

Billiards Buzz

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WOJCIECH
Does It Again

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FROM THE
Head
Rail

MIKE HOWERTON

The pool world was saddened right around the time this issue was being finished up, to see Allison Fisher announce that she had been diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease and would have to step away from competing in tournaments.

The shred of good news involved with her announcement was that she would still be continuing her work with the Legends of the Cue podcast and that she still had some other irons in the fire.

In all the years that I've covered the game, Allison was one of the most naturally talented players that I ever saw play. I remember talking to her after she won the World 14.1 title, and asked how long she had to practice to change her mindset from 9-Ball to Straight Pool. She replied that she hit some balls for about 10 minutes just before her flight.

Allison was also one of the most easily approachable players out there when it came to fans wanting her attention. I wonder if we will ever see another player like Allison.

Until next time.





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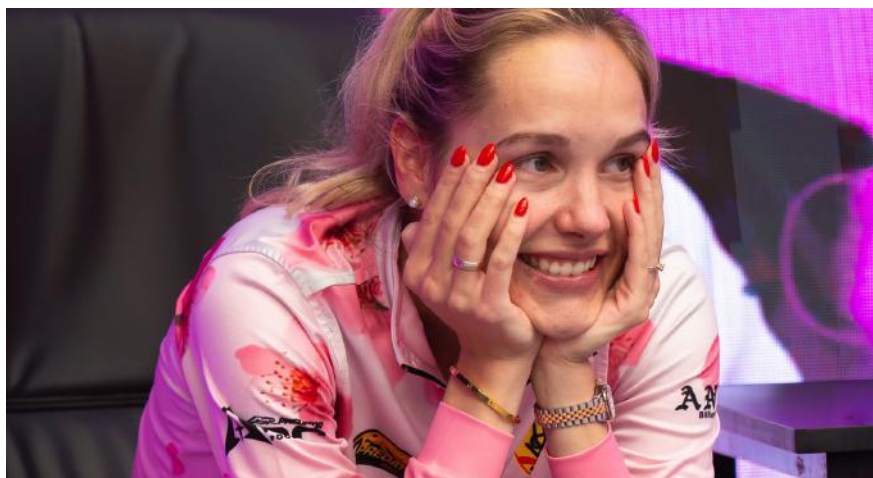
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SIDE POCKET SMARTS

All too many players seem to have a love/hate affair with side pockets, especially the pros if we are to believe what some of the commentators have to say on the subject. Myself, I have always loved the side pockets because they offer so many chances to make unusual shots, and because there are so many position routes that can be played using them.

So, while some say to avoid the sides as much as you can, I say that you should play the correct shot, whether that is into the corner, the side, or even the opposite side pocket. When you adopt this mindset, you will turn a weakness, called Side Pocket Avoidance, into a strength. Indeed, if you master the sides, you can gain an important edge over those many players who treat them with disdain.

I might add that when you are watching the pros play, pay careful attention to the shots they play into them, the position routes, and their results.

Now that you are psyched up about delving into the sides, let's begin to explore them in detail.

DON'T SHRINK THE POCKET

There is an unfortunate trend towards reducing the pocket opening on corner pockets, and its now spread to the side pockets as well. When the corner pockets are made smaller, it makes using english much harder, but at least you can make the ball from any position on the table.

When the side pockets are reduced, however, it eliminates parts of the table where you can make the ball, as is the case on snooker tables. When you eliminate parts of the table, you take away what were makeable shots, and playable position routes. So, for this feature, I am going to assume that the side pockets are 5". This is middle ground between being generous and stingy.

OBJECT BALL'S APPROACH ANGLE

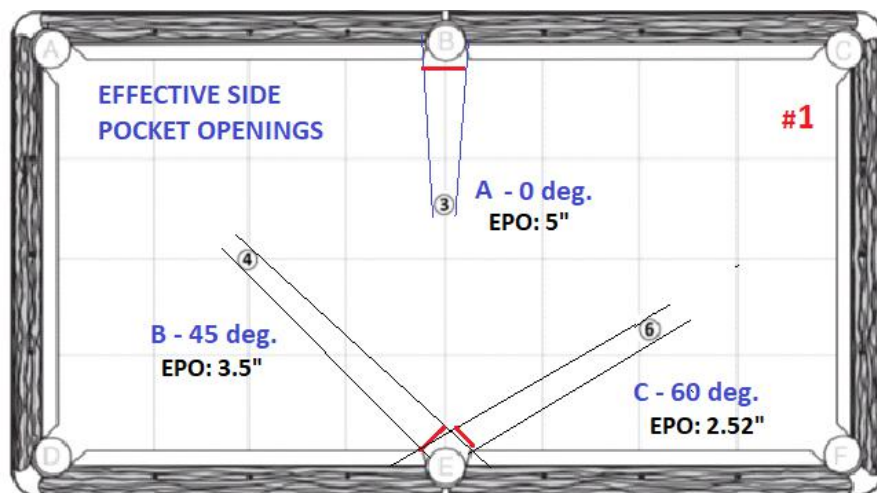
There are some differences in the size of the effective pocket opening when playing into a corner pocket. Factors that cause a change in size include the position of the ball, the age of the cloth, and the speed of stroke being used. However, for the most part, a pocket that measures 4.5" when shooting down the diagonal (from a line through the spot as shown by the ball in Position B in **Diagram #1**) plays

pretty close to that size when shooting from various other locations. This nearly uniformity of the corner pocket's size is one of the largely unnoticed miracles of pool table design.

Turning to the side pockets, which again measure 5", the graphic shows the effective pocket opening (EPO). In **Diagram #1**, the shot from Position A is straight out from the pocket, so the EPO on this one is 5".

Now we are going to jump to the object ball in Position B. It is 45° from the straight in line. Because of this angle of approach to the pocket, the EPO has shrunk to only 3.5"! This means that the margin for error (TMFE) is just 1.25". And, assuming the shot is being played into the center of the pocket, the margin for error on each side (MFE/ES) is about five eighths of an inch (.63").

If the pocket was reduced to only 4.5" with an approach angle of 45°,



the EPO would be 3 3/16" (3.189"). That computes to a TMFE of just .94"! To carry this a big step further, if the side pockets were reduced to 4", a shot played with an approach angle of 45° would be to a pocket that's only 2 13/16" (2.81"). That results in a TMFE of just .56", or a little more than a quarter inch to either side of center!

In the table I show the measurements for a shot with an approach angle of 55°. Now let's move to the shot in Position C. The approach angle is 60° so, as you can imagine, its EPO is a tiny 2.52". The TMFE is just .27", and the MFE/ES is only .14", or barely more than an eighth of an inch!

SIDE POCKET OPENINGS (5")

Deg.	EPO	TMFE	MFE/ES
0°	5"	2.75"	1.37"
45°	3.5"	1.25"	.63"
55°	2.88"	.65"	.32"
60°	2.52"	.27"	.14"

DEFINITIONS

Deg. – Object ball's position relative to the pocket in degrees

EPO – effective pocket opening

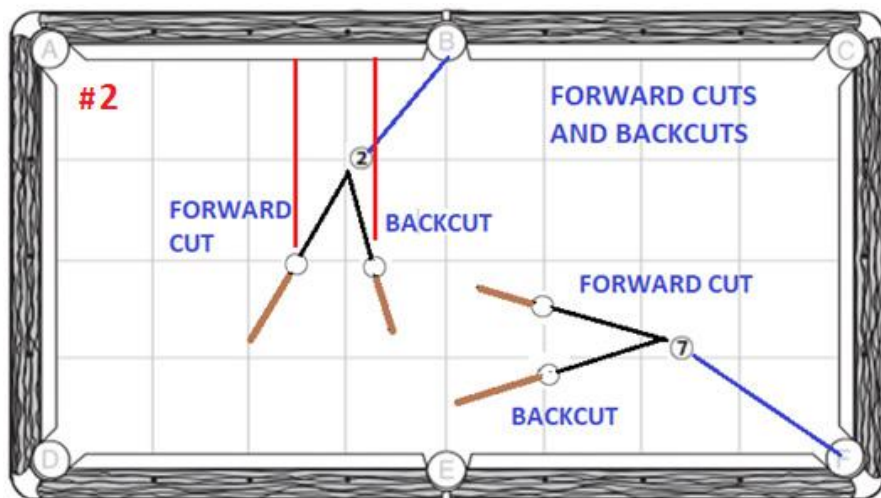
TMFE – Total margin for error

MFE/ES – The margin for error on either side of a ball that's aimed for the center of the pocket.

As a practical matter, you should begin to think about other playing some other shot once the approach angle exceeds 45°-50°. I have more to say on difficulty factors and shot selection in a couple of moments. But first, let's take a look at a couple of different types of cut shots.

FORWARD CUTS AND BACKCUTS INTO SIDE AND CORNER

The positioning of the balls and their Shot Pictures (see last month's feature) can look quite different compared to shots into the corner. For example, the object ball is often close to the rail on shots into the corners, and they can act as a guide to the pocket.



In contrast, the object ball is usually some distance away from the rail for shots into the side pockets.

In the lower right corner of **Diagram #2** we see Forward Cuts and Backcuts into the corner. On Backcuts, the object ball is further from the rail than the cue ball. On Forward Cuts the cue ball is further from the rail than the object ball. Nearly every player prefers to play Forward Cuts because they are easier to see the Shot Picture, and therefore, to aim. On the other hand, Backcuts are played into what some call a "blind pocket", though I greatly dislike this terminology because it makes these mostly very makeable shots appear to be more difficult than they actually are.

One of the two shots into Side Pocket B shows a Backcut. On this shot, the cue ball is closer to a line that runs perpendicularly from the rail than the object ball. On the Forward Cut, the object ball is closer to the side pocket as shown by its perpendicular line coming out from the rail.

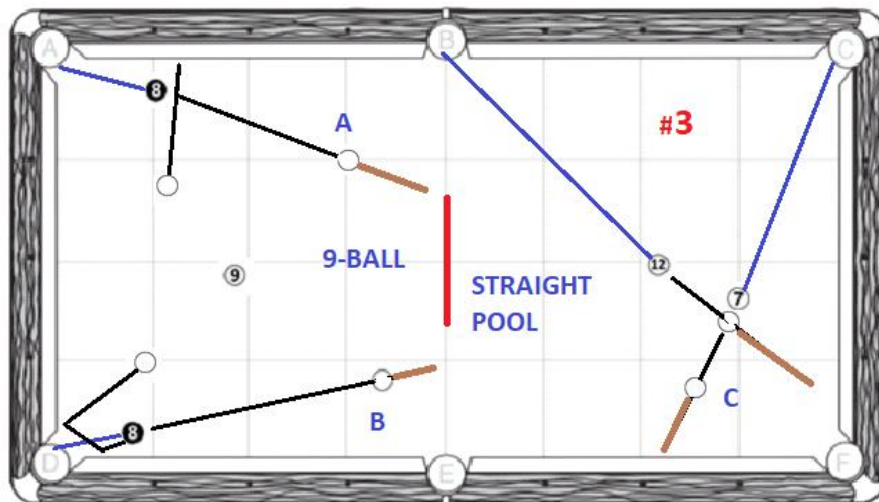
I hope these positions are useful to you in seeing some of the similarities and differences in certain types of shots into the side and corner pockets, and in mastering the Shot Pictures for shots into the side pockets.

USEFUL SIDE POCKET SHOTS

In **Diagram #3**, Position A shows a typical mistake then playing 9-Ball as the player has a route to the 9 that could end up with poor shape. To guarantee a very makeable shot on the 9, the player only needs to play an easy route off the side rail and out as shown for a small angled cut on the 9 into Side Pocket E. As you can see, accepting a shot into the side pocket can greatly simplify certain positions.

The shot in Position B shows a similar position. This time the best option is to play a simple 2-rail route for a nearly straight in shot on the 9 into Side Pocket B. In both Positions A and B there is an obvious tradeoff. On the one hand you have very easy routes that guarantee shape on the 9. On the other, assuming a 5" side pocket, you will be shooting each one into EPO of about 3.5". Since shape is not required as this is the 9, you can put all of your energy into cinching these shots.

The shot from Straight Pool shows a stop shot on the 7-ball from followed by a near straight in shot to Side Pocket B. In Straight Pool many balls will be in or adjacent to the area where they were racked. While it may be possible to avoid using the side pockets for many shots, the cost can



is little margin for error, perhaps because the shot is being played to what's effectively a 3" pocket or less, then the wise course could be to play it into the corner, cross bank it, or play safe!

Even though its distance from the pocket is longer, the shot with the 1-ball in Position B is easier than that from Position A because its Approach Angle is less severe. The shot from Position C could be the easiest of the three because it is being played into a 5" pocket.

be quite high as you could do some serious damage to your pattern. As a result, to play Straight Pool well, you simply must get comfortable with playing balls with significant angles of approach into the side pockets. Besides, as a bonus, your skill at these shots carries over to games like 9-Ball, 10-Ball, and 8-Ball!

OTHER DIFFICULTY FACTORS

Our view of shots into the corner pockets are very often significantly aided by the object ball's position, especially when it is near to a rail. In contrast, when playing most shots into a side pocket, the object ball is usually away from a rail, so this can lead to a sense of disorientation when playing these shots. As a result, this makes it even more important for you to pay attention to the Shot Picture (SP) when standing and then landing on the table so you can have time to conjure up that all-important feeling that you are positioning yourself on the correct line-of-aim. I will give a couple of examples in the next section.

A number of factors go into determining the challenge that shots into the side present. So, as with shots into the corner, knowing each shot's difficulty factors can assist you in making several key decisions: Should you even play

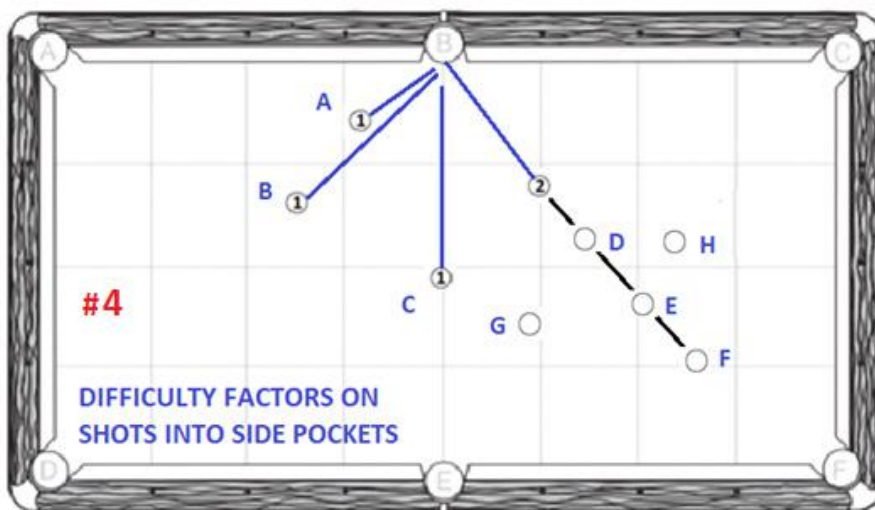
the shot? What factor, if any, deserves extra attention? How will you play position? What speed do you need? And what speed is practical when playing shots from an angle into, basically, a partial pocket?

Now let's look at some of the key factors as shown in **Diagram #4**. The shot on the 1-ball from Positions A, B, and C are all going into Side Pocket B. Imagine these shots with the cue ball lined up for a straight in shot, and at various angles and distances from the 1-ball.

The shot from Position A may be the toughest even though it is the closest to the pocket because its Approach Angle is so severe. In fact, when there

The shot on the 2-ball shows the straight in version being played at three distances – from Positions D, E, F. As you know, when everything else is equal, shots from longer distances are usually (but not always) more difficult. In this case, Position D looks simple enough while the shot from Position F offers quite a challenge.

The non-straight-in shots on the 2-ball with the cue ball in Positions G and H each have an assortment of difficulties. Everything is relative, so these can be considered medium to long shots with a small target (thanks to the Approach Angle), and both have Shot Pictures that require extra time and warm-up-strokes to develop.



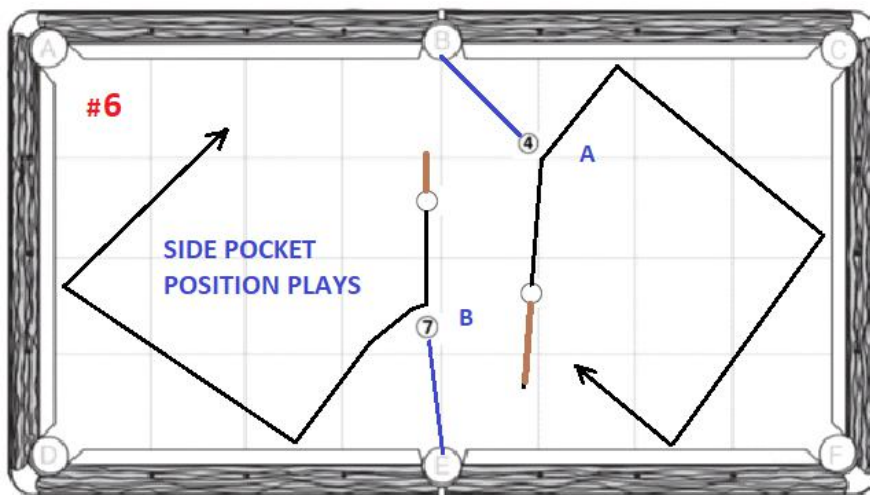
KEY DIFFICULTIES ON SIDE POCKET SHOTS

- The OB's distance from the pocket
- The CB's distance from the OB
- The approach angle of the OB to the pocket
- The cut angle of the shot
- The correct speed - esp. at steep approach angles
- Position may require special skills

SIDE POCKET SHOT PICTURES

Diagram #5 shows two shots into the side pocket. On each one the object ball is in the same place while the cue ball is the same distance from the 5-ball. One big feature of shots into the side is that the object ball (as mentioned before) is usually some distance from a side rail, and that the rail does not provide much, if any, assistance in orienting you to the shot. In the case of Position A, the Shot Picture is rather narrow, as shown by the red lines. This helps in enabling you to establish a feel for the correct line-of-aim.

With the cue ball in Position B you can see how its Shot Picture is much more expansive as shown by the black lines. For practical purposes, your attention should be solely on the cue ball, object ball, and the pocket. Seeing the spatial relationship between these



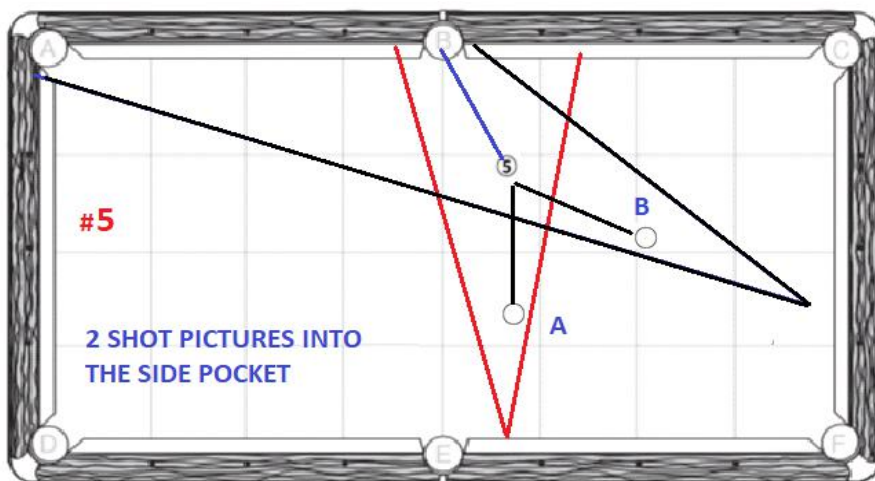
elements is the key to homing in on your final line-of-aim. Again, without much guidance if any from the rails, you will need to conjure up the correct Shot Picture using the pocket, the object ball, the cue ball, and your cue!

TWO SIDE POCKET POSITION PLAYS

Diagram #6 shows a couple of the most commonly played position routes into the side pockets. Position A shows a 48° Backcut into Pocket B. Because of the steep Approach Angle, the EPO is only about 3". The cue ball must travel a long distance 3-rail route, but it only requires a Medium Speed (5) because of the thin cut, which enables the cue ball to retain much of its energy after contact.

The shot on the 7-ball in Position B is a result of failing to get on the other side of the ball, or with a bigger cut angle. The good news is that the 7 is being played into nearly a full pocket. However, the cut angle is so small that you will have to use a touch of right english and use a Very Hard Stroke (8) in order to power the cue ball around the table. While this shot looks easy, you must also pay attention to making the ball!

In sum, you may already be quite proficient at playing into a wide variety of shots into the side pockets – in which case this feature has been a reminder course. For those of you who feel the need to improve your play into the sides, these lessons could enable you to significantly strengthen your game and to ascend to a whole new level of play.



ABOUT PHIL CAPELLE

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



Every pool player knows the feeling of being completely in control of a match and then suddenly making a mistake that seems to change everything. You may be seeing the table clearly, controlling the cue ball beautifully, and executing your patterns exactly as planned when you unexpectedly miss a ball you normally make. Maybe you get straight in when you needed an angle, overrun position, scratch, or miss the money ball with the match riding on it. The important thing to understand is that the mistake itself is often not what costs you the match. What happens when you return to the table can be far more important.

One of the most expensive shots in pool is often the shot immediately following a mistake. Imagine playing 9-ball and missing an easy 6-ball. Your opponent comes to the table but fails to run out, and suddenly you have another opportunity. Physically, your previous miss has nothing to do with the shot you are now facing. Mentally, however, many players are still shooting the 6-ball. They are won-

dering how they missed it or telling themselves the rack should already be over. Their body is standing over a new shot, but their mind is still several minutes in the past. That's how one mistake becomes two.

A good way to prevent this is to develop a mental reset phrase that signals the end of the previous shot. It doesn't need to be complicated. Something as simple as "next shot," "it's over," or "back to the routine" can work extremely well. The actual words matter less than the meaning you attach to them. Over time, the phrase becomes a mental dividing line between what has already happened and what you can still control.

Resetting doesn't mean pretending a poor shot was acceptable. If you just rattled an easy 9-ball for the match, you know you made a mistake. A realistic response might simply be, "I missed it. It's over. Next shot." There is an important difference between saying, "I can't make anything today," and saying, "I missed that ball." The first statement describes you as a player,



while the second describes one event. Strong competitors learn to separate the shot they played from the player they believe themselves to be.

When something goes wrong, use a simple three-part process: acknowledge what happened, reset mentally, and return to your normal routine. If you rushed the shot, recognize it. If you lost control of your speed or selected the wrong pattern, make a quick mental note. Then use your reset phrase, take a slow breath, and release the physical tension that often accompanies frustration. When you receive another opportunity, examine the table from the beginning. Identify the problem balls, determine your pattern, choose the cue-ball position you want, and enter your normal pre-shot routine. You are no longer recovering from a mistake; you are solving a new table.

The chair can make this especially difficult because pool gives us so much time to think. After missing, you might sit for several minutes while your opponent shoots. Players often use that time to replay the mistake repeatedly. They begin wondering why they used inside English, why they didn't choose another route, or how they missed such an easy shot. Technical players may even start rebuilding their stroke

in the middle of the match, worrying about their elbow, grip, stance, backswing, and alignment after a single miss. Unless you recognize a recurring problem, trust the fundamentals you have practiced. Competition is primarily where you perform your skills; practice is where you repair them.

The same principle applies to position errors. Suppose you pocket the ball but send the cue ball a foot farther than intended. Many players continue thinking about where the cue ball should have stopped instead of dealing with where it actually stopped. The position you wanted no longer exists. The only useful question is, "What is my highest-percentage option from here?" Good pool requires accepting the table as it exists rather than wishing it looked different.

Some mistakes naturally hurt more than others. Missing an early 2-ball isn't emotionally equivalent to missing the 9-ball hill-hill. Nevertheless,

if the match is still going, your job remains the same. I've seen players mentally surrender after missing what appeared to be the final ball, only to unexpectedly receive another opportunity. Your opponent can miss too. Your responsibility isn't to decide whether you deserve another chance; it's to be ready when another chance appears.

Mental recovery should also be practiced. During practice sessions, don't always immediately replace a missed ball and shoot it again. Occasionally step away, acknowledge the mistake, use your reset phrase, take a breath, and approach the next shot using

your complete pre-shot routine. You are training your response to adversity, and that skill becomes extremely valuable when the score is hill-hill and the pressure is real.

Every player will miss balls, lose the cue ball, choose the wrong pattern, or fail to execute a shot they've made hundreds of times. The goal isn't to eliminate mistakes completely; it's to prevent one mistake from producing another. Recognize what happened, reset your mind, return to your routine, and give the next shot your complete attention. The previous shot is already gone. **The only shot you can still control is the next one.**

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

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CHALKIN' UP THE MEMORIES...



It had been a pretty successful summer for me as I had won two major tournaments but it was back to work for a couple months.

Although school had started and that usually meant a slow-down, Cue-Topia continued to have a waiting list nearly every night and the action continued at a good pace.

Harry Platis, the action-loving attorney from Seattle, had almost become a regular as he and his wife, Althea, flew down nearly every weekend. He loved playing one pocket and we had become known as an action room. He knew just about everyone as he had been around the pool world for years and everyone was eager to match up with him. However, Althea had put Harry on a strict schedule – he could spend all day in the pool room as long as he was back to the hotel by 7 PM sharp for dinner and whatever else Vegas had to offer. So, everyone was happy, including me, as the room would start to fill up early on Saturday mornings with players hoping to match up with Harry in anticipation of his arrival.

The word had spread around town about our room and one night a man came in – he was wearing a suit. I just assumed that he was one of the casino shift bosses who frequented Cue-Topia to unwind and didn't think anything of it.

A short time later, he approached me and introduced himself as Bob Arum. He probably was surprised when I



Harry Platis & Keith McCready - '91 MGM Grand - Las Vegas, NV - Photo courtesy of IAM



Professional boxer Michael Nunn & Mary Kenniston - '89 Cue-Topia - Las Vegas, NV

he'd be happy to recommend it to his fighters.

We stood up, shook hands and I thanked him for stopping by and looked forward to meeting his fighters.

It wasn't long before Jesse Ferguson, one of the heavyweight sparring partners for Mike Tyson, came in. Arum had told him to ask for me and we ended up hitting some balls together. He played pretty sporty and when he left, he told me he'd bring Tyson and some of the other boxers in.

Besides Tyson, Roberto Duran, Michael Dunn, Bobby Czyz, Jerry Quarry and Michael Dokes were the most famous fighters that came in. Most of the others were sparring partners or boxers in the various weight classes. Jesse Ferguson was the best player of the bunch although they all seemed to enjoy themselves.

I ended up giving most of the boxers some pointers and I have to say I was surprised that although these guys had to have great eye-hand coordination, most of them were definitely not naturals playing pool. They looked like Tom Cruise in "The Color of Money" before Paul Newman taught him how to play!

In fact, Jesse became a regular sparring partner for me – we played about even. He had promised us he'd bring in Michael Dunn and as you can see by the accompanying photo, he made good on his promise. He & Jesse stopped by after he had just won his first middleweight title – both all dressed up and on their way to the after party! It was pretty cool!

Karaoke was all the rage and some of the kids were always hounding me to go after hours to the Ellis Island Casino with them. One night after things had finally quieted down, a few of us were again hanging out. One of them said let's go to Ellis Island and again,

didn't appear to recognize him. Apparently, he was one of the movers and shakers in Vegas.

As many of you probably know, Arum was the founder and CEO of a professional boxing promotion company based in Vegas. A lawyer, he was introduced by former pro football player, Jim Brown, to Muhammad Ali. It was Ali who taught Arum how to be a boxing promoter as he became the vice president and secretary of Ali's promotion company, Main Bout. The first fight he ever saw was the 1966 Muhammad Ali-George Chuvalo bout.

During the '80s, Arum and Don King were the two main guys promoting professional boxing in Vegas. He

smiled when I told him that as a guest of one of Caesar Palace's highrollers, I had been to the Marvin Hagler-Tommy Hearns, Mike Tyson-James Smith and Hagler-Sugar Ray Leonard bouts – three rows from the ring. I didn't tell him that the best part for me was being surrounded by all the stars!

After we talked for a while, I have to admit I was wondering what had brought him to Cue-Topia when he told me that one of his fighters had told him about our place and he wanted to check it out. He said most of his fighters liked to play pool and had been trying to convince him to put in a table where they trained. He told me he was reluctant to do that – mostly because they really didn't have the space. He liked our place and said



Mary Kenniston & professional boxer Jerry Quarry - '89 Cue-Topia - Las Vegas, NV

asked me to go with them. There were seven of us besides the bartender and an older guy named Dean playing the poker machine at the other end of the bar. Just to be polite, I asked him if he wanted to come with us and I was surprised when he agreed. He'd been coming in for several months to quietly play the slots and have a few beers. Most of us had never heard him say a word.

The karaoke bar at Ellis Island had become one of the hot spots in Vegas as they were one of the first in town to ride the wave that was sweeping the nation. Even though it was 3 AM by

the time we got there, the place was packed with casino workers who were relaxing after their shifts. As a few of our group were regulars there, the waitress led us to a small table in the back that had just emptied. Eight of us crowded around the table as some of the others in the area recognized four of us who were there quite often and made room for us to squeeze in.

The waitress came by to take our orders for food and drinks and handed each of us a number for the karaoke list. We began to look at the song lists that were on the table. Dean had ended up sitting next to me and I noticed

he wasn't looking at the list and wondered why he had even bothered to come with us.

I turned to him and asked, "Dean, you're going to sing, aren't you?"

Shyly, he smiled and quickly averted his eyes as he said, "Yes."

We settled in as we waited for our orders and our turns to sing. Most of the people singing were average, a few were absolutely awful and one had a pretty good voice. Everyone was also pretty loaded.

As luck would have it, Dean was the first one of our group whose number was called. He made his way through the crowded bar to get to the small stage. I was the only one that was watching as the DJ greeted Dean and handed him the mic. Dean had his back to the crowd but I could see them talking as the DJ was grinning and nodding his head.

All of a sudden, the opening notes to Elvis Presley's "Heartbreak Hotel" began. Now, try to imagine this...

Still with his back to the crowd, Dean turned around, threw out the mic a couple feet in front of him and snatched it back in time to start singing, "Since my baby left me..."

He'd pulled his pants down a little, was slouching and shaking his hips like Elvis and SOUNDED JUST LIKE HIM!

As "Heartbreak Hotel" faded, he started singing "Unchained Melody" – made famous by the Righteous Brothers. Not only did he sound just like Bobby Hatfield – he even reached the high notes!

By this time, Dean had the crowd in the palm of his hand as he sang.

Then the unmistakable opening to "New York, New York" began and the crowd went crazy. Out of his back

pocket, Dean pulled a hat like Frank Sinatra's signature fedora, unfolded it and placed it on his head. He had Sinatra's moves down and, again, if you closed your eyes, you'd think it was him.

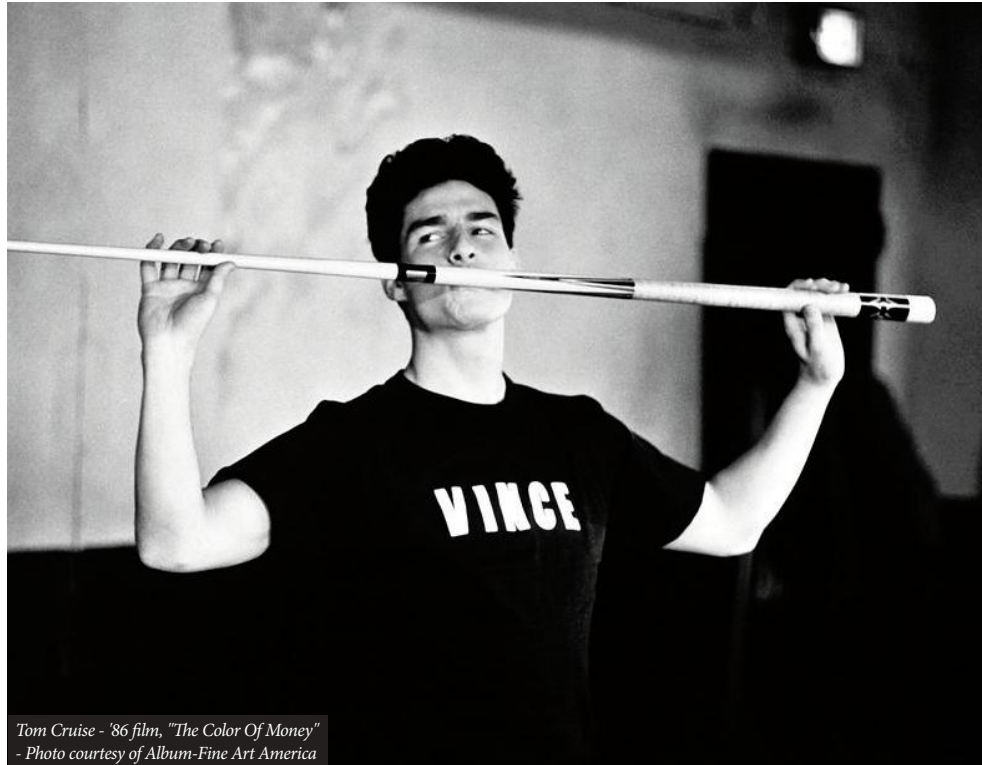
He closed out the set with "Delilah" and he belted it out as only Tom Jones could!

And that was it! The crowd went crazy as Dean slowly made his way back to our table. Everyone was smiling, clapping him on the back, touching him – it was unbelievable.

We were stunned! I'd seen quite a few impersonators but he was the best I'd ever seen. It was hard to believe the mope that sat at the end of the bar, quietly drinking and playing video poker was the same guy. It turned out that Dean and his brother had just arrived in town several months before and worked construction and had a weekend gig at a supper club out in Henderson – a town outside Vegas.

Since we had been open a little over a year by this time, some of the younger newbies – I called them the "kids" – had become enamored by the action scene and its characters. They loved listening to the stories from a world they'd never knew existed until they also became regulars. They loved the subculture of the pool world – its slang and expressions, the chatter of the back and forth negotiation of the action. They loved meeting all the road players and champions that came from all over. They loved learning the nicknames of the players and how they got them.

One night after things had finally slowed down and a few of us were sitting in the bar area, the kids started giving each other nicknames based on which animal each of them resembled. Freddy was "The Panda," a big guy was "Bear," the guy everyone knew as lazy was "The Sloth," etc.



*Tom Cruise - '86 film, "The Color Of Money"
- Photo courtesy of Album-Fine Art America*

They then turned to one of my employees, an Asian kid named David Lee, and they were stumped to come up with a nickname for him until one of the guys blurted out, "Catfish!"

Everyone burst out laughing! It was just too perfect as young David had been trying to unsuccessfully grow his very scraggly mustache for a long time but I could tell by his face that he didn't like it – his feelings were hurt. A short time later, he quietly left.

A few nights later, David had finished his shift and the room was quiet. I was sitting at the rail watching Monk play and David sat down next to me. Even though I knew why, I mentioned that he'd been quiet the last few days and asked if he was OK. As I figured, he told me that he was upset that the nickname he'd been saddled with had stuck and he didn't like it one bit.

I thought for a moment or so then turned to him and said that he didn't know how lucky he was. I told him some players spend their entire life in

the game and never get a nickname. I rattled off a few players that he knew, including me, that didn't have one. I also told him that the nickname bestowed upon him was made by his friends who liked and respected him. He sat there for a little bit and thanked me as he got up to go hit some balls.

About ten minutes later, a kid I didn't recognize came in and asked David if he wanted to play some cheap. They made a game and the kid stuck out his hand and said his name was Jim.

As he reached out to shake Jim's hand, David smiled and said, "They call me Catfish..."

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

CYNERGY



Shane Van Boening

GENERATION II

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WOJCIECH SZEWCZYK IS WORLD CHAMPION AGAIN

Article and photo courtesy **Predator Pro Billiard Series**

HO CHI MINH CITY, Vietnam, September 26th

Four years later, Wojciech Szewczyk is back on top of the world.

The Polish star has been crowned 2026 Iwan Simonis WPA Men's 10-Ball World Champion, defeating Albania's Eklent Kaçi 3-1 in Saturday night's final at Phú Thọ Indoor Stadium.

And he did it without losing a single match.

Szewczyk completed a perfect 7-0 run through the 96-player field, delivering another huge performance when it mattered most to claim the world title.

The final marked the second meeting between Szewczyk and Kaçi during the tournament. Szewczyk had already defeated the Albanian 2-0 during the double-elimination stage before overcoming him once again in the final.

His road to the title continued through the knockout stage with victories

over Olivér Szolnoki, Johann Chua, Francisco Sánchez Ruiz and Sanjin Pehlivanovic, before sealing the championship against Kaçi.

For Szewczyk, the victory marks a return to the very top of the sport four years after claiming his first WPA World 10-Ball Championship title in 2022.

2022. 2026. Wojciech Szewczyk is a two-time WPA World 10-Ball Champion.

The victory earns Szewczyk the \$80,000 champion's prize from the tournament's \$300,000 prize fund and brings an incredible week of world-class pool in Ho Chi Minh City to a close.

Champion – Wojciech Szewczyk
Runner-up – Eklent Kaçi
Sanjin Pehlivanovic & Joshua Filler

The Predator Pro Billiard Series now heads to Bali, Indonesia, for another week of international pool featuring the KAMUI WPA Women's 9-Ball World Championship, ARAMITH Men's Open and Men's Doubles World Championship.

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PIA FILLER OWNS SAIGON

Article and photo courtesy **Predator Pro Billiard Series**

HO CHI MINH CITY, Vietnam, September 25th

Pia Filler is your 2026 Poison Saigon Women's 9-Ball Open Champion!

What a week. What a finish. What a champion.

Filler delivered from start to finish in Ho Chi Minh City, battling her way through a stacked international field and stepping up when it mattered most.

With the title on the line, she kept the pressure on, took her opportunities and closed out an incredible week at Phú Thọ Indoor Stadium in championship style.

The 2026 Poison Saigon Women's 9-Ball Open brought some of the world's best women's pool players together in Vietnam for five days of high-level action, big moments and intense competi-

tion, with \$90,000 in prize money on the line.

And when the final ball dropped, there was only one player left at the top.

Pia Filler, 2026 Poison Saigon Women's 9-Ball Open Champion.

But the action in Ho Chi Minh City isn't over yet.

Today, all eyes turn to the final of the 2026 Iwan Simonis WPA Men's 10-Ball World Championship, bringing an incredible week of world-class pool in Vietnam to its conclusion before the Pro Billiard Series heads to Bali, Indonesia for the next stop of its Asian swing.

Watch the action LIVE on our Pro Billiard TV YouTube channel.

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Pia Filler

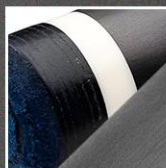
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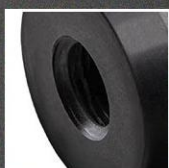
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ADDING TO HIS LONG LIST OF WORLD TITLES, GORST GOES UNDEFEATED TO WIN HIS FIRST CHINA OPEN

Skip Maloney - AzB Staff / Photos courtesy China Open

China's Liu Shasha becomes the fourth women to win China Open multiple times

The day after Fedor Gorst went undefeated to win his first China Open at the Tangzhen Cultural and Sports Centre in Shanghai over this past weekend (Sept. 8-13), he posted a bit of poetry on his Facebook page. Attributed to a Vietnamese fan (he reportedly has a lot of them there), its metaphoric form, features a typical, Vietnamese folk-rhyming style, with Gorst as a mythical 'hero.'

Desert children pass down the song of the double-edged sword:

"Dragon bones bloom with leaves and flowers

Fresh water fills the rocky plateau

It's the day the Emperor returns home."

We're not quite sure how this relates to Gorst's undefeated run through the field of 64 China Open entrants and his consequent collection of a \$40,000 first-place check, but it does have a way of reaching beyond one's immediate sense of written words. You might find yourself re-reading it. It reflects on a long passage of time for a mythical 'hero' that leads to a triumphant kind of 'homecoming' He doesn't live there, but apparently his Vietnamese fans seem to believe that it's where he belongs; a home away from home, as it were.

His 'home' is apparently disputed, at least by the World Pool Association

(WPA), which does not allow him to use his current home in the American Midwest as being sufficient to compete as a US representative. He and Kristina Tkach in the Women's event (among others) entered the China Open as 'unaffiliated/neutral athlete(s)'. The eight bracket(s) for the China Open featured eight competitors in a double-elimination Stage 1 (64 total), followed by a 32-entrant, single-elimination bracket that included the WPA's World #1 and defending champion of the event, Poland's Wojciech Szewczyk and eventually crowned



a champion. Gorst, as the ‘mythical hero’ of Vietnamese fans entered the ‘battle’ and immediately shut out his first opponent, the UK’s Blake Bur-nard. which quieted down as Gorst and Tapei’s Lee Po Hsien locked up in a double-hill battle, which, by win-ning, advanced Gorst to Stage 2.

He and Ruslan Chinakhov were the only ‘unaffiliated/neutral athlete(s)’ in the 32-entrant, Stage 2 phase of the event, which included, among others, only one US representative; Thorsten Hohmann. Other notable competitors (not a total list of them) hailed from Greece (Alex Kazakis), Austria (Albin Ouschan, Mario He), Singapore (Aloysius Yapp), Germany (Joshua Filler), Spain (Francisco Sanchez-Ruiz), Estonia (Denis Grabe), Poland (six) and, of course, the Philippines, which fielded Robbie Capito, Kyle Amoroto and Jef-frey Ignacio, who would end up figur-ing prominently in Gorst’s route to the finals.

Gorst’s four-match, Stage 2 march to the final wasn’t any ‘walk in the park’ until he got there. He opened Stage 2 with two straight victories over Polish competitors; 11-8 over Dominik Jas-trzab, 11-7 over Mieszko Fortunski. He then ran into the aforementioned Jeffrey Ignacio in the event quarterfi-nals, who battled him to double hill. Gorst prevailed to draw Greece’s Alex Kazakis in one of the semifinals.

Coming at him from the other end of the 32-player, single-elimination bracket was eventual runner-up Wu Kun Lin, who ran his own gauntlet of closely-contested battles, beginning with an 11-7 win over fellow Chi-naman Shen Xinyang. He advanced to defeat Singapore’s Yapp and Tapei’s Wu Kun Lin in two, almost-double-hill (11-9) battles and drew Poland’s Dan-iel Maciol in the other winners’ side semifinal.

Gorst downed Kazakis 11-7, as Wu eliminated Maciol 11-6.



It was not the first time that Gorst and Wu had faced each other. As far as we have been able to determine, the last time they’d met was in last October’s Qatar World Cup of 10-Ball, in the opening-round of that event’s single-elimination phase. Wu had elimi-nated Gorst 9-7. Though it augured a fight to the finish, double-hill battle in Shanghai, it didn’t turn out that way. Easily, in terms of score (not always a precise indication of any game-by-game match battle), it was Gorst’s easiest trip of the entire event. Gorst downed Wu 11-3 to claim his first Chi-na Open title.

Three-time world champion Liu Sha-sha downs childhood friend Fu Xiao-fang in Women’s final

When she entered the arena, China’s Liu Shasha was looking to capture her second Chinese Open title. In her way, among the event’s 48 entrants were the event’s defending champion, Ja-pan’s Chihiro Kawahara, four-time champion Han Yu, world 9-ball cham-pion Seo Seoa, and world number one, Tzu-Chien Wei.

She didn’t face any of those ‘storms’ directly during her six-match march

to the title, although she came up against a few who could arguably be described as stronger storms. After a bye in the opening round of Stage 1, double elimination play, she defeated countrywoman, Zhuang Xueying 7-5 and drew one of the ‘Killer Fillers,’ the female one, Pia, who battled her to almost-double- hill (7-5) before Sha-sha prevailed and advanced to Stage 2. Filler failed to advance to Stage 2, when she was defeated by Shi Tianqui in the last, loss-side qualifying round.

Four of Shasha’s six opponents were from China. She’d already defeated one of the foreign competitors (Fill-er) in Stage 1. She was to get by two of the three other women from China before facing the other foreign adver-sary. She opened Stage 2 with a 9-3 victory over Lim Yun-mi, ahead of be-ing challenged, double hill, by Wang Xiaotong. One can only imagine that the challenge had a way of causing anxiety, which she survived to face the Philippines’ Rubilen Amit in one of the semifinals.

From the other end of the women’s Stage 2 bracket, came China’s Fu Xiao-fang, who opened with victories (all versus Chinese opponents) over Chen Ruolin 9-2 and Jiang Teng 9-4, ahead

China Open

of drawing Shi Tianqui in the other semifinal.

Shasha had an easier battle against Amit than she likely imagined, downing her 9-3 and advancing to the final against Xiaofang, whom she'd eliminated in a much closer 9-7 match.

Shasha completed her quest for a second China Open title with a 9-5 victory over Xiaofang.

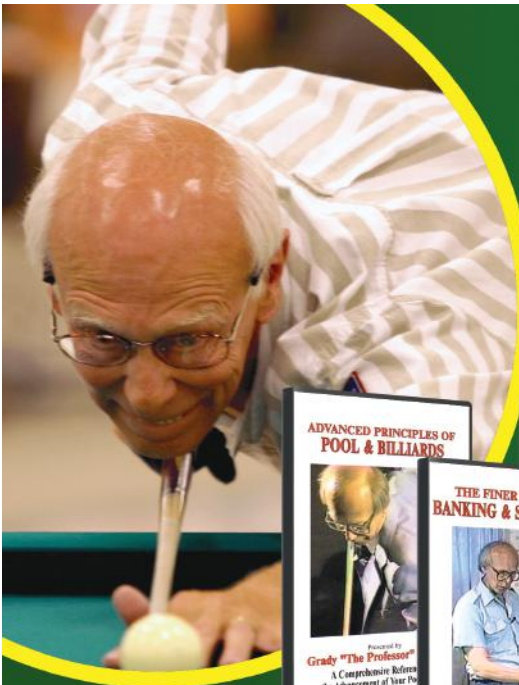
Though there were no American competitors in Stage 2 of the China Open this year, there

were two in Stage 1; Savannah Easton, who lost a Stage 1, final qualifying round from the winners' side, double-hill, to Wang Xiaotong and in the only match she needed for advancement to Stage 2 from the loss side, was eliminated by Meng-Hsia 'Bean' Hung 7-5. April Larson, who's been spending a considerable amount of time in the Asian field of Heyball events recently, lost a Stage 1 opening match to Zhou Mengmeng and, after a loss-side bye, was eliminated by Seo Seo 7-5.

(Editor's Note: We'd like to acknowledge the work of Absolute-Pool.com for portions of its original reporting on this event. Their reports, not attributed to an individual writer, included, among other things, some history of the China Open itself, information about its defending champion and how, for example, the eventual Women's winner, Liu Shasha, came to the event in search of her second China Open title and when she won it, became the fourth woman to have won the title multiple times.)



Fedor Gorst



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PAO COMES FROM THE LOSS SIDE TO WIN PECHAUER WPBA SIGNATURE SERIES STOP #2

Skip Maloney - AzB Staff / Photos courtesy WPBA and Erwin Dionisio

From a standpoint of popularity, the Pechauer WPBA Signature Series, designed specifically to accommodate WPBA competitors at or below a 650 FargoRate is off to a good start. It drew 89 entrants at its inaugural event (not numbered) last October.

This past May, due in part to some conflicting events (the APA League's National Championships, for one), attendance dropped at the 'official' Stop #1 of the Signature Series to 47. Both events were won by Canada's Veronique Menard. This past weekend's Stop #2 (Aug. 27-30) drew close to its original number (80) and though she was in attendance, it was not won by Menard.

Instead, one of the WPBA's 'journey-woman' competitors, New Jersey's

Caroline Pao, came from the loss side to win her first event held under the WPBA banner. She's been at it for a quarter of a century now with history that began with tournaments held under the banner of the J. Pechauer Northeast Women's Tour (JPNEWT). Since her first (recorded with us) appearance in a WPBA event, its Amateur Nationals in 2002 (17th), she has cashed in 54 of its events. She began her history with the JPNEWT in 2003, when she finished in the tie for 5th with Jennifer Baretta at that year's

Stop #4. She went on to cash on the JPNEWT a total of 31 times, including eight wins between '19 and '22.

Pao got off to a good start at this Signature Series event. Racing to 7 on the winners' side, she opened with a 7-2 victory over Brenda Knott, followed it with a 7-4 win over Nathalie Chabot and held Olivia Cheng to a single rack. Then, in a winners' side quarterfinal, she ran in to Kindra Prestegard, who sent her to the loss side 7-2. We'll pick Pao up on that side, after we move a pair of competitors into the hot seat match and let one of them claim it.

For the second time in as many Pechauer WPBA Signature Series events, Menard advanced to the hot seat match. This time, she matched up against Eleanor Callado; a combo with two other journeywomen competitors who've been practicing their craft's skills 'on the road' for years. Menard's trip went through Charlie Simpson (4), gave up nothing to Cecilia Watts, another four to Holly Figueroa before running into a bit of Southern 'sand' by the name of Christy Norris, who slowed the Canadian machinery down a bit. Menard won the match, but not before Norris had forced her to play a 13th deciding game (Norris would finish the event in possession of its 'qualifying spot' in a future WPBA event). Menard advanced to face Giovanna Napolitano in one of the winners' side semifinals.





Eleanor Callado, Janet Atwell and Caroline Pao

shut out Napolitano and advanced to the quarterfinals.

Norris had followed her loss to Menard with victories over Olivia Cheng 6-2 and Ashley Rice 6-4 to pick up Prestegard. She eliminated her 6-2 and joined Pao in the quarterfinals.

It was a pivotal, first match of the second day for both Pao and Norris. They both knew that a win would put them up against the Signature Series' current, two-time defending champion who was waiting for them on the other side of the quarterfinals. There's no reason to think that Eleanor Callado, waiting in the hot seat, wasn't going to an equally formidable task that lay ahead of them, but having to go through the event's defending champion to get to her was likely not lost on either of them.

Pao won the quarterfinal match over Norris 6-3 and turned her attention to Menard. There would likely have been short odds on whether the match would go double hill, and it did, with Pao winning it and advancing to face Callado in the final.

Pao was looking to chalk up her first WPBA win. Callado was looking to chalk up her first and only (recorded) WPBA victory since she'd won a WPBA Regional Tour Championship in 2013. It was the kind of matchup that was 'just what the doctor' ordered when the Signature Series was created just shy of a year ago. So, with motivation high, and to no one's surprise, in a single, extended race to 9, it went double hill before Pao secured the title.

WPBA representatives thanked Janet Atwell and her Borderline Brunswick Arena staff for their hospitality, along with Signature Series sponsor, J. Pechauer Custom Cues. The WPBA will return to Atwell's Borderline Brunswick Arena for a Pechauer Invitational, scheduled for the weekend of Oct. 7-11.

From the other end of the bracket, Callado got off on the 'wrong foot,' in a manner of speaking, when Gwen Sharpton challenged her, double hill, in the opening round. Callado got by her, gave up three racks to Kelly Wyatt, one to Nicole James, and three to room owner, Janet Atwell. Callado advanced to the other winners' side semifinal and faced Prestegard, who'd just sent Pao to the loss side.

Menard sent Napolitano over 7-2 and advanced to the hot seat match. So did Callado, who'd sent Prestegard to the loss side's 5th/6th matches 7-4. Callado claimed the seat 7-4 over Menard, who moved over to the loss side for what would prove to be a fateful match against Pao in the semifinals.

On the loss side, the 5th/6th matches were mostly done. One had finished about half an hour before the hot seat match ended (8:13-8:46, Sat. night).

The other went on for about five minutes after the hot seat match was over (8:46-8:51 p.m.). And the tournament took an overnight break. Callado left, knowing the three opponents who'd be battling for a shot at her, midday on Sunday. Menard went to bed knowing that she'd be facing the winner of the next morning's quarterfinals. The quarterfinalists themselves went off to their respective overnight 'quarters' knowing the two competitors that stood in their path to a final against Callado.

Pao had followed her loss to Prestegard with a first loss-side match against a long-time friend and former tour director of the JPNEWT, Linda Shea. It's hard to imagine a more friendly matchup in the annals of pool. But it turned into 'all business' quickly, as they settled into a double-hill match, won by Pao. She advanced to defeat Kaley Sullivan 6-4,

MORITZ NEUHAUSEN

EARNs SECOND CAREER TURNING STONE CLASSIC TITLE

AzB Staff / Photos courtesy AzB Staff and Erwin Dionisio

Moritz Neuhausen went undefeated to win the Turning Stone Classic XLIII and become the eighth player in the events twenty six year history to win multiple titles.

With Jayson Shaw (9 time winner), John Morra (defending champion) and Neuhausen in the field, the fans in attendance were expecting a repeat winner, but the brackets certainly didn't play out as most of the those fans might have expected.

The upsets started on day two with Redgie Cutler's hill-hill win over Shaw. That match was a close one the whole way, but where past tournaments would usually see Shaw dig down and take over the match late, Cutler matched Shaw rack for rack and pulled out a 9-8 win to send Shaw packing for a long trip through the one loss side.

Cutler built on that early win with a 9-5 win over Frankie Hernandez in round three, but then ran into Germany's Boris Ivanovski and lost 9-6. Ivanovski is another one of the former junior champions from Germany and after a ninth place at the recent Florida Open and acquiring a new sponsorship from Universal, is looking to become a regular on the WNT schedule of events.

Ivanovski continued through the winner's side with a win over Tom Cayer, but then dropped a 9-5 decision to Scranton PA room owner Kevin Clark. Clark has been a regular on the Joss NE 9-Ball Tour for the last four years. He cashed for the first time at Turning Stone back in 2022 and has turned in progressively better finishes every year. His win over Ivanovski sent him

to the hot-seat match and guaranteed him a career best third place finish.

On the list of players that Clark sent to the one loss side, one player of note was Shaun "Get Some" Wilkie. Wilkie has been a Joss Tour player for twenty plus years, but had never finished better than ninth place. Wilkie took the loss to Clark with class and eliminated Zion Zvi and Dylan Spohr before stunning the crowd with a 9-1 shellacking

of defending champion John Morra (Morra has lost to Neuhausen in the final four on the winner's side). Wilkie has been honing his game on the Ultimate Pool USA series of events lately but had no problem with the format at Turning Stone. "He (Morra) got really unfortunate in the beginning with a couple rolls and that gave me momentum. He is a great player, but I really just look at the table most of the time and try not to think about



Moritz Neuhausen

who I'm playing" said Wilkie after the win over Morra.

Wilkie went on to eliminate Ivanovski in a hill-hill match, and he then sent Clarke back to Scranton after another hill-hill win.

The final match saw Wilkie with small leads early on, until Moritz took over and ran to a 5-2 lead. Moritz held his biggest lead at 10-4 and while Wilkie clawed back to within two at 11-9, Moritz then took over and won the last two racks for the 13-9 win and his second Turning Stone Classic title.

Neuhausen had nothing but good things to say about the Turning Stone venue and its fans. "Turning Stone is probably the favorite event I come to every year, because the venue is really nice. The hotel is nice, and the atmosphere is really nice." Moritz said. Moritz said he had been working on getting completely comfortable with some new equipment, "I went



Shaun Wilkie

switched to a Triple Sixty butt and then I switched tips. I'm still trying to figure it out, but I feel like I found something that works." He continued.

Neuhausen has the upcoming Philippines Open circled on his schedule

and is hoping to make a splash on the Mosconi Cup points list at that event. After that, he sees the Turning Stone Classic XLIV as an event he wants to play in. "I keep coming here, and I keep doing well, so, of course, I'll play here next year".



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POTEET & CHOCHAN SHINE IN MOBILE

Mary Kenniston - Photos courtesy Pool Action TV

Adam Douglas, owner of The Billiard Club in Mobile, AL, hosted players and fans this past week for his \$12,000 added Alabama 9-Ball Open.

Local sponsors included Mobile Will – owner of Westside Vending, Smash Billiards, Breezy Acres Crafts, South Alabama Billiards and PoolHub.live.

Featuring three exciting events — the \$2,000 Added One Pocket, the \$10,000 Added Alabama 9-Ball Open (the first stop of the Making It in America Tavern Series), and the Saturday 9-Ball Mini — the room was hopping with action!

BCA Hall of Famer Kim Davenport and 2025's Senior One Pocket Classic champ was there as well as current Derby City Classic Banks Ring Game winner Devin Poteet, reigning Buffalo's Pro Classic 8-Ball champ Sergio Rivas and this year's Music City Open winner Shane McMinn.

Also there were Making It In America One Pocket champions Josh Roberts (KB's Grill & Pub – Kennesaw, GA), Tony Chohan (The Rack – Livonia, MI) and Justin Hall (Beyond Billiards – Davie, FL).

The One Pocket Division began this past Wednesday evening with a play-

ers meeting and auction. Nineteen one pocket players posted a \$300 entry fee to compete in this double elimination event. Races were 3/2 with one extended race to four for the final match.

Play began with Poteet edging out Robert Clark 3-2, McMinn easing past Joe Wilkens 3-0 and Keith Singleton notching a win over Mike Jones 3-1. All other players received a bye.

Second round saw Roberts spank Rivas, Poteet over Davenport and Greg Hogue over Singleton – all 3-0. Hall defeated Brimcat 3-1 and Chohan survived a tough one with McMinn 3-2.

Things tightened up in the third round as Hall hit stride over Poteet as did Roberts with Timothy Evans and Robert Jones beat Greg Hogue – all 3-1, while Chohan skunked Kiel Rubio 3-0

Fourth round action saw two shutouts – Chohan over Hall and Roberts over Robert Jones. Following their 3-0 victories, both Chohan and Roberts advanced to the hot seat match. Roberts then smoked Chohan 3-0 to advance to the finals.

After losing to Roberts in the second round, Rivas went on a tear as he went on to defeat Clark 2-1, Jimmy Overstreet 2-0, Rubio 2-0, Poteet 2-1 and Hall 2-1 until Chohan eliminated him 2-1. He finished in a well deserved third place.



Tony Chohan and Josh Roberts

Back in the finals, Chohan was not to be denied. He won the first game 8-0, the second 8-4 and Roberts took the third game 8-minus 1. Reinvigorated, Chohan won game four 8-0 and closed out the match 8-1. Final score – 4-1.

Congratulations to Tony for another title! Good tournament, Josh!

As the one pocket tournament entered its final stages on Friday evening, the Alabama Open Nine Ball – the first stop of the Making It in America Tavern Series – was just getting started with a players meeting and auction. Played on seven foot Diamonds, 91 players ponied up the \$150 entry fee to play in this double elimination tournament with alternate breaks, races to 9/7 and one extended race to eleven in the finals.

On his way to the final four on the winners side, Thomas Haas shot out of the gate in the upper portion of the chart. He had a first round bye and then defeated Devin Poteet 9-5, Jesse Lindsay 9-4, Tony Chohan 9-0 and Robert Jones 9-5.

Josh Roberts had victories over Andrew Cote 9-2, Cezmari Ramos 9-1, Donnie Hall 9-4 and edged past Chris Reinhold 9-8 to also take his place in the final four.

Vying for the hot seat match, Haas took down Steven Thompson 9-7 and Roberts beat Shane McMinn 9-4.

Looking to lock up a seat in the finals, the Haas-Roberts match was a close one. Tied at seven apiece, Josh pulled away to take the match 9-7. Haas headed west to await an opponent.

And while all this was going on, Ian Jones was busy snapping off the 48 player Nine Ball Mini! He defeated William Perry in the final match.

On the one loss side and after losing in the second round to Haas, Poteet fought through the bracket with wins

over Ann Vennard 7-1, Guy Johnson in a forfeit, squeaked past Randy Jordan 7-6, Jeff Clark 7-1, skunked Jimmy Overstreet 7-0, Jay Agnew 7-2, survived Steven Ellis 7-6, Matthew Wiselley 7-2 and Thompson 7-3 before facing McMinn.

McMinn had just beaten Justin Hall 7-3 and ended up in a dogfight with Poteet. Close until the end, it was Devin who sunk the final nine to win one more and left Shane in fourth place.

Waiting for Poteet was Thomas Haas and another dogfight ensued. Tied at three apiece, it was Poteet who pulled away to get to the hill 6-3. He broke and made three balls. Faced with a tough shot on the two, he cut it in with inside and went two rails for perfect shape on the 3-9 combo. He tapped that in to win 7-3 and he advanced to the finals. Haas finished in third place.

Playing one extended race to eleven, Josh Roberts had the first break and shot out of the gate winning the first three games. In game four, Devin Poteet broke and was left with a tough shot on the one. He missed and left Josh with no shot to a pocket so he played a hook. Devin missed the kick

and Josh ran out to make it 4-0.

Seemingly in dead punch, Josh broke and ran out game five and Devin finally got on the board with his own runout and before you knew it, Devin had tied the match at five apiece! What had once looked like a blowout had turned into a great match!

Undaunted, Josh responded with a two more making it 7-5. Devin answered with three of his own and took the lead for the first time in the match – 8-7!

With all the pressure now on Josh, he faltered and left Devin a tough back cut into the side. He made the ball and ran out the rest of the balls to make it 9-7.

It was then Devin's break and a chance for him to get on the hill first – which he did. He calmly ran out the last game to take the match and title.

What a match! He'll be proud to take that trophy back to his room, The Pool Room, in Jonesboro, AR!

Congratulations to our new champions Devin Poteet and Tony Chohan!



Josh Roberts and Devin Poteet

NIELS FEIJEN

RETURNS TO MOSCONI CUP AS TEAM EUROPE CAPTAIN, 27-30 NOVEMBER

Eight-time Mosconi Cup winner and four-time MVP takes charge as Europe targets seventh consecutive title

The World Nineball Tour is thrilled to announce that Niels Feijen will return to the Mosconi Cup in 2026 — but this time, he will lead Team Europe from the captain's chair as the European side targets a seventh consecutive victory at the Caribe Royale Resort in Orlando, Florida from 27–30 November.

One of the most decorated players in Mosconi Cup history, Feijen made his debut in the competition as a player in 2001 and went on to become an integral part of Team Europe's dominance across more than two decades.

The Dutchman has lifted the Mosconi Cup eight times and has been named MVP on a record four occasions — more than any player in the history of the competition.

Renowned for his professionalism, preparation and competitive mentality, Feijen now steps into a new role, taking responsibility for guiding the next generation of European stars on the biggest team stage in nine-ball.

With Team Europe having won the last six editions of the Mosconi Cup, Feijen will be tasked with maintaining the standards that have made Europe the dominant force in the competition while ensuring his players are prepared for the unique pressure and intensity of the event.

Niels Feijen, Team Europe Captain, said: "I'm really excited to be captain. I've lived every emotion the Mosconi Cup can give you as a player, from the biggest highs to the toughest losses,

and now I get the chance to use that experience to help the European team.

"The quality in Europe is incredible right now. My job is to make sure the players are mentally ready for those race-to-five matches and the pressure that comes with representing Europe.

We know what we're capable of, and I want to take that one step further."

Feijen will also renew a long-standing relationship with Team USA captain Johan Ruijsink, who was recently confirmed to return to lead the Americans for the 2026 Mosconi Cup.



Feijen added: "I've known Johan since I was 16. He was one of the people who helped bring me into the game, and we've worked together and been friends for more than 30 years. We're both incredibly competitive, so going up against each other as captains is going to be intense and fun."

Feijen has also been keeping a close eye on the European players competing across the World Nineball Tour, with the qualification race for the 2026 Mosconi Cup intensifying.

The recently crowned US Open champion, Francisco Sanchez Ruiz currently leads the European qualification standings following his second US Open title last month, with a host of European stars chasing places on the team.

Feijen said: "It's been a crazy year for European players. We've got so many heavy hitters, and we're seeing new players emerge and make deep runs.

You can really feel the level rising as the qualification cut-off gets closer."

The qualification cut-off for the 2026 Mosconi Cup will be confirmed following the Philippines Open Pool Championship, which takes place from 20-24 October.

Emily Frazer, CEO of Matchroom Multi Sport, said: "Niels is one of the greatest Mosconi Cup players we've ever seen, so having him return in the role of Team Europe captain is a fantastic moment for the competition.

"His record speaks for itself, but what makes Niels such an exciting captain is the experience and professionalism he can bring to this group. He knows exactly what it takes to perform under the pressure of the Mosconi Cup, and he understands what it means to wear the European shirt.

"With Johan returning for Team USA, we now have two captains with an in-

credible history together and a deep understanding of what it takes to win this event. I think that makes Orlando even more exciting."

With Team Europe chasing a historic seventh consecutive Mosconi Cup victory and Team USA looking to reclaim the trophy on home soil, the 2026 edition promises another chapter in the greatest rivalry in pool.

The Mosconi Cup takes place at the Caribe Royale Resort in Orlando, Florida from 27-30 November 2026.

Tickets for the 2026 Mosconi Cup are on sale now, with fans encouraged to secure their seats for four days of unmissable Nineball pool action in Orlando.

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LIU SHASHA & HSIEH CHIA-CHEN

CROWNED 2026 BOX BILLIARDS MIXED DOUBLES OPEN CHAMPIONS

Article and photo courtesy **Predator Pro Billiard Series**

Liu Shasha and Hsieh Chia-Chen are the 2026 BOX BILLIARDS Mixed Doubles Open champions after completing an impressive run in Ho Chi Minh City with victory over Aloysius Yapp and Silviana Lu in Wednesday night's final.

In front of the crowd at Phú Thọ Indoor Stadium, Liu and Hsieh delivered when it mattered most, overcoming one of the strongest pairings in the field to seal the title and take home the \$38,000 first prize.

Their victory capped five days of mixed doubles action featuring 48 international teams, with some of the biggest names in men's and women's pool battling for a share of the \$110,000 prize fund.

For the first time, the event was expanded from 32 to 48 teams after all 32 original spots were snapped up in

just 30 minutes, underlining the growing demand and excitement around the Mixed Doubles format.

Held from September 19–23, the tournament marked another major chapter in the Predator Pro Billiard Series' return to Vietnam, bringing together elite players from around the world in Ho Chi Minh City.

Liu and Hsieh become the first champions crowned during a packed week of world-class pool, with the Iwan Simonis WPA Men's 10-Ball World Championship and Poison Saigon Women's 9-Ball Open still to be decided.

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Liu Sha Sha and Hsieh Chia-Chen



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GARCIA OUSTS '24 TEXAS OPEN CHAMPION PATSURA

TO CLAIM 53RD TEXAS OPEN 9-BALL CHAMPIONSHIPS

Skip Maloney - AzB Staff / Photos courtesy Event Staff

There were more than just a few familiar faces at this year's Predator Texas Open 9-Ball Championships. Its defending champion, Shane Van Boening for starters, as well as Ukraine's Vitaliy Patsura, who claimed the title in 2024.

Unfortunately, for both of them and others, like the Philippines' Jeffrey De Luna, German late-teens competitor Felix Vogel, Alex Pagulayan, Billy Thorpe, Lee Vann Corteza, Tony Chohan, Josh Roberts and 12-year-old Texan Gavin Ray Mathew (to name just a few of the 154 entrants), so was another Filipino, Roland Garcia.

Garcia claimed title to the 53rd iteration of the \$20,000-added event, hosted by Skinny Bob's in Round Rock, TX, about 177 miles south of downtown Dallas. He went undefeated through eight opponents, half of whom were among the above short list of entrants. Things got underway for Garcia with a 9-3 win over Josh Kondo, a 9-1 victory over Joey Torres and allowed Ryan Robinson four racks, ahead of facing Gavin Ray Mathew.

A quick note here about the 12-year-old. Mathew has been making a pre-teen name for himself on the Dallas/Fort Worth (DFW) 9-Ball tour (and elsewhere) since he was 9 years old. He entered this tournament having cashed in nine events on the DFW, winning three of them, to include his first when he was 10. His presence in this year's Texas Open demonstrates a fearlessness, almost unheard of in his age group. He cashed in this tournament, finishing in the tie for 17th



Roland Garcia

place, higher than his Texas mentor, Gus Briseno, who finished in the tie for 25th. He won 66% of his first three games (27-14), downing Anastasio Tijerina 9-1, Jonathan Demet 9-7 and Michael Yednak 9-6. And then, he faced arguably the best in the field, who descended on him, one after the other. Garcia defeated him 9-4, which sent him to the loss side, where SVB eliminated him 9-1. There are more than just a few competitors at the upper end of skill levels, who'd have had trouble running through that kind of double dose of superior talent. Though it's hard to keep track of all of the current patch of junior competitors, Mathew is easily among the youngest and more even than his basic skills, his demeanor at the tables will have him playing at an enviable level for a long time.

Garcia, in the meantime, advanced to down Marcus Hodge 9-1 in a winners' side quarterfinal and drew Jeffrey De Luna in one of the other winners' side semifinals.

Felix Vogel in the meantime, who's at the tail end of his teens, headed out for the hot seat, downing Michael Linville 9-2, Manuel Perez, 9-6 and then, defeated SV, sending him off to begin a loss-side trip against Mathew. Vogel moved on, defeating Brian Sanders 9-2 and Evan Lunda 9-5 to draw the ever-dangerous Billy Thorpe in the other winners' side semifinal.

Garcia got into the hot seat match with a 9-4 win over De Luna. He was joined by Vogel, who sent Thorpe to the loss side 9-5. Garcia grabbed the hot seat 9-4 over Vogel.

De Luna and Thorpe picked up a formidable pair of opponents as they arrived to begin their loss-side trip. De Luna got 'The Lion,' Alex Pagulayan, who'd lost his third-round match to Thorpe and headed out on a six-match run that eliminated (among others) Jeremy Jones 9-3, Lee Vann Corteza

and Evan Lunda, both 9-4, and in the match that advanced him to meet De Luna, won a double-hill battle against Roberto Gomez.

Thorpe drew eventual runner-up and unofficial winner of the tournament's 'most matches played' award (14), Vitaliy Patsura, who'd lost to SVB in the second round and set out on an 11-match, loss-side winning streak that would take him all the way to the finals. He gave up just five racks over his first three matches until Tony Chohan challenged him, double hill. Patsura was just warming up, as he moved on to give up a single rack to Gabriel Martinez and three to Marcus Hodge, before Bader Alawadhi forfeited their match, advancing Patsura to face Thorpe.

Patsura sent Thorpe to the proverbial 'showers' 9-2 and was joined in the quarterfinals by De Luna, who'd survived, double hill, versus 'The Lion.' Patsura dispatched De Luna 9-6 to face Vogel in the semifinals. That match came within a game of double hill, but with the determination and momentum of 10 straight, loss-side wins, Patsura prevailed over Vogel 9-7 and punched his ticket to the finals.

Patsura had gotten an overnight (Friday) break after he'd won the first of his 11 loss-side wins, but had been at the tables, playing one match after another since noon. With the exception of Tony Chohan, nobody had gotten closer to him than three racks, until the quarterfinals, at which point, the racks-against kept growing; six and then, seven, ahead of entering the finals.

There was fight in him yet, though. He got to within four racks of claiming the title, until Garcia chalked up the last four to claim the 53rd Texas Open Championships 9-5.

TD Sheyla Neris thanked the ownership and staff at Skinny Bob's for their hospitality, and all of the 154 entrants in the 9-Ball event, the 32 in the Ladies event, and the 37 competitors in the One Pocket tourney, along with the those who played in the \$1,000-added Ring Game and the \$1,000-added 9-ball Mini.



Vitaliy Patsura

SHUFF COMES FROM THE LOSS SIDE TO WIN THE \$20K-ADDED TEXAS OPEN'S ONE POCKET DIVISION

Skip Maloney - AzB Staff / Photos courtesy Event Staff

All we want to know is who's been putting what and how much of it into Brandon Shuff's Wheaties recently.

Because we, and presumably a lot of the players currently involved in Predator's Texas Open Championship's 9-ball division tournament (Sept. 4-8), would like to order some, delivered please. What commanded our attention about this was the fact that at the start of this week's Texas Open (Sept. 1-4), Shuff went undefeated through its first divisional tournament; a \$20,000-added One Pocket event that drew 37 entrants to Skinny Bob's Billiards in Round Rock, TX. In his eight-match run to the title, he sent Fedor Gorst (among others) to the loss side, and though he'd lose the event's hot seat match to Jeffrey De Luna, he moved to the semifinals and shut out T-Rex (Tony Chohan), who'd arrived after eliminating Shane Van Boening, double hill. Shuff advanced to the final and double-dipped De Luna, double hill in the second set to claim the title.

Let's be clear. Shuff is not some newly-arrived 'phenom' from the regional tour circuit. He's been recording cash-winning finishes at regional tour and professional events for the past 23 years in all disciplines. Though he's won a total of 32 known-to-AZBilliards events in that span (easily over 50, in reality), he's had spurts of 'breakthrough' wins that elevated him from one level to another. And he's had some close calls; runner-up to SVB in One Pocket a little over a month ago at the 2026 Midwest Billiards and Cue Expo, for example, and last year, at the Derby City Classic, where he's

been competing in multiple disciplines for over 20 years, he finished 4th in the One Pocket division (behind Gorst, SVB, Mickey Krause and Anthony Meglino). He was a member of the 2012 Mosconi Cup team with Shane Van Boening, Johnny Archer, Mike Dechaine, and Dennis Hatch, which was, in and of itself, a bit of a breakthrough moment.

So, it's obviously more than just something that someone's been slipping into his Wheaties recently. It's another step in a substantive long career at the tables in which he has maintained a reputation for being among the USA's and (with a current ranking among the WNT's top 128), the world's top competitors.

Brandon Shuff



"I've worked really hard at this, so this win isn't anything new or different," he said in a break during the Texas Open's ongoing 9-ball tournament, "This one was a big (breakthrough moment) in One Pocket, for sure."

So let's take a look at his One Pocket run in Texas. Through eight opponents and nine matches, Shuff chalked up an aggregate game score of 31-11 (73%). He wasn't scored upon through his first three matches, opening with shutouts over Jonathan Demet, Pete Bowman, and Marc Vidal Claramunt, at which point, in a winners' side quarterfinal, he ran into Fedor Gorst, who battled him to double hill. Shuff survived and drew Sergio Rivas in one of the winners' side semifinals.

His eventual hot seat opponent, Jeffrey De Luna, with one less match-played, thanks to an opening-round bye, would end up with an aggregate game score of 23-13 (63%). He opened his campaign in a double-hill battle against Chip Compton. Surviving that, he moved on to shut out Christopher Tevez, defeat Alex Pagulayan 4-2, and draw Shane Van Boening in the other winners' side semifinal.

De Luna shut SVB out, while Shuff punched his ticket to join him in the hot seat match with a 4-1 victory over Rivas. Having had only four racks scored against him in the four matches it took him to get there, Shuff appeared to have a 'gear' slip on him in the hot seat battle. He was allowed only a single rack in the match that put De Luna in the hot seat.

Over on the loss side, the two opponents who were wending their way through the field to compete in the two 5th/6th matchups against SVB and Sergio Rivas were Fedor Gorst and Tony (T-Rex) Chohan. How'd you like to lose your first match in a winners' side semifinal and find either of those two waiting for you on the other side of the bracket?

Gorst had followed his loss to Shuff with a shutout over Sky Woodward, a double-hill win over Roberto Gomez and drew his Mosconi Cup teammate SVB. T-Rex followed his second-round loss to Gorst by giving up just three racks to his first four loss side opponents. He gave up one each to Payne McBride and Alex Pagulayan, none at all to Marc Vidal Claramunt and another one to Alex Pagulayan before saying 'hello' to Sergio Rivas.

To no one's surprise, both matches for advancement to the quarterfinals went double hill. There were a lot of One Pocket fans, present or watching Skinny Bob's Billiards' YouTube Channel, who paid attention to the marquee matchup between SVB and Gorst. They were treated to the double-hill match that went on (according to digitalpool's time stamp record) for just under two hours on Wednesday night. SVB advanced to the quarterfinals. The YouTube stream that advanced SVB to the quarterfinal can still be viewed, as can many of the One Pocket matches, to include the double-hill, Chohan/Rivas match that advanced Chohan in about an hour and 15 minutes. The quarterfinal, which advanced T-Rex, also went double hill, in a few minutes shy of an hour, at which point (10:30 p.m. on Thursday night, Sept. 2), the One Pocket event took an overnight breath.

The semifinal, pitting Shuff against T-Rex, which got underway at about 11 a.m. on Friday morning (Sept. 3) took a little longer than the quarterfinal, just over two-and-a-half hours, even though Shuff didn't give up a rack.

The opening set of the true double-elimination final, which got underway around 1:30 p.m. on Friday was a bit of a marathon, lasting (again, according to the digitalpool time stamps) just 10 minutes shy of four hours. Shuff tied up his match

score vs. Rivas at 1-1 with a 4-1 victory, reloaded and headed into the second set. This one went double-hill and when it was done, Shuff had recorded another of his 'breakthrough' wins and claimed the Texas Open Championships' One Pocket title.

Earlier today (Sat. Sept. 5), between matches of the ongoing 9-Ball division of this year's Texas Open, at which Shuff had already won his first two matches, he reflected briefly on the career that had brought him to this point and while acknowledging that this latest One Pocket title qualified as a 'breakthrough' win for him, he had already moved on.

"I'm a persevering type of person," he said, "so let's hope we're having another conversation when this Texas Open 9-Ball is over."



Jeffrey De Luna

KIBAROGLU SUCCESSFULLY DEFENDS TEXAS OPEN LADIES TITLE, DOWNING HOME-GROWN ARYANA LYNCH

Skip Maloney - AzB Staff / Photos courtesy Event Staff

Though the American contingent, in all divisions of this past Labor Day weekend's (Sept. 4-7) Predator Texas Open Championship at Skinny Bob's Billiards, in Round Rock, TX dominated the entrant fields, though competitors who hailed from elsewhere won two of the three main events.

The 32-entrant One Pocket division, in which three out of every four competitors was from the USA, was won by Brandon Shuff, who defeated the Philippines' Jeffrey De Luna in the final. In the 9-Ball division, won by Roland Garcia, American competitors comprised 90.5% of the 154-entrant field (141), while half of its final 12, and five of its top 6 competitors were from elsewhere. The same balance existed in the Ladies division, where American women were 90.6% of the 32-entrant field (29), but unlike the 9-ball competition, only two of the final 12 were from other shores.

The \$3,000-added Ladies Championship was won by Turkey's 37-year-old Eylul Kibaroglu, the two-time defending champion of the Texas Open's Ladies division, who defeated home-grown (Texas) competitor, 23-year-old Aryana Lynch twice; hot seat and in what turned out to be a single-set, double-hill final. Canada's Amy Beauchamp finished 9th/12th, while Korea's Hye-Jin Song finished in the tie for 25th.

We talked in our report on the One Pocket division of these Texas Open Championships about Brandon Shuff recording what was, for him, a 'break-through' win, which was true, but it was preceded by previous 'break-



Eylul Kibaroglu



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throughs' that had elevated his competition level at various stages of his 23-year career. For Texas' Aryana Lynch, whose runner-up finish in this Texas Open Ladies Championship, represented a first significant breakthrough in her nine-year (recorded with us) career at the tables. The cash payout alone for her runner-up finish in the Texas Open was more than she'd earned in an entire year at any point since 2017, when she recorded her first cash finish with us and joined the AZBilliards' database (again, this is related only to what's been reported to us since that time).

She has made three, known cash-pay-out appearances in WPBA events and 'cut her teeth,' playing on the Gulf Coast Regional Women's Tour when she was 14, and later, the Dallas-Ft. Worth (DFW) Ladies 9-Ball Tour. Her last known and recorded payout with us came three years ago, when she runner-up at a stop on the DFW Tour.

So there she was, as far as we knew, absent (more or less) from the tables for three years, playing against what would be five opponents in seven matches, only two of whom entered the tournament with lower Fargo-Rates than her own (576). She opened with a 7-3 victory over Holly Maloney and drew Kim Sanders (591), who had a FargoRate-calculated 57.6% chance of defeating her in their race to 7. Though Sanders would battle her to double hill, Lynch beat those (relatively) even odds and advanced to down Michelle Cortez 7-3 and draw Jaidan Barbour in one of the winners' side semifinals.

Eylul Kibaroglu, in the meantime, got by Ellen Couvillion 7-3, junior competitor, Jordan Helfrey, who played well in a tight match 7-4, Amy Beauchamp 7-5 and drew Lisa Porter in the other winners' side semifinal.

Kibaroglu defeated Porter 7-3 and advanced to the hot seat match. Lynch,

in the meantime, sent Barbour off to the loss side's 5th/6th matches 7-4. Kibaroglu allowed Lynch only a single rack in their first of two matches and claimed the hot seat.

When Porter and Barbour showed up on the loss side of the bracket, they both drew competitors who'd lost to Lynch. Michelle Cortez, who'd lost a winners' side quarterfinal to her, defeated Chris Fields and Sue Orr, both 7-3, to pick up Porter. Barbour drew Kim Sanders, who'd lost to Lynch, double hill in the second, winners' side round, came over to start her seven-match, loss-side campaign and opened with two straight, double-hill wins, over Yvonne Asher and Jennifer Kraber. She then got by Amy Kraber 7-3, before running into her third, double-hill match, against Ellen Couvillion. She won that 'close call' to meet up with Barbour.

Sanders advanced to the quarterfinals 7-5 over Barbour and was joined by Cortez, who'd eliminated Porter 7-4. Sanders earned herself a rematch against Lynch with a 7-4 win over Cortez in the quarterfinals. Cortez' momentum at that point, suggested that they might be headed into at least another double-hill match for advancement to the final. That did not come to pass. Lynch gave up just three racks to Cortez in their semifinal second match and got her second shot at Kibaroglu, waiting for her in the hot seat.

This time, the match didn't end up going as smoothly for Kibaroglu as it had the first time. Hard to know what players are thinking, while conventional wisdom suggests that the good ones don't do a lot of thinking about past matches. It applied to both of them in the final; Lynch wasn't likely to have been dwelling on her earlier 7-1 match, battling for the hot seat,

while Kibaroglu was busy being as vigilant and focused as she'd been the first time around. The two battled to double hill before Kibaroglu dropped the last 9-ball and claimed her third, Texas Open Ladies title.

(Editors note: A complete report on the 9-ball division of this year's Texas Open has been or shortly will be posted, containing full details of Roland Garcia's victory, along with 'thank you's for added-money, the hospitality of Skinny Bob's and the participation of all of this year's entrants across five different tournaments, including the 1,000-added (each) Banks Ring Game and 9-Ball Mini tournament



Aryana Lynch

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DENKHA BATTLES HIS WAY TO THIRD SUCCESSIVE NATIONAL SNOOKER TITLE

Article and photos courtesy www.Snookerusa.com

Renat Denkha has won the 2026 United States National Snooker Championship though was made to battle hard by Hasanain Alsuntani to claim his third successive title at the PABSA Academy in Santa Clara, California.

Even though Denkha had won his group and Alsuntani had finished as runner-up in his, it was the number eight seed who had the less precarious route through the knock-out stage losing just one single frame to the 2022 champion Steven Wong in the quarterfinals, while the defending champion only made it through his quarterfinal with Daniel Holoyda by virtue of a final frame respotted black.

Alsuntani lost 2-1 to Holoyda in their group match on the first day of the Championship, but from then he encountered very few problems on the road to his first Championship final.

Although as the defending champion Denkha started as the slight favorite to win, a very intense high-class final was anticipated and that is exactly what ensued.

It was Denkha who made the best start as the Californian appeared incredibly nervous in the first frame, and the player from Chicago sealed it very comfortably with a break of 64.

However Alsuntani then found his stroke as a run of 32 in frame 2 gave him the confidence which helped settle his nerves, and he started to cue much more freely. He won frame 2

and then also secured a very protracted third frame of which he was always in control of to take a 2-1 advantage.

Alsuntani could not seem to make any headway in the fourth frame, and a run of 36 by Denkha helped him to level the match at 2-2 going into the 10-minute interval.

On the resumption of play, the match swung back in favor of Alsuntani as he took control of the fifth frame to restore his lead.

Denkha also found himself 3-2 down in last year's final against Ajeya Prabhakar, and so he has the proven



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ability in a final to fight back when under pressure. Alsultani was up in frame six and had several wonderful opportunities on the final colored balls to take a crucial 4-2 lead just as Prabhakar had last year, but yet again Denkhah took advantage of his opponent's routine mistakes and his fighting spirit shone through to pinch the frame on the final black to level the match at 3-3.

The next frame got cagey from the start as several reds ended up in the baulk area, though Denkhah was presented with a good scoring opportunity. Though while stretching to make the stroke he missed the red into the top-left hand pocket and Alsuntani stepped in with a very cool and well-constructed break of 71 to require just one frame for the title.

Even at this point given Denkhah's tenacity and experience you knew that he was still very much in the match. An early run of 37 in the eighth frame put him firmly in control, and Alsultani was not able to counter and the match was level again at 4-4 and going into a final frame.

After Alsuntani's break-off, Denkhah stroked in a fabulous long red of which he scored 28 points from and it set the tone of the frame. He was always on the front foot from that moment and further scoring contributions resulted in Alsuntani conceding the frame and

match with a red remaining on the table.

Denkhah has come such a long way in this Championship, having first competed in it back in 2017 at the New York Athletic Club where he lost in the semifinals to Ahmed Aly Elsayed. He did not compete again until 2023 at the Embassy Billiards Club where he lost to the eventual champion Daren Taylor in the quarterfinals.

However he came back the following year and has not lost a match in the Championship ever since, stretching his winning streak to 23 matches after his 5-4 success in this final.

The United States Snooker Association was honored to have the CEO of the Championship sponsoring partner Herbspro, Tanu Bhattacharya, and the CEO of the Billiard Congress of America, Shane Tyree, at the PABSA Academy to watch the final and be part of the presentation of the trophies.

Mr. Tyree presented Alsuntani with the 2026 runner-up trophy, and Denkhah was presented the 2026 winner's trophy by Ms. Bhattacharya and with the perpetual "The Tom Kollins Trophy" by Mr. Prabhakar. A special mention was given to Sargon Isaac who won the highest break prize for his magnificent run of 103 which he compiled during his group match against Yi Dai.

Alan Morris, the Executive Director of the United States Snooker Association (USSA), was delighted with the success of the Championship. He commented: "It has been such an amazing Championship with the standard being one of the highest ever, if not the highest standard of them all with some truly great performances from many of the players.

"I have to congratulate Renat on the achievement of winning three successive Championships which is a tremendous accomplishment, and thank all of the players who participated as they make this great Championship what it is."

Morris concluded: "I want to also congratulate Ajeya (Prabhakar) and Sam (McGrath) on the establishment of the PABSA Academy which proved to be wonderful addition as a host of this year's Championship, and it is sure to play a vital role in the hosting of future major snooker events in the United States."

All of the results from the 2026 United States National Snooker Championship can be found on the tournament page on Cloud Snooker, which is the USSA's official tournament running and scoring system platform.

Watch the whole of the final on the Pan American Billiards and Snooker Association YouTube page



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CUETEC

BENOIT GOES UNDEFEATED

TO CLAIM PALMETTO STATE'S WOMEN'S CHAMPIONSHIP IN SPARTANBURG, SC

Skip Maloney - AzB Staff / Photo courtesy event staff

Ashley Benoit, who came into this past weekend's (Sept.12-13) Palmetto State Women's Championships ranked among the WPBA's Top 20 women (#19), went undefeated through a field of 26 to claim the event title.

She went undefeated to the hot seat, downing NC's Christy Norris in the hot seat match, and defeated Nikki Brown in the finals. The \$750-added event was hosted by The League Room Grill & Billiards in Spartanburg, SC.

Using what's known as a 'tiered-entry' system, instead of just awarding byes to a number of opponents in an opening round of play, Benoit was among the six competitors who was awarded an opening-round bye. She opened her campaign against Crystal Jackson, who'd won a preliminary, double hill match and defeated Kay Faith. Benoit wasn't scored upon until her third round of play, having shut out both Jackson and Kaitlyn Giddens. She advanced to face junior competitor Arianna Houston in one of the winners' side semifinals.

From the other end of the bracket, Christy Norris played a preliminary round against Tiffany Stidman, defeating her 8-6 and followed up with victories over Heather Smith 8-4 and Lisa Cossette 8-6. Norris drew Nikki B(rown) in the other winners' side semifinal.

Benoit sent Houston off to the loss side 8-3, as Norris sent Brown over 8-6. Benoit defeated Norris in the hot seat match 8-2.

On the loss side, Houston arrived and drew Kim Pierce, who'd lost one of the preliminary winners' side matches

against Nikki B and won five straight, which included the recent elimination of Cossette 6-4 and Jackson 6-1. Nikki B came over and picked up Kaitlyn Giddens, who'd followed her loss to Benoit with victories over Dona Selman 6-2 and Amber Jackson, double hill.

The quarterfinal rematch between Nikki B and Kim Pierce came about when Nikki B eliminated Giddens 6-1 and Pierce had eliminated Houston 6-4. Nikki defeated Pierce a second time 6-2 and turned to face Norris in the semifinal.

That match went double-hill before Brown prevailed for a shot at Benoit, waiting for her in the hot seat. Benoit repeated her hot seat match performance against a different opponent, defeating Nikki B in the final 8-2.

"I honestly played some of the best pool I've played in a while," wrote Benoit in a Facebook post following the event, "and I'm really happy with how I performed from start to finish."

"It feels good to see the hard work translating into results!" she added. "I'm already looking forward to coming back. Spartanburg definitely treated me well."

Tour director and co-owner/managing partner of Spartanburg's League Room, Josh Ball thanked his staff for their efforts at keeping the event running smoothly, as Benoit offered her



own thanks for those same efforts, thanking Josh and Alicia Ball "for putting together and running such a great tournament." Josh Ball also added thanks to EvoSports and its co-founders, Colin and Justin Li for their streaming services.

The League Room Grill & Billiards will hold a 9-ball Open on the weekend of Oct. 2-4, which has already registered Mike Dechaine, Johnny Archer and Tommy Kennedy as competitors.

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Tourney Results

Sep 03 - Sep 06

Turning Stone Classic XLII

Turning Stone Casino

Verona, NY

- 1 Moritz Neuhausen \$10,000
- 2 Shaun Wilkie \$6,500
- 3 Kevin Clark \$4,000
- 4 Boris Ivanovski \$2,700
- 5 John Morra \$2,000
- 5 Lukas Fracasso-Verner \$2,000
- 7 Dylan Spohr \$1,600
- 7 Jayson Shaw \$1,600
- 9 Danny Hewitt \$1,200
- 9 Ron Casanzio \$1,200
- 9 Tommy Cayer \$1,200
- 9 Zion Zvi \$1,200
- 13 Angelo Innes \$950
- 13 Brad Guthrie \$950
- 13 Dan Mulhollen \$950
- 13 Joe Dupuis \$950
- 17 Bryzen Manipula \$599
- 17 Dave Pinkston \$599
- 17 Ken Donald \$599
- 17 Rachel Lang \$599
- 17 Reggie Cutler \$599
- 17 Tyler Henninger \$599
- 17 Waleed Hashem \$599
- 25 Bill Gallagher \$400
- 25 Brian Vu \$400
- 25 Bucky Souvanthong \$400
- 25 Erik Hjorleifson \$400
- 25 Jake Jackson \$400
- 25 Jim Prather \$400
- 25 Paul Cormier \$400
- 25 Steve Sutton \$400

Sep 04 - Sep 04

Village Cue Club Friday Night Labor Day "Grind"

Village Cue Club

North Palm Beach, Florida

- 1 Chris Cabbage \$240
- 2 Erick Amador \$160

- 3 Jesner Suarez \$100
- 4 Michael Johnson - \$50

Sep 05 - Sep 13

2026 China Open Ladies Division

Shanghai Pudong Yuanshen Stadium

Shanghai,

- 1 Sha Sha Liu \$36,000
- 2 Xiao-Fang Fu \$18,000
- 3 Rubilen Amit \$9,000
- 3 Tian Qi Shi \$9,000
- 5 Jiang Teng \$5,400
- 5 Meng-Hsia Hung \$5,400
- 5 Seo Seoa \$5,400
- 5 Xiao Tong Wang \$5,400
- 9 Chieh-Yu Chou \$2,700
- 9 Han Yu \$2,700
- 9 Pei-Chun Tsai \$2,700
- 9 Ruo Lin Chen \$2,700
- 9 Shui Ching Chiang \$2,700
- 9 Wan-Ling Wang \$2,700
- 9 Yu-Wen Hsieh \$2,700
- 9 Yun Mi Lim \$2,700
- 17 Chia Hua Chen \$1,800
- 17 Chihiro Kawahara \$1,800
- 17 Darya Siranchuk \$1,800
- 17 Ge Bai \$1,800
- 17 Kelly Fisher \$1,800
- 17 Kristina Tkach \$1,800
- 17 Mu Yan Zhang \$1,800
- 17 Pia Filler \$1,800
- 17 Qing Ning Huang \$1,800
- 17 Sakura Muramatsu \$1,800
- 17 Savannah Easton \$1,800
- 17 Tzu-Chien Wei \$1,800
- 17 Venus Lim Xin Yi \$1,800
- 17 Yuki Hiraguchi \$1,800
- 17 Zhou Meng-Meng \$1,800
- 17 Zhu-Qing Bi \$1,800

Sep 05 - Sep 13

2026 China Open

Shanghai Pudong Yuanshen

Stadium

Shanghai,

- 1 Fedor Gorst \$40,000
- 2 Kun Lin Wu \$20,000
- 3 Alexandros Kazakis \$10,000
- 3 Daniel Maciol \$10,000
- 5 Jeffrey Ignacio \$6,000
- 5 Joshua Filler \$6,000
- 5 Ruslan Chinakhov \$6,000
- 5 Zhen Qi Xue \$6,000
- 9 Aloysius Yapp \$3,000
- 9 Casper Matikainen \$3,000
- 9 Marco Teutscher \$3,000
- 9 Mario He \$3,000
- 9 Maximilian Lechner \$3,000
- 9 Mi Le \$3,000
- 9 Mieszko Fortunski \$3,000
- 9 Robbie Capito \$3,000
- 17 Albin Ouschan \$2,000
- 17 Denis Grabe \$2,000
- 17 Dominik Jastrzab \$2,000
- 17 Francisco Sanchez-Ruiz \$2,000
- 17 Hayato Hijikata \$2,000
- 17 Hui-chan Lu \$2,000
- 17 Jin-Hu Dang \$2,000
- 17 Juan Carlos Exposito \$2,000
- 17 Konrad Juszczyszyn \$2,000
- 17 Kyle Amoroto \$2,000
- 17 Naoyuki Oi \$2,000
- 17 Shen Xin Yang \$2,000
- 17 Szymon Kural \$2,000
- 17 Thorsten Hohmann \$2,000
- 17 Wiktor Fortunski \$2,000
- 17 Wojciech Szewczyk \$2,000

Sep 06 - Sep 06

Village Cue Club Sunday Labor Day "Grind"

Village Cue Club

North Palm Beach, Florida

- 1 Erick Amador \$250
- 2 Sam Kantar \$190
- 3 Mike Mastropieto \$130

4 Ariel Matute \$80
5 Anthony Pirone \$40
5 Christian Lopez \$40

Sep 07 - Sep 07

Village Cue Club Monday Labor Day "Grind"

Village Cue Club

North Palm Beach, Florida
1 Sam Kantar \$380
2 Erick Amador \$250
3 Gary Robinson \$150
4 Charles Marable \$150

Sep 10 - Sep 13

4th Annual Stevie Chan Memorial

Piazza's Sports Bar

Aurora, Colorado
1 Shane Van Boening \$5,080
2 T.J. Steinhaus \$3,000
3 Shane Thompson \$2,000
4 Adam Sisneros \$1,500
5 Robert Mattson \$1,000
5 Ruben Silva \$1,000
7 Joe Prince \$800
7 Jose Loma \$800
9 Brian Krapes \$500
9 Donivan Pedroncelli \$500
9 Greg Romero \$500
9 Marc Vidal Claramunt \$500
13 Dave Gomez \$300
13 Jason Nida \$300
13 Tom D'Alfonso \$300
13 Tony Piazza \$300
17 Brayden Gallegos \$200
17 Chris McDaniel \$200
17 Eric Charlton \$200
17 Greg Webster \$200
17 Jackie Yang \$200
17 Jacob Casados \$200
17 Matt Driste \$200
17 Robert Leivonen \$200
25 Bobby Neues \$140
25 David Anderson \$140
25 David Matlock \$140
25 Devin Schweer \$140
25 Frank Urbaniak \$140
25 John Boster \$140
25 Kiko Ibarra \$140

25 Sharik Sayed \$140

Sep 12 - Sep 12

TOP Tour Stop

Dot's Cue Club

Rocky Mount, NC
1 Jesse Gilbert \$500
2 Delton Howard \$300
3 Mike Glenn \$150
4 Larry Hughes \$120

Sep 12 - Sep 12

Palmetto State Women's Championship

The League Room

Parkersburg, West Virginia
1 Ashley Benoit \$2,500
2 Nikki Brown \$1,750
3 Christy Norris \$1,100
4 Kim Pierce \$670
5 Arianna Houston \$120
5 Kaitlyn Giddens \$120

Sep 16 - Sep 20

Alabama 9-Ball Open

The Billiard Club - Mobile

Mobile, AL
1 Devin Poteet \$5,500
2 Josh Roberts \$3,500
3 Thomas Haas \$2,300
4 Shane McMinn \$1,655
5 Justin Hall \$1,250
5 Steven Thompson \$1,250
7 Jonathan Hennessee \$850
7 Matthew Wisely \$850
9 Robert Clark \$550
9 Robert Jones \$550
9 Steve Ellin \$550
9 Tony Chohan \$550
13 Chris Reinhold \$350
13 Jay Agnew \$350
13 Robert Tabers \$350
13 Sergio Rivas \$350
17 Cody Booth \$200
17 Dallas Broussard \$200
17 Evan Hudson \$200
17 Greg Hogue \$200
17 Jamie Baraks \$200
17 Jimmy Overstreet \$200

17 Mike Jones \$200
17 Travis Vennard \$200

Sep 16 - Sep 20

Alabama 9-Ball Open One Pocket Division

The Billiard Club - Mobile

Mobile, AL
1 Tony Chohan \$3,300
2 Josh Roberts \$2,300
3 Sergio Rivas \$1,300
4 Justin Hall \$850

Sep 18 - Sep 20

5th Annual Wicked Wahine Event

Legacy Billiards Bar & Grill

Spokane, Washington
1 Min Chen Thrams \$1,200
2 Sky Cristadora \$900
3 Melissa Wilson \$700
4 Jennifer Shumaker \$450
5 Marissa Holden \$250
5 Stacy Roberts \$250
7 Dora Valdez \$150
7 Molly Oliver \$150
9 Christie Lee \$100
9 Dawn Ostenberg \$100
9 Jamie Lough \$100
9 Cricket Pine \$100
13 Makayla Kvasnicka \$80
13 Rebecca Roberts \$80
13 Sandi Fisher \$80
13 Sandra Oschmann \$80
17 Amanda Hang \$60
17 Arionna Miller \$60
17 Brandy Stensgar \$60
17 Carlajeon Beers \$60
17 Chelsea Reiter \$60
17 Cynda Eldred \$60
17 Molly Rose Hamilton \$60
17 Queena Hale \$60

Sep 18 - Sep 21

Jersey Girl Billiards' 2026 Bayou Bash

Buffalo's Billiards

Jefferson, La
1 Gary Abood \$2,300
2 Brayden Splawn \$1,500

3 Austin Champagne \$950
 4 Kevin Ping \$600
 5 Isaiah Arellano \$400
 5 Klumtoro \$400
 7 Cross Mitchell \$275
 7 Devon Arnoult \$275
 9 Gina Cerasoli \$700
 9 Jacob Hodges \$200
 9 Jerry Stewart \$200
 9 Paul Krimes \$200

Sep 18 - Sep 21

Jersey Girl Billiards' 2026 Bayou Bash Ladies Division

Buffalo's Billiards

Jefferson, La
 1 Alyssa Reeves \$850
 2 Eylul Kybaroglu \$500
 3 Ashley Benoit \$300
 4 Gina Cerasoli \$100

Sep 19 - Sep 26

WPA World 10-Ball Championship 2026

Vietnam

1 Wojciech Szewczyk \$80,000
 2 Eklent Kaci \$40,000
 3 Joshua Filler \$20,000
 3 Sanjin Pehlivanovic \$20,000
 5 Aloysius Yapp \$10,000
 5 Francisco Sanchez-Ruiz \$10,000
 5 Mieszko Fortunski \$10,000
 5 Robbie Capito \$10,000
 9 Felix Vogel \$5,000
 9 Hayato Hijikata \$5,000
 9 Jayson Shaw \$5,000
 9 Johann Chua \$5,000
 9 Jonas Souto Comino \$5,000
 9 Kledio Kaci \$5,000
 9 Kun Lin Wu \$5,000
 9 Mario He \$5,000
 17 Albin Ouschan \$2,500
 17 Alexandros Kazakis \$2,500
 17 Bader Al Awadi \$2,500
 17 Christopher Tevez \$2,500
 17 Dominik Jastrzab \$2,500
 17 Fedor Gorst \$2,500
 17 Marco Teutscher \$2,500
 17 Mi Le \$2,500

17 Naoyuki Oi \$2,500
 17 Niels Feijen \$2,500
 17 Oliver Szolnoki \$2,500
 17 Sean Mark Malayan \$2,500
 17 Shane Van Boening \$2,500
 17 Skyler Woodward \$2,500
 17 Wiktor Zielinski \$2,500
 17 Yuma Dorner \$2,500
 33 Carlo Biado \$1,250
 33 Casper Matikainen \$1,250
 33 David Alcaide \$1,250
 33 Denis Grabe \$1,250
 33 Dennis Laszkowski \$1,250
 33 Dimitris Loukatos \$1,250
 33 Jakub Koniar \$1,250
 33 Juan Carlos Exposito \$1,250
 33 Konrad Juszczyszyn \$1,250
 33 Luca Menn \$1,250
 33 Mateusz Sniegocki \$1,250
 33 Moritz Neuhausen \$1,250
 33 Quoc Hoang Duong \$1,250
 33 Ralf Souquet \$1,250
 33 Roman Hybler \$1,250
 33 Szymon Kural \$1,250

Sep 19 - Sep 26

Women's Open

Vietnam

1 Pia Filler \$25,000
 2 Shi Tian Qi \$15,000
 3 Chieh-Yu Chou \$7,500
 3 Rubilen Amit \$7,500
 5 Chezka Centeno \$3,750
 5 Han Yu \$3,750
 5 Seo Seoa \$3,750
 5 Tzu-Chien Wei \$3,750
 9 Chihiro Kawahara \$1,750
 9 Gao Meng \$1,750
 9 Harin Lee \$1,750
 9 Jasmin Ouschan \$1,750
 9 Marharyta Fefilava \$1,750
 9 Meng-Hsia Hung \$1,750
 9 Savannah Easton \$1,750
 9 Xiao-Fang Fu \$1,750
 17 Chia Hua Chen \$750
 17 Kelly Fisher \$750
 17 Kristina Tkach \$750
 17 Kristina Zlateva \$750
 17 Ming-Ling Wang \$750
 17 Sha Sha Liu \$750

17 Shui Ching Chiang \$750
 17 Silviana Lu \$750

Sep 19 - Sep 26

Mixed Doubles Open

Vietnam

1 Chia-Chen Hsieh \$19,000
 1 Sha Sha Liu \$19,000
 2 Aloysius Yapp \$9,000
 2 Silviana Lu \$9,000
 3 Han Yu \$4,500
 3 Kun Lin Wu \$4,500
 3 Robbie Capito \$4,500
 3 Seo Seoa \$4,500
 5 Chieh-Yu Chou \$2,250
 5 David Alcaide \$2,250
 5 Fedor Gorst \$2,250
 5 Johann Chua \$2,250
 5 Naoyuki Oi \$2,250
 5 Tian Qi Shi \$2,250
 5 Tzu-Chien Wei \$2,250
 5 Wan-Ling Wang \$2,250
 9 Alexandros Kazakis \$1,125
 9 Brittany Bryant \$1,125
 9 Che-Wei Fu \$1,125
 9 Diana Khodjaeva \$1,125
 9 Felix Vogel \$1,125
 9 Francisco Sanchez-Ruiz \$1,125
 9 Joshua Filler \$1,125
 9 Kelly Fisher \$1,125
 9 Meng-Hsia Hung \$1,125
 9 Mieszko Fortunski \$1,125
 9 Pei-Chun Tsai \$1,125
 9 Pia Filler \$1,125
 9 Savannah Easton \$1,125
 9 Shane Van Boening \$1,125
 9 Venus Lim \$1,125
 9 Yu-Lung Chang \$1,125

Sep 19 - Sep 20

The Maine Event XVIII

TJ's Classic Billiards

Waterville, Maine
 1 Tommy Cayer \$1,050
 2 Dillon Nickerson \$800
 3 Dave Hall \$600
 4 Alex Bausch \$450
 5 Alex Gurevich \$300
 5 Steve Reynolds \$300

- 7 Bob Mendenjian \$200
- 7 Rick Matarazzo \$200
- 9 Bryce Swisher \$100
- 9 Drew Herbert \$100
- 9 Frank Cayer \$100
- 9 Jeff Mosimann \$100

Sep 19 - Sep 19

Village Cue Club Open One Pocket

Village Cue Club

- North Palm Beach, Florida
- 1 Anthony Meglino \$850
- 2 David Jacobs \$500
- 3 Dennis Searing \$300
- 3 Justin Gilsinan \$300

Sep 19 - Sep 20

The Maine Event XVIII Second Chance

TJ's Classic Billiards

Waterville, Maine

- 1 Brandon Butler \$300
- 2 Tyler McCormick \$210
- 3 Wyatt Dutton \$150
- 4 Ryan Sweeney \$100

Sep 26 - Sep 27

NWPA Tour 2026 Stop 6

Bobalou Billiards

- Roseburg, Oregon
- 1 Sarah Myers-Mitchell \$500
- 2 Kathie MacDonald \$335
- 3 Jordan Oakes \$220
- 4 Melyssa Chasteen \$135
- 5 Diana Whitaker \$75
- 5 Malini Baker \$75
- 7 Lisa Van Winkle \$55
- 7 Maryann McConnell \$55

Sep 26 - Sep 27

Joss Tour 2026-2027 Stop 2

Yale Billiards

- Wallingford, Connecticut
- 1 Mhet Vergara \$1,150

- 2 Edward Duarte \$800
- 3 Kevin Bauccio \$600
- 4 Max Watanabe \$400
- 5 Dan Sharlow \$300
- 5 Michael Toohig \$300
- 7 Bob Mendenjian \$200
- 7 Joe Darigis \$200
- 9 Eric Hamel \$100
- 9 Nick Coppola \$100
- 9 Phil Davis \$100
- 9 Stephen Rowe \$100

Sep 26 - Sep 27

Joss Tour 2027-2027 Stop 2 Second Chance

Yale Billiards

- Wallingford, Connecticut
- 1 Ryan Cullen \$320
- 2 Dave Corricelli \$220
- 3 Bob Ellis \$160
- 4 Vinnie Zuniga \$160

BCA Hall of Fame Banquet

2026 Induction Ceremony

COREY DEUEL

The Prince of Pool
2026 Greatest Player Inductee

- U.S. Open 9-Ball Champion (2001)
- All Japan 9-Ball Champion (2001)
- United States Amateur Snooker Champion (2013)
- Derby City Classic One Pocket Champion (2013)
- Derby City Classic Bank Pool Champion (2018)
- Mosconi Cup MVP (2006) • 10-Time Team USA
- Americas Heyball Champion (2024)

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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.

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER

2026 Borderline Brunswick Invitational

Oct 07 - Oct 11

Borderline Billiards
Bristol, TN

2026 Reyes Cup

Oct 15 - Oct 18

Manila
Manila,

West Coast Women's Tour 2026 Stop 6

Oct 17 - Oct 17

Diamond Billiards
Modesto, California

Philippines Open Pool Championship

Oct 20 - Oct 24

Manila
Manila,

NWPA Tour 2026 Stop 7

Oct 24 - Oct 25

Ox Billiards
Seattle, Washington

West Coast Women's Tour 2026 Stop 7

Nov 14 - Nov 14

Hard Times Billiards - Sacramento
Sacramento, CA

Leather Pocket 9-Ball Open

Nov 17 - Nov 21

Leather Pocket Billiards
Calgary, Alberta

NWPA Tour 2026 25th Anniversary Stop

Nov 21 - Nov 22

Ox Billiards
Seattle, Washington

Mosconi Cup XXXIII

Nov 27 - Nov 30

Caribe Royale
Orlando, Florida

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NAME	COUNTRY	\$ AMOUNT	
 Joshua Filler	 GER	\$205,640	↑
 Fedor Gorst	 USA	\$202,690	↑
 Francisco Sanchez-Ruiz	 ESP	\$195,045	↓
 Shane Van Boening	 USA	\$164,705	
 Wojciech Szewczyk	 POL	\$151,654	↑
 Aloysius Yapp	 SIN	\$149,900	↓
 Chezka Centeno	 PHI	\$132,219	
 Carlo Biado	 PHI	\$100,950	↓
 Margaret Fefilova-Styer	 BLR	\$93,219	↑
 Seo Seoa	 KOR	\$92,338	↑



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