarka (Akademia Bilar-dowa Rokietnica)
3. Oliwia Zalewska (Akademia Bilar-dowa Rokietnica)
4. Monika Ząbek (GKS Katowice)

Finally, participants played the 9-Ball discipline. Once again, Daniel Macioł

proved the best, confirming his sensation-al form by defeating Szymon Kural (TCF HUB – Retro Team Kraków) with a score of 9-3. Mieszko Fortuński and Hubert Łopotko took the final podium places. In the Women's category, Oli-wia Zalewska triumphed. The player from Akademia Bilar-dowa Rokietnica defeated Monika Ząbek 6-4. Katarzy-na Wesołowska and Izabella Jońska finished just behind them.

Men's 9-Ball Podium:

1. Daniel Macioł (GKS Katowice)
2. Szymon Kural (TCF HUB – Retro Team Kraków)
3. Mieszko Fortuński (Baribal Lubin)
Hubert Łopotko (Bank Spółdzielczy w Sokółce LP Sokółka)

Women's 9-Ball Podium:

1. Oliwia Zalewska (Akademia Bilar-dowa Rokietnica)
2. Monika Ząbek (GKS Katowice)
3. Izabella Jońska (Fortis Bilard Kielce)
Katarzyna Wesołowska (Fortis Bi-lard Kielce)

It is worth noting that Daniel Macioł was named the MVP of the Polish Billiard Championships, while the winner of the annual Men's Polish Ranking is Wojciech Szewczyk. Among women, the title of the best player of the championships and the winner of the Women's Polish Ranking went to Oliwia Zalewska. All three can be cer-tain of nomination for next year's Euro-pean Championships and financing by the Polish Billiard Association for participation in the European Cups, with the men additionally receiving funding for the World Championships.

The matches were played for the first time on Diamond tables from the USA, supplied and prepared by the Strate-gic Partner of the Championships – AXIS TWO, represented by Krzysztof Gardjas and Mateusz Śniegocki, both well-known in the billiard sports com-munity. It must be emphasized that the demanding, well-prepared equip-

ment was definitely enjoyed by the participants.

“The Polish Championships are one of the best-staffed national champi-onships in the world. The sporting level, especially represented by the men, can satisfy absolutely everyone, even the most demanding billiard fan. Therefore, it is not surprising that media from around the world were interested in the games. For the first time, the transmission from the final table included English commentary. This is because, thanks to the cooper-ation with BILLARD.TV, the signal was broadcast across the entire USA, and the competition could be followed by sports fans on the popular DAZN platform, among others,” emphasizes Grzegorz Kędzierski, President of the Polish Billiard Association.

“Regarding the results, there were no surprises this time. In the men's cat-egory, the players who belong to the absolute world elite led the way. How-ever, it is worth emphasizing that this is another season of dominance by the Macioł-Szewczyk duo on the na-tional scene, for which they deserve tremendous applause. A similar situ-ation occurred in the women's cate-gory, where Oliwia, Kasia, and Moni-ka played the first fiddle. We are also pleased with the organizational level, because it must be stated clearly that the Polish Championships are one of the best-prepared events worldwide, for which enormous thanks go to the main partners AXIS TWO, Diamond, the Marshal's Office of the Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship, Aramith, Simonis, as well as the Ministry of Sport and re-gional co-organizers led by FORTIS Bi-lard Kielce. Also, thanks to the entire media team of TVSPORTS.PL and the vast group of Media Partners from the region, Poland, and the whole world. It is precisely the complete symbiosis of cooperation between all companies and individuals, crowned with the phenomenal play of the participants, that makes the Polish Billiard Cham-

Polish Billiard Championship

pionships a beautiful celebration of billiard sport,” Kędzierski emphasizes.

However, the billiard excitement in Starachowice is not over. The Polish Championships for People with Disabilities were inaugurated over the weekend, and immediately after them, the European Championships for People with Disabilities will take place, where we will also see representatives of our country. These competitions will also be broadcast online on the TVsports.pl YouTube channel.

Venue: Hotel Europa, Starachowice, ul. Radomska 76

Championship Press Officer: Maciej Urban email: media@bilard-sport.pl Tel. 514 077 099

Championship Director: Grzegorz Kędzierski email: biuro@bilard-sport.pl Tel. 608 368 683

Useful Links: www.pzbil.pl – Polish Billiard Association website – tables,



photos, and results from the competitions

www.tvsports.pl – live broadcast from all tables
www.facebook.com/mistrzostwapolskiwbilard – Polish Billiard Championships fan page
www.facebook.com/pzbil – Polish Billiard Association fan page

Organizers: Polish Billiard Association, Świętokrzyskie Sport Association FORTIS BILARD Kielce, EPBF

Honorary Patronage: Marshal of the Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship, Ms. Renata Janik, Mayor of Starachowice, Marek Materek.

Strategic Partners: Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship, Diamond (USA), AXIS TWO.

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WORLD NINEBALL TOUR

UNVEILS FIRST WAVE OF BLOCKBUSTER 2026 SCHEDULE

The World Nineball Tour is excited to reveal the first wave of its 2026 schedule — a global slate of elite competition running from January through June.

This lineup includes three major Matchroom Events, two WNT Junior Events and 13 WNT Ranking Events across four continents, marking the most ambitious opening of a season in WNT history.

Fans around the world can catch the start of the 2026 season live on WNT TV — Sign up now to be part of all the action.

2026 WNT CALENDAR- JANUARY TO JUNE

With new destinations, returning favourites, and increased prize funds for players worldwide, the 2026 campaign sets the stage for Nineball's biggest year yet.

- Chinese Taipei Open (\$102.7k), 8-11 January - Taipei City, Chinese Taipei

- Legends Cup (Invitational), 22-24 January — Manila, Philippines
- Carabao International Open (\$100k), 4-8 February — Jakarta, Indonesia
- Premier League Pool, (\$100k) 18-22 February — Florida, USA
- Pattaya Open (\$40k), 2-6 March — Pattaya, Thailand
- European Open Pool Championship (\$225k), 10-15 March — Sarajevo, Bosnia & Herzegovina
- WNT Junior Event, 13-14 March — Sarajevo, Bosnia & Herzegovina
- Cuetec Belgium Open (\$32k), 19-23 March — Ostend, Belgium
- Inthebx Open (\$25k), 26-29 March — New York, USA
- McDermott Open (\$29.3k), 1-4 April — Connecticut, USA

- Players Championship by Diamond at Expo (\$80k), 9-12 April — Philadelphia, USA
- Beasley Open (\$29.2k), 16-19 April — North Carolina, USA
- Bob Stocks Memorial (\$45k), 22-26 April — Virginia, USA
- Costa Rica Open (\$25k), 29 Apr-3 May — San Jose, Costa Rica
- Arena Open (\$25k), 14-18 May — Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- Scottish Open (\$50k), 20-23 May — Glasgow, Scotland
- UK Open Pool Championship (\$225k), 25-30 May — Brentwood, UK
- WNT Junior Event, 28-29 May — Brentwood, UK
- Mezz Hill Hill Estonia Open (\$25k), 5-7 June - Tallinn, Estonia

Total Prize Fund: \$1,158,200

The season opens in Manila with a landmark showcase in one of pool's most passionate heartlands. Legends Cup unites icons Efren Reyes, Earl Strickland, Francisco Bustamante, and Ralf Souquet for a special celebration of Nineball's legacy and future.

Premier League Pool follows from 18-22 February at Classic Billiards in Miami, Florida, bringing together an elite, invitation-only field for one of the tour's most unique and tactical formats.



In March, the tour returns to Sarajevo for the European Open Pool Championship (10–15 March), where a world-class field will once again compete for one of the most prestigious titles on the calendar, now with a prize fund increased to \$225,000.

May then marks a new chapter for a flagship UK event, as the UK Open Pool Championship (25–30 May) heads to Brentwood with a fresh venue, a massive field, and one of the most anticipated atmospheres of the season, also boasting an increased prize fund of \$225,000.

The first wave of the 2026 calendar will also see the return of two WNT Junior Events, staged alongside the European Open and UK Open. Each will feature a 32-player field for competitors aged 16 and under, continu-

ing the World Nineball Tour's commitment to showcasing junior talent alongside its flagship open events and strengthening the grassroots of the game globally.

The 2026 calendar is anchored by these four flagship Matchroom events, supported by a global series of 13 WNT Ranking Events, giving players across Asia, Europe, and the Americas more chances than ever to climb the rankings. This diverse early-season slate underscores the WNT's commitment to expanding competitive access, elevating regional scenes, and giving emerging talent the opportunity to break through on a global stage.

Emily Frazer, CEO of Matchroom Multi Sports commented:

“The opening wave of the 2026 World Nineball Tour schedule shows exactly where our sport is heading. With more world-class events across more regions than ever before, we're giving players a true international pathway from January through to the start of June. From the Legends Cup in Manila to new additions like the Costa Rica and Pattaya events, this is the strongest opening to our calendar we've ever assembled. Nineball is growing at a phenomenal pace — and 2026 will be a defining year.”

Further schedule announcements for the remainder of the 2026 World Nineball Tour season will be revealed in the coming months.

For full details on the 2026 World Nineball Tour season, visit matchroompool.com.

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When Sportsmanship Fades: What the Ryder Cup and the Mosconi Cup Are Losing

By Pete Marovich, Founder, The Billiard Almanac

Bear with me for a bit of history and a comparison.

I have worked as a photojournalist for 40 years, and for 15 of those years I covered professional golf for Golf World Magazine, Golfweek Magazine, and occasionally Sports Illustrated. My images appeared in most major golf publications between 1985 and 1999.

During that time, I photographed four Ryder Cups — 1987 at Muirfield Village, in Dublin, Ohio; 1991 at Kiawah Island, South Carolina; 1995 in Rochester, New York, and 1997 in Valderrama, Spain. Those years gave me a close look at an event that once embodied the best qualities in sport, fierce competition grounded in respect. The Ryder Cup was emotional, but it wasn't hostile. It was loud, but it wasn't antagonistic. And unlike today, it was not driven by money.

In its earlier eras, the Ryder Cup barely generated revenue. Players didn't compete for appearance fees or com-

mercial bonuses. They competed for pride, for legacy, and for the honor of representing their team. Because money wasn't the engine, there was no pressure to manufacture drama or cultivate rivalry beyond what the competition naturally produced. Fans cheered great shots from either side, not because they were neutral, but because they appreciated excellent golf wherever it came from.

That spirit came alive for me in 1987, when Europe defeated the United States on American soil at Muirfield Village. After the matches ended and I had packed my cameras, I heard singing coming from a pavilion. Curious, I walked over. Inside, a couple hundred European and American fans were arm in arm, singing, toasting each other, laughing, telling stories, and already talking about next time. These were opposing fans, just an hour removed from heartbreak

and triumph, celebrating together. It wasn't for cameras. It wasn't for social media. It was simply goodwill born of shared passion. That sense of respect once defined the Ryder Cup. In fact, one of the most famous moments in golf history, Jack Nicklaus conceding Tony Jacklin's putt in 1969, crystallizes what the event stood for.

Jacklin had a short putt to tie their match and tie the Ryder Cup. Nicklaus picked up his marker and conceded. By doing so, he removed any chance of the United States winning outright. A tie meant the U.S. retained the Cup, but it was not a victory. Nicklaus chose sportsmanship over the possibility of

triumph. "I didn't think you would miss it," he later said, "but I didn't want to give you the chance."

It is hard to imagine that happening today.

As the Ryder Cup's commercial value exploded, through broadcast rights, corporate hospitality, sponsorships, and merchandising, the event changed. Today, players sometimes behave more like performers than competitors, celebrating in ways meant to provoke. Broadcasters amplify conflict because conflict draws clicks. Fans now boo opponents routinely, heckle during shots, and treat the opposing team as villains rather than athletes.

The Ryder Cup is still thrilling. But it is thrilling in a different, more commercial way, and sportsmanship often seems like a casualty of its success.





Fan Gallery

The same trend is now visible in pool's Mosconi Cup, which was patterned directly after the Ryder Cup.

When the Mosconi Cup began, it injected energy and showmanship into a traditionally quiet sport, and that was refreshing. But in recent years, the event has drifted toward hostility. Fans now boo during players' pre shot routines. They celebrate unforced errors. They chant specifically to distract opponents. Players encourage this energy, sometimes deliberately provoking reactions.

The reason is familiar, money. The Mosconi Cup is a major annual revenue source for its production company, Matchroom. Because pool lacks the fi-



Tony Jacklin

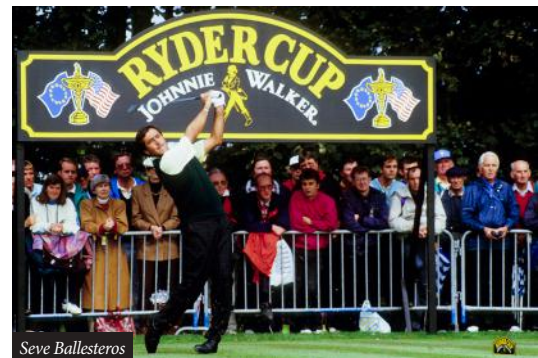
ancial depth of golf, the Mosconi Cup isn't just a flagship event. It is a business necessity. And that necessity has consequences. The most important is frequency. Unlike the Ryder Cup, the Mosconi Cup is held every year.

Annual repetition forces organizers to manufacture energy, tension, and spectacle. There is no natural ebb and flow, no space for storylines to breathe, no anticipation that makes the event feel singular. If the Mosconi Cup were held every two years, as the Ryder Cup is, it would immediately gain prestige. It would allow teams to rebuild more effectively, especially Team USA. It would reduce emotional fatigue. And it would give the atmosphere room to be passionate without becoming toxic.

But a two year cycle would also cut revenue in half. And so the event remains annual, escalating each

year in noise and theatrics to maintain commercial momentum.

Sports can evolve. Fans can be enthusiastic. Players can show emotion. None of that is the issue. The problem arises when passion turns into provocation, when entertainment replaces excellence, and when spectacle becomes more valuable than sportsmanship.



Seve Ballesteros

What I saw in 1987, a gathering of rival fans singing together long after the match, feels almost unimaginable today. And yet that moment captured the essence of why the Ryder Cup became beloved worldwide. It wasn't just about who won. It was about how they played, how they treated each other, and how competition could bring people together rather than drive them apart.

The Ryder Cup and the Mosconi Cup can still represent those ideals. They can still be loud without being hostile, electric without being antagonistic, and passionate without being petty. But doing so will require remembering what Jack Nicklaus understood in 1969 and what those fans in 1987 demonstrated spontaneously. Sportsmanship is not a relic of the past. It is the foundation that gives competition meaning.

If these events continue to drift toward spectacle, they may remain popular, but they will lose the very qualities that once made them great. The choice ahead is simple, chase noise or preserve integrity.

For the sake of the sports I love, I hope they choose the latter.

Pete Marovich is a photojournalist currently covering the White House and Congress for the New York Times and Getty Images. He is the founder of TheBilliardAlmanac.com

Tourney Results

Dec 03 - Dec 06

Mosconi Cup XXXII

Alexandra Palace

- London,
 1 David Alcaide \$40,000
 1 Jayson Shaw \$40,000
 1 Joshua Filler \$40,000
 1 Moritz Neuhausen \$40,000
 1 Pijus Labutis \$40,000
 2 Billy Thorpe \$20,000
 2 Fedor Gorst \$20,000
 2 Shane Van Boening \$20,000
 2 Skyler Woodward \$20,000
 2 Tyler Styer \$20,000

Dec 04 - Dec 07

Predator Spanish Open 2025

Gandia Palace Hotel

- Gandia, Valencia
 1 Oliver Szolnoki \$7,037
 2 Luca Menn \$5,395
 3 Felix Vogel \$3,518
 3 Hubert Lopotko \$3,518
 5 Fraser Patrick \$2,052
 5 Sanjin Pehlivanovic \$2,052
 5 Tobias Bongers \$2,052
 5 Wojciech Szewczyk \$2,052
 9 Amil Andre Gangflot \$1,466
 9 Casper Matikainen \$1,466
 9 Denis Grabe \$1,466
 9 Mario He \$1,466
 9 Maximilian Lechner \$1,466
 9 Mustafa Alnar \$1,466
 9 Szymon Kural \$1,466
 9 Yuma Dorner \$1,466
 17 Adam Stankiewicz \$850
 17 Albin Ouschan \$850
 17 Alexandros Kazakis \$850
 17 Dennis Laszkowski \$850
 17 Dominik Jastrzab \$850
 17 Fabio Rizzi \$850
 17 Jakub Chrobot \$850
 17 Mateusz Sniegocki \$850
 17 Mohammad Soufi \$850

- 17 Niklas Dohr \$850
 17 Petr Urban \$850
 17 Ralf Souquet \$850
 17 Roberto Bartol \$850
 17 Roman Hybler \$850
 17 Stefan Kasper \$850
 17 Valentino Cordelli \$850

Dec 04 - Dec 07

Making It In America One Pocket Tour Stop

Kennesaw Billiards

- Kennesaw, Georgia
 1 Josh Roberts \$4,700
 2 Sergio Rivas \$2,700
 3 Kim Davenport \$1,600
 4 Reggie Cutler \$1,000
 5 Clint Freeman \$750
 5 Tim Orange \$750
 7 Marcus Byrom \$600
 7 Paul Song \$600

Dec 04 - Dec 07

Predator Women's Spanish Open 2025

Gandia Palace Hotel

- Gandia, Valencia
 1 Sha Sha Liu \$3,753
 2 Jasmin Ouschan \$2,345
 3 Kristina Zlateva \$1,759
 3 Pei-Jen Tsai \$1,759
 5 Han Yu \$1,055
 5 Pia Filler \$1,055
 5 Sandra Baumgartner \$1,055
 5 Shui Ching Chiang \$1,055
 9 Ana Gradisnik \$469
 9 Linnea Hjalmarstrom \$469
 9 Mario Ribeiro \$469
 9 Nina Torvund \$469
 9 Silvia Lopez Fibla \$469
 9 Soledad Ayala \$469
 9 Xin Yu Hong \$469
 9 Yvonne Ullmann \$469

Dec 06 - Dec 07

NWPA Tour 2025 Stop 7

Scratch Pizza and Billiards

- Fife, Washington
 1 Melissa Rushton \$1,200
 2 Kathie MacDonald \$810
 3 Lela Andrews \$525
 4 Jackie Fitchner \$350
 5 Maryann McConnell \$250
 5 Stephanie Drakulic \$250
 7 Evelyn Hazlett \$180
 7 Kathryn McMillan \$180
 9 Brittany Dewalt \$125
 9 Jennifer McKune \$125
 9 Nicole Donisi \$125
 9 Regene Lane \$125
 13 Aimee Wilson-McDonnell \$80
 13 Cindy Sliva \$80
 13 Shaundra Radford \$80
 13 Suzanne Smith \$80

Dec 06 - Dec 07

2025 Raxx Billiards Christmas Spectacular

Raxx Pool Room, Sports Bar & Grill

- West Hempstead, NY
 1 Tony Liang \$10,000
 2 José Martinez \$5,700
 3 Eduardo Cardova \$3,200
 3 Frankie Hernandez \$3,200
 5 Bryan Toolsee \$1,700
 5 Curtis Wright \$1,700
 5 Elijah Egerter \$1,700
 5 Euryel Castillo \$1,700
 9 Boojie Oraa \$825
 9 Carlos Marquez \$825
 9 Chris Lazaravitch \$825
 9 Kevin Kiely \$825
 9 Kyle Leung \$825
 9 Ray Lee \$825
 9 Silvestre Palacios \$825
 9 Victor Nau \$825

17 Alberto Estevez \$150
17 Brandon Gordon \$150
17 Charles Vergara \$150
17 Gary McDonnell \$150
17 Jaydev Zaveri \$150
17 Jhagdeo Rammarine \$150
17 Joe DeVito \$150
17 Maksym Lavrynenko \$150
17 Mark Harrington \$150
17 Pat Byrne \$150
17 Robert Calton \$150
17 Tahsin Mujib \$150
17 Troy Deocharran \$150
17 Umit Yolcu \$150
17 Wilfredo Albay \$150

Dec 06 - Dec 06

Mezz Cues LA 9-Ball Series Stop

Good Timez Billiards

Huntsville, Alabama
1 Keegan Badour \$1,350
2 Jason Wetherald \$700
3 Jose Centeno \$350
3 Luke Lao \$350
5 David Nichols \$160
5 Johnathan Monroy \$160
5 Michael Hansen \$160
5 Yen Huynh \$160
9 Al Garcia \$160
9 Butch Barba \$160
9 Chaokun Li \$160
9 Joseph Leon \$160
9 Luis Garcia \$160
9 Mark Whitehead \$160
9 Rhino Lay \$160
9 Terrence Lee \$160

Dec 13 - Dec 14

Sharpshooters Billiards 9-Ball Tournament

Sharpshooters Billiards & Sports Pub

Amsterdam, NY
1 Anthony Meglino \$3,000
2 John Morra \$2,000
3 Jesus Atencio \$1,500
4 Raymond Linares \$1,000
5 David Broxson \$700
5 Robb Saez \$700
7 Ian Jones \$500
7 Jimmy Gestwicki \$500

9 Donny Mills \$400
9 Josh Roberts \$400
9 Julio Burgos \$400
9 Tommy Kennedy \$400
12 Carlos Gomes \$300
12 Gabriel Orozco \$300
12 Jerry Arvelaez \$300
12 Tony Robles \$300

Dec 13 - Dec 14

Garden State Pool Tour Open Stop

Shooter's Family Billiards

Wayne, NJ
1 Rafeal Acosta \$1,000
2 Chris Hanold \$450
3 Jacob Relkin \$300
3 Ronnie Xu \$300
5 David Marchant \$150
5 Joshua Druz \$150
7 Luis Jimenez \$150
7 Marc Lamberti \$150

Dec 13 - Dec 14

TOP Tour Stop

Dot's Cue Club

Rocky Mount, NC
1 Randy Miles \$800
2 Jayce Little \$520
3 Frank Leahy \$300
4 Chris McSorley \$200
5 Jerry Cannon \$150
5 John Monegro \$150

Dec 13 - Dec 14

2025 Lisciotti Cup

Racks Billiards & Bar

Vernon, Connecticut
1 Alex Bausch \$1,100
1 Josh Thiele \$1,100
1 Kevin Guimond \$1,100
1 Lukas Fracasso-Verner \$1,100
1 Michael Mathieu \$1,100
1 Steve Mack \$1,100

Dec 16 - Dec 21

Jacksonville Men's Open

Hyatt Regency Jacksonville Riverfront

Jacksonville, Florida
1 Joshua Filler \$30,000
2 Robbie Capito \$14,000

3 Aloysius Yapp \$7,000
3 Arseny Sevastyanov \$7,000
5 Alex Montpellier \$3,500
5 Marco Teutscher \$3,500
5 Tyler Styer \$3,500
5 Wiktor Zielinski \$3,500
9 Albin Ouschan \$1,750
9 Alexandros Kazakis \$1,750
9 Bader Al Awadi \$1,750
9 Jayson Shaw \$1,750
9 Jeffrey De Luna \$1,750
9 John Morra \$1,750
9 Konrad Juszczyzyn \$1,750
9 Stefan Kasper \$1,750
17 Alan Rolon \$875
17 Blaine Barcus \$875
17 Darren Appleton \$875
17 Donny Mills \$875
17 Georgi Georgiev \$875
17 Gerson Martinez \$875
17 Jesus Atencio \$875
17 Jonathan Pinegar \$875
17 Landon Hollingsworth \$875
17 Lukas Fracasso-Verner \$875
17 Mario He \$875
17 Payne McBride \$875
17 Sheridan Burmester \$875
17 Sun Yi Hsuan \$875
17 Vitaliy Patsura \$875
17 Yusue Kuriansky \$875

Dec 17 - Dec 20

Jacksonville Mixed Doubles Open

Hyatt Regency Jacksonville Riverfront

Jacksonville, Florida
1 Allison Fisher \$20,000
1 Jesus Atencio \$20,000
2 Chieh-Yu Chou \$10,000
2 Konrad Juszczyzyn \$10,000
3 Jayson Shaw \$5,000
3 Savannah Easton \$5,000
3 Sun Yi Hsuan \$5,000
3 Xin Yu Hong \$5,000
5 Albert Januarta \$2,500
5 Albin Ouschan \$2,500
5 Alexandros Kazakis \$2,500
5 Dimitris Loukatos \$2,500
5 Han Yu \$2,500
5 Jasmin Ouschan \$2,500
5 Kelly Fisher \$2,500
5 Kristina Tkach \$2,500

Dec 18 - Dec 21

2025 Women's World 9-Ball Championship

Hyatt Regency Jacksonville Riverfront

Jacksonville, Florida

- 1 Seo Seoa \$50,000
- 2 Kristina Tkach \$25,000
- 3 Allison Fisher \$16,000
- 3 Xiao-Fang Fu \$16,000
- 5 Chezka Centeno \$9,000
- 5 Jasmin Ouschan \$9,000
- 5 Sha Sha Liu \$9,000
- 5 Wan-Ling Wang \$9,000
- 9 Chieh-Yu Chou \$4,000
- 9 Chihiro Kawahara \$4,000
- 9 Eylul Kybaroglu \$4,000
- 9 Kelly Fisher \$4,000
- 9 Marharyta Fefilava \$4,000
- 9 Meng-Hsia Hung \$4,000
- 9 Rubilen Amit \$4,000
- 9 Tzu-Chien Wei \$4,000

Dec 18 - Dec 21

Integrity Cues Women's 9-Ball Barbox Classis

Bluegrass Billiards

Philadelphia, Pa

- 1 Eylul Kybaroglu \$2,100
- 2 Ashley Benoit \$1,500
- 3 Kaley Sullivan \$1,050
- 4 Christy Norris \$825
- 5 Mindy Maialetti \$600
- 5 Rachel Lang \$600
- 7 Katie Bischoff \$425
- 7 Rachel Walters \$425
- 9 Ada Lio \$240
- 9 Chrstine Cockrell \$240
- 9 Giovanna Napolitano \$240
- 9 Skylar Hess \$240
- 13 Carol Clark \$120
- 13 Dana Venticinque \$120
- 13 Natae Goldman \$120
- 13 Tina Pawloski Malm \$120

Dec 19 - Dec 21

Jersey Girl Deck the Ball Natural Born Women Division 2025

JOB Billiards

Madison, TN

- 1 Toni Tucker \$640

2 Rhannee Moore \$500

3 Tomi Strawn \$280

Dec 19 - Dec 21

Jersey Girl Deck the Ball Tournament 2025

JOB Billiards

Madison, TN

- 1 Lukas Fracasso-Verner \$4,500
- 2 David Cole \$2,740
- 3 Devin Rouger \$1,400
- 4 Sam Rowland \$1,100
- 5 Gabe Booth \$500
- 5 Jeff Hale \$500
- 7 Eddie Miller \$260
- 7 James G. Brown \$260
- 9 John Lindon \$200
- 9 Jonathan Pinegar \$200
- 9 Jose Buenano \$200
- 9 Rich Denham \$200
- 13 Jamie Green \$140
- 13 Lincoln Campbell \$140
- 13 Trenton Whitehouse \$140
- 13 Tyler Cordova \$140
- 17 Allen McClure \$100
- 17 Chip Thomas \$100
- 17 Darrell Helfenbein \$100
- 17 Jason Woosley \$100
- 17 Jerry Clayman \$100
- 17 Jose Loera \$100
- 17 Ruben Soto \$100
- 17 Wayne Smithson \$100

Dec 20 - Dec 21

Queen of the Slate Open Women's 9-Ball

Forest City Billiards

Portland, ME

- 1 Ashley Benoit \$2,500
- 2 Nicole Albergaria \$1,700
- 3 Lonnie Fox-Raymond \$1,100
- 4 JoAnn Mason Parker \$800
- 5 Deborah Wyman \$650
- 5 Rachel Lang \$650
- 7 Amy Theriault \$320
- 7 Emily Duddy \$320
- 9 Ada Lio \$200
- 9 Becca Ellis \$200
- 9 Bonnie Saritelli \$200
- 9 Donna Switzer \$200
- 13 Jane Im \$100

13 Joanne Vienneau \$100

13 Stacie Bourbeau \$100

13 Tammy Desjardin \$100

Dec 20 - Dec 20

Q City 9-Ball Tour Stop

Action Billiards

Inman, SC

- 1 Landon Hollingsworth \$800
- 2 Rick Banks \$600
- 3 Jon Jon Newman \$400
- 4 Junior Gabriel \$200
- 5 Cole Lewis \$100
- 5 Zach Martin \$100
- 7 August Boatman \$50
- 7 Blais Junior \$50

Dec 20 - Dec 21

Long Island Billiards Elite Super Holiday Tournament

Raxx Pool Room, Sports Bar & Grill

West Hempstead, NY

- 1 Robert Mendoza \$1,800
- 2 Rajesh Poodoon \$1,200
- 3 Eduardo Cardova \$800
- 3 Erick Edgardo Garcia Molina \$800
- 5 Bianca Martinez \$600
- 5 Max Watanabe \$600
- 7 Curtis Wright \$450
- 7 Ifzaal Mohammad \$450
- 9 Adil Mahmood \$200
- 9 Charles Vergara \$200
- 9 Evan Moreau \$200
- 9 Steve Kalloo \$200
- 13 Brian Vasquez \$125
- 13 Duc Lam \$125
- 13 Mhet Vergara \$125
- 13 Moshinia Evans \$125

Dec 27 - Dec 28

TOP Tour Championship

Breaktime Billiards & Sports Bar

Clemmons, NC

- 1 Nathan Childress \$820
- 2 BJ Ussery \$600
- 3 Tommy Kennedy \$400
- 4 Jas Makhani \$200
- 5 Mike Higgins \$100
- 5 Scott Roberts \$100

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	Joshua Filler	 GER	274.116,00 US\$	
	Shane Van Boening	 ALB	179.775,00 US\$	
	Moritz Neuhausen	 GER	178.838,00 US\$	
	Alex Kazakis	 GRE	143.741,00 US\$	
	Pijus Labutis	 LTU	140.750,00 US\$	↑
	Ko Ping Chung	 TPE	136.000,00 US\$	↓
	Francisco Sanchez-Ruiz	 ESP	135.700,00 US\$	↓



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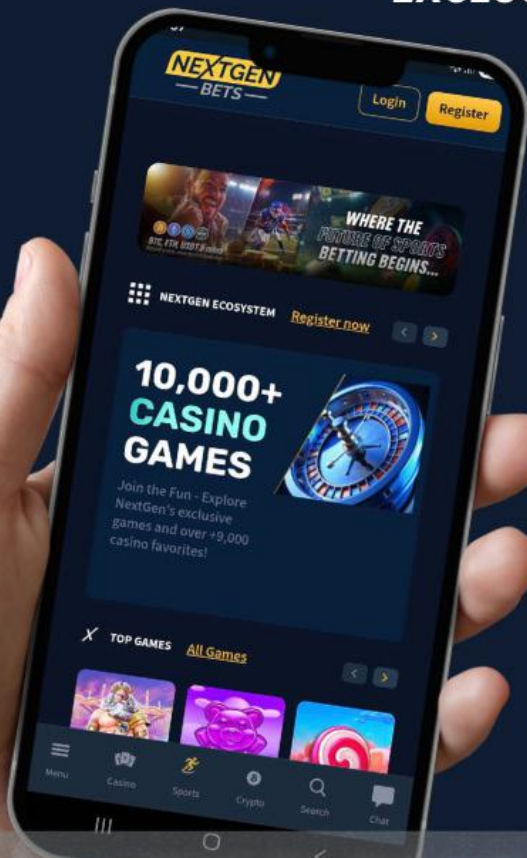
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