

Billiards Buzz

an  publication

vol.5, Issue May 2020



A Man With A Plan

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Volume 5, Issue #45

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FROM THE Head Rail

MIKE HOWERTON

This month is another month without much of anything to report as far as tournament results. The only real tournament news that we saw all month was either a postponement or a cancellation. It's starting to look more and more like what was going to be a very promising 2020 is going to be a major disappointment. The good news though, is that the major events that we would have been seeing happen now are being postponed instead of cancelled. It should be a heck of a 2021.



With that being said, we have a magazine full of mostly human interest stories again this month. After Melinda's interview with Mark Wilson last month, we gave her the month off this time, but all of your other favorites are here. Check out our cover story about Ed Liddawi and his National Billiard League. We have had a lot of people over the last few years, claim to have the next great idea, but if anyone can really get it done, it's Ed.

Personally, I have been keeping myself busy with a couple projects that I've been tossing around. One of those projects is a home for On Demand videos from some of the top instructors in the business. Check out poolondemand.net. Our very own Jerry Briesath is there, along with Randy Goettlicher and Scott Lee, and more to come. You can also find the series of Road Story DVDs from Diana Hoppe, and some historical matches from Jay Helfert's collection that are sure to interest fans of the veterans of the game.

Until next month, stay safe out there.

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THE STOP SHOT - THE MOST IMPORTANT SHOT IN POOL



JERRY BRIESATH

Almost every average or above average league player can make the cue ball stop on a straight in. Many good players can stop the cue ball perfect on any straight in shot, but don't actually know why it stops, and if you don't know exactly why the cue ball stops on a straight in shot, you're missing out on a vast amount of pool knowledge.

The only way the cue ball can stop when striking an object ball is that the cue ball arrives at the object ball sliding on the cloth with no backspin or overspin. To do this, you must overcome the friction of the cloth between the cue ball and the object ball.

To learn what's really happening on a stop or draw shot, place a striped ball on the head spot and turn the ball so the stripe goes around the equator of the ball and the white part of the ball is facing up and down, so you can easily see the backspin you are putting on the ball. Now strike the cue ball one tip below center with a slightly firm stroke and notice where the backspin stops and the overspin begins. You will notice that there is a 4 to 6 inch area where the cue ball would stop dead if it struck an object ball. Now strike the cue ball as low as possible the same speed and notice how the backspin lasts much further down the

table before it gets to that "no spin" area and the overspin begins. Practice this several times using different speeds to start memorizing how low and how much speed is required to make the cue ball run out of backspin at any point between the spot and the corner pocket.

You will have better results if you shoot stop shots a little lower on the cue ball, which requires less speed and therefore gives you more control.

Remember — the stroke and follow through on a stop or draw shot is exactly the same as a follow shot, just a different place on the cue ball.

Good luck — Jerry

BEAT YOUR OPPONENT BEFORE THE FIRST SHOT

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

Confidence is a big piece of athletic success. Confident pool players constantly look to dominate their opponents and “play to win,” while players lacking confidence consistently underachieve, choke, and play to “avoid losing.”

To some this may be a subtle difference, but to anyone who has ever played sports it's often the difference between champions and the rest of the field.

When you are confident in your pool playing abilities, your mind and body become synchronized and you get into the Zone. Confident players don't pay attention to things that don't matter (the opponent, the fans, the last missed shot, etc), and instead channel *their complete energy* into the *only* thing that is important – the next shot. Confidence also impacts your perception – for example, say you took 10 shots and made 5 and missed 5. A confident player will stay focused, positive, and optimistic; whereas a player with less confidence will get angry, frustrated, and inevitably miss more future shots.

The good news is that you control your self confidence. To begin with, make sure to have a positive attitude every time you pick up your cue. Positive emotions and attitudes have a tremendous impact on self-confidence. The great news is YOU control your emotions and attitude, so be sure to stay positive everyday as this game is tough enough without you being your own worst enemy.

Some additional tips for building self-confidence are presented below:



- **Practice with a purpose.** Work on mastering the basic skills until you can do them without thinking – to the point where they become automatic. More shots made = greater self-confidence
- **Make pool mastery a personal challenge.** Is the glass half-full or half-empty? The perception you have is as individual as you. Whenever you play pool you are going to make some shots and miss others – the real question is what will you focus on at the end of the day? If you are challenged to get better every day you will always look to build on the future by challenging yourself to get better every day.
- **Look to learn something new every day.** By improving at the small details of pool (i.e. getting into pin-point position), you will make more



shots and improve your confidence level. Find mentors in your pool hall and watch them learn from them, and ask questions whenever possible.

- **Laugh.** Life is short enough, so you might as well enjoy as much of it as you can! Sometimes you have to just break down your stick, smile, and promise to make tomorrow a better day than today. Remember, it's not the end of the world when you miss a shot (or lose a game), and the sun really will come up tomorrow.
- **Keep a journal of your success.** If you think you will remember the last time you played great pool, think again. I'll bet you can't even remember what you had for lunch yesterday, much less that great tournament you played in 6 months ago. Trust me, if you want to feel good nothing beats a quick re-read of one of your best all-time games.

Confidence is king, and *you* control your confidence level. *Think* like a champion and one day you may become one – good luck!

Dr. Christopher Stankovich is a nationally acclaimed expert in Sport & Performance Psychology and the Founder of Advanced Human Performance Systems. For more information on performance-enhancement products, including the popular “Mind of Steel for Pool Success” DVD please visit www.drstankovich.com

I'D BET MY NICKEL ON JACK

ANTHONY BEELER

One of the most colorful pool playing characters I have ever come across was a gentleman named "Nickel" Jack Goode of Liberty, Kentucky. Coined the nickname, "Nickel Jack" because he wore nickels in the crevices of his ears during play, Jack was a player from the "old school," he played little defense and was perhaps the best kick shot perpetrator I have ever seen.

In fact, after playing against Jack for many years I cannot recall a single time where I ever saw him foul on a reasonable kick shot. On many occasions, I questioned Jack about why he was such a good kicker, but being the dramatic storyteller that he was he would always dance around the subject by telling a tall tale about a recent gambling excursion. To hear Jack tell it, no matter who he beat it was always for \$2,600.00.

One day, I went to the poolroom and was shocked when the room owner informed me that Jack was in the hospital and was given less than 24 hours to live. Surprisingly, when I returned to the poolroom a couple of days later, Jack was smoking a cigarette and was playing the "Cherry Master" machine. Being shocked, the first words out of my mouth were, "Aren't you supposed to be dead?" Jack laughed and took long drag off of his cigarette, blew some smoke and said, "I am too mean to die!"

He then went on to inform me that it was a monumental day, because he had just picked the Kentucky Derby winner and had won several thousand dollars. I said you must be as good with horses as you are at kick-

ing. Jack said, "Yep, almost!" Then he said, "I never did tell you about the strategy I use on kick shots."

According to Jack, when you are kicking you're better off going into a ball on a flatter, narrower angle. "It's much easier to hit and control," he said. After talking to several pro players, what Jack said was in fact true and accurate. To prove this, set three balls up along the long rail. Then shoot each ball into the rail rubber of the end rail as shown (where the "red star" is located). Notice that ball 1 will go into the pocket after hitting the rail rubber, but ball 2 ball jaws the pocket and ball 3 doesn't come close.



Now, imagine your cue ball is on the opposite side of the table where the yellow "X" is located. Now you have to kick at that same pocket (where the red star is). Percentage wise you would be better off kicking further down (near where ball 1 is positioned) and shortening the cue ball up with left English. The flatter angle makes the pocket play much bigger and the inside spin helps the ball roll into the pocket.

The ball obviously can be pocketed kicking higher on the cushion, but kicking lower on the rail near where the 1 ball is located (shortening the shot up with inside spin) gives you a much larger margin of error.

In fact, there is a reverse English kicking system that can be used to calculate such a kick. Jack called it the





guarded secret. Jack was the best kick shot artist that I ever had the pleasure of playing against. During a local tournament one man said it best, "I've seen a lot of players come and a lot of players go, but when it comes to kick shots, if I had to pick a player, I'd bet my nickel on Jack."

"Nickel System." The starting point for the kick shot is the placing the cue ball in front "side pocket diamond" aiming into the first diamond on the opposite side of the table as shown below (the path of the dotted cue ball). Here, kick into rail with maximum left spin. Hit the cue ball with a firm speed and it will take you to the corner pocket.

mond above the side (cue ball "A") you would aim 1/2 a diamond higher than the starting point (using the same speed and spin). If you were 2 diamonds higher (cue ball "B") you would aim 1 diamond above the 1st diamond starting point and so on.

Adjustments are made in halves. So in other words, if you were 1 dia-

Sadly, after a long battle with cancer Jack finally passed away, but each time I return to Campbellsville, I think about the day Jack shared a closely

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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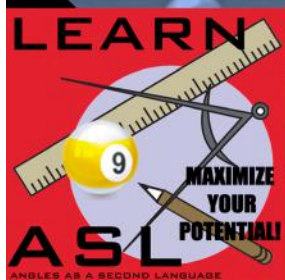


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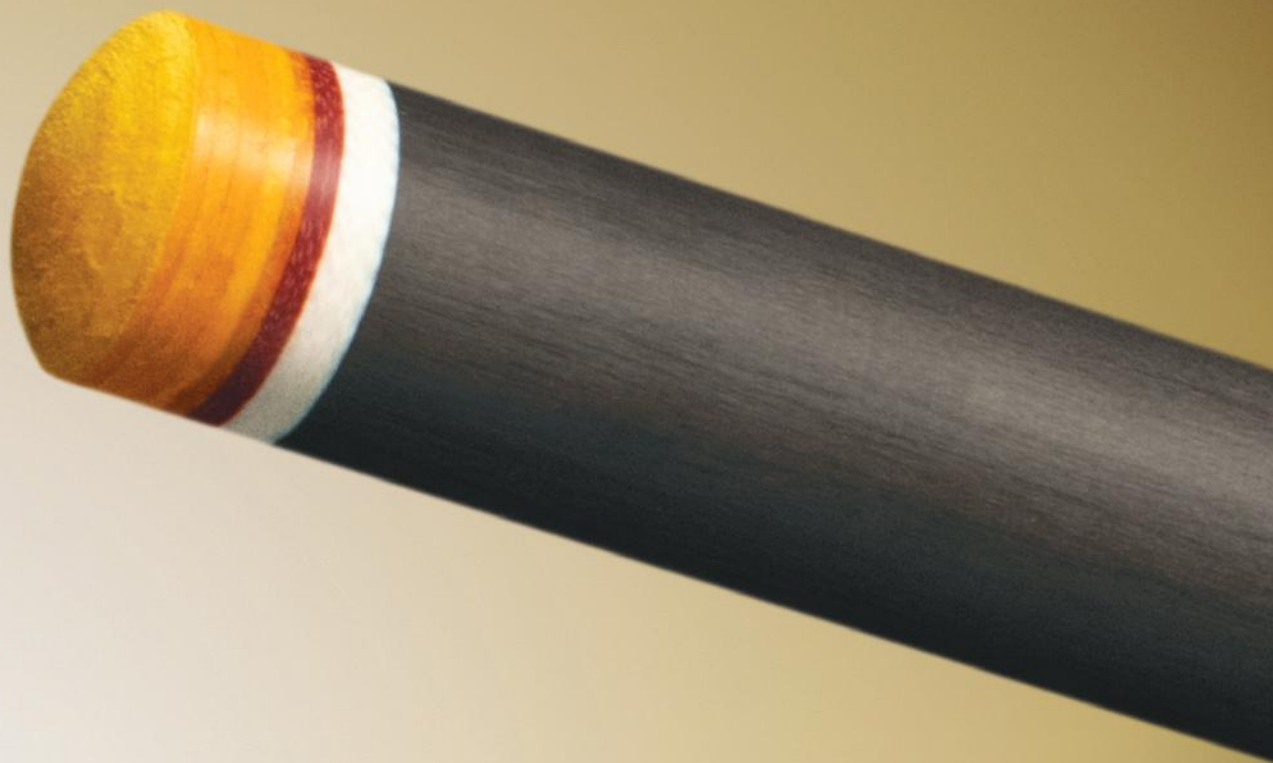
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Gospel Trick Shot #7

Salvation Bracelet

History of the Trick Shot: My former road partner in the 1980's, Mike Massey, used this classic shot in his fabulous repertoire for years. He is still considered by many the greatest trick shot artist of all time. Mike called it the "Smiley Face" and later when we traveled together with Gospel Trick Shot, I used the five specific Gospel colors and renamed the shot the "Salvation Bracelet."

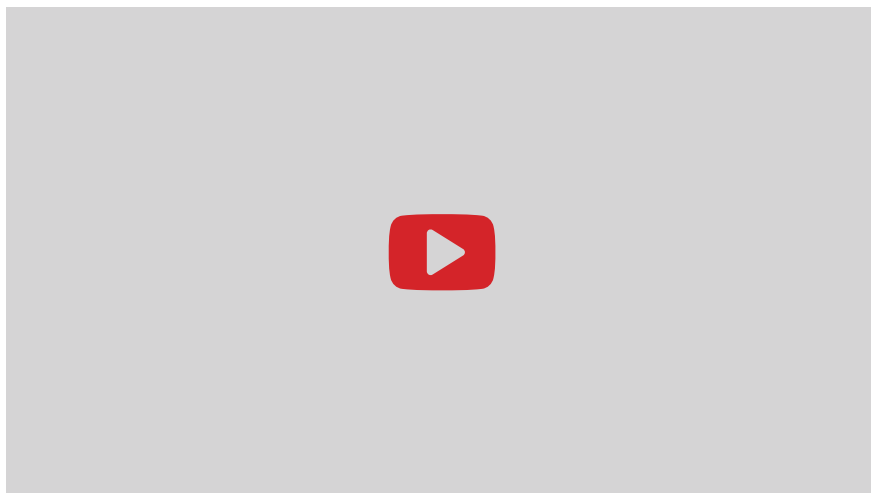
GTS Name and Why: The five Gospel colors in order are black for the darkness of sin, red for the blood of Jesus, white for the cleansing of sin, gold for the promise of heaven, and green for growing in grace. The Serving Hands group at the Hawthorne Gospel Church has made tens of thousands of these bracelets for Gospel Trick Shot. They have been distributed all over the world as the shot was being performed.

Scripture References in NIV Translation: Romans 3:23, 6:23, 5:8, 10:9-10, 10:13 and II Peter 3:18.

Cue Ball Placement: Place cue ball in between the other four colored object balls – black, red, gold, and green. Use another object ball or another cue ball to perform the shot.

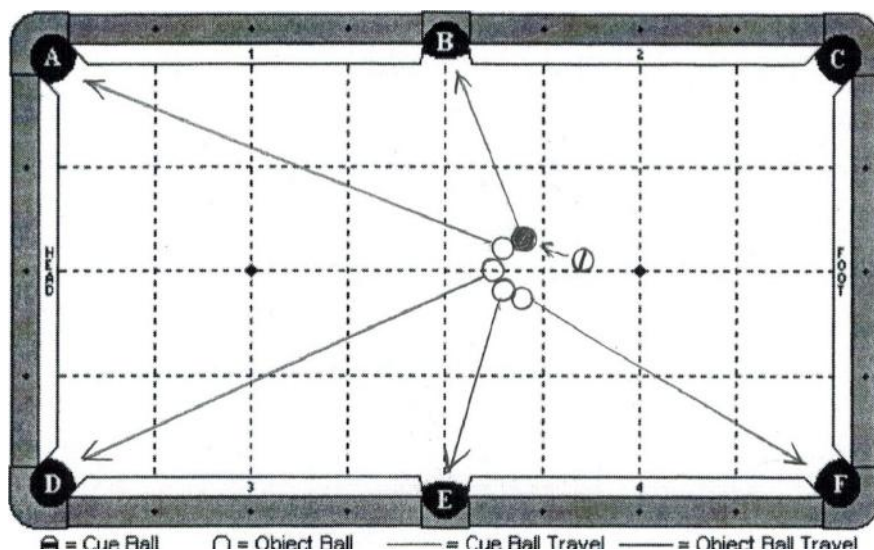
Object Ball(s) Placement: As shown in the diagram below with the black eight ball first, then red three ball, white cue ball, gold or yellow one ball, and green six ball.

Objective: Using another cue ball or object ball hit the eight-ball firm full in the face and directly in line with pocket A. All five Gospel colored balls will be pocketed as shown in diagram.

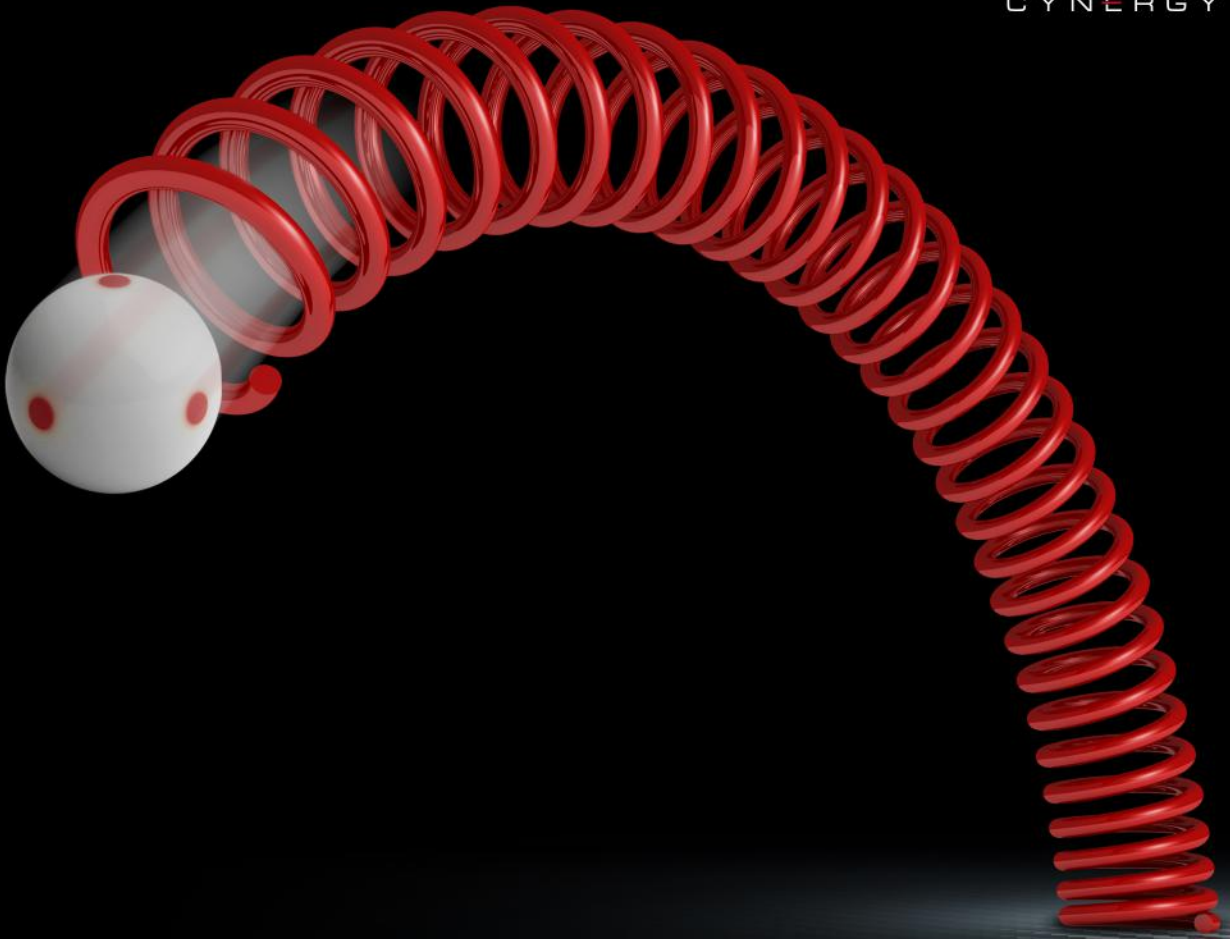


Special Notes: If the cue ball is a different size and weight then adjust the tangent line accordingly on the red, white, and gold balls to successfully pocket all balls. Observe that the last two balls are a combination into pocket F and the green six ball will throw about two ball widths because of the directional force.

Crowd Reactions Through the Years: As the shot is being set up and explained each person in the audience receives a free bracelet from a Gospel Trick Shot helper. Similarly, the Gospel is a free gift because Jesus did it all for us as our Savior and salvation cannot be earned.



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MAN WITH A PLAN

He'd been 'tossing it around' for about 10 years. Thinking about it seriously for the last five or so. And now, at a time when we could all use a little light, peeking out beyond a distant and difficult-to-predict horizon, Ed Liddawi, owner and manager of Sandcastle Billiards in Edison, NJ has gone public with an idea that is arguably long overdue – the institution of a national Pro tour, which he has labeled the National Billiard League (NBL).



One can almost hear the universal outcry from anywhere you happen to be.

“Yeah, right!!” says the (hypothetical) cry, “here we go again!”

Among the many things for which Kevin Trudeau was blamed when his International Pool Tour (IPT) initiative bit the proverbial dust in late 2006, was the demise of the pool hustler, an archetype of Americana, similar to a Wild West gunslinger, only with a cue stick (they don’t call young emergent pool players ‘young guns’ for nothing). The hustler moved from town to town, fleecing the local citizenry and riding out with a wad of cash in his/her saddlebag. According to L. Jon Wertheim, a former senior writer at Sports Illustrated and author of *Running the Table: The Legend of Kid Delicious* (Dan Basavich), *the Last American Pool Hustler* (2007), “the pool hustler wasn’t murdered by any single suspect, but the last man holding the knife was Kevin Trudeau (who) out-hustled the hustlers and killed off a national archetype in the process.” Mr. Wertheim also cited us here at AZBilliards, specifically, our Forums, as being among his ‘suspects.’

“Even before Mr. Trudeau, hustling was on its deathbed,” he wrote in an



Op-Ed for the New York Times in November, 2007. “Time was, a player could score big in, say, Cheyenne, WY and by the time word got out over the pool transom, the hustler was already in Lexington, KY or Laredo, TX. But then came the popular online forum, AZBilliards.com. Suddenly, a play-

er would score big and his exploits would be publicized by sunrise.”

But it wasn’t just the iconic pool hustler that metaphorically died. So, too, did trust in the sport itself and for all intents and purposes, the prospect of any nationally organized and administered pool tour. The pool world moved in the direction of regional tours and ‘big money’ independent events. And it’s been mired there ever since. This, in spite of repeated exclamations by a variety of (though not all) industry professionals that a national pool tour was desperately needed to ‘save’ the sport.

The first question we asked Ed Liddawi was how he would respond to the legions of ‘naysayers’ who were sure to surface when he announced these plans.

“There are going to be ‘naysayers,’ no matter what,” he responded. “It’s OK. There are only going to be 32 slots





available in your local area. Someone will be happy to take it. You can sit back and watch your friend win the money.”

“I’m used to it (the ‘naysayers’) in the billiards industry,” he added. “Especially in the billiards industry. We have a lot of those negative people out there and if they’re not doing something themselves, they give you no credit.”

By the same token, news of this emergent National Billiards League reached beyond its tri-state New York confines to, among others, Ian Anderson, president of the World Pool and Billiards Association (WPA), who told Liddawi that he was glad to be seeing something finally being organized here in America, that it was long overdue and that he supports the idea.

Liddawi believes himself to be poised in what he calls a “perfect position” in terms of resources and connections in the industry to pull it off. He’s been a part of the industry for 27 years and has owned and managed Sandcastle Billiards for the last 12 of them. He has established relationships with all of the major entities in the industry and currently sits on the Board of Directors of the Billiards Congress of Ameri-

ca (BCA), who, he says, “have an open ear to get things going on the play side of things again, especially with the junior players.”

“It would be foolish of me not to take action and utilize these resources at my fingertips,” he said.

This NBL initiative emerged from a long personal history at making things work right. Born in Toms River, NJ in 1975, Liddawi moved around a lot in his early years, and it wasn’t until high school that he was introduced to the sport of pool. Like a lot of people without a family connection to the sport, Liddawi’s first experiences came at a location where the tables shared space with a bowling alley; that, and a table in a cousin’s basement. He participated in organized wrestling, track and football in high school, but moving around as he did, he never solidified an interest in representing a school at any sport.

When he graduated from high school and went on to college, in hopes of eventually becoming an architect, he and a classmate met in the rec room of Mercer Community College and soon discovered that they’d rather meet and play at an actual nearby pool hall; The Billiard Club in Robinsville, NJ. While at college, he also met



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play so true,

you really have to ask yourself

would you rather play against your

opponent...



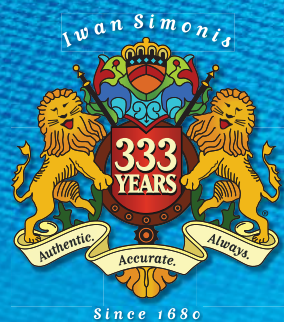
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The Winning Combination

Santos Sambajon, who introduced him to Francisco Bustamante, and later, Efren Reyes. As he was studying to be an architect, beginning with studies centered on civil engineering, he found himself driving this small group of Filipino pool players around to their matches.

This went on for a few years, but just at the turn of the century, he found himself preparing to become a father. He looked at a long road ahead, about 10 years of further schooling before his ambitions to be an architect would be realized, and made a change.

“I switched from architecture to computers,” he said, “(and from there) to computer networking, making platforms and troubleshooting issues between platforms.”

Though he would continue to play pool, he more or less took an extended break from the sport for about 10 years, while he worked as a computer tech for the Perth Amboy Board of Education. During this away-from-but-not-completely-away-from-pool period of time, he found himself working at a pool hall part time and eventually managing the place. About seven years into the break from pool, he got another pool room job, which

he turned into Sandcastle Billiards. Though the general economy would enter a downward spiral, beginning around 2008, Sandcastle Billiards’ fortunes moved in the opposite direction. This was aided and abetted by Pat Fleming’s decision to base Accu-Stats in the location and the Make It Happen series of events began, which, as its first event, featured a match between then-newcomer Jayson Shaw and Ronnie Alcano.

“So it all started,” said Liddawi, “with making buildings upright, then turned into making networks communicate and now, I’m troubleshooting pool to determine how we move ahead.”

In the early years of considering options for his developing national billiards’ league idea, he used his experience working with several organizations around the world to “study the algorithms and formats of successful events of other countries” and discussed his ideas with a number of major contributors in the industry; representatives from Diamond (tables), Aramith, Simonis and with other members on the board of the BCA, for example. Why, he wanted to know, have we gone from being the kings of pool in the 60s and 70s, to being the laughing stock and to the



Bully Thorpe and Ed

disorganized, random and independent events of today? He utilized his research into the question to develop a three-sided approach to his emerging ideas.

“Standardization, organization and professionalism,” he said.

All of the NBL’s events, which will be a combination of 10-ball and 8-ball events, will operate utilizing the same format, the complete details of which will accompany official announcements as the projected date for the first qualifier approaches (January, 2021). These events will be run with the same-size tables and the same rules, which will embrace professionalism at all levels.

“We have to unify under one blanket organization, the NBL,” Liddawi explained. “It’s not going to be like a local bar league. It will be a season, a series of events, like the NBA and the NFL.”

“All players will be wearing the same uniform, (differentiated by) their name and state,” he added, “to create an image, a professional look.”



Ed with the Ko Brothers

As the idea picked up some momentum, he began to reach out to venues, in search of 32 (Sandcastle Billiards, of course, being one of them) that would host the eight qualifiers (Jan./Feb., April/May, July/August and Oct./Nov.), as well as the four main events with projected \$200,000 prize packages in March, June, September and December. The search emphasis was on pool rooms.

“One goal is to re-stimulate activity and bring pool back where it belongs,” he said. “in pool rooms. Not the bars, not the casinos, not in the hotel ball-rooms. Everything – the qualifiers and the main events – is based out of pool rooms.”

The enterprise will be, says Liddawi, self-sustaining, with the players who participate providing the funds with entrance fees, as they do in the current regional tour/independent event scenario. And it will be based on a simple formula – 32 (locations) X 32 (players at each location) X 2 (qualifiers, leading to the quarterly event with the \$200,000 prize purse). Money over and above the entrance fees and payouts in the qualifying events



will be used to pay for qualifying players’ flight, hotel, and entry slot to the quarterly event and a tour card for the rest of the year (after the quarterly event, making them exempt from having to qualify so that they may simply pay their way in just like a professional can) and two official NBL jerseys to wear at the Main Event.

Liddawi continues his search for pool rooms to hold the NBL’s first (and future) qualifiers. There were, as we went to press, 30 confirmed locations, with half a dozen more considering becoming the final two locations. He is mindful as this search continues of the presence of regional tours and attempting to coordinate the NBL’s schedule with the regional tour schedules. With his plan to hold the NBL’s qualifying events on the same day, nationwide, he’s likely to encounter some scheduling conflicts and has indicated a willingness to work with regional tours in having a qualifying event become part of a given tour’s schedule, albeit with the understanding that said event be conducted under the rules that the NBL will have established, in terms of format, rules, and prize money.

“Integrated would be fine,” he said. “The NBL would be happy to support

and promote all independent events, tours, and organizations, by offering them advertisements, as they sponsor their players.”

While firm commitments to a variety of formatting and organizational issues are in the future, Liddawi has received principle support from Scott Frost at his Freezer’s Sports Bar and Grille in Arizona, Big Tyme Billiards and Skinny Bob’s in Texas, Big Dog’s in Iowa and Breaktime Billiards in North Carolina, to name just a few, along with commitments from a variety of people who’ve agreed to be Tour Director when a venue opens up in their area. When he spoke to us, he was hard at work securing a number of locations in the Northeast. As of yesterday, a promotional video on NBL’s Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/NationalBilliardsLeague>) says that there are only eight venue slots left.

Liddawi is supporting something of a mantra as he forges ahead with his plans. Since he identifies the plans’ weakest link as ‘player participation,’ he is trying to cement a simple phrase into the hearts and minds of interested players.

“Fill the field!!” he said. “Fill the field! Fill the field.”



FLORIAN "VENOM" KOHLER

With the lack of events to report on at the moment, we are teaming with the Supr Charged Agency to feature interviews with various European and American players. Hopefully this will give all of the readers a chance to get to know these players better.



This time, we get to know "Venom"
Florian Kohler

Name (and nickname): Florian
'Venom' Kohler

Birth year: 1988

City of residence and birth city: Las
Vegas, US - Born in Mulhouse, France

We want to kick this off with how Florian began his career, so let's start with the opening bio from his website.

Venom first picked up a pool cue and began "fooling around" at the age of 18, when he received a mini-pool table for his birthday. He learned his first trick shots from videos on the Internet, watching and imitating what he saw.

Not satisfied, Venom quickly moved on to inventing his own, modern version of old trick shots. Within two years, Venom was competing against trick shot pool pros that had been playing since before he was born. He hasn't looked back since.

Who was your inspiration when you first started?

My first inspiration was a guy online named Ppooler. Then it was Semih Sayginer, followed by Mike Massey and Tom Rossman.

You are known as very creative and often come up with new and amazing shots. What is the process like when you work on a new shot?



This is pretty hard to explain. I would say it is a little bit of everything. From watching other sports to literally coming up with it on the spot, it is very varied. Sometimes I have nothing, but then the next day, out of the blue, I'll have 2 or 3 crazy new shots. I wish I could 'control' this better but it really is an artistic process and like artists, inspiration can come from very different things.

About how long does it take you, from the original idea stage, to have a shot "complete" and part of your show?

That also depends very much. Sometimes one shot can be integrated in the show in 15 minutes if it's a new but easy one. But if it's a hard one, I would say it takes me weeks to decide if it is worth it live or not.

How did you come up with the idea of bringing your Diamond table to the desert, Valley of Fire, for your latest video?

This was an old dream of mine. I always thought pool in the pool halls was very stereotyped, so I always wanted to get it out of the pool halls for my videos. On top of that, the landscape in my opinion adds an element

of extreme sport that really matches my trick shots.

Your wife became a part of your videos a couple of years ago. How did that come together?

That was a very natural process. Part of the joy in pool is to teach your knowledge, so she learned a few tricks and really enjoyed it. After a while, it became obvious we had to do tandem videos. For the modeling part same as well. During practice, I often used her to 'crash test' some shots because she is actually fearless, so it really helped to determine which shot would be worth including in a full production. We really enjoy doing those together as a couple, lots of fun!

Are you a God-given talent, or is it a mix of talent and hard work?

I would say the creativity is definitely something I cannot explain, but the rest is just practice practice and practice!

Do you feel the pressure from up and coming artistic cueists?

I was recently talking about that with Mike Massey and to be honest, not really. I actually kind of miss it. There are a few players here and there that





are technically very good and will win tournaments, but so far nobody has my creativity and to me copying something that already exists is very different than creating it.

What are your greatest accomplishments? Tell us about the feeling of achieving those.

It is hard to pick but I always thought my tournament accomplishments were never quite as important as the ones outside the pool industry. If I were to choose my first Guinness World Record, the 1 billion views I have online and reaching 1M subscribers on Facebook and soon youtube! No cueist ever reached that YouTube Gold Button, so that will be something truly special!

How often did you practice early on, and how often now?

I practice less and less now with all my other ventures, but when I started and for the next 7 years I was putting more hours in than I could count. I had no issue doing a week practicing 10 hours a day until my fingers were bleeding!

What should newcomers in this discipline practice most?

Definitely finding new shots and discovering their own style. I believe with the evolution of the cues, we can push the sport further and further.

You are also a great 9-ball player. How would you rate yourself in terms of the APA rating system?

Since I own the league in Vegas, I can tell you I would definitely be a 7-9 . I do have a high run of 73 in straight pool and 5 break and runs in 9 ball, all on 9 foot tables.

Do you ever get tempted to participate in local events?

I do very rarely. Not because I do not want to, but mainly because I am simply too busy. Trick shots are my job

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Florian "Venom" Kohler

and normal pool is my hobby, so I am treating it like this, always trying to get shows on a weekend, rather than playing a tournament.

Is it true that you also hold a black belt in Judo, and do you still practice it?

Yes that is correct. I unfortunately sort of stopped when my pool career started to take off in order, to avoid injuries.

How important is the equipment for an artistic cueist?

Very important! While you can do most shots with simple equipment, the key for us is for the cues to last and be solid/reliable. I can do 70% of my masses with a standard playing cue, however after 50 tries on that cue



I would guarantee I would break the ferrule or something!

When did you realize that you could actually make a living from this?

It sort of happened gradually. I decided to really take a chance when my first viral video hit and had a few sponsors that would allow me to survive.

How many travel days do you have per year?

Not sure how many days, but I can tell you last year I took nearly 120 flights!

You have almost 1 million subscribers on YouTube.

What, in your opinion, is required to be a great ambassador/sponsored player?

Love of the game first. You cannot just do it for the money or for the titles. This is a crazy game and as soon as you think you control it, something will happen. I just try to enjoy the game and truly love every kind of cue sport which naturally translates during my shows and other interactions.

What should the billiard industry do, in general, to get more recognition outside the industry?

I think, break off the cliches, be more professional and consider ourselves as such. After all, pool is one of the most played sports in the world, so with the right structures, nothing should stop us from reaching our legitimate status!

Thoughts on Matchroom and their efforts to make pool great?

Fantastic! Any effort like this will be beneficial for everyone. Even for the players not selected, such an effort will ripple and enhance the professionalization of our beloved sport!

You were involved in the "Billiards 2024" project. Your goal was to get the sport accepted for the 2024 Olympic Games.

Were you surprised that the Olympic committee decided to not accept billiards, but chose breakdancing, skateboarding, surfing and climbing?

In my opinion this was the best effort billiard has made in a long time. Brands and disciplines working to-

gether, past their differences, all towards a common goal. Yes, the result didn't reflect our efforts, but I truly believe something 'clicked' and in the future this will serve the industry greatly! As far as the other disciplines, to me it was simply a lobbying/marketing issue that unfortunately we could not do anything against...

What are your goals for 2020?

Hard to say at this point. My goal was to grow the pool league and go back to traveling a bit less for trick shots but really with the covid19, it's hard to say what economical landscape we will all wake up to in a month... I am still hoping to continue promoting the



game through my shows and especially appeal to the younger generation!

Can we expect more world records from you in the next 2 years?

Absolutely. As a matter of fact I had an event planned for next month that unfortunately is cancelled due to the pandemic. I am thinking about potentially doing it live now but hard to say if we can meet Guinness requirements during those times... I will certainly keep everyone posted!!

Your thoughts on the Covid-19 situation and what should pool players do?

These are going to be hard times for us, just when everything was starting to be better. Obviously, we cannot participate in tournaments and travel, so all we can do is share the love for the game online and practice as much as possible!!

What Happened in Vegas

It was, to say the least, a tumultuous week in the history of Cue Sports International (CSI).

In early March, amidst growing concerns about the spread of the corona virus, CSI was faced with a number of decisions about a set of upcoming scheduled events at the Rio Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas. There was a long list of things that had to be taken into consideration; signed contracts, already-made travel arrangements on the part of prospective attendees and vendors, as well as what CSI management was hearing from local, state and federal officials about plans to limit the spread of the corona virus.

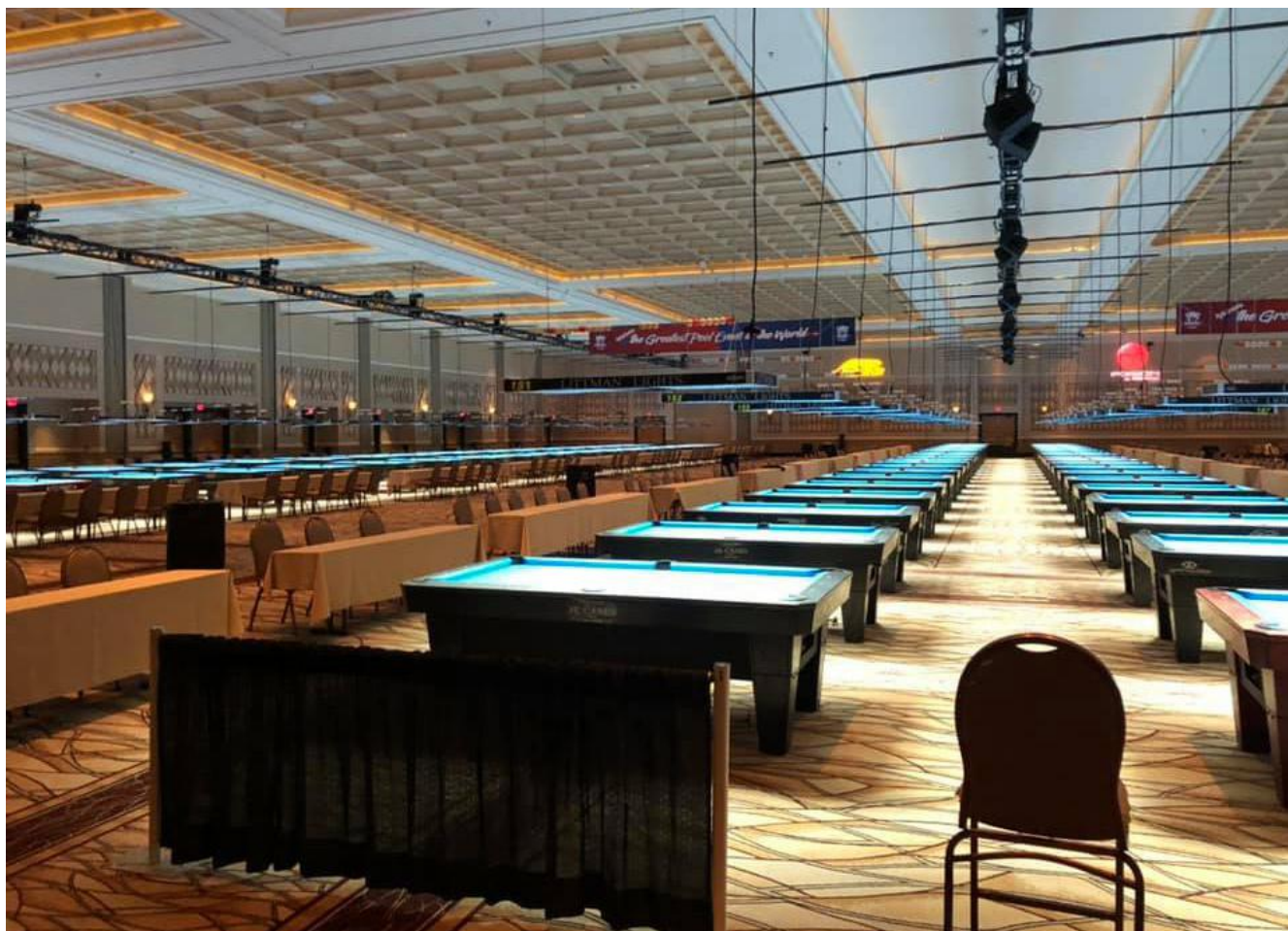
“You never make a decision like that in a vacuum,” said CSI owner/CEO Ozzy Reynolds. “Even prior to setting up, we were having conversations with (representatives from) the Rio and paying attention to what the Trump administration was saying.”

“We weren’t ostriches,” he added. “We agreed at the time, that with the available information we had, things were not serious enough to do anything but hold the event.”

There were, of course, people at the time who expressed opinions that

they should cancel. They heard those voices, continued staying alert for changes in the information at hand and kept meeting with all concerned to maintain a dialogue on the developing situation.

They had re-scheduled their annual Cue Sports International Expo from its previous late-July slot to mid-March, and planning for the event, to include the four-day Diamond Las Vegas Open, had begun almost immediately when the late July, 2019 event had finished. The 2020 event got underway on March 10 (DAY ONE), the day



before the World Health Organization officially declared the spread of the Covid-19 virus as a pandemic. The Diamond Las Vegas Open began the following day, March 11 (DAY TWO) with a match between Darren Appleton and defending World 10-Ball Champion Ko Ping-Chung, which was followed by a match between Mosconi Cup MVP Skyler Woodward and former World 9-Ball Champion Carlo Biado. Other matches filled the Day One schedule.

“The good news,” Reynolds had noted in a press release on the same day, “(was) that we did a lot right last year. The schedule was right on target. It was just a matter of fine tuning.”

The next day (March 12, DAY THREE), with more and more people asking whether the pandemic would impact the ongoing schedule of BCAPL and USAPL events and the Predator World 10-Ball Championships, another CSI press release was issued, noting that “the safety and well-being of our customers and staff are our priority and we have been coordinating closely with the Rio and Caesar’s Entertainment. Although the threat in the US remains extremely low (this, according to CDC assessments released on that day), out of an abundance of caution,” a series of precautionary measures had been instituted since the start of the event, which included hand sanitizing stations, hard surfaces being cleaned with anti-bacterial/anti-viral sprays at the end of each day, pool tables being cleaned frequently, the cessation of using unwrapped utensils, the replacement of condiment pumps with packets and a host of other steps which concluded with an announcement that the CSI and the Rio were “closely monitoring the guidance of the World Health Organization and the Center for Disease Control to ensure we do our part to keep everyone safe.”

DAY FOUR passed with those measures in place as the events continued

to play out in Las Vegas and the rapid spread of the virus began to play out from coast to coast. On Saturday, March 15 (DAY FIVE), singles events for the BCAPL and USAPL were well underway and that night, Chinese Taipei’s Jung-Lin Chang downed the Philippines’ James Aranas in the finals of the Diamond Las Vegas Open.

On Sunday, March 15 (DAY SIX), the CDC announced a recommendation against gatherings of 50 or more people for the next eight weeks. And that night, CSI announced that on Monday night, they’d pull the plug on what was left of the Expo; all Junior 8-ball and 9-ball events, as well as all 8-ball and 9-ball team events and bring the entire process to a halt, four days early.

“When they (CDC) announced that,” said Reynolds, “no other divisions (of the varied events) were allowed to start up. We weren’t ordered to do so. The CDC announced the recommendations and we complied.”

On Monday, March 16 (DAY SEVEN), the process of closing it all down began and it also signaled, for the time being, the closing down of CSI offices.

“Like for the rest of the world, it’s a difficult time,” said Reynolds, “but we’ll get through it. The leagues have stopped and they’re the heartbeat of the business.”

“We’ve closed the offices,” he added, “but no one’s been laid off, everyone’s getting paid.”

Not only was everyone ‘getting paid,’ but CSI announced, five days later, that they would, upon request, refund the entry fees for those who’d paid for the cancelled team portions of the events. In addition, since the event was already underway when the World Health Organization made their ‘pandemic’ declaration, CSI announced that they would also pay the entry fees of players who had made

travel arrangements after March 11, but chose, following the declaration to not make the trip.

It was unfortunate that some people tried to take advantage of this CSI decision by making multiple requests for the same entry and requesting money back on events in which they had not actually played. In addition, the CSI offices encountered more than its share of rudeness when CSI personnel asked those making their ‘money back’ requests for the necessary information to process those requests.

“I feel for, like, every President we’ve ever had,” said Reynolds. “It’s easy for people to Monday morning quarterback, but you have to make the best decision, based on the best available information.”

Like many people, Reynolds wishes he had a “crystal ball” to determine how this pandemic is going to play out, long term. For now, though, he’s focusing on the here and now and trying to use the time wisely.

“We’re using this opportunity to get a few things done that had been on a back burner,” he said. “Positioning ourselves so that when things do return to normal, we’ll be able to hit the ground running.”

He expects league activity will take what he described as a “mid-term” hit, with reductions in the area of 10/15%. Without the ‘crystal ball,’ he can’t foresee how deeply into the calendar, league activity might be curtailed.

“Three months? 12 months? Three years?” he asked, rhetorically. “My gut tells me there’s going to be this odd mixture when things start to return to normal. You’ll have some people rushing out, but there are going to be some people who remain nervous.”

Overall, he added, “I think 2020 will be a bit of a lost year.”

Roy's Basement

with April Larson, Pia Filler and a pair of ghosts

It's hard to know whether there's a market for watching two pool players compete against each other by separately playing the ghost, on separated-by-potentially-thousands-of-miles pool tables.

On Sunday, April 19, April Larson in Minnesota and Pia Filler in Virginia did just that and according to Roy's Basement founder, chief cook and bottle washer, Ariel Roy Francisco, who organized the match-up and ran the live stream that broadcast it far and wide, viewership peaked at about 1,100 and maintained an average of about 900 viewers over the eight hours of the broadcast.

For some, it was compelling, particularly for those who, via communication in the broadcast's chat room, were able to bet each other on the outcome. For others, it was compelling because it featured two of the sport's up and coming women stars; Larson and Filler, the former being considerably better known than the latter, although that may change soon. For some, it was riveting TV, while for others, it was worse than watching paint dry.

Results, as they say, may vary.

What is not in dispute was the outcome. Pia Filler got off to an impressive start in her race to win 50 games against the 9-ball ghost. Though she would eventually see the ghost surpass her on a number of occasions, it was never by much and she finished having allowed the ghost to win just one more game than her (51). April Larson, who by her own admission, hadn't been involved in a 'pressure' pool match since she finished in the

tie for 17th at the Ashton Twins Classic in Canada this past January, started slowly, allowing the ghost to win five, and eventually, gave up a total of 74. Donations to Roy's Basement during the live stream totaled just over

\$1,800, which was split three ways, between the Basement and the two players.

"I would have thought that there'd have been more viewers," said Fran-

Pia Filler



April Larson



cisco. "It's really hard to get viewers involved with women's pool."

"I was disappointed that I didn't get more feedback from some of the veteran female pool players," he added, noting that he'd sent some of them the poster promoting the event. "I was surprised that I didn't hear back from any of them."

As for the two competitors, they both claimed to have learned something from the experience. For Pia Filler, it was about her mental game and awareness of "mistakes made and good things accomplished."

"Any match that takes that long, 8 hours under pressure," she said, "can wear on your mind, but if you want

to be a pro, you have to be a fighter, a positive thinker. You can't let bad things come into your mind."

For April, it was a match suited to her nickname – The Grinder. She learned, she said, a lot about herself.

"I learned that once I settle in, I'm good," she said, "and that small things can have a rippling effect on you."

In her case, she explained, one of the "small things" was her break, which had been working fine for her as she was practicing in preparation for the event, but not so much when the event began at around 1 p.m. on Sunday afternoon.

"I couldn't figure out what was wrong," she said, as the ghost began

piling up victories; five of them before April finally chalked up a rack. Part of the ripple effect from less-than-stellar breaks was about April herself. It's one of the things she said she'd work to change if this kind of opportunity presented itself again.

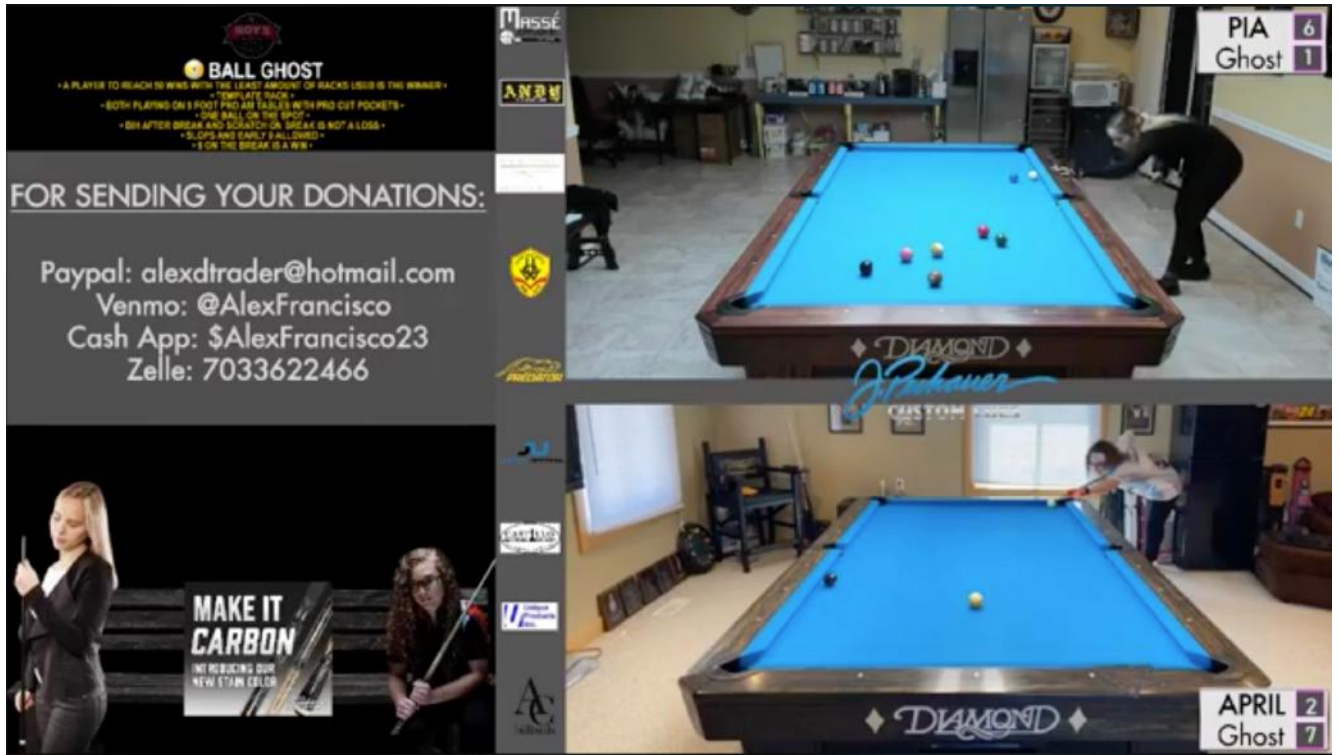
"I would not let myself get so nervous," she said. "It had been about four months since I felt that kind of (game) pressure and I had no idea how to handle it."

"I needed to calm down," she added, "and I didn't have a lot of time to ponder and think about how to do that. I needed to figure it out right then."

She did calm down, eventually, and combined with a tip she got during a break about the benefits of pattern racking (not expressly forbidden in the stated rules of the event), she started to run racks, eventually running as many as eight in a row. By

“ IT'S REALLY HARD TO GET VIEWERS INVOLVED WITH WOMEN'S POOL.

– Ariel Roy Francisco,”



the time she and Pia were into the 20s of the 50 they needed, they were neck and neck in their personal score, while April lagged considerably behind in the number of racks chalked up to their respective ghosts.

Both are in something of a holding pattern with their careers at the moment, pretty much like everybody else, waiting to see when and where the next tournament might be organized. They spoke before and after the event and are on the same sort of wavelength when it comes to competing and mutual good feelings for each other. They both expressed gratitude for their respective sponsors; April, thanking J. Pechauer Custom Cues, IBA Pool Leagues, TNT Billiards, Kamui, Jam Up Apparel, Nails by Sonny and Love our Roof, while Pia

thanked Predator Cues, Gabriel's Billiards, Andy Cloth and HOW tips (all of whom can be seen in her photo).

Pia, for one, is looking ahead to June, when the Euro Tour is scheduled to hold an event and slightly further ahead to late September/early October when the Predator World 10-Ball Championships for women are scheduled to be held. No word, as yet, on whether they will actually be held.

"I hope it's going to happen," she said, "but it's kind of up to the whole world, so we just live day to day and hope for the best."

She noted, as well, that her husband, Joshua, who, along with Ariel Roy Francisco, commented on the dual ghost matches, is waiting to see how his tournament schedule will play

out. They expect to be in Roy's Basement literally and figuratively until about the end of May.

Francisco, in the meantime, continues to put Joshua at the table in the basement, playing about seven different ghost games, as he ponders plans for other kinds of ghost matchups.

"I'm working with my tech crew toward a series of single-elimination, multi-ghost 12-ball events," he said, noting that time zone differentials will likely have a way of prioritizing US players for these events. "It'll be open to 16 players only (random draw, no seeding), playing until someone wins. We'll ask for an entry fee and then add something to the pot."

Stay tuned to Roy's Basement's Facebook page for announcements of Josh Filler's ongoing appearances over the next month or so, and any official announcements about the 16-player event, which could come as early as tonight (Tuesday) or tomorrow.

“ I LEARNED THAT ONCE I SETTLE IN, I'M GOOD, AND THAT SMALL THINGS CAN HAVE A RIPPLING EFFECT ON YOU.

– April Larson ”

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ASHTON TWINS

bring social distancing and the proximity of help together with a 9-ball battle

To women struggling with issues of domestic abuse, self-isolation in their home has the potential to be as dangerous as the Covid-19 virus.

The need to escape the violence becomes much more acute and the agencies normally positioned to be of assistance get overwhelmed with aid requests, while at the same time, donations diminish. On Saturday, April 11 at The Hidden Spot in Calgary, the pool-playing Ashton Twins (Bev and Joanne) got together for a benefit 9-ball match; a race to 19 between them and after them, two brothers (Guy and Andrew Nicklin), that solicited donations for

a local domestic abuse organization called Gems for Gems.

Five years ago, a friend of Bev Ashton, Jordan Guildford, used a teenage memory to launch a charitable campaign designed to benefit the victims of domestic abuse. As detailed in a blog post by Mica Lemiski on the Hillberg & Berk Web site, when they were teenagers, Guildford and her siblings had pooled the money their grandmother had given them to purchase

Christmas gifts for themselves and used it, instead, to purchase a bracelet for their single Mom “that looked like leaves woven together.” Initially, when, upon opening the package, their Mom burst into tears and left the room, the siblings thought that they’d made a mistake, but when she returned, and explained to her children that the gift had, in fact, “reconnected her to being a woman and an individual, the link between jewelry and personal empowerment had been made clear to Jordan.”

Fueled by the memory of her mother and the bracelet, Guildford decided to spearhead a jewelry drive to collect accessories she would give to women in shelters on Christmas. She called the campaign “Gems for Gems,” the intended message being that gems in the community would donate gems to the gems (the women) in shelters on Christmas. With only three weeks to collect, she set a goal of giving 25 packages. She collected enough to do 436 packages.

Now, Gems for Gems is a nationally-registered charity whose mission has expanded beyond the realm of crowd-sourcing jewelry and into that of domestic abuse education and prevention. They still operate the annual jewelry drive, but their outreach now includes a scholarship program and a series of workshops designed to empower survivors.



Bev Ashton and Valerie Franiel



Bev Ashton and Jordan Guildford became friends while exchanging pleasantries on treadmills at Orangetheory Fitness in Seton, a suburb of Calgary. When Jordan, in conversation with Bev, recently explained that domestic abuse was having a tendency to be more acute in these times of self-isolation, Bev conceived of the challenge match with her sister and set out to make it happen.

They settled on The Hidden Spot location in Calgary and, to maintain self-isolation guidelines, determined that it would be a closed event, with just enough people to make it happen; no spectators, bar patrons, or excess personnel of any kind. They communicated with Valerie Franiel to enlist the support of her E-sports Productions company to set up a live stream and the function of \$20 donations to the charity. They launched proceedings earlier than Saturday by offering on their streaming site a set

of individual challenge matches between individuals with pool tables in their home and the ‘ghost’ (a hypothetical pool opponent in a structured game).

“Before we started streaming the Ashton twins,” said Franiel, “we had already raised \$1,000.”

There were, noted Franiel, only six people in The Hidden Spot when the matches started. And the first glitch in the machinery, so to speak, came when everybody realized that as a result of restrictions imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic, the room’s Internet service provider had suspended service. It took a while, a few hours, for them to get that connection up and running, but when it did, the matches began.

In the end, they raised just over \$4,000 for Gems for Gems, as the FB stream drew nearly 10,000 viewers to the six-hour-plus streaming broadcast

between the Ashton twins and then, the Nicklin brothers. The donations made each donor eligible to win one of two cues – a \$1,000 (Canadian) Viking Custom Cue and a \$1,500 (Canadian) Erbez Custom Cue - and a couple of Gems for Gems ‘swag bags,’ valued at \$100 (Canadian) each. According to Bev Ashton, Jordan Guildford is more than happy with the donations to Gems for Gems.

“For her,” said Ashton, “\$500 would have been cool, so with the \$4,000, she was ecstatic.”

“We wanted to do something positive and good,” Ashton added, “while maintaining social distancing and offering some entertainment to people who are sitting bored in their houses.”

And oh yeah, there were a couple of pool matches broadcast on Saturday. The event opened with the Ashton twins, who should have been mic-ed to take advantage of their penchant for sibling trash talk that can border on the hilarious and for those who don’t know them, can occasionally sound vindictive. Joanne Ashton’s Web site, for example, notes that she was born

“ WE WANTED TO DO SOMETHING POSITIVE AND GOOD, WHILE MAINTAINING SOCIAL DISTANCING AND OFFERING SOME ENTERTAINMENT TO PEOPLE WHO ARE SITTING BORED IN THEIR HOUSES. ”

Ashton Twins Charity Challenge

20 minutes before Bev and that it was the best 20 minutes of her life.

Their Fargo rates are separated by 42 points (Bev/571 and Joanne/613), which, at the outset, in a race to 19, gave the higher-rated Joanne an 81.3% chance of winning the match (Fargo Rate match odds tend to give a higher-ranked player a better chance of winning with longer matches).

“We have different styles,” noted Bev. “But she actually has more titles and has actually worked harder at it.”

Bev figured that the Fargo Rates were about right and generally speaking, represented their long-time hypothetical match score over a hypothetical 100 matches; Joanne, winning about 80 of the 100. It was Bev, however, who came out gunning. After a few back-and-forth matches to start things off, she opened up a substantial lead, which got as far as 10-3, be-

“ WE HAVE DIFFERENT STYLES, BUT SHE ACTUALLY HAS MORE TITLES AND HAS ACTUALLY WORKED HARDER AT IT. – BEV ASHTON ”

fore Joanne started the catch-up routine that would eventually tie them at 16. Win #17 represented Joanne’s first lead of the match, which she followed with two more to win it all.

The Nicklin brothers, Andrew and Guy, played a shorter race to 13. It was a much tighter match that went back and forth to an 8-8 tie, before Andrew pulled ahead to eventually win 13-9.

“Everybody called it the battle of the almost-twins,” said Valerie Franiel, “because they look so much alike that everybody assumes they’re twins, but they’re not. Andrew is older by 13 months.”

According to Franiel, the success of this particular event has prompted

her (and her company) to begin arranging for follow-up tournaments to include one this weekend (Saturday, April 18, 2 p.m., Mountain Time), which will feature a “Border Battle,” pitting Canadian Geoff Waterfall against USA’s Phillip Wright, who will each be playing against the ‘ghost’ from their home. Geoff will be in Rock Creek, British Columbia as Wright competes from Owatonna, Minnesota. Watch the E-Sports Productions Facebook page for further info on upcoming matches.

“I’m happy we went through it,” said Bev Ashton of her and Joanne’s benefit match; streaming glitch and eventually, loss to her sister, notwithstanding. “It was professional and fun and good.”

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The advertisement features a dark green and black background. At the top, three yellow circular icons with the letters 'A', 'Z', and 'B' are arranged horizontally. To their right, the word 'MARKETPLACE' is written in large, bold, yellow capital letters. Below this, the text 'The Official Billiard Supply For AZBers' is written in a smaller, white font. The central part of the ad shows three billiard cues, one of which is prominently displayed in the foreground with a white tiger logo and the 'P3' brand name. The bottom right corner features a small logo with the numbers '9' and '8' and the text 'Powered By SEYBERTS.COM SEYBERTS BILLIARD SUPPLY'.

Allison Fisher **Joins Team Lights Out**

It is with our greatest pleasure to welcome one of the greatest players of all time to our family... Allison Fisher!

We have partnered up with Allison to release an exclusive line of Allison Fisher gear by Lights Out Billiards Apparel. Over the next coming weeks we will be bringing you a selection of AF branded gear at [shoplightsoutbilliardsapparel!](http://shoplightsoutbilliardsapparel.com) It is an absolute honor to have Allison as part of our family.

The journey started a few years back when I (Jake Lawson) had the opportunity to take a weekend long training class at the Allison Fisher Academy in North Carolina. Over the years we have stayed in contact and we at Lights Out always relished the opportunity of working with Allison and now the time has come. She embodies what our Brand is all about with the utmost grace and class. She certainly needs no introduction. She started playing snooker when she was 7. She won her first world title at the age of 17. To date, she has won over 80 national titles and 11 world titles in total.

She was the top-ranked player on the Women's Professional Billiards Association (WPBA) circuit from September 1996 to June 2001, and again each year from 2002 to 2007.

In 2009, Fisher was inducted into the Billiard Congress of America Hall of Fame. In 2007, she was declared the female Player of the Year by all three of the major pool publications, Billiards Digest, Pool & Billiard Maga-

zine, and InsidePOOL Magazine. She also ranked #1 in the P&B "Fans' Top 20 Favorite Players" poll for that year. She has been the BD female Player of the Year for 11 of the 12 years spanning 1996–2007, including 6 in a row, 2002–2007. Her achievements are unprecedented!

She currently has her own line of cues with Joe Pechauer and we look to con-

tinue to expand her own AF brand apparel globally. You can find out more information about the Allison Fisher Academy at: <http://www.allisonfisher.com/learn/> along with her own line of cues at: <https://allisonfishercues.com>.

Welcome to the #LightsOutFamily! It's one of our greatest honors to be partnered with you!



Gareth Potts

With the lack of events to report on at the moment, we are teaming with the Supr Charged Agency to feature interviews with various European and American players. Hopefully this will give all of the readers a chance to get to know these players better.

This time, we have Chinese 8-Ball Star, Gareth Potts.

You mainly play English and Chinese pool.

What is the main differences from American pool when it comes to the tables, rules, balls and cue?

I started my career playing English 8-ball where I won 4 world titles. These, along with numerous other tournaments, meant I was the most successful English 8-ball pool player ever at the time when I finished in 2014 to pursue a new career in China.

The small ball game is run by two different governing bodies that play by two very different rule sets. One being more chess like and the other being a more attacking rule set. I am still currently the only player to win world titles at both World rules and Blackball rules respectively.

My English 8-ball career was relatively short due to Chinese 8-ball bursting into the scene and into my life in 2013.

I won the first ever Joy Chinese 8-ball final masters in 2013, also in 2014 and 2017. Off the back of winning the first masters in 2013, I fell in love with Chinese pool and I signed a long term contract with Joy Billiards that has allowed me to focus solely on Chinese 8-ball. Stephen Hendry, Shane Van Boening, Chris Melling and Zhang KunPeng are a few that are currently signed with Joy billiards.

The 3 main Cue sport disciplines around the world are American Pool, English pool and snooker. They are all obviously very different in every way. Balls, tables, cloth rules and equipment all vary, but Chinese 8-ball is basically where they all meet in the middle.

There are so many different forms of Pool across the world and this for me is one of the problems. I personally believe that Chinese pool is the per-



fect hybrid cue sport that appeals to all cue sport players from every discipline, wherever you play and wherever you're from - it's the middle ground of them all!

It's played on almost the same size table as American pool, with the same size and weight balls with almost the same rule set as the American BCA rules.

The table aesthetically looks like a snooker table. The pockets are a similar cut and nap Strachan6811 cloth is used.

Predominantly it's 8-ball that is played.

This is backed up even more so by the fact that players use different cues to play Chinese pool. For example, the American players feel as though an American type cue is the right equipment to use. Some Chinese players use a snooker type cue with a 10mm tip. Some English players even use their English 8-ball cue. And others use something in the middle of all those.

I personally believe that none of these cues are perfect for Chinese pool. You wouldn't play tennis with a badminton racket or you wouldn't play

squash with a ping pong bat. Obviously, using the right equipment is vital. I have my own cue range out on the market (Potts Cue), which is effectively a hybrid cue for a hybrid cue sport....

But either way my point being is that if you were going to abolish all cue sports and just keep one, it would surely have to be Chinese pool as a compromise to every cue sport player or fan around the world, because it's simply right in the middle of them all!

The prize money for pool in China is the highest anywhere in the world. The two biggest Chinese 8-ball tournaments now are the Joy Masters at \$150,000 to the winner and the Star World Championships which is \$100,000 to the winner. These are snooker type first prizes, but there needs to be more events and more of these types of events outside of China. This then would make Chinese 8-ball more accessible to the world!

Who was your inspiration/idol when you were younger?

Definitely my father, who passed away when I was 21.

Regarding players I grew up watching, Stephen Hendry. A lot of people natu-



Yes I use drills, they are important. A combination of solo work and practice with other top players. Finding that balance is important.

As for what drills; there are loads. You can look on YouTube or on my social media. I have posted loads over the years at English pool and Chinese pool.

What should newcomers practice most? - What are newcomers doing wrong?

The most important thing is constructive practice. Just hitting the balls around the table is pointless. There needs to be routine and structure to what you're doing. Adding pressure even in solo practice is important, if you're doing a routine or drill, set yourself a target. So for example - I would say I'm not stopping for lunch until I've completed it 5 times in a row. (Many days I went hungry. lol) This adds pressure and purpose to what you're doing!

What is the strongest part of your game?

I play 8 ball and always have done so. So I would say the strongest party of my game is my patterns and my finishing. Taking the balls in the correct order is the most important part of 8-ball.

What is your weakest part of the game?

Probably doubles (Or bank shots in America). On English tables and Chinese tables, there is not a marked diamond system and the cloth is nap. So judging the slide off the cushions isn't easy, that's my excuse anyway. Or maybe I'm just generally rubbish at them. lol

What is your favorite game(s) and why?

Chinese pool without a doubt. It's the toughest form of Pool in the world.

rally don't like winners but I personally do, and he was the ultimate winner!

Who do you admire amongst today's players?

There are a lot of very good players around the world from all different forms of cue sport and all have their own great traits. You have to be at the top of any sport. But when it comes to pure talent, Ronnie o Sullivan is the daddy.

What are your greatest accomplishments? Tell us about the feeling of those wins.

Winning my first major junior title at 13 years old, which was the European championships in France, with my father there watching.

My first world title age 21, 3 months after my father had passed away.

All the world titles and masters titles at Chinese pool have all been special in their own way.

I think what defines special is the timing of that particular win to that individual.

I don't really think too much about what I have won, I think it's important to not live off the back of previous wins and achievements. Maybe the time for that is at retirement!

How often did you practice at an early age and how often now?

I've always worked hard at my game from an early early age.

I have always practiced hard. I believe you only get out what you put in - nothing comes for free - you have to earn it.

I've been lucky over the years to have had a lot of top players to practice with, which is important. Mark Selby is my brother in law so I've spent many hours picking balls out, lol. Growing up I had a lot of top players around me to learn from. This is invaluable!

I'm lucky that I always enjoyed the practice and I think when that day comes that I stop enjoying, it will be the day when I hang my cue up.

Do you use drills when you practice? - Which drills?



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Any sport in the world that is at the top of the ladder always has the highest degree of difficulty. Golf, tennis, football, basketball, motor racing just to name a few.

So the high skill level required combined with the relatively simplicity of the rules is the reason it can be, by far, the biggest pool game in the world, with the biggest prize money.

Is fitness important for pool players?

Fitness is something I have been into since an early age, and is without doubt massively important. I go to the gym most days and work to a strict training and diet plan.

In some tournaments, you play a lot of matches over a lot of days over big races. Going to the gym isn't about being just physically fit, it's about being mentally fit too.

Cue sports is evolving all the time and the standard is getting higher all the time. Anything that gives you even a 1% edge can be the difference between winning and losing.

Also, cue sports aside, why wouldn't you want to keep fit and healthy.

What are the 3 most important factors? Who has the best stroke in pool today?

This is a tough question because all cue sports are different and they require different strokes and hits on the cue ball, which in turn requires different cue actions.

American pool players tend to be very loose and loopy. Most don't even hold the cue tight to their chest. Everything is played with a lot of spin and the cue ball does a lot of travelling.

Chinese pool is very different, your cue action needs to be straight. The cue needs to be firm on the chest and



you need to be very accurate. Your fundamentals and being 'textbook' technically is much more important.

Also playing on nap cloth as opposed to Simonis is also very different, which also makes the strike on the cue ball different.

There are a lot of variants in techniques, stances and cue actions from cue sport to cue sport. So what is right for one doesn't necessarily mean it is right for another!

How is your mental strength? Do you have any advice/tricks?

I think my mental strength is also one of the strongest parts of my game. I have won a lot of matches from behind. But it's not only about this; it goes much deeper.

Having the ability to deal with making mistakes. We all make mistakes during matches. It's how you mentally deal with it and limiting what that mistake costs you.

If you make a mistake, it can't cost you any more than that one rack. You see so many players make a mistake and it affects them for the next 1,2,3 4 frames, which in turns ends up costing you the match, because you never mentally recovered from that first initial mistake. I'm sure a lot of players can relate to that.

Then there is the side of if you draw a player that you think is better than you. (In some cases you've lost before you've even took your cue out of its case)

The mental side of the game is just as, if not more important, than any other.

How important is the equipment and why do you use the equipment that you do?

Using the correct equipment is vital. If you're using the wrong gear, then you're never going to play to your full potential.

As stated above I have endorsed my own cue range for Chinese pool and that's what I use

The other vital thing you get right is the tip and chalk. I understand with tips, it's personal preference among top players. Some prefer harder tips some prefer softer, some prefer the tips higher, some lower. Some have them over hanging some prefer them flush to the ferrule. So it's what works for you regarding tips.

I personally use a Soft pro Taom tip.

This brings me into chalk. - Now this is one thing that should not be about personal preference. You have to use Taom chalk.. FACT!

Almost all of the top snooker players use it and so do almost all of the top English 8-ball players.

Gone are the days of chalk making a mess of the table, transferring onto the cue ball and object balls and caus-



ing bad contacts, big bounces, kicks and skids.

Taom chalk is a complete game changer and has in many ways revolutionised cue sports. Why would you not use chalk that stops all of the above? So if you miss or make a mistake it's because you did it not your chalk. Cue sports is hard enough workout fighting against certain equipment that don't do their job properly.

Chalk is abrasive so therefore wears the cloth more easily.

It is without doubt the best thing to happen to cue sports for a long time.

The thing that needs to happen now is it should be made mandatory that everyone has to use it!

What should the billiard industry in general do to get more recognition outside the industry?

There are players out there that are also marketable away from the table, and as pool grows with tv etc, there will become opportunities that come along for players.

In my opinion it's all about TV, endorsements and viewing figures.

Tournaments and organisations need professionals in charge that know what they are doing and that run it as a business.

I suppose the more events that are on tv for higher prize money makes people sit up and take note

What are you goals for 2020?

I set myself the goal to win the Chinese Pool International Masters again this year, which was held in China in January. I finished 5th losing to Chu Bingjie, who went on to win. So, not the result I was after, but for 95% of it I played pretty good. This was the last tournament I played and the last Chinese pool tournament due to the Coronavirus.

Your thoughts on the Covid-19 situation and what should players do?

The situation with Covid-19 has not only stopped cue sports but it has stopped the whole world. These are unprecedented times which certainly puts things into perspective for all of us.

Winning or losing a pool match is not so important anymore. Things that once seemed important to us no longer do or are.

I would like to wish all fellow players, amateur or professional, from every cue sport discipline from around the world, all the best during these uncertain times.

We can all get through this and cue sports will come out the other side of it, stronger I'm sure.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank my sponsors for their continued support

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The most important thing above all right now is staying safe

Take care of yourselves and your loved ones

VENOM GOES THE DISTANCE FOR WORLD RECORD

You have all heard people say they felt like they stood at the table day and night... Well, Florian Kohler did it, literally, during his 24 hour Trick shots Marathon on April 18th.

The 31-year-old French man decided to tackle his 7th Guinness World Record (GWR) by attempting the record for the most trick shots performed in a 24 hour period.

He certainly did not disappoint!

The previous record of 120 successful trick shots was absolutely crushed

with 'Venom' setting the new record at an outstanding 753 completed shots!! The feat was live streamed for free on Florian's social media channels in order to celebrate his 1,000,000 subscribers on YouTube, and was viewed by over 300,000 people on all platforms combined. With viewers from all around the world, Florian seemed satisfied with his performance.

'This was a superb experience really! I was pretty sure to break the record so we decided to explain all the tricks during the first round to make it closer to a show and after a bit of a hectic start everything really fell into place. I was quickly able to engage what I like to call my "automatic mode" and time just flew by.'



Florian started his attempt at 3pm PST Saturday the 18th of April and finished it Sunday the 19th, 24 hours later without using half of the allowed break allowed per the Guinness World Record. The previous record was broken approximately 5 hours into his attempt, but what is most notable is his success rate.

Florian was allowed 3 attempts to complete each shot and he made almost all the shots that were in the official 120 shot trick shot program at least

once to keep an outstanding 73.61% success rate!

That is 753 successful trick shots out of 1023 played!

Other notable figures are the amount of shots attempted, 1877 for a total of 1725 balls made. With no surprise his highest disciplines were jump and masse with respectively 83% and 78% rates of success.

While Florian said the day was still grueling, the entire performance was pretty easy going and not as boring as he thought due to the fact that he was answering questions online and communicating with the fans during the entire 24 hour period. The only 'tough' time he had was from 7am to 10 am, when his back started to hurt and the fatigue really being felt.

When asked if he would do it again Kohler simply answered: 'Definitely, if I need to. While the success rate was quite high, I definitely could have practiced more beforehand, so should be able to

TOTAL STATS OVERALL	
Event Time	24:00:00
Total Time Played	22:35:00
Time on a Break	1:25:00
Total Points	5465
Disciplines Played	68.2
Trickshots played	1023
Attempted shots	1877
Total Balls Made	1725
Completed Shots	753
Success rate %	73.61%

better than that number and I also could have played faster as well!

Not satisfied with that performance, only a few days after the 24 hour Florian also broke another World Record, 'The Highest Jump Pot of a Billiard ball'!

While the 24 hour record is still under review by the GWR team due to its length, his highest jump has already been validated with a mark at 75cm or 29.5 inches!

Both records took place under GWR official COVID -19 conditions.

Florian would also like to thank his sponsors Mezz, Rasson, APA, Simonis, Aramith, PoolDawg and the entire team that assisted him!



Sergey Lutsker

With the lack of events to report on at the moment, we are teaming with the Supr Charged Agency to feature interviews with various European and American players. Hopefully this will give all of the readers a chance to get to know these players better.

This time, we have Russian youth Sergey Lutsker.

Name: Sergey Lutsker

Age: 22

City: Moscow

Started playing where and age?

I am started play pool at 10 in the great billiard club “Modus vita” Moscow.

How is the pool community in Russia?

We have a lot of good and top players and really good young guys who will play on the top level in 5 years. I think Russian team is one of the best in Europe now.

Who was your inspiration/idol when you were younger? (and why?)

I really like Efren. It looks so easy when he plays pool and everyone likes him. I really like my teammate Fedor Gorst and Joshua Filler. They have different styles but very effective in the game.

I think these two guys will be on top for next years.

What are your greatest accomplishments? Tell us about the feeling of those wins.

I really like my win on the Russian championship 8 ball when I played with big temperature all the week and



“ I JUST HOPE TO PLAY IN ANY TOURNAMENTS BECAUSE NOBODY KNOWS WHEN COVID-19 WILL BE FINISHED. ”

beat Stepanov on semifinal from 4:7 and Fedor hill-hill in the final.

How often did you practice at early age and how often now?

At early age, 3 hours 4 times per week. Last 4 years, 3-5 hours 6 times a week. I like play with ghost but no ball in hand and play matches between my teammates. I mostly practice pocketing and my safety game.

What should newcomers practice most?

- Stroke
- How you see the line
- Feeling

What is your favorite game and why?

I like 9-ball because it is very fast game and most popular now.

Is fitness important for pool players?

Sure. Cardio training is most effective for pool players.

Who has the best stroke in pool today?

I really like Fedor and Melling.

How is your mental strength?

Not ideal. I need to work a lot to control my emotions.

How important is the equipment?

Very important. I am playing with best Mezz cues. Using a TAOM glove and tip which is the best on the market.

Your thoughts on the outcome of Mosconi Cup 2019?

This was absolutely Johan's win against Europe. They were better than Europe so it's an expected finish.

What are your goals for 2020?

I just hope to play in any tournaments because nobody knows when covid-19 will be finished.

Who will win?

- World Cup of Pool

Russia

- US Open

SVB

- 9-ball WC

Chang Jung Lin

- 2020 Mosconi Cup

Europe



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APA Unveils Plan for 2020 Las Vegas Events Amidst Pandemic

As poolplayers across North America patiently wait to get out of the house and back on a pool table, APA is taking a proactive approach trying to ensure its 2020 Las Vegas championships ultimately take place if the pandemic subsides enough to make pool tournaments possible later in the year.

APA's goal is to hold its 2020 Championship events, if it is safe to do so. Therefore, APA has worked with its hosts at the Westgate Las Vegas to move its events to later in the year.

The APA World Pool Championships, scheduled for August 2020, are being rescheduled for Nov. 28 – Dec. 6. The event will include both the 8-Ball and 9-Ball World Championships as well as the Masters, Wheelchair and Ladies 8-Ball Championships. The event will take place at the Westgate Las Vegas as planned. MiniMania events will also be offered.

"We have concerns about whether or not an event will be possible in Las Vegas in August, but at this point, it's hard to know how things might look three or four months from now. We felt we needed to do everything possible to ensure the APA World Championships could take place this year if we can do so safely," said APA President Greg Fletcher.

"We've bought ourselves some time to make decisions in response to what happens with the pandemic in the next few months," he added.

Fletcher also indicated that no event would take place in Las Vegas unless local and state officials indicate it's overwhelmingly safe to do so.

APA New Event Dates

Showdown Series Championships
August 11-15, 2020

- APA 9-BALL DOUBLES CHAMPIONSHIPS: Aug. 11-12
- APA JACK & JILL CHAMPIONSHIP: Aug. 11-13
- APA 8-BALL DOUBLES CHAMPIONSHIPS: Aug. 12-15
- APA TEAM CAPTAINS CHAMPIONSHIPS: Aug. 13-15

APA WORLD POOL CHAMPIONSHIPS
Nov. 28 - Dec. 6, 2020

- APA WHEELCHAIR CHAMPIONSHIPS: Nov. 30 - Dec. 1
- APA LADIES 8-BALL CHAMPIONSHIPS: Dec. 1-4
- APA MASTERS CHAMPIONSHIPS: Dec. 4-6
- 8-Ball Team: Nov. 28 - Dec. 3
- 9-Ball Team: Dec. 2-6

APA POOLPLAYER CHAMPIONSHIPS
April 27 - May 2, 2021

- APA 8-BALL CLASSIC: April 27-29
- APA 9-BALL SHOOTOUT: April 30 - May 2

2020 Qualifiers Advance to '21 to Compete Alongside All '21 Qualifiers

"We aren't going to ask our members or our staff to do something that would jeopardize their health," said Fletcher.

The move will give APA Leagues across the country more time to resume League play and to schedule playoff and World Qualifier events to

determine which teams will qualify for the World Championships.

If the APA World Pool Championships ultimately cannot be held in 2020, APA would work with its League Operators on how players fund monies allocated to send teams to Vegas will be awarded.

While APA is moving the World Championships to December, it is prepared to host APA members at the Westgate Las Vegas in August if circumstances allow. APA is prepared to host some of its Showdown Series events including the 8-Ball Doubles, 9-Ball Doubles and Jack & Jill Doubles Championships, in addition to the Team Captains Championship. The event is being dubbed the “Showdown Series Championships” and will run Aug. 11-15, a portion of the original event dates.

The 8-Ball and 9-Ball Doubles Championships were scheduled to take place during the Poolplayer Championships, which have already been postponed. The Jack & Jill Doubles and Team Captains Championship were already scheduled to take place in August.

“We’re less confident about an August event at this point, but this at least gives us a chance to host these events this year if the pandemic situation improves in the next couple of months,” said APA Tournament Director Bill Tufts.

“We realize it might be a long shot, and we certainly will not host an event if we believe it’s unsafe to do so, but

we owe it to our members who qualified for these events to get a chance to play if we can give them the opportunity to do so,” he added.

Should the August event ultimately be canceled, the 2020 8-Ball Doubles, 9-Ball Doubles, Jack & Jill Doubles and Team Captains Championships will have to be canceled and will not be rescheduled.

Players that qualified for this year’s 8-Ball Classic and 9-Ball Shootout will still get a chance to play in the event they qualified for. Those events, previously scheduled for the 2020 APA Poolplayer Championships that were scheduled for this month (April/May), are being moved to April 2021 and held in conjunction with next year’s event. Dates for next year’s event will be forthcoming.

The combination of the 2020 and 2021 events will make for the largest Poolplayer Championships ever in terms of payout and participation. Players who qualified for the 2020 event will receive travel assistance funds and hotel lodging at next year’s event.

“We wanted to do whatever we could to honor the hard work and dedica-

tion people put into qualifying for these events, and we want to give them a chance to live out their dream in Las Vegas if possible,” said Tufts.

The plan gives APA a potential opportunity to host all of its Las Vegas events without permanent cancellation, but it’s important to recognize plans will ultimately be dictated by what happens with the COVID-19 pandemic over the next several months.

APA is still evaluating its Junior Championships scheduled for June in St. Louis, but Tufts recognized it’s highly unlikely the event will be able to take place.

“Definitely a long shot for the Juniors event; we have a little more time, but we think it’s highly unlikely this event will be able to take place as scheduled,” said Tufts.

The APA, based in Lake Saint Louis, Mo., sanctions the world’s largest amateur pool league, with leagues throughout the United States, Canada and Japan. Nearly 250,000 members compete in weekly 8-Ball and 9-Ball League play. The APA is generally recognized as the Governing Body of Amateur Pool, having established the official rules, championships, formats and handicap systems for the sport of amateur billiards.

The APA typically produces four major tournaments each year—the APA World Pool Championships, the APA Poolplayer Championships, the APA Junior Championships and the U.S. Amateur Championship—that, together, pay out more than \$2 Million in cash and prizes annually!

The APA and its championships are sponsored by Aramith, Action Cues, Pool Dawg and Valley-Dynamo.

For more information on the American Poolplayers Association, visit <https://poolplayers.com/>.



MARSHALL 'TUSCALOOSA SQUIRREL' CARPENTER PASSES

Marshall Carpenter was born in February 9, 1928 in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. He began going into the poolrooms as a kid selling peanuts, which led to his nickname, 'The Tuscaloosa Squirrel'.

Squirrel quickly took a liking to the game, and once it got to the point he could beat everybody locally, he began to travel.

Squirrel spent about 25 years playing pool on the road, including time with 'Minnesota Fats', 'Rags' Fitzpatrick and Eddie Taylor. The game of One Pocket became his specialty. He and Eddie Taylor became good friends back in the mid-fifties, and they both were among the players that used to gather at the Jansco Brother's in Johnston City before George and Paulie began to hold tournaments. 'Squirrel' played in the very first Johnston City One Pocket tournament in 1961 and he won the One Pocket division at Johnston City in 1962, then fell second to Taylor in 1963.

He was elected into the One Pocket Hall of Fame in 2005.

After retiring from pool in favor of golf for many years, 'Squirrel' came back to pool in his later years, and still enjoyed getting out to his local room to compete until recently.

Renowned for his masterful control of both cue ball and object balls, fellow hall of fame member Grady Mathews said of 'Squirrel', that he had "about the prettiest touch in pool."

He is survived by his wife Judy and his son, Marshall Jr and his wife Jenny, sister-in-law Lori Bartman and her husband Kelly, and granddaughters

Eleanor and Elizabeth. Memorial services are scheduled for April 10, 2020 at 2PM at Memory Chapel Funeral Home, 2200 Skyland Blvd, E Tuscaloosa, Alabama. The family is hoping to

hold a celebration of his life once public health restrictions have been lifted.

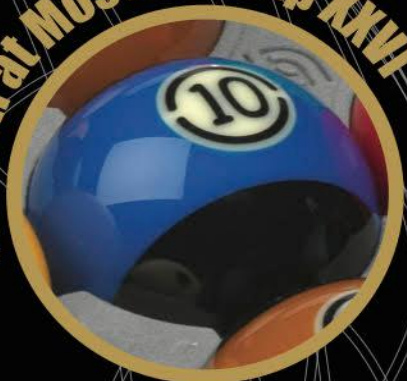
In lieu of flowers, at the request of his family, donations can be sent to the One Pocket Hall of Fame in his name.



Marshall Carpenter

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WORLD CUP OF POOL

— SAUDI ARABIA —

WORLD CUP OF POOL POSTPONED

The World Cup of Pool, set to take place in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia this June 23-28, has been postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Rescheduled dates for the World Cup of Pool will be announced in due course.

Matchroom Pool, together with MoS (Ministry of Sports) and CBX, the of-

ficial promoter of the event in Saudi Arabia, have taken this decision with the health and safety of players, spectators and staff as the paramount concern.

The thoughts of everybody at Matchroom Pool, MoS and CBX are with those around the world who are affected by the coronavirus pandemic.



WORLD POOL — CHAMPIONSHIP —

WORLD POOL CHAMPIONSHIP MOVES TO JANUARY

The next World Pool Championship will now take place from Wednesday, January 6 until Sunday, January 10, having originally been slated for October.

Matchroom Pool acquired the rights in perpetuity to host the World Pool Championship from 2020 in an agreement with the WPA earlier this year. However, due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic the decision has been taken to postpone the event until the new year.

This decision has been taken to ensure that the World Pool Championship can be staged to the very highest standards, enabling players from around the globe to qualify

and travel to compete in the tournament.

Emily Frazer, Matchroom Pool COO, said: “The World Pool Championship is a prestigious event and should be the most important event on the calendar for professional pool players. Following our acquisition, we are extremely eager and excited to stage the event, however it is our first time and we are focused on making it right. The event will boast 128 of the top male and female players across the globe, it is important that all 128 deserving players are able to participate and are not restricted by the current climate.

“With the second half of 2020 filling up with postponed live sport and espe-

cially Matchroom Multi Sport events, moving the World Pool Championship to the new year also gives us space to make room for other tournaments.

“The World Pool Championship will now sit at the beginning of the calendar, making January the right fit for the re-schedule and starting 2021 on a great high – a small silver lining.”

A further announcement regarding the venue, prize money and entry criteria for the World Pool Championship will be made later this year.

The thoughts of everybody at Matchroom Pool remain with those around the world who are affected by the coronavirus pandemic.



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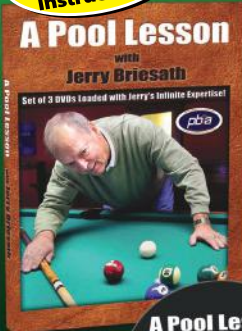
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