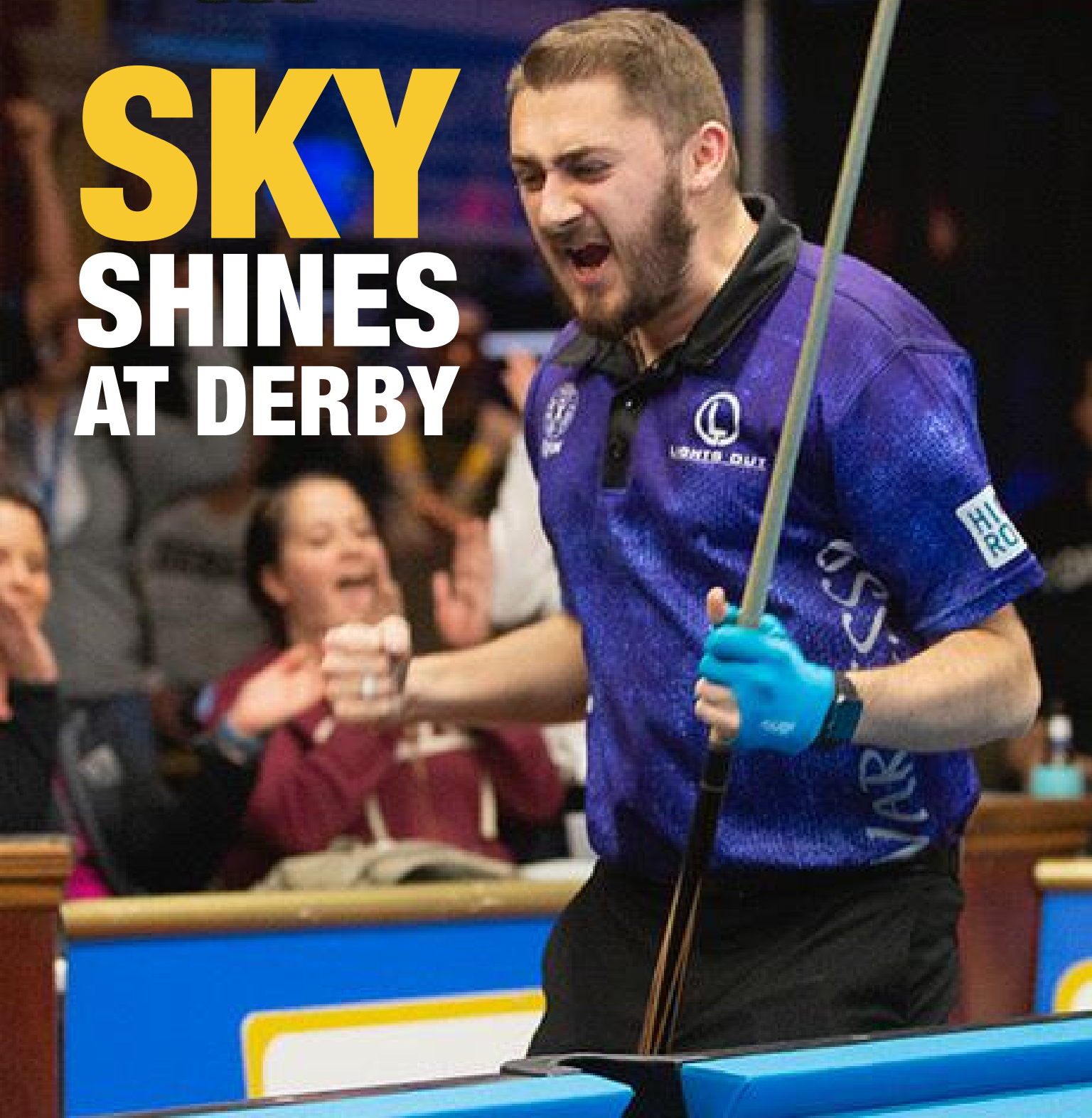


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Billiards Buzz

Volume 4, Issue #29

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FROM THE Head Rail

MIKE HOWERTON

Wow, Skyler Woodward sure put on a show at the Derby City Classic. Wins in the 9-Ball division, the Bank Ring game and the Master of the Table. Skyler is the first American player to win the Master of the Table since Shane Van Boening won it in 2012. While we named our 2018 Players of the Year in this issue, Skyler sure seems to have put himself in front of everyone else for that award in 2019. You can read all about Skyler's performance, as well as everything else that happened at Derby, in Dave Thomson's wrap up in this issue.

You can also find Skip Maloney's report on the World Pool Series season finale, our report from Turning Stone and that aforementioned Player of the Year announcement.

Also in this issue, is a special Melinda Bailey interview. Usually it is Melinda as the interviewer, but we decided to switch things up this month and make Melinda the interviewee.

Until next time.



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Mechanics and Consistency - The Difference Between The Best And The Rest



JERRY BRIESATH

How many people do you know that started playing pool, fell in love with the game, improved the first three or four years they played and then reached a plateau where the improvement stopped? Then they went out and bought magazines, books and tapes trying to get their game to a higher level. All these sources of information that I mentioned above are good at providing the player with increased knowledge of the game. Whether it's learning about banking systems, tangent lines, follow, draw, English or learning to play patterns better, this knowledge is very important if you want to improve your game. The easiest part of the game is learning about the game. Now for the hard part - putting that knowledge on the table. This is where mechanics come into play.

It is very difficult to watch even the best tape or read the best instruction book on a subject such as drawing the cue ball, and then going to your

table and trying to do it properly. If you've ever tried it, you know what I mean. The best way to learn the mechanics of our sport is to find people who spend a lot of time teaching the game and learn from them. Both the VNEA and the BCA have qualified and certified instructors all over the country that can help you. By showing you proper fundamentals and good mechanics, a good instructor can help you improve your game 10 times faster than you can by yourself.

Every year at the VNEA tournament, hundreds of players come by and ask me just about every question that can possibly be asked about the game. When I hand that person a cue and ask them to demonstrate where they're having a problem, the answer almost always lies in a simple improvement of his or her mechanics.

If you have a problem you just can't seem to overcome, bring it to Vegas and we'll fix it. See you there.

Jerry Briesath

WIN MORE GAMES BY TAKING CONTROL OF THE TABLE

The Sports Doc - Dr. CHRIS STANKOVICH
www.drstankovich.com



When we experience nerves, it's the body's way of alerting us to potentially dangerous situations in life. Interestingly, these nerves are driven by our perceptions, and often our perceptions leave us thinking that we are helpless to situations and have no control.

P sychologists have found that there is an inverse relationship between control and stress, meaning the more in control we feel the less stress we experience; and the less control we feel the more stress we experience.

Control stress, win more games

Pool players probably lose more games because of negative, nervous energy than they do because they didn't know *how* to make a shot. In these cases the player knows where to aim, the pocket to shoot toward, and the English to put on the cue, but the stroke and follow through are disrupted because of nerves that directly impact bodily movements. This seemingly helpless feeling of shaking, feeling a rapid heart beat, and dealing with stomach butterflies can all be minimized by simply telling yourself *stay in control, everything will be alright*.

Yes, it really is that easy. Our bodies respond to how we program ourselves, and we program beginning

“

POOL IS A TOUGH ENOUGH GAME TO MASTER EVEN ON YOUR BEST DAYS, SO WHY MAKE THINGS HARDER BY BEATING YOURSELF?

”

with our thinking. By using self-talk to take control of situations, our stress decreases, allowing us to execute perfect, synchronized shots. Wouldn't you rather try and make shots while feeling in control, versus trying to make balls while feeling like you're in a fire alarm state of mind?

What you “see” is what YOU see

No two people see the world the same way, just like no two pool players see a table the same way. When you approach the table, do you make the decision to view the layout as a challenge to run, or do you allow your thinking

to immediately become afraid and threatened? Make it a point to view competition through a healthy, optimistic lens and you will be surprised at how different tables begin to look, as well as how many more games you begin to win.

Pool is a tough enough game to master even on your best days, so why make things harder by beating yourself? View each competitor as a challenge, and take control of every shot – before you know it you will experience a healthy flow and pace to your game, allowing you to play your best.

Dr. Chris Stankovich, known as “The Sports Doc,” is a national expert in the field of sport & performance psychology and has been featured on ESPN for his work with elite athletes. His #1 best selling pool video “Mind of Steel: Mental Toughness for Pool Success” has been used by thousands of players to improve focus, increase confidence, and eliminate anxiety. You can learn more about Dr. Stankovich and Mind of Steel by visiting drstankovich.com

DEVELOPING A POWERFUL PRE-SHOT ROUTINE

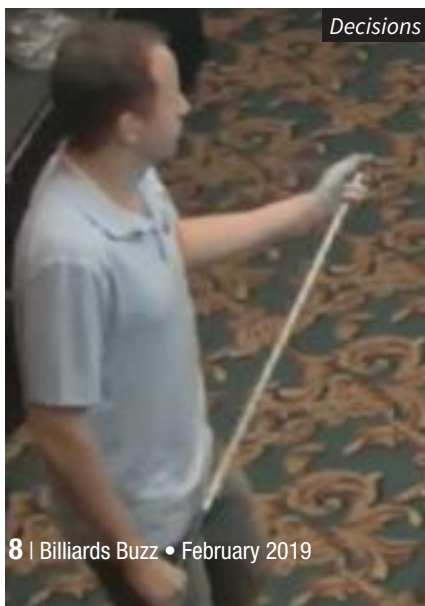
ANTHONY BEELER

Next time you're at a pro tournament, be sure to check out what top players do before each shot. A good pre-shot routine is an essential part of the game. It enables us to put ourselves into "Dead Stroke" on demand and focus all of our energy into the present moment.

This month we will look at many steps you may want to incorporate into your pre-shot routine.

1 Free your Mind from Negative Thoughts or Expectations: Before you get down to shoot, you should exhibit a positive attitude. You'll be free of negativity by not thinking about the score, how you are playing, how well your opponent is playing, or the soundness of your stroke mechanics.

2 Make Quality Decisions: Take your time and make sure that you pick out the right shot. Examine the angle and review your options. Always think at least three balls ahead. Professionals think through their entire turn (every shot). You will also need to determine the correct amount of speed and spin needed to execute the



shot properly. Remember to make all of your conscious decisions from a standing position with chalk in hand. You should also look for potential problems and be sure to avoid them. Once you make all of your decisions you can place the chalk on the table and make a transition from "thinking mode" into subconscious execution of the shot.

3 Align: This is the fundamental that requires the most maintenance and you need to make sure you're perfectly aligned to the shot at hand. You should aim from a standing position then lock your eyes in on the contact point of the object ball as you settle into your stance and position your cue onto the shot line.

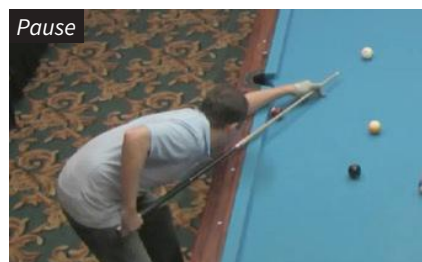
4 Practice Strokes: Next, take several slow warm-up strokes to ensure everything is correct. This is your second aiming checkpoint to ensure accuracy. If anything does not look right at any time, you should GET UP AND START OVER!

5 Set: The first part of your "stroke" is called "set" and is your third aiming checkpoint. This is where you stop your cue tip around 1/8 of an inch away from the cue ball and take one final look. You should note that it takes the human eye two to three seconds to focus on a target from a still position. Therefore, it is imperative



that you come to a COMPLETE STOP to zero in on your target. You will want to note that your eyes will move back and forth, but should be focusing on the cue ball at the end of the "set" position. During practice, you should remain completely still and say, "1...2...3..."

6 Pause: The next thing you should do is move into what many instructors refer to as "pause." This is where you will slowly pull back your cue and stop at the end of your backswing. When making the transition from "set" to "pause," your eyes should move from the cue ball to the point of contact on the object ball. A good pause helps remove a jerky forward



swing and should help you maintain accuracy. As you practice the “pause,” you will want to pull your cue back and say “1...2...” (second stop).

7 Finish: The third part the process is commonly referred to as “finish.” During “finish,” you should smoothly accelerate your cue and follow through the cue ball. A good follow through should be around 5 inches past the cue ball. Always remember to keep your eyes on the object ball during this phase.

8 Freeze: The fourth and final part of the stroke is called “freeze.” During “freeze,” it’s important to keep

your body, head, and cue still. This is the evaluative part of the process. It is here that if the shot is missed, you should try to diagnose what went wrong. As you practice “freeze,” you should remain completely still and say “1...2...3...4...”

Furthermore, most good instructors teach players that their timing in an actual game will be roughly half of the duration of what it was during practice. In other words, during a real game, your “set” will last around 1.5 seconds, your “pause” will be around

1 second, and your “Freeze” will last approximately two seconds. Personally, I like to emphasize “set,” and I don’t teach my students to cut it in half. I want their eyes to have plenty of time to focus on the target.

You should continually work to improve your ability to focus specifically on each step. Once you master the process, you will develop a much stronger mental game. In the words of the late Larry Liscotti, “Once you master the process you will start making more money and less friends.”

Finish and Freeze



Anthony Beeler is the 2017 Pool Instructor of the Year and is a former BCAPL National 9-Ball Champion. He has numerous top 25 national finishes and is one of only 8 ACS Master Instructors in the world. He is the primary author of the *National Billiards Instructors Manual* and 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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MELINDA BAILEY INTERVIEW

For a change of pace this month, we are going to turn Melinda Bailey's interviewing magnifying glass back on her and find out what drives the one and only "AKA Trigger".

Q: Let's start at the beginning. When did you first start playing and what brought you to the game of pool?

A: Gosh, that's a LONG time ago! When I was in high school in San Antonio, Texas, I frequented an arcade that happened to have pool tables. I became so good at the video games, one quarter lasted hours (on Galaga and Defender for example). Eventually I got bored and moved to the pool tables to fill my time.

Q: Did you get serious about the game right away, or was it just something that you did for fun?

A: Oh, I only had fun for *too* many years. When I went to college (Texas A&M) I was surprised but happy they had a billiards club. So, I joined and played in a couple of tournaments – yet I had no idea what I was doing or how to play. After I graduated, I moved back to San Antonio and joined a league. That naturally led to weekly, state, and then national tournaments. However, I was still only having fun, and my shot-making was the only thing to improve in that span of about ten years.

Q: How long did you play before you started expanding into the other side of the game (running tours,

etc)? How did that expansion first happen?

A: Within about 10 years. In 1998 I moved to Jacksonville, FL for a promotion. I was dating a pro and created him a website WAY before the internet was even popular. I loved working with graphics and also taught myself to build websites. Making him a website led me to YOU (Mike Howerton) and I started to work with AzBilliards (AzB).

Q: For those readers who aren't familiar with your resume, can you list all of the things that you have been involved with in the game?

A: Some of my friends gave me the label "Ambassador of Pool" because I dabbled in so much, lol. As I played in tournaments in Florida, I would occasionally cover them for AzB. In 2000, I moved back to Texas for another job (in Fort Worth) and then covered events across Texas. Then the Hunter Classics Ladies Tour fell in my lap. I helped run it for 9 years and became the photographer, website developer, Tournament Director, wrote articles, etc.

Q: What do you mean it "fell in your lap?"

A: You won't believe this, but at one of the end of the year stops, the two ladies who ran it gave about five players (who had been helping out) each a manila envelope on Sunday night. It basically said they were turning the tour over to us, and "good luck!" Most of us stayed on and kept the tour going because we were passionate, but it was a shock and unexpected.

Q: Oh wow. Okay, continue, please. What else have you been involved in?

A: The tournaments/tours I covered in FL and TX naturally led to larger events for AzB, like the Mosconi Cup and pro tournaments. While I was at

these events I would take photos, write articles, interview people, and/or provide bracket info. Back then, I would call you with all the names and then email you scores. Glad we don't do that anymore!

I also created/maintained more websites, all related to pool (a lot of pro players, pool authors (like Phil Capelle), billiard supplies, cues, tours, etc.). After I stopped helping with the Ladies Tour, a few years later I next formed the Omega Billiards Tour.

All the while for these 20+ years of covering tours and tournaments, I was also traveling to *play* in tours/tournaments, and also played regularly throughout each year on 2-4 leagues every single season.

I also write in my pool blog, I am now doing monthly interviews for Billiard Buzz (two years so far), I give lessons, and I also help American Billiard Radio at times.

Q: Did being "thrown" into the industry help you?

A: Yes, actually. Creating websites helped me in the long run personally. When I used to visit pro or big tournaments instead of being shy and giggly as a male or female pro walked by,

they would stop ME for a hug because I was already friends with most of them. I was never intimidated or nervous around them – and that also helped for that one time I played in a WPBA pro event, too.

For sure being in the industry also helped me run the Ladies Tour and then start the Omega Billiards Tour. Billiard businesses saw me as dependable due to my success building websites, covering tournaments, or playing/running tournaments and then they also got to know me personally. People knew me and my ability because of all I dabbled in, and also my personality - all which helped when I approached them about ideas or partnerships.

Further, running tours is not just about the mechanics and tactical part to ensure successful stops for the players, I gained great experience about leadership and how to handle situations (good and bad). I really loved that for some reason. Behind the scenes many people had no idea I was handling issues that may arise with players or negotiating with businesses. The experiences have been helpful in so many other areas of my life.

Q: You say you played in one WPBA event. That was never a dream of yours?

A: Absolutely not. I am not delusional (at least I don't think I am, lol), and I knew I couldn't compete with the pros. I couldn't put in the table time needed to become a pro or get good enough to be a threat. I am thankful my income came from my career, so playing on the pro tour was not something I needed to do or ever even considered.

Q: Tell us about the Tours you ran.

A: The Ladies Tour went through several main sponsors over the years. From the Hunter Classics Tour to the





OB Cues Ladies Tour to the Jerry Oliver Ladies Tour. It's currently the longest-running Tour in the US - going on 25 years! I am proud to be part of that history. I retired from the Ladies Tour after 9 years to take care of my Mom. After my Mom passed, it took me a few years to have the strength to even leave the house, but my vision/dream was to eventually start an open Tour in the Dallas/Fort Worth (DFW) area.

Q: Why did you want to start a tour in DFW?

A: The DFW area has a ton of players yet we all had to drive far to San Antonio or Houston or Oklahoma to play in tournaments (remember, TX is a big state!). I wanted to start a tour in DFW so the players had a local tour to play in and at the same time be able to try and win money at the game they love to play.

Q: How did you start the Omega Billiards Tour?

A: I approached a few pool rooms in the DFW area about the idea. The

pool rooms knew me because I frequented their rooms and I sold them on the idea (or maybe it's just because they love me, ha!). I then contacted Michael Hoang of Omega Billiards about being the main sponsor. Unbeknownst to me, he followed up on our meeting and reached out to Royce Bunnell (RIP) who was part owner of OB Cues. Royce had saw me run the OB Cues Ladies Tour for years and Mike wanted to find out if I would be a good fit to run a tour with his name on it. Mike would tell me later that Royce told him, "Melinda will be fair, ethical, and run a great, effective tour. Whatever you do, don't pass up this opportunity with Melinda." It was real sweet to hear that years later after I was running the tour!

Q: How did the Tour do?

A: I had no idea how the Tour would go, but I never once thought it wouldn't succeed. I had run the ladies tour for 9 years and had so much experience, I already knew how to run a Tour well. I was also very responsible, ethical, and fair and of all the tournaments I personally had played in for 20 years, I knew being honest and upfront about the money was key, along with treating every player fair/equally. I didn't care if you were a pro or a first timer, you still get the same treatment and no favoritisms. I was pretty insistent about the fairness. I would find out later a lot of players REALLY appreciated that. Oh, and also started every tournament on time. I ran a tight ship and everyone knew it (and appreciated that, also).

I ran the Tour behind the scenes all by myself, but at the tournaments I always had great help! It was my job as the "owner" of the Tour to take any heat and also deal with any issues or concerns. I never wanted the helpers to be on the receiving end of a venting session or be treated badly by a player. I did bounce some ideas off people at times and of course the sponsors,

but I knew the buck stopped with me and I was proud (and didn't mind at all) to be that person to handle and be responsible for all issues.

An added benefit I discovered was the Tour kinda helped the billiards economy in the area. Pool players were playing more, practicing more, going to pool rooms more... all to get ready and be prepared to play on the Tour. They now wanted a new cue or needed to buy equipment or they wanted a home table. So, a tour can actually help the billiards economy.

Q: How long did you run the Omega Billiards Tour?

A: I'm actually pretty proud of the success of the Omega Billiards Tour. I started the Tour with seven stops limited to 64 players, \$45 entry fee, and \$1,000-added to each stop. The tour grew every single year and by 2017, the Tour had 12 stops, a \$50 entry fee, over 100 players per stop, and the added money was increased to \$1,700 a stop.

Each year the season finale always had at least \$5,000-added. We also had point standings, which helped the players want to improve and play in more events. Additionally, as an incentive, the Tour gave products to the top three ranked players at the end of the year (Predator cues and then OB cues).

The tour just kept getting larger and larger and garnered attention due to its success. I started to get calls from poolrooms not just outside of DFW, but from Arizona and Oklahoma and Virginia, who wanted to be a part of the Tour because it was so successful.

I have to thank Mike Hoang of Omega Billiards, the pool rooms in DFW who gave me a chance, and all the players who played! The players were the heart of the tour, and the sponsor and pool rooms gave us the added money and a place to play. It was a match made in heaven :)

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Q: Did you notice a difference running a ladies tour versus a men's tour?

A: I was pretty naive and didn't think there would be much difference. But after about the 2nd stop or so of the Omega Billiards Tour, I asked one of my friends (Charlie Smith, who I actually interviewed last Spring in Billiard Buzz), why a certain player was rudely complaining about something. He flatly said to me, "Melinda, running a men's tour is not like running a women's tour. You're going to get a lot of crybabies on testosterone." Lol. And he was absolutely right! The male players definitely complain more... and they don't do it quietly.

The other thing I discovered, is when men argue they get over it pretty quickly and move on. It was eye-opening to see two players get into it in the middle of a match and by the end of the match they were friends again. I joke with people all the time that if two females argue, they may not talk again for 20 years, lol.

On the ladies tour, I was more careful how I spoke to them, but with the men I found out that was NOT effective. Don't get me wrong, I was very cordial to every player, but when someone would start to chew me out after they

lost to a lower-ranked player (for example), I stopped talking nice. When I stood my ground or raised my voice back at them, they would back off and stop being rude to me. Raising my voice is out of my element now, but it was a huge learning experience to realize talking frank with a male player made things better and they didn't take it personal.

Q: Have you ever gotten involved with a part of the game and thought you were biting off more than you could really handle?

A: Well, that is an interesting question. Building new websites was fun because it was creative, but maintaining them became a pain and boring. To be brutally honest, I was doing too much for the Ladies Tour. I felt it was almost expected of me to update the website, maintain the points, upload photos, write articles after each stop, all the while helping run stops and taking care of my Mom, too. The lack of appreciation and being overwhelmed led me to finally resign after 9 years. I believe everything happens for a reason, though, and it was a God send as my Mom needed more care and I was able to dedicate more time to her. Running the Omega Billiards Tour, I only felt overwhelmed towards the end – but it wasn't about what I

could or could not handle, it was more about my priorities changing in life.

Tell us about your titles.

- 5th place BCAPL Nationals Scotch Doubles (2007)
- 4th place BCAPL Nationals Scotch Doubles (2008)
- 2nd place BCAPL Nationals Women's 8 Ball Team (2008)
- 1st place ACS Texas State Women's 8-Ball Singles (2011)
- Two 1st place BCAPL Nationals Women's 8 Ball Team (2012, 2013)
- 2nd place end-of-year standings on the OB Cues Ladies Tour (2013)
- 1st place BCAPL Texas Women's 8 Ball Team (2013)
- Two 1st place BCAPL Texas State Scotch Doubles (2014, 2015)
- 1st place BCAPL Texas State Women's 8 Ball Singles (2014)
- 1st place ACS Women's Nationals 9-Ball (2014)
- 1st place ACS Women's Nationals 9-Ball and 8-Ball Team (2014)
- 2nd place BCAPL Texas State Women's 8 Ball Singles (2015)
- And numerous first places in league playoffs and standings for women's teams, men's teams, and individual standings (2011-2015)

Q: What do you think made you turn the corner with your game?

A: I don't think I was mature enough yet to work on what I needed to do – I was more having fun the first ten years and couldn't commit or dedicate time due to "life" things the next 10 years. I also think because I didn't play sports in all my years of school, I had a late start understanding the many facets of competing.

Although it took me almost 20 years to finally see consistent progress in my game, I think it was just finally a combination of all the important things that just came together at once for me.



I had known what three ball shape was, and I was told for two decades to stay down on my shots, and I also knew a good, solid pre-shot routine and fundamentals are key, but I didn't really work on those things to put it all together. I mean, I tried at times, but it just wasn't "sticking" for me for whatever reason. I also had major "test anxiety" and could not perform under pressure. Of course, I noticed my mental toughness improved as I gained more successful experience in pressure situations.

Starting around 2010, numerous but very important things all happened at the same time that put it all together finally.

I started to finally stay down on my shots, I started to look at the object ball last more consistently, I started to walk around the table more to see three-ball shape, I instilled a solid pre-shot routine, and I also incorporated a soft, smooth stroke into my repertoire. At this same time, I was also on numerous successful teams. All of the experience throughout the years of missing so many shots under pressure situations (lol) kind of led me to be in a position of being the clutch player on many of these team because I had improved so much. I have to admit, it was flattering to be sought-after by so many teams. Additionally, I also truly believe that writing about every tournament in my blog helped me as well. There's something to be said to reflect on *why* you won or lost and because I blogged every tournament, it became my own learning platform.

And finally, it was during this same time I was also running the Omega Billiards Tour. I was able to watch the greatest players in DFW play back-to-back matches every stop for numerous tournaments. Like I said before, I learn just by watching. I noticed the better players had smooth strokes, even on tough shots/outs. If you watch Tony Sulsar play (his was my very first



Billiards Buzz interviewee!), you can ONLY get better. He has a gentle stroke and it rubbed off on me to watch him play so many matches throughout the life of the Tour, consistently with the same pre-shot routine with a soft, smooth stroke.

All of the experiences playing in tours and tournaments led me to become a very solid player once my game, my knowledge of the game, my physical talent, solid fundamentals, and that smooth stroke matched up well finally with all the strategy I had learned over the years. It doesn't matter that I practiced all the time for years on end. What finally worked for me was figuring all that out so that I could finally play well under pressure.

Q: And then after well over two decades doing all that you were doing while also playing pool, you kind of just pulled the plug on things. Can you talk about that decision and how you decided to make that change?

A: My decision to stop playing pool was actually pretty easy. I joke and tell people I'm like Michael Jordan but then they remind me I'm *nothing* like Michael Jordan, lol. But Michael Jordan went out on a high note, and that's how I feel. If I hadn't won all those titles from 2010 to 2015, I *know* I would still be playing pool. But I'm overjoyed with my successes.

Then I started to notice I wasn't having that much fun anymore *at* tournaments *or* running tournaments. I wished I was anywhere else that provided me more peace, less stress, and less drama.

Not running the Omega Billiards Tour was the toughest decision - I lost sleep for 6 months because I was going to make that announcement. The players loved the Tour. I heard from many players they were going to stop playing pool but then the Tour came along, or other players came out of retirement because of the Tour. The players were very appreciative. I heard all the time they appreciated the hard work and were thankful for the Tour and. My dream was proven! Luckily, a new tour replaced the Omega Billiards Tour (it's called the DFW Tour) and the players still have a tour to play in the area. Whew!

I would say another reason why I quit playing pool is because I had a bad habit of drinking too much and stepping away from the pool rooms helped curtail that. Actually haven't drank in two years and 4 months! :)

Q: How often do you question if all this was the right decision for you?

A: Not ONE TIME have I wanted to go back to playing pool or help with any aspect of tournaments. I haven't been more sure of any decision in my life (well, I'm sure there were some break-ups with guys I was sure of, lol).

Q: Do you still follow the game?

A: I do. I like to check out streams and brackets to see how friends are doing. I also like to read on social media what folks are saying. While I might have literally a laundry list to still write about in my blog, I do love finding new topics.

Q: I know you still give lessons to a handful of people. How are you playing?

A: I was giving lessons off and on from 2014-2017. The way I teach is I spar with the player and go over all the options and strategies of what they should or shouldn't shoot *and why*. In 2018, I gave one lesson in January and didn't give another lesson until a year later, January 2019. I literally didn't play pool for an entire year! I had no idea how I would play, but I'm actually shocked how well I'm hitting them.

Q: Why do you think you are still playing so well after not playing for a year?

A: It just simply proves how much I honed-in my fundamentals and pre-shot routine. Admittedly, I was also not playing in a pressure environment, so I had no distractions or mental toughness to deal with that day. But my muscle memory to stay down on my shots, follow through, looking at the object ball last, etc. is all still there. It actually explains why I was so successful the last 5 years of my pool journey. I still can't really describe what I finally figured out with my stroke, though. Instead of rushing or hitting hard, I discovered one day how effective a soft, smooth stroke with a good pre-shot routine became so beautiful. It feels like I'm one with the whole routine. Sometimes I stayed down in my stance longer than needed because the shot felt good. It made the game so much more beautiful for me.

Q: Now you are mostly known for writing your blog <https://pooljourney.blogspot.com/>. Do you do any writing outside of pool and your blogs? Was writing something you had a desire to do?

A: Oh, thank you for saying that! I make a goal to write a post 10-15 times a month in my pool blog, but I don't think many players are even aware of it, so it touches my heart you think I'm



known for it :) I have a personal blog I write in, which I really love, also, but other than the interviews I do for Billiards Buzz, I do not do other writings (well, I write a ton at work, but that's a different beast). I can tell you though that doing interviews is one of my most favorite things! But, I never thought in a million years the things I do for pool would involve writing. Yet here I am, lol.

Q: How did you start blogging?

A: The blog started because the internet provided me a way to put my pool diary online (yes, I had a pool diary). My pool diary was a detailed account of my tournaments – I would write about every single match, the good or the bad, and what I learned. At some point I shared my pool blog with a few people, then they convinced me to make it public. THEN, a friend suggested I be more open instead of vague. Instead of, "My Mom was sick" I should share more, "I took my Mom to the ER last Friday because her emphysema was acting up." It allowed me to really open up more and be more personable. It turned out to be the best advice for my blog I've ever received.

I like to blog not just about tips to improve your game, but aspects associated with running tournaments, leadership, personalities, experiences, etc. Oh, and recently I added sections where I follow certain players and write about their tournament experi-

ences. It's been a really fun process! It's an interesting way to pass on tips/advice to the readers.

Q: When you first got into the game, social media wasn't nearly what it is today. How do you think social media has changed the game?

A: Social media has allowed people to have Facebook pages or Instagram accounts, instead of a website. I think it gives the author a more hands-on approach and more interaction with their fans (and less work needed by webmasters, *whew!*). But I also think social media has allowed people to use the platforms to vent and complain. I am **ASTONISHED** at some of the things I read on social media that people say about/to others. It's like the computer gives them an excuse to not be proper, cordial, or kind. I admire folks who can reply to a mean post appropriately, making points without being a jackass back. Takes skill, maturity, and a lot of self-reflection to do that. I reply very professionally and am never rude, even if I'm pissed off. I learned this from the leadership classes I took for work and all I learned from running the tours. There is something to be said for making a point without being an a-hole, even if you are upset.

I also see a great side to social media. Advertised tournaments can reach a ton more players now. And, gambling matches in the area are sometimes announced on social media, which of course was never done in the past. It's exciting to be aware of big matches and we can watch them in person (because social media told me about it. :) The only downside to social media is if someone is on the down low – hustling is tougher now to stay incognito due to social media and camera phones.

Q: Can you talk about the differences between your life when you were neck deep in pool and now?

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by *PREDATOR*



ARSENIC³ HIGH-PERFORMANCE DNA

A: I lived and breathed pool for 25 years. I even dreamed about pool! Every decision I made about my weekends or time off revolved around planning pool tournaments. Where to go and what weekends I needed to mark on my calendar for pool. Further, any decision to bid on a new job depended on the pool scene in that potential area/state. ALL my decisions revolved around pool!

I discovered that it is common that as we reach our mid 40s, several new and important things start to happen. We finally realize we can CHOOSE not to be around drama, AND we do something about it. We start to realize it's okay to not be around people or situations that cause angst in our life and we say "no" more often.

This happened to me. I wanted more PEACE in my life. I have been in smoky pool rooms for 25 years, and I wanted to get out of that element. I also chose to stop being around leagues and teams and tours – I didn't notice this as much before and it only started to bother and annoy me in my 40s, but being around pool I was surrounded by whiners or complainers or unhappy people. That wasn't my definition of peace at all, lol. I also really enjoy not having to deal with all the negative emotions that can come with competing. I also like the freedom to be able to have dinner with a friend ANY night now, instead of in the past trying to find an open night. It's so nice to take a walk on a beautiful day seeing new colors. When I came home I might read about an unfortunate incident at a tournament that has everyone's feathers all ruffled up. Which place would you rather be?

My life is so much more peaceful. I go to sleep at a decent hour, I am spending less money, I don't smell like smoke, I am not dealing with drama or conflict, I wake up refreshed with energy. I wouldn't take back my pool journey *at all*, I actually loved every



minute of it! But right now I'm extremely happy I walked away.

Q: Let's step away from the game a little. You are a meteorologist?

A: Yes I am! Don't meet those every day, do you? I graduated from Texas A&M with a Bachelor's degree in Meteorology. I have worked for the National Weather Service (NWS) for 26 years. I truly love my career and love going to work. I recognize how rare that is and how blessed I am to love my job.

Q: What made you choose that occupation?

A: Oh gee, get ready for another long response!

I firmly believe "weather" chose me. :)

The Texas Hill Country is about an hour and a half from where I grew up in San Antonio and it's very beautiful and memorable. My Mom and I would go to the Frio River almost every weekend when I was a child through my mid-teens and she would look up the forecast all the time to see if the weather was good enough for us to go that weekend. She did this for YEARS. One day I finally told her, "Mom, I will just become a meteorologist so I can tell you the weather."

Then in 7th grade my school had career day, but for some reason each class only got one professional. My class happened to get, yep, a meteorologist.

In high school, I applied to 4 colleges across Texas. The first (and only) college to reply was Texas A&M, and I accepted! I went through A&M's HUGE book of courses and numerous majors and as I was flipping through, trying to decide what I wanted to major in, I saw they had a meteorology program. I thought to myself, "I always said I would be one." So, that's what I majored in. I would find out later Texas A&M is the ONLY undergraduate school in Texas with a meteorology program! And yet they were the sole college that accepted my application. Fate!

Then, sadly I accepted an intern position in San Antonio with the NWS my second summer of college. I was sad because I had to forgo my "fun" job being a camp counselor at the YMCA. But that would be one of the most important decisions of my life. There are not a lot of NWS Forecast Offices in Texas, but I happened to live in a city that had one! It was destiny, again. When I graduated college, they hired me full time. Had I not put my foot

in the door as an intern, I wouldn't have got that position. So you see, the weather chose me. :)

Q: Do your co-workers know about how well you play the game and all that you were involved with?

A: Nope, lol. Sharing about tournaments added too much unnecessary pressure for me. How would I face my coworkers with yet another bad finish? When I proudly shared I placed 9th and won \$50, they would look at me confused, *why are you wasting your time with pool?* And yet I was standing in front of them ecstatic I finally cracked the top 10! So, I just stopped telling them. Of course, this was during the time in my pool journey I couldn't play worth a damn, lol.

Then something happened that put it all into a bad perspective for me. A promotion opened in Key West, FL one time. One of the top bosses asked me if I was going to apply. I told him, "No, there isn't enough pool in Key West." You see, I would have to drive 2 hours just to reach the mainland or fly to stops across Florida (they had a Ladies Tour there), and so it would be too much work/money/time to try and travel to events. His reply was, "Well, you would probably only be there a couple of years before moving up and then on to a new location. You can't take a couple of years off from pool?"

And that sealed it. I never spoke about pool again to anyone at work. I realized they didn't understand at all what pool meant to me and how entrenched it was in my life.

One day about ten years later a different boss overheard me on the phone tell someone I was in one of the billiard magazines due to first place finish. I was VERY proud! My boss poked his head in my office after my call and said nicely, "Don't you think your co-workers would want to know about that success? They would love to hear

about your win." Although he was correct, I was still tainted. I lived and breathed pool. Take a couple of years off?? Would I ever ask someone to take a couple of years off from church? Or time with their kids? No. I even ran one of the most successful tours in DFW, but none of my coworkers knew that. I just kept it all to myself (and kept most coworkers from my social media accounts so they wouldn't find out).

Q: Those of us who are lucky to call you a friend know how close you were with your parents. Share with us your connection and the grief you experienced.

A: (thank you for the compliment.) My Mom was my best friend. And she would tell everyone that I was *the love of her life*. If you saw the way she looked at me or the way her face lit up when she talked about me, you would believe this wholeheartedly. I was an only child and when she divorced when I was 7, we became even closer. Even after she remarried a few years later, the bond her and I had throughout my life was pretty amazing. My StepDad passed away in 2007 and in March of 2008 I moved my Mom from San Antonio (where she had lived for 38 years) to Fort Worth because I could not take care of her from so far away (she had emphysema). She and I bought a house together and it was the first time she ever had central air and carpeting. I was a VERY proud daughter! Her emphysema advanced which also caused heart problems (because the lungs are working so hard) and I was her caretaker the last 4 years of her life. I wouldn't change it for the world – it was an honor to help her. But, her passing caused me to have serious grief for almost five years. Even my personality changed – I didn't smile or engage at work and was not pleasant to be around at all because I was in a constant funk or grumpy. Further, I used grief as an excuse to drink too much when I went

out. Then my biological Dad passed unexpectedly in 2015 and his loss was tough on me, also. We had become closer and I had so much more to learn from him. He also loved me dearly. I was told a couple of years ago if you are grieving after six months, you should seek help. I wish I had known that sooner. Consequently, though, because of all I have experienced, I have become that empathic voice for many of my friends. I don't wish it on anyone, but I am so glad to be there for my friends and understand at a different level what they are going through during first holidays or unexpected losses of loved ones.

Q: Can you talk about the influence they had on your life?

A: As I stated before, I learn well from watching and did the same growing up and paying attention to how my Mom and StepDad did things. I also have the work ethic I have because of them. I am extremely conscientious and get things done that need to be done well in a timely manner (one of the reasons I was good at running tours/tournaments). My Mom and both my Dads had a heart of gold and that rubbed off on me as well; they were each very loving people. But something in particular I learned from my parents at the end of their lives had a huge impact on me the last 8 years. And it has helped me, in return, to help so many others. They taught me the importance to have plans in place for when a loved one passes. My Mom was very open about what she wanted and how she wanted me to help her in the end. Some people think it's taboo to talk about. What people don't realize is, knowing someone's last wishes is actually a GIFT. I was able to speak for her when she could not speak, and express all her wishes, wants, and needs. And I was able to do this also for my dear friend Dave Faver when he was in hospice. It was an honor to help him in his final days and I also spoke for him when he couldn't speak for

himself. I think that area (End of Life Care) might be what I focus on after I retire from my career. I occasionally give talks/speeches about it to groups and currently volunteer for an End of Life organization. It's all in honor of my Mom and what I learned from her.

Q: You make it a point to ask your interviewees about things that were difficult in their life, so we can learn from them. Do you have anything like that to share?

A: Yeah, I have several things, but I'll touch on just a couple. First, I have to state up front that I would not change my life AT ALL. When I reflect on my life, I only think of the good things; everything that has happened were experiences I learned from and made me the woman I am proud to be today. Further, my parents did the best they could with what they knew.

My StepDad loved my Mom and I *more than anything* on this earth. But he verbally abused us for 25 years (until his passing). If you do the math, this means it continued into my adulthood. It wasn't every day, but when he would get upset (whether justified or not), he would yell, raise his voice, and be rude. My neighbors could hear him berating us from their houses, that's how loud he was. He also chewed out waiters and anyone that upset him. I was raised this way, so I thought yelling was normal. I really did! I would snap at waiters and friends in college, and I just wasn't pleasant to be around at all. To complicate things further, both my parents took everything wrong or assumed the worse, so lucky me acquired that trait as well. I would get so upset and hurt at my friends all the time, even into my 30s – I just didn't see things any normal way because that's how I saw my parents act and I grew up that way. And to complicate my life even more (lol), I inherited depression and addiction. Sometimes my depression could get

so deep, it was paralyzing at different times throughout my life (and just as recently as last Fall). So, because of all these things, I now understand and accept why I didn't have the capacity to handle my emotions while I played pool for about the first 20 years, and why it took me so long to finally have mental toughness.

It's embarrassing to admit this, but the first time I learned that yelling wasn't a normal way to talk to someone, I was 22 years old. Yet it still took me 10+ years to stop verbally abusing those around me :(I am human and every once in a while I will still snap at someone, but believe me when I say it hurts me for days because I hate when it comes out. Because I was verbally abused for so long, my tongue lashing could be pretty severe. I can't believe I used to be like that! I am much better now, and am usually the person to try and calm others down if people get upset.

If you know me now, you wouldn't fathom that at 35 I was chewing out waiters or snapping at friends all the time, or that in my late 20s I thought everyone was deliberately always being mean to me which caused me to either lash out or sink into depression. I am much, MUCH better now, but it took a LONG time to not be rude to people or take things wrong all the time. It took a lot of self-reflection and work, *but more so*, I had help along the way. My friend June Hager Walter helped me IMMENSELY to not take everything wrong and to love myself, and my ex-husband helped with my snapping at people. You have to understand it takes *a lot* of trust to help someone see things in a different perspective where they will hear you.

I was *extremely* fortunate that key friends and coworkers helped me from being an insecure yelling bitch who overreacted all the time, to become the confident, professional, loving, friendly, calm, understanding

woman I am proud to be today. I am forever thankful!

I do have to add that the Bailey family opened their arms and hearts to me (still do!), so it pains me to talk about my StepDad this way. I still loved him and he loved us.

Q: So, without pool, what kind of goals and aspirations do you have for your life? Do you still have any pool related goals that you haven't accomplished?

A: Wow, good question. My "title goal" was to always win the Women's Singles BCAPL Texas State tournament and I won that in 2014. OMGosh, finally! My dreams to run a tour in DFW, to do interviews, and give lessons all came to fruition. My other goal (which I've been doing for almost 15 years) would be to continue to write in my pool blog (I really LOVE doing that). Otherwise, I feel pretty fortunate all my pool dreams/goals have been accomplished. Outside of pool, the last couple of years I decided I want to be an even better employee. And just last year I earned one of the highest reviews I, so I think that's working. :) My goals otherwise are to live life to the fullest and be happy. Pretty simple, yet pretty tough at the same time, right?

Melinda "ak-trigger" Bailey has been in the pool scene as a player and ambassador for pool for over 25 years.



Additionally, she was a Tournament Director for two large tours in Texas for over 15 years. She is a loyal blogger (<http://pooljourney.blogspot.com/>) and holds numerous BCA/ACS Texas State and National titles (singles, doubles, and teams).



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Derby City Classic XXI,

January 25–February 2, 2019

CELEBRATING 21 YEARS OF BANK POOL, ONE POCKET, 9-BALL
WITH A LITTLE BIG FOOT 10-BALL & 14.1 ON THE SIDE.

LIVE from the Horseshoe Southern Indiana Casino, Elizabeth IN

By **David Thomson**: mediumpool.com

At 21 years old the Derby has become an institution. It's attendance keeps increasing with 505 competitors in Banks, 410 in One-Pocket, and 407 in 9-Ball. Those numbers proclaim it the largest professional pool tournament in the world.

The 2019 Derby also generated an astounding \$312,900 in prize money.

Creator Greg Sullivan is overwhelmed. "When the Derby was created, we never considered that there could be this much success. 1322 entries! 20+ countries! It's incredible."

Diamond's president Chad Scharlow added, "Needless to say, we are truly grateful to those competitors and sponsors for their continued support. It's truly is an honor to have attracted the world's greatest players."

Enjoy the chronological highlights of the DCC XXI. To delve deeper than this synopsis, visit the Derby City Classic event page at azbilliards.com.

The Diamond BIG Foot Challenge

Format: Race to 11, single elimination, alternate break, all balls count.

\$32,000 Prize Fund. Chang: \$16,000, Filler, \$8,000, Gorst and Orcollo, \$4000 each.



Bigfoot Winner Jung-Lin Chang

From a field of 16 of the finest, international talent, we were down to two.

In true Derby City spirit, the race was on. Joshua Filler, the younger steed broke loose to streak ahead 4-0. Jung-Lin Chang, the senior, more experienced workhorse, paced himself. In the second stretch, he charged ahead 7-5.

As they jockeyed back and forth, it was neck-and-neck as they neared the finish line. At 9-9, an opportunity appeared and the well-seasoned veteran, calm and composed, closed out the set. At 11 games to 9, he had secured the prestigious Diamond BIG Foot title.

Jung-Lin Chang's exemplary accomplishment established his reputation as one of the most formidable pro players competing today. OK, the Diamond BIG Foot Challenge takes only four matches to win but look at his Accu-stats' Total Performance Averages (TPA). .922 in the final with Filler, his gutsy .930 gouged Gorst in the semi's, a brutal .933 battered Van Boening, and a mere .883 in his opening encounter with the irrepressible Albanian Eklent Kaci. And, let's not forget, this was Chang's first sniff at Big Foot.

And what about Filler? He slipped to .888 in the finals after an unprecedented .956 that demonstrated a truly

lionhearted assault on the dangerous Dennis Orcollo.

Filler's command of Orcollo, which opened the final day's proceedings, was the finest demonstration of pool prowess in recent years. His aforementioned .956 TPA was garnered by eight break-and-runs, plus, when Dennis broke dry, Joshua ran two more: ten of his eleven games were run-outs.

He dipped to .850 with Bustey and began his crash course with a crushing .919 against Corteza. Three legendary Filipinos and Filler manifested not a sliver of fear, just sheer dominance compounded by inner belief.

Chang's semifinal encounter with last year's finalist Fedor Gorst was easier than he expected. Fedor was the first to admit that he had struggled. His, normally, pinpoint cue-ball and fierce determination had eluded him. With his 5th place finish in One-Pocket and 3rd in the 9-Ball, and being so tournament tough, Gorst is destined for greatness.

DCC BANK POOL CHAMPIONSHIP

Race to 3, 9-Ball–Short Rack.

\$10,000 first place prize: **\$4,000** for second, **\$2,200**, 3rd/4th, etc.

From a record-setting 505 entrants, there is only one man left standing.

Billy Thorpe, undefeated in 14 arduous rounds, became the undisputed Diamond Derby City Classic Bank Champion by eliminating Kuwait's Omar Al Shaheen, 3-2.

En route to the Accu-Stats TV table, Billy had won games without his opponent being allowed to approach the table. In round 13, he had given Skyler Woodward, a DCC Banks Ring Game winner, his first loss at 3-0. The demolition included two games where he ran 5 balls-and-out.



Banks Winner Billy Thorpe

When they met again, the punishment was repeated: 3-0.

Omar Al Shaheen had earned his berth by beating back-to-back BIG Foot 10-Ball titlist Jayson Shaw and 3-time DCC Banks Champ John Brumback, just to name a few who are still in shock.

Previously, Omar had competed in DCC's 9-Ball and Banks events but, had slipped under the slate as he had never gotten past the last 16.

Thorpe, throttle wide open, had been walloping the balls. There is no baby in Billy. He's a pounder. He had also home field advantage having experienced the "heat" of the Accu-Stats' lights. Being undefeated, he also had the comfort of a buyback.

What most spectators expected to be one-sided was, contrarily, tied at 2 games and 4 balls apiece.

"Oh no," Billy a little bit twitchy. "How did it come to this? I'm starving, I should have eaten." The thoughts are racing through his mind. He doesn't want to think about the buy-back booth. "It's OK, I'm undefeated, he has to beat me twice. Forget that! I'm closing this out NOW!"

Defensively, Omar left Billy long, very long. His dark eyes focused intently on the contact point, he pulled back his trusted stick and, mustering all his power, he pummels the object ball... CRACK! The Cyclop almost busted the back of the pocket.

You can still hear his rebel yell ringing around the arena.

"Guys who compete wide open are dangerous," Billy later stated, "Especially in a short-rack, race to 3."

Omar was a little deflated, yet elated to have gotten so far. "What's better than this in the sport we all love so much?" And, let's not forget, he'll go home a hero.

Billy has added another Diamond event to his resume. Plus, he was 120 points closer to the Master of the Table title.

DCC ONE POCKET CHAMPIONSHIP

RACE to 3. **\$12,000**, **\$6,000**, **\$3300**.

410 competitors are now culled to ONE!

One Pocket; Chess with Balls.

Just like chess, One-Pocket is about knowing the moves. It is, also, said that the “mover” will out-play the shotmaker. As shotmakers have the need to pocket balls, One-Pocket players, “Tie ‘em up, stick ‘em in the stack, leave ‘em stuck.”

This strategy, knowingly, exercises patience that, eventually, frustrates the fast-and-loose shooters into firing at will. Actually, as the trap has been set, it really is firing unwillingly.

In the final moments of the Derby City Classic One-Pocket Championship, Francisco Bustamante, down two - zero to the crafty Corey Deuel, manifested true grit and sustained stamina as his never-say-die attitude drove the last ball into his pocket.

The 55-year-old veteran, in his 8th day of the Derby City Classic’s brutal dawn to dawn schedule, now sat atop the leader board in his search for back-to-back All-Around Champion titles... and the additional \$20,000 bonus money!

Courageous Corey Deuel had an extraordinary day. Not only did he defeat Shane Van Boening and Alex Pagulayan, with only Bustey and Alex left, he luckily drew the bye.

Alex’s grueling 8 days had included many a moment upstairs, battling for a position in the final 8 in the 14.1 Challenge. He just missed...with a high run of 198! In the semi’s, he was, understandably, showing signs of fatigue. He, soon, succumbed to Bustey’s imaginative moves and superlative shotmaking.

In the finals, Bustamante’s performance was sublime, even exhilarating. At 2-zero, Corey’s crafty, creative, aggressive cue ball, finally, derailed and left Francisco an opening. Bustey ran a mesmerizing 8 and out.

At 2-1, it was Corey’s break. It was now Bustey’s turn to get creative. With a



Bustamante coaxes in the final ball

blistering bank that, intentionally, kissed off a ball into his pocket, Bustey had the audience in awe as he ran another 8 and out. 2-2.

Game 5, the decider: Bustey’s break. Deuel took a timeout.

Recomposed, with the courage and foresight that only Corey would adopt in such a foray, he attacked. Out of nowhere, a ball fell in his hole.

He couldn’t believe it, with the spheres spread far and wide he was left safe. He pocketed a ball to be re-potted while sending whitey safely, supposedly, towards his opponent’s hole. It rolled high leaving a sliver of a shot. Bustey’s ball fell.

Francisco’s confidence was now in full bore. Failure wasn’t an option.

With unwavering focus and calm determination, his indomitable spirit rose to the occasion. All Deuel could do was wonder what could have been as, ball by ball, the title slipped away.

But wait, there was hope. Needing one ball, Bustey’s bust into the cluster didn’t leave a direct shot to his pocket.

Formerly slumped, Corey now sat erect in his seat.

Francisco scanned his options. The remaining balls were openly available to his opponent’s pocket. One error here and Deuel was more than capable of running out the rack...and stealing the title.

Bustey espied a bank, a long, slow trickle towards his corner and, if it didn’t fall, Corey would be left safe.

At a snail’s pace, the orb slowly rolled, and rolled, and rolled. Francisco, animate now, talking to it, “Come, come,” coaxing it along until, on its last revolution, with his fingers snap, snap, snapping, it finally dropped.

The arena was a madhouse. Screams, and yells, and a’hollerin’ roar to the rafters. Deuel, devastated, yet graciously accepted Bustey’s high-five. Then, he headed to the lobby and held court in a hundred dollar chess game.

After the \$12,000 check presentation, Bustey was immediately rushed to a 9-Ball match with Shawn Murphy. No rest for the victorious. That’s the Derby

Bustamante was awarded 120 points towards being Master of the Table.

Would he prevail and repeat?

DCC 9-BALL CHAMPIONSHIP

407 entrants; Another attendance record broken!

1st. \$16,000, 2nd. \$8,000, 3rd, \$6,000, 4th/5th, \$3950.

Race to 9. Winner Breaks. 3 balls, minus those pocketed, must make the kitchen on the break.

The Outsville Accu-Rack is in use. 9-ball on the spot.

1st. \$16,000, 2nd. \$8,000, 3rd, \$6,000, 4th/5th, \$3950.

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DCC All Around Champion: \$20,000!

At 3:30 in the morning, Skyler Woodward, surrounded by friends, fans, and family, sank the case 9 and was declared the undisputed Diamond DCC XXI All-Around Champion and Master of the Table.

In addition to the \$16,000 for winning in the 9-Ball division, for the enviable Master of the Table title, he captured the top prize of the event...\$20,000!

The 120 MoT points created a decisive lead over Bustamante, his nearest rival, who was honored with \$3,000 for second. Orcollo scored \$2,000 for third.

Woodward had just survived back-to-back-to-back bouts with Orcollo, Biado, and Vann Corteza—three of the toughest, ball pounding Filipinos on the planet.

He had one more, lesser known (until now) omnipotent Filipino in front of him, the 26-year-old fearless, emotionless, automaton, James Aranas.

James has been living in West Virginia in a house of pool repute. His host always invited any visiting cue-carrying Pinoy to his home away from home. Currently Aranas was, in practice, being schooled by Orcollo, Pagulayan and the like.

When away from the table, James is a very friendly, responsive guy. His respect and passion for the sport are more than apparent.

On the table, he's a demon.

He, like Woodward, was undefeated before succumbing to Orcollo, one of his heroes.

James had previously neutralized South Dakotan Danny Olsen, Netherlander Neils Feijen then, undeterred after his loss to Dennis, Fedor Gorst.



It's a miracle, I got a shot after the break

Fedor had a fantastic day. First, he'd removed Pinegar, then Van Boening, and then Jayson Shaw...9-2!

Jayson stated respectfully, "He shot incredible. A couple of scratches and he totally controlled the set. All I could do was watch."

Gorst grabbed third.

The first set in the Finals began with Aranas nailing an Accu-Stats' TPA near .950 which, incidentally, was what Sky had just laid on Orcollo to eliminate him from the tournament.

The trouble was, Sky couldn't catch a roll. As Grady Mathews used to say, "The balls always know who's winning." The rolls were favoring James.

For example, at around 6-6 in their race to 9, Woodward broke to have his cue ball career towards the side pocket. The crowd sighed in relief as it appeared to escape the hole as it rolled around the rim to park on the edge...until a roaming 3 kicked it into the pocket.

That mishap changed the set. Sky scurried to the buyback booth.

At 2 am with the audience, entranced, was ready for the do-or-die second set.

Between racks, Sky, like James, was struggling to keep his eyes focused. Exhaustion affects 20 somethings, too.

Both had been in competitive mode for a solid 16 hours. Add that statistic to the torture of 9 days of the Derby. The debilitating onslaught to the senses will take its toll, even on the balls.

They refused to cooperate. No matter how hard they were smacked, Skyler couldn't get an opening shot. His frustration fed into the fans, some of whom, had deemed their kid from Paducah might be doomed.

The energy in the Accu-Stats TV Arena had never known such a low. It was like a funeral. You could, literally, hear a pin drop. The tournament desk land-line rang in the distance. Riiiiiiiiing, riiiiiiiiing. It was incessant.

In the deciding set, Skyler, still scrambling, had maintained a one-game lead with Aranas always playing catch-up.

“If I could get a shot after the break, I could fly,” muttered Sky as he approached the headstring.

The balls blasted apart. He was left straight in on the 2. He raised his arms to the heavens. It was a miracle. His audience responded with howls of encouragement.

He ran all the way to the 9 and, with whitey having arrived a little bit funny, he missed it!

The 9 then hung near the corner pocket. Aranas nudged into the lead.

And scratched on the break!

Was Woodward spent? Could the Mosconi Cup escapologist recover? Could he muster the inspiration when he needed it? What would his MC coach Johan Ruijsink say?

Channeling all, with ball-in-hand he, confidently, ran the rack.

He needed one more, only one more. The opening and closing racks are always the biggest testers of one’s mettle.

The key shot was a tricky three-railer for shape on the trapped 5 to the 6. Then, he was surely out.

Aranas sat patiently in his seat. He acknowledged that his opponent missing position was his last opportunity to get back to the table.

Skyler had distance between his cueball and the 5. Normally, it was inside his comfort zone, but this ball was worth thirty-six thousand dollars.

He fired the 5 into the pocket. His cueball sped across the Simonis. Sky’s eyes darted as they followed the orb rail after rail until it stopped perfect on the six.

After easing in the 8, he was straight-in on the crowning 9.

The arena was in uproar, fans on their feet, cheering their champion. Sky,

emotions at their peak, fists pumping, screamed with relief.

The Derby has an all-new American, Master of the Table.

There was only one question remaining, from where is this unwavering inner strength summoned?

Only champions know.

Additional Attractions: The ONE POCKET HALL of FAME DINNER

Wednesday, 30th, Jan. 6 pm., in the casino’s **Diamond Lounge**.

Onepocket.org, under the auspices of producer Steve Booth, inducted Scott Frost and James Walden.

Interestingly, the two players honored this year had quite a history together.

Road players are always on the hunt for new talent to skulk around with in search of the cash.

Walden had observed Frost as a talented kid and was awed by his dedication to learning and his taste for adventure.

Away they went. Frost’s forte, even then, was One-Pocket. James excelled in 9-Ball.

Exercising rule number 1 of the road, neither exposed their true expertise. Until they lost. Then one would announce, “Try him some.”

That’s how it’s done.

Scott Frost is now a jubilant member of the One Pocket Hall of Fame!

James Walden has the honorable acclaim of “Lifetime Pool in Action!”

One Pocket Hall of Famer Shannon Daulton emceed the evening’s festivities, while fellow members, including, Nick Varner, John Brumback, and Jer-



emy Jones entertained the one-hole fans with personal encounters with the honorees.

THE DCC Friday Night BANKS RING GAME

The most boisterous Bank Pool Party on earth attracted Billy Thorpe, Skyler Woodward, Shane Van Boening, Jayson Shaw, Neal Jacobs, and Mike Delawder in the winner-take-all Bankfest.

Warming up at 50 bucks a ball, not so surprisingly, Delawder then Jacobs were soon to falter. Surprisingly, SVB was next to go bust.

Skyler strung enough together to leave Shaw, ALL IN, with a lonely c-note. Sky, on a roll, bounced a few more, and bye, bye Jayson.

He and Billy had garnered \$6k apiece. Skyler, still in revenge mode from their Banks event encounter, with extraordinary skill, in one inning ran out the balls ’til Thorpe ran out of cash. All Billy could do was smile.

Sky, on cloud 9, walked away with that wry grin, and the 12 large.

THE DIAMOND STRAIGHT POOL CHALLENGE

THE HIGH-RUN FINALISTS.

- Joshua Filler, 285
- Dennis Orcollo, 260
- Chris Melling, 244
- John Schmidt, 216
- Mika Immonen, 201
- Shane Van Boening, 198
- Lee Vann Corteza, 183
- Niels Feijen, 179.

Highlights included Shane running 124 and out on Melling before play in the One-Pocket and 9-Ball schedules determined that the tournament couldn't be completed.

Maybe, they can have the player with most points in the 8 high-runs be declared the champion?

Mika had finished farther than his fellow competitors and was unofficially declared the winner.

As the top 14.1 players all finished high in the 9-Ball and One-Pocket events, the lesson learned? It pays to play Straight Pool.

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SHANE VAN BOENING AND HAN YU

Wins 2018 AzB Player of the Year Awards

By its very nature, the AzBilliards Player of the Year awards are meant to acknowledge the best male and female players from the preceding year.

On the men's side though, the 2018 Player of the Year race seemed to be much more of a comment on parity in the game instead of one player's dominance.

2018 didn't see any real dominance from one player as it seemed we had

as many different winners as we did marquee events. Joshua Filler's World 9-Ball Championship win made him a candidate, and we expect to see him dominate the game in coming years. Jung-Lin Chang's win at the International 9-Ball Open, teamed with a 5th

at World 9-Ball, certainly put his name in the equation, and Niels Feijen's World Pool Masters win put his name in contention. In the eyes of AzBilliards though, it was "The South Dakota Kid", Shane Van Boening, who earned the Player of the Year recognition.

Shane's back to back US Open 10-Ball and US Open 8-Ball wins back in July were certainly impressive. Prior to that, Shane had wins at the US Open One Pocket and Bank Pool Championships. Add on his August win at Turn-



Shane Van Boening Celebrates at the 2018 Mosconi Cup



Shane Van Boening with his 2014 award

The race for 2018 Female Player of the Year came down to a three way Chinese photo finish with, Han Yu, Siming Chen and Xiao-Fang Fu all making a case for the honor. While the future of the ladies game still firmly resides in China, we here at AzBilliards really only had the China Open, Women's World 9-Ball Championship and Amway Cup to figure into our final decision.

Based on her World Title win at the Women's World 9-Ball Championship, her third place finish at the Amway Cup and her 9th place finish at the China Open, AzBilliards has chosen Han Yu as the Ladies Player of the Year.

Yu just edged past Chen in AzBilliards tracked prize money at \$52,700 and sits atop the WPA Women's rankings.

Van Boening's win was his third career AzBilliards Player of the Year award, and his first since 2014. Yu's win was her second and will join the 2016 trophy in her trophy case.

As always, AzBilliards thanks Aramith Billiard Balls for their invaluable support with this award. Both players will be presented with a trophy created by Aramith.



Han Yu poses with her 2016 award

ing Stone and there was also that 3-9 combination with the weight of his country on his shoulders in London. When you expand the scope to top 4 finishes, you have to count his runner-up finish at the World Pool Masters, his 3rd place finish at the World 9-Ball Championship and his 4th place finish at the International 9-Ball Open.

Van Boening's total tracked prize money in 2018 was just over \$110,000, a full \$40,000 more than his closest competition, Dennis Orcollo. With the majority of Van Boening's wins coming in the states, his end of year WPA ranking sits at 8th place. That is with him only competing in five of the eight ranked WPA events.



Han Yu at the Women's World 9-Ball Championship

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Filler Downs Countryman Souquet in Finals of WPS Grand Finale

The pool industry has been looking for a feel-good story that becomes a movie, other than a sequel to *The Hustler* or *The Color of Money*, for years.

Thanks, in part, to Darren Appleton and New York City's Steinway Billiards' owner, Manny Stamatakis, pool may have itself another marketable story, which could have been written for the screen.

Like any good film story, it's not just about the premise, but the trials and tribulations that lead to the eventual happy, or at least hopeful conclusion. The story would begin at Steinway Billiards at the Predator 10-Ball Grand Finale, at the end of the second season of the World Pool Series (co-owned by Appleton and Stamatakis). This finale, held from January 17-20, featured two German pool players - Joshua Filler and Ralf Souquet - who battled it out in the finals.

After this ending-is-just-the-beginning introduction, the story would cross the Atlantic Ocean to the German state of North Rhine-Westphalia (about the size of Maryland), in which both players grew up, 100 miles and 30 years apart; Souquet (50) would grow up in Eschweiler, a municipality (town) of about 55,000 residents, approximately 100 miles southwest of Boenen, a municipality of about 18,000 residents, where Filler (21) spent his early days.

Though the evidence is primarily anecdotal, Souquet "guesses" that he was "Filler's mentor for a little while because (he had known) his wife, Pia, for a long time," but they never really established any sort of student/

teacher relationship. But when have facts ever stood in the way of a good story on film? Through varied trials and tribulations, they move on in their separate professional and amateur spheres and in 2017, end up as teammates on Europe's winning Mosconi Cup team. A little over a year later, in the rough winter of 2018/2019, they arrive at Steinway Billiards with 50 other players to compete in the WPS Predator Grand Finale. After both are defeated (Souquet in the opening round, and Filler in the second round), the fictional mentor and student work their way back to a final field of 16 and eventually, arrive at the final match, in which the student defeats the mentor.

Roll credits, as they say.



Max Lesser (Predator Community Manager), Shirley Ang, Pia Filler, Josh Filler, Darren Appleton, Rick Shellhouse and John Leyman

Most good film stories feature a secondary (sometimes, tertiary) story line, highlighting peripheral characters or events that impact on the main story's heroes, and this one would be no exception. The secondary story line in this one could be about the WPS itself, and the ways that the European experience of professional pool differs from the American experience, and how a European-organized (though primarily American-based) series of tournaments has played out on its iconic, American (Steinway Billiards) stage.

But first things first. The season finale of Appleton and Stamatakis' second season of the World Pool Series. The \$25,000-added event, originally scheduled for October, was delayed due to some scheduling conflicts, which would have had a tendency to reduce its entrant field. The dates of January 17-20 were finally chosen, and while it would feature an impressive roster of international professionals, along with a few semi-pro American players, it would begin with only 50 entrants; only 14 of which hailed from the US of A. This did not include players who reside in the United States, but identify as European, Filip-

pino or Asian, like Gary O'Callaghan, who was listed under the flag of Ireland, or Zion Zvi, who was listed under the flag of Israel.

It was the best turnout for any of the four events of the 2018 WPS. There were only 32 for the opening 9-ball event in April 2018, 41 for the 10-ball event in June and 47 for the 8-ball event in Romania in August. The 10-ball format of the Finale was chosen by the players. The entrant fields for the first (2017) WPS season (all 8-ball events) went in the opposite direction, from an initial field of 128 in January 2017, to 83 in April, down to 62 in July and then up slightly to 69 in October. Overall, these were not the kinds of numbers that the founders of the World Pool Series wanted to see, but that's moving us into the secondary story area; more later.

So, in our main story, the Kaiser ("emperor" in German, derived from the Roman Caesar) and the Killer (because it rhymes with Filler) started out moving in opposite directions. Fresh off his World 9-Ball Championship in Qatar a month or so ago, the Killer (Filler), following an opening round bye (called a "walk-over" in Europe-

an parlance), won his first match 11-1 over Eric Lim. The Kaiser, also after an opening round bye, lost his first match 11-6 to 'fireballing' Mike Dechaine.

Filler didn't get too far (remember, short field of 50) and lost his second match to Greece's Alek Kazakis 11-9. Had he won, Filler would have moved into the event's 16-entrant, single-elimination phase from the winners' side. Instead, he moved to the loss side, where he defeated Canada's John Morra 11-4, to move into the final 16 from the losers' side.

Souquet, in the meantime, working on the loss side, shut out Michael Leahy, defeated Omar Alshaheen 11-6 and worked his way into the final field of 16 with an 11-6 win over Dennis Grabe.

The final 16 was a strong list of players, which beyond Killer and Kaiser, included something of a 'dream team' of finalists, battling for the title. In the first round, Albania's Klenti Kaci downed Appleton 13-8. Zoren James Aranas defeated Petri Makkonen 13-10, Dechaine eliminated Mika Immonen 13-5 and Souquet took care of Jayson Shaw 13-11.

Following his single match victory on the loss side, which put him among the final 16, Filler found himself facing Kazakis a second time, and defeated him 13-5. Ruslan Chinakhov got by Tony Robles 13-8, and in a double hill match that led to a shot-by-shot shootout, the only one in the first round of the single-elimination phase, Mieszko Fortunski defeated Dennis Orcollo. Chris Melling joined the final 8 in the event quarterfinals with a 13-11 victory over Zion Zvi.

In the quarterfinal matches that followed, Souquet got his rematch against Dechaine, while Kaci faced Aranas, Filler met Chinakhov, and Melling squared off against Fortunski. Souquet earned his slot in the semi-



Joshua Filler, John Leyman and Ralf Souquet

finals with a 13-9 rematch victory over Dechaine. Aranas joined him after eliminating Kaci 13-11. Filler advanced to the other semifinal match with a 13-8 victory over Chinakhov. Melling joined him after winning the only double hill match (by shootout) of the semifinals against Fortunski.

It was the Kaiser's first appearance in the semifinals of a WPS event and he took full advantage, downing Aranas 13-10. The Killer eliminated Chris Melling 13-8.

Though the Billiards Congress of America Hall of Famer would use two dry breaks to get out in front of Filler 3-0 in the race-to-17 finals, Filler fought his way back to a 4-4 tie. Filler surged ahead with four straight, and though Souquet fought back with three of his own to get within a single rack at 8-7, Filler surged again, with three straight to make it 10-7, signaling the mid-point of the potential 33-game match.

Filler went on to chalk up three of the next four matches, extending his lead to five racks at 13-8. Souquet was able to close the gap to four games, but Filler came right back to win three straight and reach the hill first. Souquet continued to fight, picking up two to bring it to 16-11, but a foul in what proved to be the deciding 28th game, gave Filler ball in hand, and in effect, the WPS Predator Grand Finale.

And now, a word from the sponsors . . .

Darren Appleton had a lot of people to thank and he thanked them all, beginning with his WPS co-founder, Manny Stamatakis and his entire Steinway Billiards staff, which hosted seven of the eight WPS events. And to the IDM Club Romania, Robert Braga and his crew that helped make that single European event happen. He wanted (and did) "especially thank" tournament director John Leyman, who did a great



deal more than his tournament director title would lead one to believe. Appleton also acknowledged the unwavering support and assistance of the event's general manager, Shirley Ang, along with Ira Lee, and Eric Kwon with High Rock Productions, Ted Lerner, Ron Mason, JP Parmentier Photography (to include assistance with graphics and social media), Erwin Dionisio, and referees Michaela Tabb and Rick Shellhouse. "Massive thanks" went out to main sponsors Predator Cues, Rasson Billiards, Aramith, Simonis, Tiger Products, Kamui, Steinway Billiards, Poison Billiards, Outsville Partners, Billiards Digest, Cuescore, WPA and AZBTV.

Appleton expresses some doubts about the future of the WPS

"I'm not really sure yet," said Darren Appleton about the future of the WPS. "There won't be four events in 2019. . . maybe two, but something different. I'll know a lot more in March."

Enter the peripheral story line in the mentor/student movie. It's a story line about the way that the pool industry, top to bottom, is decidedly different, and arguably better in Europe than it

is here in the United States.

For WPS General Manager, Shirley Ang, the difference is about professionalism, which starts from the ground up and includes such mundane issues as dress codes and embraces more significant issues, like the ways in which each group (Europe and the US) market the sport. Ang produces/manages/runs both pool and poker tournaments all over the world. Her pool schedule in the year ahead will prohibit her from managing whatever form the 2019 WPS takes.

"It's a different attitude in America than it is in Europe," she said. "I've been asked this before, but I don't know American players inside and out. I know the mentality of the Europeans. In America, it's more about the next paycheck than it is about the future and how they can better themselves."

"It starts in the lower ranks," she added. "In Europe, with leagues and team competition, there are dress codes. And the sportsmanship behavior in Europe is a big difference."

There are other differences, as well. Some more significant than others.

“Playing for money, for example,” said Ang. “It’s not something very common to do in Europe; hustling, giving weight, handicaps.”

Perhaps the most striking difference, according to Ang, is the degree to which American players participate (or don’t) in the process of promoting the sport through social media.

“It’s a lot of work, outside of that one week of the actual event,” she said. “People don’t realize what I’m doing. It’s not only running the tournament, it’s marketing, paperwork, deals, deals and deals. And (social media) views, after the fact.”

“America, I think, is lagging in that regard,” she added. “Events here don’t gather as much traction in the press. If you look at our media presence and how the tournament(s) are marketed. We reached 2.5 million people with the Jayson Shaw semifinal at the event in Romania in August. There were 24,000 reactions and shares, 785 engagements with video.”

“It’s just a difference in attitude, a different way of perceiving the sport. If you want to be a part of the sport, you have to be professional.”

Ang saw some positive signs in the recent American team victory at the most recent Mosconi Cup (coached, of course, by a European, Johan Ruijsink). Though firmly in the European ‘camp,’ because so many of its players are people she knows, personally, she was happy to see the Americans win.

“I’m a Team Europe fan, always,” she said, “but I was happy and proud that Team USA won, for the sport and the future of the event.”

“It was the most exciting Mosconi Cup event in ages,” she added, “and so nice to see America as a team. It was the first time that I’ve seen Team America be a team.”

“It’s been a very disappointing 2018 with the lack of player support,” said Appleton, “and that has basically crippled the WPS, especially the lack of support from the American players.”

We tried everything. . . change of discipline, format, lower entry fees, and it still didn’t work. Maybe New York is the problem, I don’t know.”

“So I have to think carefully about the future,” he added, “because we had a massive shortfall and financial loss for me, personally.”

Like Ang, Appleton was concerned about the lack of social media outreach and support from the players themselves, and not just American players. And while, from its production angle and support from the players who did show up, it was a successful event, plans for the future have to take such social media considerations into account.

“Social media is a powerful tool for pool these days,” he said, “but sadly, most of the players don’t use it to benefit tournaments like the WPS, and themselves, so it seems like the players still don’t quite get it.”

“Don’t get me wrong,” he added, “some are good with it, but sadly, the majority are not and don’t push and advertise the events, themselves and potential sponsors.”

“It’s pretty sad really, because for a sport like pool, social media is a massive opportunity and essential for the future growth of the sport.”

So there you have it. A made-for-film story from the world of pool, with two bona fide heroes in made-up roles of mentor and student, set against the backdrop of growing pains within the industry, as it plays out in Europe and the US of A. Back in the ‘real world,’ Appleton continues to ponder his own future and that of the World Pool Series he helped to create.

“I’m not sure what’s going to happen,” he said, “but we’ll make a decision in March.”





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Jayson Shaw celebrates title #6

SHAW TIES ARCHER WITH SIXTH TURNING STONE TITLE

It was another full field of players who braved the freezing weather to compete in the 31st Turning Stone Classic at the Turning Stone Casino in Verona, NY on January 10th - 13th. As always, the 128 player field included Joss Tour regional players as well as top pros, looking for their share of over \$41,000 in prize money.

Things got underway on Thursday with every competitor playing one match. While that first round didn't feature any major upsets, Mika Immonen's 9-5 loss to returning veteran Jeremy Sossei and

Danny Hewitt's 9-4 loss to fellow Canadian Nick Charette certainly got the attention of the fans in attendance. After a 9-2 win over Larry Phlegar on Friday, Immonen would then be eliminated by Joss Tour regular Brent

Boemmels in his next match. Hewitt bounced back nicely from his opening round loss and would win eight straight matches on the one loss side before finally succumbing to Estonia's Denis Grabe early on Sunday.

Fan favorite Jennifer Baretta dropped her Thursday match to Steve Sutton, but drew a crowd for every one of her Friday and Saturday matches. Her late Friday night match with Loree Jon Jones had the crowd's attention, going hill-hill before Baretta eliminated Jones.

Another player that drew a lot of attention was American Tommy Tokoph. Tokoph was making his Turning Stone debut and he made the most of it by advancing into Sunday play undefeated. While his Saturday afternoon 9-3 win over Jia Li was impressive, his 9-7 win over Grabe to close out Saturday was even bigger. As strong as Tokoph was playing, he had no answer on Sunday for Jeremy Sossei. Sossei hadn't been to Turning Stone for over a year, but he picked up right where he left off with an undefeated run to the hot-seat match.

Sossei's hot-seat opponent was returning champion Shane Van Boening, looking to tie Jayson Shaw with five Turning Stone Classic titles. Van Boening had looked his usual dominant self the entire weekend. Bracket watchers had expected a Van Boening / Shaw match to highlight Sunday morning, but Finland's Petri Makkonen spoiled that idea with a 9-7 win over Shaw on Saturday night. The opponent didn't matter for Van Boening on Sunday morning though, as he sent Makkonen to the one loss side 9-3. Van Boening then took the hot-seat with another 9-3 win over Sossei.

Instead of the match with Van Boening on Sunday morning, Shaw was taken to the hill by Canada's John Morra, who put together the comeback of the day. Shaw led the match 8-2 before Morra won six straight games to tie things at hill-hill. A misplayed safety on the one-ball by Morra in the case game was all the opening that Shaw needed to send Morra home in 7th place. It was smoothing sailing for Shaw after that match, as he then

eliminated Zion Zvi 9-3 and Tokoph 9-2. A much closer 9-6 win over Grabe was followed up by another lopsided (9-4) win over Sossei in the semi-finals.

The final was another installment in the Van Boening / Shaw rivalry. Shaw was looking to tie Johnny Archer with a record six Turning Stone titles, while



Shane Van Boening



Jeremy Sossei

Van Boening was aiming to tie Shaw at five titles each. With his undefeated week and a perfect record in past Turning Stone Classic final matches, Van Boening had to be the favorite, but Shaw had other ideas completely.

The extended race to thirteen saw Van Boening with an early 2-1 lead, but all

he was doing was slowing Shaw down. With a 4-2 lead, Shaw broke and run four racks to take a comfortable 8-2 lead. Van Boening fought back, but struggles with his break kept him from being able to mount any major comeback as Shaw went on to score a 13-6 win for Turning Stone Classic Title #6.



Tommy Tokoph

US OPEN 9-BALL

Field Full At 256 Entries

The 256-player field for the 43rd US Open 9-Ball Championship is now full.

With 221 player entries confirmed, and 35 spots reserved for global qualifying events still to take place, Matchroom Multi Sport is now operating a waiting list system. Players who have not yet entered the 2019 US Open 9-Ball Championship should join the waiting list at www.matchroompool.com/usopen9ball. If a place in the event becomes available, the player at the top of the waiting list will be contacted and offered that space.

Players can still enter one of the many qualifying events taking place around the world which offers entry to the US Open 9-Ball Championship, which is set for Mandalay Bay Resort Las Vegas this April 21-26. A full list of qualifying events can be found at www.matchroompool.com/usopen9ball.

Matchroom Multi Sport COO Emily Frazer said: "We're thrilled to have filled the field for the US Open 9-Ball already. We knew this event was going to be hugely popular but to have a full field more than three months before the event shows just how excited the pool world is about Matchroom's first US Open.

"The US Open 9-Ball is a great event with a long and illustrious history. We've got plans now to take it to a whole new level and we've got lots of big news to announce over the next few weeks.

"Obviously there will be some disappointed players who have missed out

on the chance to enter the US Open, but we strongly advise they join the waiting list and look at the list of qualifying events still to be played. It's going to be an incredible week at Mandalay Bay in April."

A full list of the players already entered can be found at www.matchroompool.com, where details of all qualifying matches are also available. Further qualifying matches are expected to be added in due course.

Tickets for the 43rd US Open 9-Ball Championship are available now at www.matchroompool.com from as little as \$10 with VIP packages also available for the final three days of the tournament.

US OPEN
9-BALL CHAMPIONSHIP

The tournament will be split into two stages with the full field playing double elimination down to the final 16 from Sunday April 21st until Tuesday April 23rd across multiple tables. From Wednesday April 24th until Friday April 26th the final 16 players will play straight knockout in the TV Arena in front of a global television audience.

The prize fund for the 43rd US Open 9-Ball Championship is set at a minimum \$300,000.



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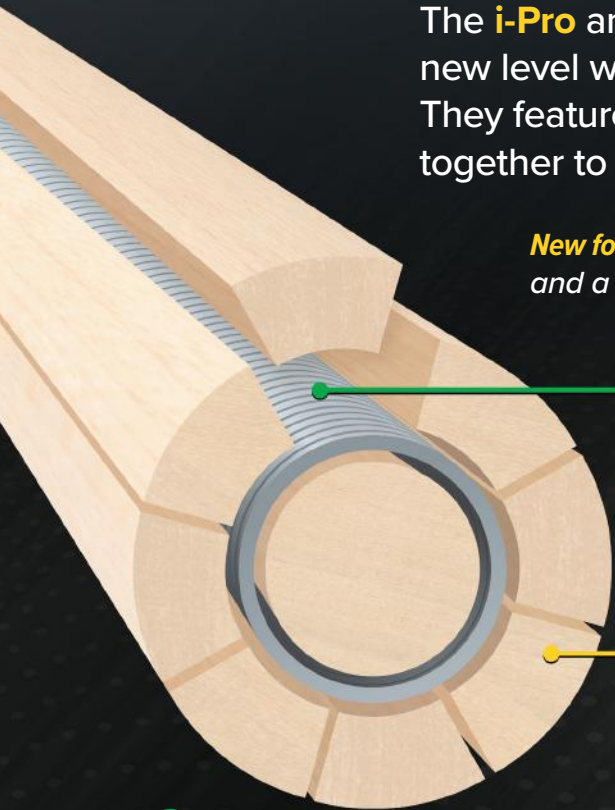
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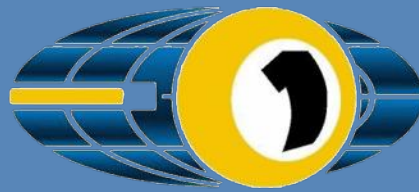
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The WPA and CSI to Produce the 2019 WPA Players Championship in Las Vegas

The World Pool-Billiard Association (WPA) and CueSports International (CSI) are excited to announce a collaboration to produce the 2019 WPA Players Championship.

The event will be staged at Griff's Billiards in Las Vegas, April 16-19, ahead of the US Open 9-Ball Championship, which will be held April 21-26 at Mandalay Bay Resort & Casino in Las Vegas. This WPA Category 3 Ranking event, with \$50,000 added prize money, will provide players, especially those competing in the US Open 9-Ball Championship, even more opportunity in Las Vegas.

WPA President, Ian Anderson said, "The WPA is delighted to be staging its own ranking event in the legendary hub of pool, Las Vegas. Our goal is for this event to be the first of more to follow."

The event will be limited to 64 players in a single elimination format with a 32-player consolation event for those eliminated in the first round. The

main event will be a race to seven with the semi-final and final being a race to nine. The consolation event will be a race to five with the semi-final and final being a race to seven. 48 of the 64 players in the main event will be chosen by the WPA rankings and WPA member federations. A single \$250 entry fee will cover the main event and the consolation tournament.

The remaining 16 spots will be filled by four qualifier tournaments, one per day, held at Griff's Billiards April 12-15. The top four finishers from each qualifier will receive a paid spot in the main event. A single *\$250 qualifier entry fee allows players to compete in all four qualifiers and will also gain free entry into the main event for those who qualify. Qualifiers will be single elimination, race to five and open to anyone not already entered in the main event. The field is limited to 96 players each day on a first come basis. Details will be available soon on how and where to enter.

(*a daily entry of \$100 is an option)

"We are honored to assist the WPA in producing this event," said CSI CEO, Ozzy Reynolds. "Professional pool is experiencing a resurgence in the U.S. and we are glad to be part of it. This is great for the players and the entire industry."

Prize funds are guaranteed by the WPA, and the payouts for the main event and consolation tournament will be as follows.

WPA Players Championship Payouts

1 - \$10,000
2 - \$7,000
3/4 - \$5,000 ea.
5/8 - \$3,000 ea.
9/16 - \$1,500 ea.
17/32 - \$400 ea.

Consolation Tournament Payouts

1 - \$1,500
2 - \$1,000
3/4 - \$500 ea.
5/8 - \$250 ea.
9/16 - \$150 ea.

Mark Griffin, owner of Griff's Billiards, said, "We are thrilled that the WPA chose Griff's as the host location for this event and we are excited to be part of the continued growth of professional pool."

All other details will be released in the coming weeks at <https://wpapool.com/wpa-players-championship/>.

The World Pool-Billiard Association (WPA) is the international governing body for pocket billiards and is com-

prised of six member federations representing North America, South America, Europe, Asia, Africa and Australia. The WPA is the world-recognized body for sanctioning World Championship events. It is also one of the three member organizations of the World Confederation of Billiards Sports (WCBS), representing the billiard disciplines of pool, snooker and carom. For more information about the WPA, visit www.wpapool.com.

CueSports International (CSI) is an international pool league and event leader and is currently comprised of three divisions: CSI leagues, CSI events and CSI media. CSI leagues manages the BCA Pool League and USA Pool League, CSI events produces numerous amateur and professional events around the globe and CSI media creates live streaming and digital content. Through its vision and strategic alliances, CSI is "shaping the future of pool." For more information about CSI or any of its divisions, visit www.playcsipool.com or find CueSports International on Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and Twitter.



Upcoming Tournaments

Each month *Billiards Buzz* looks ahead at the events on our calendar to give both players and fans the information they may use to plan their activities.

FEBRUARY - MARCH

Sunshine State Pro Am Tour 2019

02/02 - 02/03

Brewlands Bar & Billiards
Tampa, Florida
Website: <http://www.sunshinestate-proamtour.com/>

Tri State Tour 2018-2019 Stop

02/02 - 02/02

Steinway Billiards
Astoria, NY
Website: <http://www.thetristatetour.com/>

Q City 9-Ball Tour Stop

02/02 - 02/03

Speak Eazy Billiards
Sanford, NC

2019 Dynamic Billard Leende Open

02/07 - 02/10

Golden Tulip Jagershorst
Leende
Website: <http://www.eurotouroonline.eu/>

2018 Florida State Open 10-Ball Championship

02/09 - 02/10

Zingales Billiards
Tallahassee, Florida
Website: <http://uspoisontour.com/>

Tiger Florida Tour 2019 Stop 1

02/09 - 02/09

Brewlands Bar & Billiards
Lakeland, FL
Website: <http://www.tigerfloridatour.com/>

5th Texas 10-Ball Championship

02/13 - 02/18

Skinny Bob's Billiards
Round Rock, Texas

Northeast 9-Ball Open XXXI

02/16 - 02/17

Sharpshooters Billiards & Sports Pub
Amsterdam, NY
Website: <http://www.joss9balltour.com/>

Va State 10-Ball Championship

02/16 - 02/17

Diamond Billiards
Midlothian, VA
Website: <http://www.actionpooltour.com>

Q City 9-Ball Tour Stop

02/16 - 02/16

Gate City Billiards Club
Greensboro, NC

NAPT Division II Championship

02/21 - 02/24

Bullshooters
Phoenix, AZ
Website: <http://www.playnapt.com/>

Joss Tour 2018-2019 Stop 9

02/23 - 02/24

East Ridge Billiards
Rochester, NY
Website: <http://www.joss9balltour.com/>

WPBA Masters 2019

02/27 - 03/03

Soaring Eagle Casino & Resort
Mt. Pleasant, MI
Website: <http://www.wpba.com/>

10th N.E. Pool & Billiard Hall of Fame 9-Ball Open

03/02 - 03/03

Snookers - Sports Billiards, Bar & Grill
Providence, RI
Website: <http://www.joss9balltour.com>

Kevin Ketz Memorial

03/09 - 03/10

Trick Shot Billiards
Clifton Park, NY
Website: <http://www.joss9balltour.com/>

Sunshine State Pro Am Tour 2019

03/09 - 03/09

Boulevard Billiards
Ocala, FL
Website: <http://www.sunshinestate-proamtour.com/>

Jerry Olivier Ladies Tour 2019 Stop 2

03/09 - 03/10

Skinny Bob's Billiards
Round Rock, Texas
Website: <http://www.obcuestour.com/>

Joss Tour 2018-2019 Stop 12

03/23 - 03/24

Union Station Billiards
Portland, Maine
Website: <http://www.joss9balltour.com>

Upcoming Tournaments

Each month *Billiards Buzz* looks ahead at the events on our calendar to give both players and fans the information they may use to plan their activities.

FEBRUARY - MARCH

Northern Virginia Amateur Tour Stop

03/23 - 03/24

Hard Times Billiards
Springfield, Virginia

Website: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/267290537455630>

Super Billiards Expo 2019 Players Championship

03/28 - 03/31

Greater Philadelphia Expo Center at Oaks
Oaks, PA

Website: <http://www.superbilliards-expo.com/>

Super Billiards Expo 2019 Pro-Am Barbox Championship

03/28 - 03/31

Greater Philadelphia Expo Center at Oaks
Oaks, PA

Website: <http://www.superbilliards-expo.com/>

Action Pool Tour Bar Box Bash

03/23 - 03/24

Peninsula Billiards
Newport News, Virginia

Website: <http://www.actionpooltour.com>

Super Billiards Expo 2019 Women Players Championship

03/28 - 03/31

Greater Philadelphia Expo Center at Oaks
Oaks, PA

Website: <http://www.superbilliards-expo.com/>

World Pool Masters 2019

03/29 - 03/31

Tercentenary Sports Hall, Victoria Stadium
Gibraltar, Gibraltar

Website: <http://www.matchroom-pool.com/page/WorldPoolMasters/Home>



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Tourney Results

01/05 - 01/06

Sunshine State Pro Am Tour 2019 Stop #1

Stroker's Billiards

- Palm Harbor, FL
- 1 Nathan Rose \$1,100
 - 2 Michael Delawder \$750
 - 3 Mitchell Keiser \$550
 - 4 Jared Schlauch \$400
 - 5 George Saunders \$300
 - 5 Bobby Garza \$300
 - 7 Kyle Bova \$200
 - 7 Trenton White \$200
 - 9 Carl Johnson \$150
 - 9 Matt Menes \$150
 - 9 Jose Delrio \$150
 - 9 David Singleton \$150
 - 13 Ashley Chewcaskie \$100
 - 13 Steve Knoll \$100
 - 13 Jay Winters \$100
 - 13 James Roberts \$100

01/05 - 01/05

New England 9-Ball Tour Stop #10

Legends Sports Bar & Grill

- Auburn, ME
- 1 Tony Albair \$500
 - 2 Kyle Pepin \$350
 - 3 Barrett Ridley \$250
 - 4 Dillon Nickerson \$250
 - 5 Jason Barnies \$100
 - 5 Noreen Moy \$100
 - 7 Dave Morrison \$75
 - 7 Steve Smith \$75
 - 9 John Parsons \$60
 - 9 Xavier Libby \$60
 - 9 Tyler Dunbar \$60
 - 9 Carlton Gagnon \$60

01/05 - 01/05

Q City 9-Ball Tour Stop

Brown's Billiards

- Raleigh, NC
- 1 Anthony Mabe \$600
 - 2 Graham Swinson \$425
 - 3 Corey Sykes \$250
 - 4 Randy Tate \$100
 - 5 Brian Bryant \$50
 - 5 Barry Mashburn \$50

01/06 - 01/06

Tri State Tour 2018-2019 Stop

Clifton Billiards

- Clifton, New Jersey
- 1 Joe Mazzeo \$550
 - 2 Alfredo Altamarino \$350
 - 3 John Francisco \$230
 - 4 Clint Pires \$140
 - 5 Fernando Galeas \$80
 - 5 Teddy Lapadula \$80
 - 7 Paul Spaanstra \$60
 - 7 Ada Lio \$60

01/10 - 01/13

Turning Stone Classic XXXI 9-Ball Open

Turning Stone Casino

- Verona, NY
- 1 Jayson Shaw \$8,000
 - 2 Shane Van Boening \$5,000
 - 3 Jeremy Sossei \$3,600
 - 4 Denis Grabe \$2,600
 - 5 Petri Makkonen \$2,000
 - 5 Tommy Tokoph \$2,000
 - 7 Zion Zvi \$1,600
 - 7 Danny Hewitt \$1,600
 - 9 Billy Thorpe \$1,200
 - 9 John Morra \$1,200
 - 9 Spencer Augbelle \$1,200
 - 9 Alexandros Kazakis \$1,200

- 13 Ron Casanzio \$850
- 13 Sean Morgan \$850
- 13 Josh Friedberg \$850
- 13 Frankie Hernandez \$850
- 17 Dennis Hatch \$550
- 17 Raphael Dabreo \$550
- 17 Mohamad Ali Berjaoui \$550
- 17 Kevin West \$550
- 17 Nicolas Charette \$550
- 17 Luc Salvas \$550
- 17 Erik Hjorleifson \$550
- 17 Jia Li \$550
- 25 Brent Boemmels \$300
- 25 Joey Cicero \$300
- 25 Greg McAndrews \$300
- 25 Jay Goyer \$300
- 25 Jennifer Barretta \$300
- 25 Len Gianfrate \$300
- 25 Hunter Lombardo \$300
- 25 Thorsten Hohmann \$300

01/12 - 01/13

New England 9-Ball Tour 2018- 2019 Stop #11

Crow's Nest

- Plaistow, New Hampshire
- 1 Lukas Fracasso-Verner \$650
 - 2 Bobby Lewis \$420
 - 3 Richard Comeau \$275
 - 4 Emily Cady \$175
 - 5 Joe Lynch \$80
 - 5 Chris Ouimette \$80

01/12 - 01/12

Tri State Tour 2018-2019 Stop

Shooter's Family Billiards

- Wayne, NJ
- 1 Ilija Trajceski \$550
 - 2 Shivam Gupta \$350
 - 3 Corey Avallone \$230
 - 4 Bob Toomey \$130
 - 5 Jaydev Zaveri \$80

- 5 Mac Jankov \$80
- 7 Max Watanabe \$60
- 7 Shweta Zaveri \$60

01/12 - 01/12

Q City 9-Ball Tour Stop

The Steakhorse Restaurant and Billiards

- Spartanburg, SC
- 1 Josh Heeter \$1,100
- 2 Brian White \$700
- 3 Mike Bumgarner \$400
- 4 Matt Harrell \$225
- 5 Blade Best \$150
- 7 Chris Tuten \$100
- 7 JT Ringgold \$100
- 9 Mackie Lowery \$50
- 9 Jacob Brooks \$50
- 9 Keith Bennett \$50
- 9 Clint Clark \$50

01/12 - 01/20

Joy Billiards World Chinese 8-Ball Masters 2019

Qinhuangdao Olympic Sports Center Stadium

- Qinhuangdao, Hebei province
- 1 Haitao Yu \$147,234
- 2 Yun Wang \$44,170
- 3 Fan Yang \$14,723
- 4 Jeffrey Ignacio \$7,361
- 5 Peng Wang \$4,417
- 5 Bing Jie Chu \$4,417
- 7 Dashuang Wang \$3,680
- 7 Yu-Bo Zheng \$3,680
- 9 Johann Chua \$2,208
- 9 Hongrui Sun \$2,208
- 9 Shane Van Boening \$2,208
- 9 Han-Qing Shi \$2,208

01/12 - 01/13

Jerry Olivier Ladies Tour 2019 Stop 1

Big Tyme Billiards

- Spring, Texas
- 1 Terry Petrosino \$800
- 2 Angie Payne \$600
- 3 Orietta Strickland \$450
- 4 Kim Pierce \$335
- 5 Jennifer Kraber \$200
- 5 Chris Fields \$200

- 7 Shayla Neris \$125
- 7 Natalie Mans \$125
- 9 Robyn Petrosino \$85
- 9 Tam Trinh \$85
- 9 Jeannie Cockman \$85
- 9 Michelle Yim \$85

01/16 - 01/20

Music City Classic 2019 Open Division

JOB Billiards

- Madison, TN
- 1 Alex Pagulayan \$4,200
- 2 John Gabriel \$2,500
- 3 Jamie Baraks \$1,500
- 4 Michael Gann \$1,025
- 5 Jerry Clayman \$750
- 5 Skyler Woodward \$750
- 7 Jeff Melton \$450
- 7 Robert Frost \$450
- 9 Gene Drerup \$300
- 9 Nicholas Hickerson \$300
- 9 Josh Roberts \$300
- 9 Robb Saez \$300
- 13 Raed Shabib \$225
- 13 Casey Pire \$225
- 13 Rusty Jackson \$225
- 13 Terry Edwards \$225
- 17 Cale McCormick \$150
- 17 Joe Keith \$150
- 17 Caninon Fox \$150
- 17 Mike Durbin \$150
- 17 Jaime Cox \$150
- 17 James Blackburn \$150
- 17 Johnny Archer \$150
- 17 Joel Rains \$150

01/16 - 01/20

Music City Classic 2019 Ladies Division

JOB Billiards

- Madison, TN
- 1 Brittany Bryant \$1,150
- 2 Julie Cone \$775
- 3 Marianne Merrill \$425
- 4 Lisa Cossette \$310
- 5 Kim Dodd \$250
- 5 April Dobbins \$240
- 7 Michelle Hicks \$200
- 7 Julie Cooper \$200
- 9 Michelle Dunn \$100

- 9 Angela Gann \$100
- 9 Heather Middleton \$100
- 9 Kathy Sanders \$100

01/17 - 01/20

Predator Grand Finale

Steinway Billiards

- Astoria, NY
- 1 Joshua Filler \$8,000
- 2 Ralf Souquet \$5,000
- 3 James Aranas \$3,000
- 3 Chris Melling \$3,000
- 5 Miesko Fortunski \$2,000
- 5 Ruslan Chinakhov \$2,000
- 5 Mike Dechaine \$2,000
- 5 Eklent Kaci \$2,000
- 9 Dennis Orcollo \$1,000
- 9 Tony Robles \$1,000
- 9 Jayson Shaw \$1,000
- 9 Alexandros Kazakis \$1,000
- 9 Mika Immonen \$1,000
- 9 Petri Makkonen \$1,000
- 9 Darren Appleton \$1,000
- 9 Zion Zvi \$1,000

01/19 - 01/20

Action Pool Tour 2019 Stop 1 Open Division

Q-Master Billiards

- Virginia Beach, VA
- 1 Reymart Lim \$900
- 2 Ty Laha \$500
- 3 Kenny Miller \$350
- 4 Mac Harrell \$240
- 5 Bill Duggan \$125
- 5 JT Ringgold \$125
- 7 David Hunt \$100
- 7 Coen Bell \$100
- 9 R.J. Carmona \$80
- 9 Bernard Andico \$80
- 9 Liz Bernier-Taylor \$80
- 9 Danny Bell \$80

01/19 - 01/20

Northern Virginia Amateur Tour Stop

Hard Times Billiards

- Springfield, Virginia
- 1 Harshit Kedia \$740
- 2 Andrew Tu \$445
- 3 Chris Funk \$270

- 4 Tuan Chau \$160
- 5 Giulietta Dahl \$95
- 5 Dennis Ryan \$95
- 7 James Hendershot \$60
- 7 Robert Nijkamp \$60

01/19 - 01/20

Action Pool Tour 2019 Stop 1 Ladies Division

Q-Master Billiards

- Virginia Beach, VA
- 1 Bethany Sykes \$250
- 2 Liz Bernier-Taylor \$140
- 3 Cheryl Pritchard \$40

01/19 - 01/19

Q City 9-Ball Tour Stop

Mickey Milligan's Sports Bar

- New Bern, NC
- 1 Zac Leonard \$600
- 2 Ray McGinn \$400
- 3 Bill Spatafora \$225

- 4 Jack Whitfield \$175

01/19 - 01/20

SE Open 9-Ball Tour Stop

Racks Billiards

- Sanford, Florida
- 1 Julio Burgos \$825
- 2 Raymond Linares \$600
- 3 Steve Voucher \$400
- 4 Bobby Garza \$300
- 5 Tommy Kennedy \$200
- 5 Cristobal D. Barrows \$200
- 7 Rhyan Hunter \$150
- 7 Joselito Martinez \$150
- 9 Kristian Dinitrov \$100
- 9 Kyle Bova \$100
- 9 Dennis Brown \$100
- 13 Serafin Saaidi \$50
- 13 Jessica Barnes \$50
- 13 Jeannie Seaver \$50
- 13 Ricardo Rodriguez \$50

01/24 - 01/27

Sivissidis 9-Ball Open 2019

Koralli Billiard Club,
Agia Paraskevi

- 1 Alexandros Kazakis \$3,426
- 2 Dimitris Loukatos \$1,827
- 3 George Antonakis \$913
- 3 Giannis Maltezos \$913

01/26 - 01/27

Q City 9-Ball Tour Stop

Borderline Billiards

- Bristol, TN
- 1 Brandon Kidwell \$730
- 2 Scott Roberts \$425
- 3 Brian James \$275
- 4 Hunter White \$150
- 5 Mike Clevinger \$110
- 5 Brandon Stiltner \$110
- 7 Steve Guy \$60
- 7 James Miracle \$60

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01/26 - 01/27

**Predator Pro-Am Tour
2018 Stop Amateur
Division**

Steinway Billiards

Astoria, NY

- 1 Jaydev Zaveri \$1,500
- 2 Paul Carpenter \$1,100
- 3 Matt Klein \$750
- 4 Ramilo Tanglao \$525
- 5 Lidio Ramirez \$400
- 5 Greg Ackerson \$400
- 7 Ryan Dayrit \$300
- 7 Bryan Jeziorski \$300
- 9 Levie A. Lampaan \$200
- 9 Eli Trajceski \$200
- 9 Suzanna Wong \$200
- 9 Kunami Chau \$200
- 13 KC Clayton \$150
- 13 Bianca Martinez \$150
- 13 Chickie Romero \$150
- 13 Rhys Chen \$150

01/26 - 01/27

**New England 9-Ball Tour
Stop #12 2019 Winter
Classic**

**Snookers - Sports Bil-
liards, Bar & Grill**

Providence, RI

- 1 Dave Morganelli \$1,600
- 2 Rob Piersa \$1,100
- 3 Clyde Matta \$850
- 4 Adam Blair \$650
- 5 Kevin Bauccio \$500
- 5 Bob Lucas \$500
- 7 Rich Ferrell \$350
- 7 Mike Demarco \$350
- 9 Ranulf Tamba \$275
- 9 Bill Cote \$275
- 9 Phil Medeiros \$275
- 9 Emily Cady \$275
- 13 Mike Nicoloro \$150
- 13 Justin Bertrand \$150
- 13 Mike Verducci \$150
- 13 Lindsey Monto \$150

01/26 - 01/27

**New England 9-Ball Tour
Stop #12 2019 Winter
Classic (10-Ball)**

**Snookers - Sports Bil-
liards, Bar & Grill**

Providence, RI

- 1 Ryan Lineham \$625
- 2 Lukas Fracasso-Verner \$425
- 3 Corey Avallone \$300
- 4 Chad Bazinet \$220

01/26 - 01/27

**Predator Caribbean 10
Ball Open**

Pool Players Factory

- 1 Edwin Garcia \$4,000
- 2 Ruben Bautista \$2,000
- 3 Julio Burgos \$1,000
- 4 Manilo Dendariarena \$600
- 5 Joselito Martinez \$400
- 5 Wilfredo Camacho \$400
- 7 Alan Rolon \$300
- 7 Ricardo Rodriguez \$300
- 9 Jomax Garcia \$200
- 9 Efrain Morales \$200
- 9 Juan Poventud \$200
- 9 Miguel Batista \$200
- 13 Edwin Toro \$100
- 13 Wilberto Ortiz \$100
- 13 Nelson Hernandez \$100
- 13 Jorge Pagan Valentin \$100

01/27 - 01/27

**Tri State Tour 2018-2019
Stop**

CueBar Billiards

Bayside, NY

- 1 Patrick Meyers \$545
- 2 Greg Matos \$260
- 3 Jason Goberdhan \$150
- 4 Ralph Ramos, Jr. \$100



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MARCH 15th - 21st 2019

\$10,000 *Added*

MARCH 15TH - 10 BALL RING GAME - \$500 ADDED

\$110 ENTRY - \$10 GREEN FEE INCLUDED
LIMITED TO 32 PLAYERS CALCUTTA STARTS AT 7P

MARCH 16TH THRU 17TH - 9 BALL OPEN - \$3,500 ADDED

\$75 ENTRY - \$25 GREEN FEE INCLUDED LIMITED TO 128 PLAYERS
CALCUTTA STARTS AT 12 NOON RACE TO 9/7 ALTERNATE BREAKS
RACK YOUR OWN NO 3 FOUL NON PRO LADIES GET A GAME ON THE WIRE

MARCH 17TH - 9 BALL - LADIES ONLY - \$1,000 ADDED

\$75 ENTRY - \$25 GREEN FEE INCLUDED LIMITED TO 32 PLAYERS
CALCUTTA STARTS AT 12 NOON
RACE TO 5/5 ALTERNATE BREAKS RACK YOUR OWN NO 3 FOUL

MARCH 18TH THRU 21ST - 1 POCKET PRO EVENT - \$5,000 ADDED

\$1,000 ENTRY LIMITED TO 16 PLAYERS CALCUTTA AT 7PM RACE TO 4/4 FINALS RACE TO 6

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