

Billiards Buzz

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A Family Affair

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FROM THE Head Rail

MIKE HOWERTON

A big congrats to Chezka Centeno, who added the Women's World 8-Ball Championship to her resume last month. For a short time, she was the holder of both the Women's World 8-Ball and Women's World 10-Ball titles.

To explain the cover a little bit, the photo is Chezka with her father Fausto Albert Centeno and Chezka is holding a photo of her Mother. Her father was able to see her win the World 8-Ball title and he posed with Chezka for this "Family Affair"

On a "Was I the last one to know this?" question, I found out last month that the Color of Money book told a different story than the movie. I devoured the book after learning that and loved the book and Fast Eddie character all over again. Thanks to Dawn Hopkins for enlightening me. The things you learn while watching a WPBA match.

Until next time.





Simonis Cloth and Aramith Balls

play so true,

you really have to ask yourself
would you rather play against your opponent...

...or against your
equipment?



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Article by Skip Maloney - AzB Staff / Photos courtesy Erwin Dionisio

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THINKING ALONG WITH THE PROS

I opened this year's features with a four part series on being a pool watcher. This month I am going to approach the subject by following a series of thoughts that might take place during a pro's shot playing process, or what I call The Shot Cycle.

As you will see in a moment, there are so many things that can make up a shot during the planning, playing, and learning phases.

The bolded entries are thoughts that I entered as a stream of consciousness on so many, but not all, aspects of a typical shot. I went back later and, as shown by the non-bolded type, entered an additional thought or two that quickly came to mind.

Now I understand that this is a large number of words for shots that might be played in about 10-30 seconds (or longer if the pro uses an extension). But it is possible to think a lot in a

short time, as shown by research that shows that we have about 48 thoughts per minute.

Furthermore, so much of our thinking takes place rapid fire as Harvard researcher and author Steven Pinker suggests in his 1994 classic work, *The Language Instinct*. In it he talks about how our thoughts happen without them being described in words, such as I've done below. In reality, we can think of so many of the items on the list below and others because of an internal language called mentalese. When we use it, we are thinking wordlessly, so we are not taking the time to think or write out more complete

descriptions our as I have done below. And bear in mind that these descriptions could go on for many paragraphs and include diagrams of them, as I have done in my books.

So, it is possible to think of so very many things that are relevant to each shot when you allow yourself to become totally engaged with the watching of each shot the pros play. And as you do, you will be both entertained, educated, and at times totally enthralled by the exploits of these master craftsman. Now, what could be better than that?

What is the Shot Picture?

The cue ball's and object ball's locations combine for a specific kind of Shot Picture – a spatial relationship that will come to you quickly with experience. So, what is the one you see?

What is the Speed Picture?

A Speed Picture gives you an idea of the force required for a shot.

Where do they need/want to send the cue ball?

What is the position route? What rails will be used, if any?

Is this an easy shot, a routine shot, or a difficult shot?

The type of shot leads to the time required to plan it and to then to play it.





What makes it so easy, routine, or challenging?

Is a long shot, a thin cut, a difficult position route?

Are there any special ingredients to the shot?

Is english needed, a special bridge, or extra time during the warm-up strokes (WUS) for dialing in the line-of-aim?

What actions are taken during the planning process?

Do they survey the table? Or get into their shooting stance for added perspective?

Do they point with their cue to a certain spot?

Pros who point their cue down the cue ball's path to their position play target and/or point to the positional bullseye do a great service to themselves, and to the fans!

Do I think the pro can achieve his objective?

When it's a tough shot, this builds a heightened sense of anticipation.

On preparing to watch an easy shot, it is now about execution? How well did they do?

Build suspense on easy shots by looking for the quality of execution.

When playing more difficult shots, what could be their recovery route?

Can you see a Plan B, a Plan C, or a safety if needed?

When they miss ideal position, are they going to play a safety, or play a recovery route?

Try to answer this question, and then see what you might learn from the pro's choice.

Recovery routes are fun to watch because the pro might pull off something special, or not. This leads to suspense, surprises, and super shots.

When you see a recovery route, evaluate the result, and go practice it yourself.

What is their likely pattern? Three balls at a time, or more?

Skillful pattern identification + creation of a position route + skillful execution = runouts.

What is the key shot or shots that will likely determine the success, or failure, of this runout?

How might the pro go about setting up for the winning shot?

If the rack is not runnable, when should they play safety?

Timing the playing of a safety is a major skill.

Play a safe now, or is it better to run a few balls to a safety?

Is a ball close to the Safety Ball for an easy hook?

Do any clusters need to be broken? When is the best time to do that?

Is the next shot coming from a ball in the cluster?

Of the 22 Principles of Position Play, which ones are most relevant to this shot?

Avoiding one or more obstructers? Avoiding a scratch? Not getting hooked behind a Shadow Ball?

What is the position zone? Are there any Shadow Balls that reduce its size?

How will you approach the zone? Across the line or down the line?

What is the correct side? And what angle on this side?

The correct side angle can be measured in half ball and ball widths from straight in.

Where on the Spectrum of Speed will this shot fall?

You can quickly narrow it down – if a 4 (medium soft) is too soft and a 6 (medium hard) is too hard, then the correct speed must lie somewhere in between

Once I've determined the speed, what should I be looking for as they execute the shot?

Special attention might go to their WUS routine, their stroke, and/or their follow through.

Are they using any special equipment, such as the bridge or an extender?

What moves does a player make to attach their extender, and how does it impact their stance?

Will they be employing a special kind of set up?

Will they be stretching, using an awkward bridge, or elevating for a jump shot?

Is the emphasis on making the ball, playing position, or both?

On the toughest shots making the ball and playing fine position are a both a major challenge.

How will this players style contribute to the shot? What should I be looking for?

Do you especially like their style, and are there things about it that you'd like to incorporate in your game.

It is now time for the Execution Phase to begin. What is the player's process?

Does their process include a deep breath or two? A pre-look from their shooting position? Some air-warm-up strokes (AWUS)?

How do they land on the table?

It is wise to focus on this super important part of their shot playing process.

What is their WUS routine? Does it come close to how I might perform it?

This part of the shot reveals so much about the player and their style of play.

As they perform their WUS, can I tell what kind of shot they are going to play based on their WUS?

As you become an expert pool watcher, you will be able to key in on the force they will be employing.

At some point I anticipate that they are now going to play the shot, at which point my level of anticipation reaches its peak.

Was I right? Was I able to sense when they were about to take their final stroke?

What does their stroke look like?

Do you like their type of stroke? Are they a smooth stroker or more of a hitter?

When will I shift my attention from the CB hitting the OB to the OB's path to the pocket, and to the cue ball's travels?

A key point in watching a shot comes when your attention shifts from watching the object ball, post contact, to the cue ball.

What do I see from the roll of the cue ball? Any bending after contact? English taking off the rail or rails?

Try to determine, in advance of the shot being played, any special things that bring joy to your pool watcher's eye.

As the cue ball rolls, do I notice its rolling speed as it slows before stopping?

Based on the roll, can I make an educated guess as to where it might stop?

Once its stopped, how would I rate this shot?

Before the player moves on to then next shot, how would assess the one just played – perhaps on a 5 Scale from Great to Very Poor?

What did I learn from the kind of stroke they took?

Was it smooth? Did it feature a rapid acceleration to contact? Or a slow build up to contact?

Did they follow through completely? Or did they employ some body english?

Did their follow indicate a relaxed state of mind when playing the shot? Did they have to exit the table in a hurry to avoid the cue ball, such as on straight back draw shots?

What does the player reveal by their assessment of the shot?

Do they quickly proceed to the next shot in a pre-planned pattern, or do they need to devise a recovery route or a Plan B?

What can I see now about their next shot?

Did the shot just completed connect seamlessly to the next one, or not? Why not?

Am I going to plan this shot along with the pro?

Is there enough time between any two shots to plan along with the pro?

Did the shot elicit any kind of response from the crowd?

Was there a big applause? A gasp following a miss? And what was the crowd's reaction?

Was I surprised by the result?

Did the shot confirm things I know?

Was my knowledge confirmed, or did I learn a new way to play that kind of shot?

ABOUT PHIL CAPELLE

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

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BEFORE YOU BEND OVER THE SHOT

ANTHONY BEELER

Hall of Fame basketball coach John Wooden once said, *“Be quick, but don’t hurry.”* Those five words perfectly describe what great pool players do every time they approach the table.

From a distance they appear to play quickly, but if you pay close attention, you’ll notice they almost never rush a decision. Their minds work long before they ever bend over the cue.

Most players spend thousands of hours trying to improve their mechanics while giving very little attention to improving the quality of their decisions. Yet poor decisions ruin far more racks than poor strokes ever will. The

best players in the world understand that shot-making is only the final step of a much larger process. Before the cue ever moves forward, the rack has already been carefully planned.

One of the simplest habits I’ve developed over the years is using the chalk as a mental switch. When I pick up the chalk, it’s time to think. When I put it back down, thinking is finished. That small routine creates a clear separation between planning and execution.



Too many players continue solving problems while they’re already down on the shot. That hesitation creates doubt, and doubt destroys confidence.

The first thing I do with the chalk in my hand is walk to either the head or foot of the table. Looking straight down the table gives a much narrower perspective and allows the entire pattern

to reveal itself. From the side of the table it’s easy to become locked onto one shot. From the end of the table, you begin seeing how every ball connects to the next. Suddenly the run starts telling you where it wants to go.

Once I understand the layout, I begin looking for the simplest pattern available. I call this “shoot-and-stop” position. Every extra



THE DECISION PROCESS

THINK FIRST. SHOOT SECOND.

A WINNING ROUTINE FOR EVERY SHOT

1

PICK UP CHALK
— IT’S TIME TO THINK.



Chalk in hand means you are in thinking mode. No decisions are made without it.

2

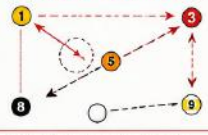
GET THE RIGHT VIEW.



Stand at the head or foot of the table to make decisions. It gives you a better (narrower) perspective on the layout of balls.

3

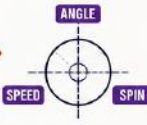
BUILD YOUR PLAN — CHOOSE YOUR ROUTE.



- Try to follow the order of spin: Stun first, then follow, draw is your last option (harder to control).
- Look for shoot-and-stop patterns.
- The path of the least cue ball movement is always the best.
- Once you have picked out your pattern, go to your shot.

4

ANALYZE THE SHOT.



What angle, speed and spin does the shot need to be struck with?

5

PLAN FOR THE OUTCOME.



Pick out the desired spot you want your cue ball to be in and decide if you error, are you better off erring short or long of the mark?



PUT THE CHALK DOWN — IT’S TIME TO SHOOT.

Once all decisions are made, put the chalk down on the table.

Shut up and shoot.

★ GREAT DECISIONS

★ BETTER POSITION

★ MORE WINS

foot the cue ball travels introduces another opportunity for something to go wrong. Rails, traffic, speed control, spin, and unexpected kisses all become variables. Whenever possible, I want the cue ball to move the shortest distance necessary. The less it travels, the fewer chances I give myself to make a mistake.

As I work through the pattern, I also think about spin. Players often become fascinated with dramatic draw shots, but draw is usually the hardest spin to control consistently. Whenever possible, I try to solve the table with stun first, follow second, and reserve draw for the situations where it's truly necessary. The simpler the cue-ball action, the higher the percentage of success.

Only after the entire pattern has been chosen do I turn my attention to the shot directly in front of me. Now the questions become very specific. What angle do I need? How much speed

produces the best result? What spin gives me the greatest margin for error? Finally, I decide where I would rather miss if my speed isn't perfect. Am I better off coming up short or drifting a little long? Great position play isn't just about finding the perfect spot—it's also about avoiding the worst one.

Once every decision has been made, I put the chalk back on the table.

That simple act signals that planning is over. From that point forward, I don't want to analyze, second-guess, or negotiate with myself. My only job

is to trust the decisions I've already made and execute them with confidence. If doubt creeps in, I simply stand up, pick the chalk back up, and start the process over again.

Great pool isn't simply a product of great mechanics. It's the result of consistently making quality decisions before the cue ever leaves your bridge hand.

So, the next time you approach the table, remember this simple routine.

Pick up the chalk. It's time to think. Put the chalk down. Now it's time to shut up and shoot.

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 was July 18, 1988 and Cue-Topia was finally open for business - although without the fifteen video poker machines. We had decided not to wait – we were gambling that our gaming license would be approved.

Rex Cannon had called a few people to tell them that we were open and word passed quickly through the local pool grapevine. We were packed within a couple hours.

All nineteen tables were in use and people milled around talking and sweating the action. I had jumped behind the bar and worked nonstop until my graveyard guy came in at midnight. As Vegas is a 24 hour town, even in the middle of the night, people came in steadily to check us out and have a beer.

As the first week wore on, the word spread and we had a steady stream of



Ronnie Allen, Cole Dickson & Larry Schwartz - '88 Cue-Topia - Las Vegas, NV



Cue-Topia - Las Vegas, NV - Photo courtesy of Willie Parker

players from southern California and Arizona. It was great to see so many of my old friends.

Every night we had a waiting list and one of the local mini truck clubs had decided Cue-Topia would be their new hang out spot. Our parking lot was full of tricked out Datsun and Toyota pickups. With their custom paint jobs and accessories, one was nicer than the next and some were downright fabulous!

I had talked to my old friend, Gene Catron ("The Glove"), when we were building the pool room and he had told me that he would come do a grand opening exhibition for me. A

roll down another pair of cues to get the action going on the second table and then the final table.

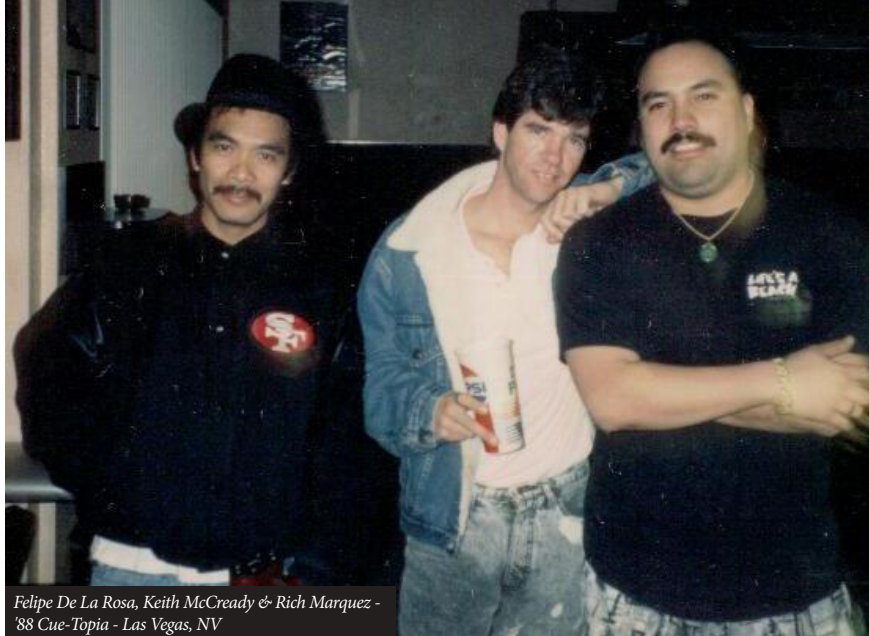
It was really amazing and if you've never seen it, here's a link to something similar:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2XTGBOKqccw>

Glove drew the tickets for the raffle winners and then held court signing autographs and posing for photos for several more hours until we finally retired to my house.

Glove left early the next day for Los Angeles and when we tuned in to the Johnny Carson show that night to watch his segment, we all cheered as he sat on the couch and told Johnny and Ed McMahon how he'd just come from doing a show at Cue-Topia in Las Vegas! How cool was that!

We had developed a pretty healthy afternoon crowd with all the players coming in and matching up – mostly one pocket. Eddie Kelly, Johnny Ervolino, Jack Perkins, Larry Schwartz, Toby Fleharty, George Kalman, Bob Herchik, Dave Nottingham, Donny Williams, Bernard Rogoff, Vince Tedesco, Dick Miles, Mike Katsuras ("Nutsy", Gary Hutchings, Jimmy Milazzo, Joel Marks, Nathan Hall and Ricky White all became regulars.



Felipe De La Rosa, Keith McCready & Rich Marquez - '88 Cue-Topia - Las Vegas, NV

couple weeks after we opened, he called again and told me he was going to Los Angeles to be on the Johnny Carson Show in a few weeks and would stop by Vegas to do his exhibition. We decided on a date and I got to work putting together flyers to spread around town.

Glove had told me about his show but I'd never seen it. He got to town and he and his assistant began the laborious process of setting up many boxes of dominoes and pool balls in an intricate design spreading over three Gold Crowns on the players side of the room.

The twenty or so seats on the rail overlooking the Gold Crowns had been staked out early that morning. They were the best seats in the house!

It took them many hours to get it all set up and as post time approached, the room began to fill up as people from all over town began to arrive.

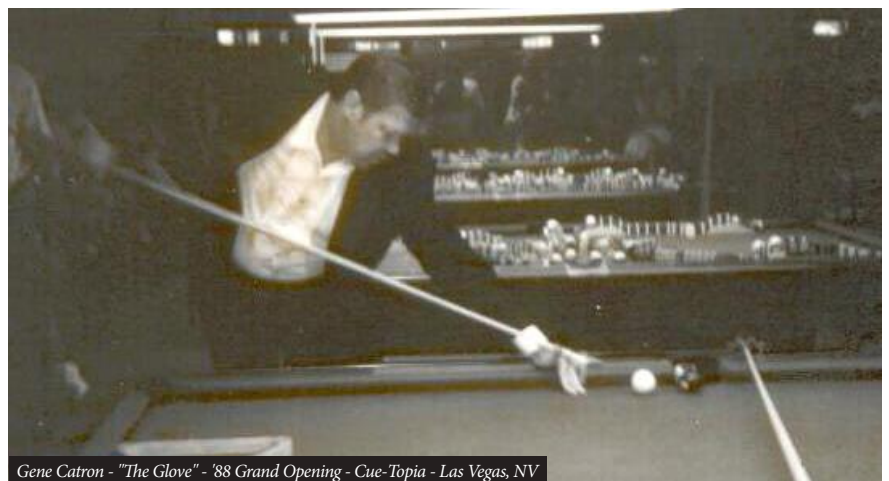
We had been selling raffle tickets all week for the various prizes we were going to give away – a top of the line McDermott cue, a Joe Porper case, a few Cue-Topia t-shirts and sweatshirts as well as several other things.

It was standing room only as we raffled off the prizes and then Glove

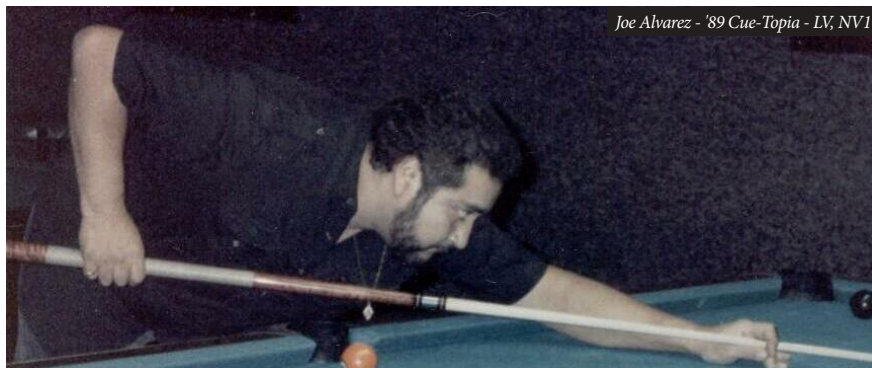
began his show. He started out telling pool stories as he set up and performed some trick shots and after about a half hour, his last trick shot set the grand finale in motion as the balls fell and one sent the cue ball in motion rolling down a pair of cues to the next table.

All we heard were clicks as the dominoes fell, balls disappeared into pockets and cleverly placed matchbooks stopped the action for several seconds – uh oh – until the dominoes started falling again and the crowd cheered.

All the dominoes and pool balls were down on the first table except for the cue ball which had been triggered to



Gene Catron - "The Glove" - '88 Grand Opening - Cue-Topia - Las Vegas, NV



Joe Alvarez - '89 Cue-Topia - LV, NV1

We had many of the southern California players coming and going too – Keith McCready, Archie Karas, Cole Dickson, Ronnie Allen, Dickie Renk, Jay Helfert, “Rags” Woods and Ismael Paez (“Morro”), to name a few.

You never knew who was going to walk in the door! Billy Incardona, Earl Strickland, Wade Crane, Ewa Laurance, Buddy Hall, Nick Varner, Rafael Martinez, Jimmy Reid, Scott Kitto, Mike Gulyassy, Chris MacDonald, Bill Cress, Mike Zimmerman, Dave Piona, Danny Jones, Jimmy Mataya and other stars of the day always came by whenever they were in town. Plus, when the large events were in Vegas, we were packed!

One day, Rex Cannon walked in with Warren Costanzo (“Monk”). Although I’d seen him beat Mike Sigel at the Tropicana in 1979, I’d never met him. Rex introduced us and said that he’d told Monk about Cue-Topia and he’d be staying with him for a week or so. That week or so turned into almost three years as Monk said we had so much action he couldn’t leave. Monk and I became great friends, dinner buddies and sparring partners. We’d play sets of nine ball almost every night - I learned so much from him.

Greg Hatch and his son, Dennis, were back in town. They were traveling in a motor home and Dennis’s mom, Pat, asked me for a job. I put her on days and Dennis got free time unless he was in action. They were in town for

about six months and I have to admit, I hated to see them leave. Pat was one of the best employees I ever had and all the players loved her.

And so it went – we were in the black from day one with waiting lists every night and a healthy afternoon business.

One afternoon, the door opened and in walked the head of the Vegas mob with two of his henchman. I was by the cash register and recognized him right away – my heart started pounding. Coming from back east, I knew exactly why they were there.

They walked up the steps and looked around before coming up to the bar and – let’s call him Frankie - asked if the owner was in.

I told him I was one of the owners and told them I’d be right with him. I came out from behind the bar and very politely asked him to leave.

Astonished, Frankie said, “Do you know who I am?”

“Yes, I do and that’s why I’m asking you to leave. If my customers start seeing you or your crew hanging around, I won’t have any customers anymore.”

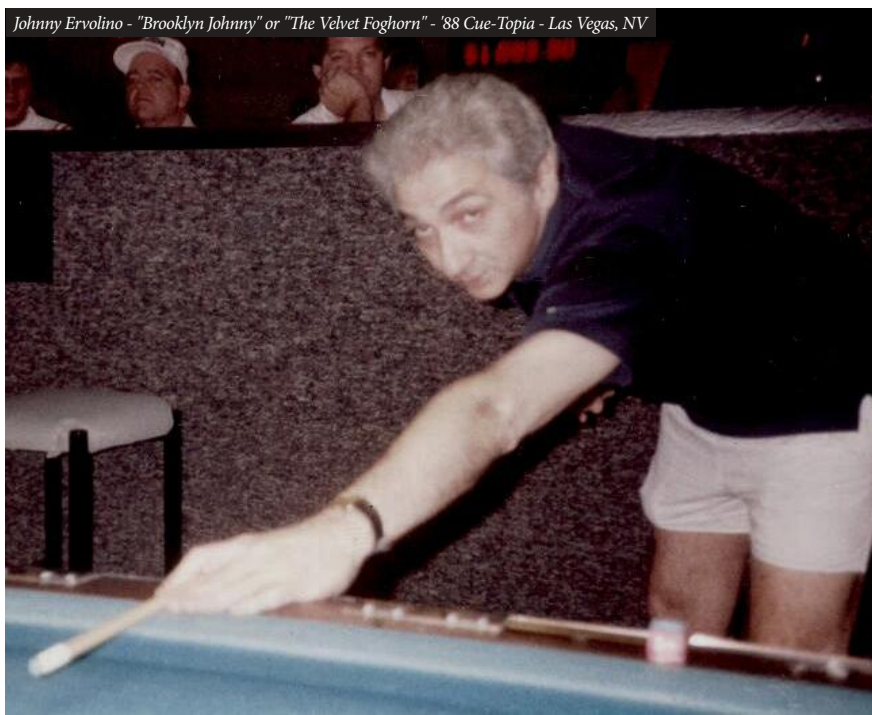
Stunned, he stared at me and then turned around to his guys and started laughing.

He turned back to me and said, “Lady, you’ve got some balls. C’m on, let’s get outta here.”

As they walked down the steps, Frankie looked at me one last time and grinned as he shook his head.

You could’ve heard a pin drop. Everyone in the place – including Freddie – knew exactly who they were.

Freddie came flying up to me and wanted to know what I’d said to Frankie. He was all upset – he just knew that I’d antagonized him and we were in trouble.



Johnny Ervolino - “Brooklyn Johnny” or “The Velvet Foghorn” - '88 Cue-Topia - Las Vegas, NV

I just looked at him, laughed and told him that I'd handled it. They wouldn't be back - of course, with no help from him as he cowered at the end of the bar.

The months rolled by and we finally got our gaming license at the beginning of November. We had fifteen video poker machines - one dollar machine, four nickels and ten quarter machines. We had all but the dollar machine hooked up to progressive jackpots. It wasn't long before they were humming most of the time. For every \$10 dollars in coin they bought, they'd get a beer. In addition to the pool players, we also had a pretty good clientele of neighborhood folks who just came in to play the machines.

Having heard about Cue-Topia, Willie and Joe Alvarez had come into town with their families from Fort Collins, CO. Although I didn't know them, I could see that they could play as they matched up with my regulars. It wasn't long before Joe told me they'd like to stay in Vegas and asked me for a job.

I put Joe on as manager and hired his wife, Jane, to work the day shift. They were both good people and looked after Cue-Topia as if it were their own. I hit the jackpot with those two!

Players from out of town loved Vegas and most of them wouldn't come to



Mike Massey - "Tennessee Tarzan" - BCA Hall of Famer - Mike Surber on left rail - Bruce Davis in red - Kati Moses center rail - '88 Cue-Topia - Las Vegas, NV

the pool room until they were busted. Looking for a loan or to hock their cues or jewelry, we also had a standing offer of \$300 for any player to either do an exhibition or play Joe a challenge match.

One day Mike Massey came by and asked if he could do a \$300 exhibition for me. I said that would be fine but since Mike was a born again Christian, I didn't want any mention of religion - just trick shots.

He laughed and agreed. We set it up for the following night so I'd have time to get the word out for a crowd.

He came in the next afternoon and started setting up the table for his trick shots by tapping in ball loca-

tions. The place started to fill up and show time was near. Mike found me and asked if I could have someone ask him at the end of his show why did they call him "Tennessee Tarzan." He said the prompt would be, "Are there any more questions?"

I decided to have my star struck employee, David Lee, ask him the question. He was thrilled and when prompted, blurted out, "Why do they call you Tennessee Tarzan?"

Mike didn't miss a beat. He hopped up on the table and started doing one-armed pushups - switching arms too. He did them for about a minute or so, hopped back down and shot his hand in the air saying, "Praise the Lord."

As soon as he said it, he made eye contact with me and kept apologizing over and over - saying he couldn't help it.

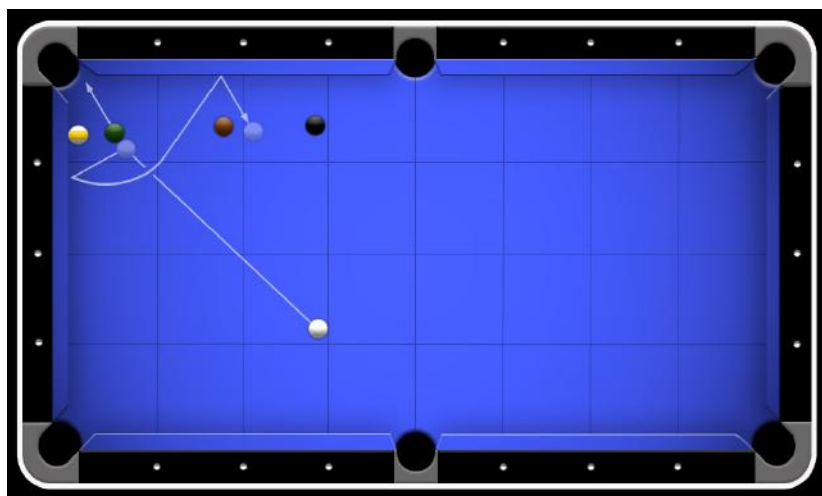
Yup. Praise the Lord...

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.



Rex Cannon - Brad ? & Terry Packard at table - '89 Cue-Topia - Las Vegas, NV

F R O M



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

This month we feature the Magician again.

In his match against Tony Ellin back in 1993, Reyes was faced with this shot on the 6-ball. Top might have brought the 9-ball into play, while draw to avoid the 9-ball would have made it a much more precarious shot.

Reyes came with this creative force follow shot to bend into the perfect spot for shape on the 7-ball.



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CENTENO WINS FINAL SHOTS OF DRAMATIC CLOSE TO CLAIM ONEIDA WPA WOMEN'S WORLD 8-BALL TITLE

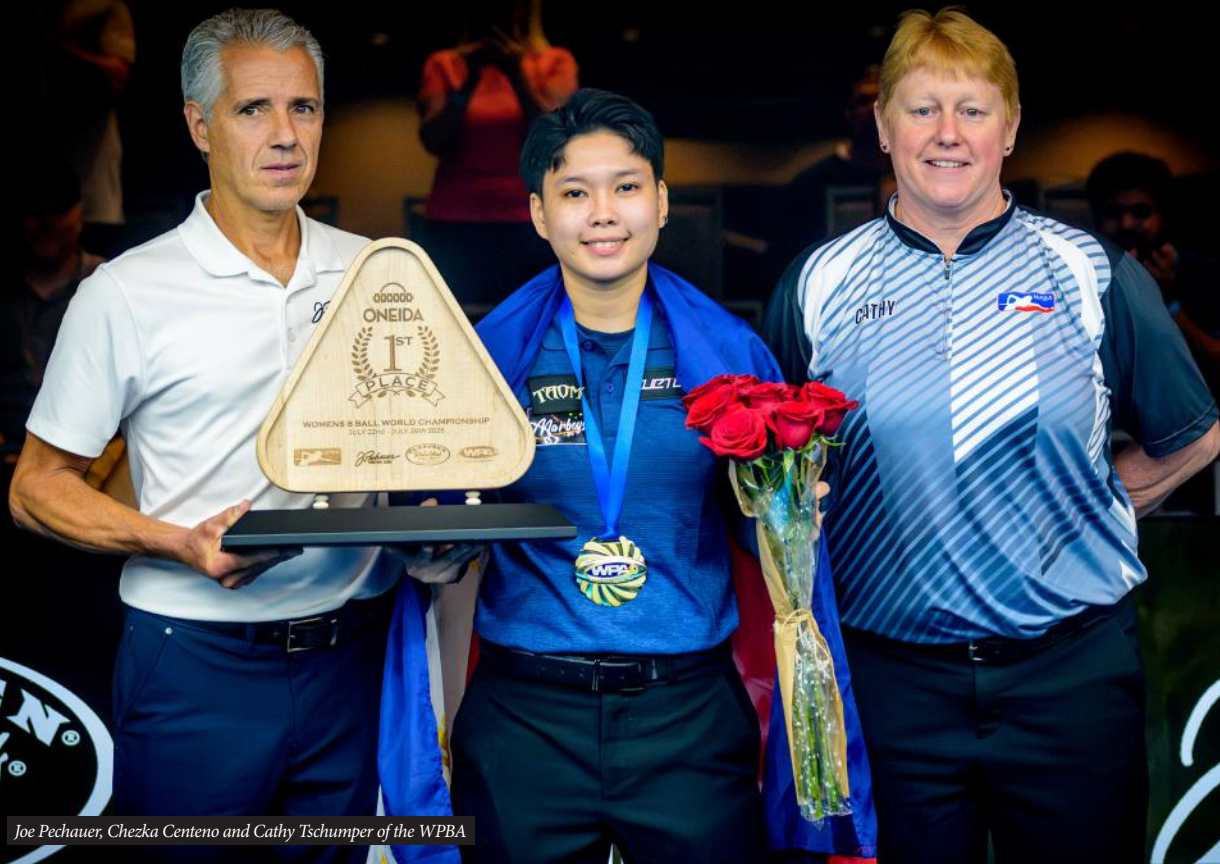
It ended in a few minutes of extraordinary high drama that necessitated the employment of judges and a look at the videotape to determine what had actually happened in the first of the last three shots made in the final match of the 2026 Oneida WPA Women's 8-Ball World Championship.

Over the weekend (July 22-26), the \$40,000-added event drew 64 of the world's top female pool players to the Oneida Casino Hotel in Oneida, WI; an unincorporated community that is part of the Oneida

Nation reservation, located just west of Green Bay, WI.

The Philippines' Chezka Centeno went undefeated through three opponents in a double-elimination Stage 1

and four in a single-elimination Stage 2. She closed it out against the UK's Kelly Fisher last night (Sun. July 26) to claim the event title. The above tale of videotape reviews and a judgment call weren't the event's only drama,



Joe Pechauer, Chezka Centeno and Cathy Tschumper of the WPBA

but it was certainly the most significant and virtually ended the match in which it occurred and allowed Centeno to claim the Women's World title it represented.

Let's take them in order. For starters, this was only the second WPA Women's 8-Ball World Championship held anywhere, let alone the USA. To date, there have been only three, all-time WPA 9-Ball Championships here and the last one of those was held in Chicago in 1997. So this was a "big deal" last year, according to WPBA Tour Director Jerry Stuckart at the time, and it was another 'big deal' this year, as once again, the WPBA ran the tournament at the same location, somewhat later in July than it was held last year (July 2-6), when it was preceded by an opening ceremony at Lambeau Field in Green Bay.

The first element of drama stepped onto the stage when last year's winner (Jasmin Ouschan) and runner-up (Chezka Centeno) stepped up to play their first matches this year. They were set apart in the initial, 64-player, double-elimination bracket, which meant that if they were to meet at the table at all, they'd have to do so either on the loss side or in Stage 2. When the 64 entrants began to compete on Wednesday (July 22), they were looking to reduce the field to 16, eight from each side of the double-elimination bracket. Ouschan and Centeno were there when Stage 2 began on Saturday (July 26) and once again, they came from opposite ends of the single-elimination bracket, guaranteeing that if they were to meet at all, they would meet in the finals. It was an orchestrated drama built into the staging of the event and would only occur if last year's winner and runner-up met in the final.

As it happened, they didn't, which set up another set of dramatic and unexpected circumstances that started in Stage 1 and came to a conclusion in



Stage 2. Austria's Jasmin Ouschan began the quest to defend her women's world title against Japan's Miina Tani and defeated her 7-3, before facing and defeating USA's Ashley Rice 7-4.

Meanwhile, junior competitor, Sofia (Pink Dagger) Mast, who came into the event as the current #7 in the WPBA's rankings (seven steps ahead of Ouschan) set out to do better in this year's tournament than she'd done last year, when she finished in the eight-way tie for 17th. She opened with a 7-1 victory over Canada's Veronique Menard and followed that with a 7-4 win over Taipei's Shui Ching Chiang.

Ouschan and Mast drew each other in the third round of Stage 1. Presumably to the surprise of both of them and likely many of the spectators who saw it happen, the teenager defeated the world champion 7-4, which qualified her for advancement to Stage 2.

In the same, top quarter of the Stage 1 bracket, Chezka Centeno defeated USA's Ada Lio 7-2, and Turkey's Eylul Kibaroglu 7-3. She qualified for Stage 2 with a 7-5 victory over South Korea's Seo Seo.

Another mini-drama played out in a similar fashion, beginning in Stage

1 and concluding in Stage 2. Taipei's Tzu-Chien Wei, who finished in the four-way tie for 5th last year (Stage 2 quarterfinals) and her good friend, UK's Kelly Fisher (who finished in the eight-way tie for 9th place last year) were separated in the bracket from competing against each other on the winners' side of the bracket in Stage 1 and came within a match of facing each other in the finals of Stage 2. The two junior competitors, Mast and Savannah (Road Runner) Easton (the current USA National Women's 10-Ball Champion and #6 in the WPBA) were in the path of the potential Fisher/Tzu-Chien match in Stage 2, which, if all the contingencies had fallen into place, would have been in the event final.

Fisher, who'd lost a double-hill battle to Margaret Fefilova-Styer in the third round of Stage 1, defeated Japan's Yuki Hiraguchi (7-3) on the loss side and advanced to Stage 2 from there. Tzu-Chien Wei advanced from the winners' side by defeating Joanne Ashton (2), Olivia Cheng (0) and qualified with a victory over Rubilen Amit (5), who joined this little mini-drama.

At the opening of Stage 2, the stage was set for a possible rematch be-



An emotional Chezka Centeno

tween the Pink Dagger Mast and defending champion, Ouschan. It never happened because both of them were eliminated in the first round; Amit defeated Mast 8-6, as eventual winner Centeno was busy sending Ouschan home 8-4. It was Amit and Centeno who met in one of the quarterfinals; Centeno advancing to the semifinals 8-6. In the meantime, Tzu-Chien Wei had opened with an 8-5 victory over Meng-Hsia (Bean) Hung, advancing to another quarterfinal to meet Japan's Chihiro Kawahara. Tzu-Chien gave up just a single rack to Kawahara and moved on to a semifinal versus Centeno.

It was a star-studded, Stage 2 opening round, with the bottom half of it fully-loaded. Kelly Fisher opened against the WPBA's highest-ranked competitor, Kristina Tkach and eliminated her 8-5. Tkach came into the event with a commanding lead in those rankings and is likely to remain atop the list. Fisher, who had arrived at #8 on the WPBA rankings, advanced to the quarterfinals and shut out #7, Taipei's Chieh-Yu Chou.

Roadrunner Savannah Easton put on an impressive Stage 2 show, opening

with an 8-5 win over the WPBA's #2, Germany's Pia Filler, and followed that with a double-hill win over #3, Margaret Fefilova-Styer. She turned her attention to Fisher in the semifinals.

The potential 'friends' battle between Fisher and the woman known affectionately as 'Wei-Wei' was still on at that point. Fisher held up her end of

the 'bargain' with an 8-6 victory over Easton that featured only two 'break and run' racks; one for each of them. Easton's break was working for her, as she broke 'successfully' 63% of the time to Fisher's 29%. There were a lot of dry breaks, because in the end, they averaged less than a ball per break (.9 for Easton and .3 for Fisher). They both experimented with breaking from different places. Between them, they missed a total of seven shots, all but two of them were legal shots; Easton missed five of the seven. They were very close in 'balls pocketed' (70 to 67, in favor of Fisher) and 'balls pocketed per inning,' where Easton was a single percentage point better (4.2 to 4.1).

The 'Wei Wei'/Centeno semifinal was equally tight with many of the stats closely aligned. There was only one 'break and run,' chalked up by Centeno, who also won the 'successful break' category (50% of the time versus Tzu-Chien's 43%) and 'average balls pocketed' off the break (.7 to Tzu-Chien's .6). Centeno also dropped 10 more total balls than Tzu-Chien (73-63). Significantly, Tzu-Chien led the way in the 'minus' category of Missed Shots, with eight of the 11 recorded.



Kelly Fisher

Centeno returned to the WPA Women's 8-Ball Championship final for the second year in a row with an 8-5 win.

A back-and-forth, nail-biter ending with (arguably) the Championship's most dramatic moment

The final was the shortest match of the final three; an hour and 17 minutes, as compared to the 1:42 (Tzu-Chien/Centeno) and 1:43 (Fisher/Easton) semifinals. Appropriate, given the fact that Fisher is known as Kwikfire and Centeno is known as The Flash. This hasn't been meticulously researched, but The Flash was generally moving on to her next shot before the shot clock had ticked down 10 seconds. Fisher wasn't far off from that, although she actually took up less 'table time;' 46% (35 minutes) of the hour and 17 minutes vs. Centeno's 54% (42 minutes).

There were only three 'break and runs,' two by Centeno, who finished with a narrow 'edge' in Break Success (29% to 25%).

They recorded the same average number of balls pocketed off the break (.6, which, as in the semifinals, reflects a lot of dry breaks). The most significant 'stat' that came out of the final is that, combined, they only missed three shots (Fisher missed two of them).

The match went back and forth to a 5-5 tie, with two of the three 'break and runs' in those 10 games (one each). Of the 15 games played, 10 of them were won when the person who did not break, stepped up to the table after the break and ran the table. There were seven dry breaks and three which involved a made-ball off the break, and a cue ball that dropped, as well.

Things started a shift at rack #11, which Centeno broke and ran to take the lead (after a tie) for the first time. Fisher broke rack #12 dry and Centeno ran the table to take the match's first two-game lead. Centeno broke rack



#13 dry and Fisher ran the table to close the gap to one (7-6).

Fisher dropped two balls breaking rack #14, dropped two more and then missed her shot at the 14-ball. As everyone was absorbing the shock of that miss, Centeno ran the rest of the rack and was on the hill at 8-6.

And so began the final game. In a match that averaged just shy of three minutes per game (not including player breaks, or time between rack breaks), it took 11 minutes to complete the final game. A good hunk of that time went to reviewing the referee's call on what proved to be Fisher's last shot.

Centeno broke dry. Fisher stepped up and dropped six of her seven low balls and missed her shot at the 6-ball. Centeno stepped up and ran six of her seven high balls and missed her shot at the 10-ball. She got a 'pool gods' kind of roll on the cue ball, which left it in a straight line to Fisher's 6-ball resting on a long rail, a few inches from a corner pocket. But there was a problem. The 8-ball was right in the middle of that line.

Kelly bent down, aiming the cue ball (with a little left spin, one assumed) to pass the 8-ball on one side, hit a short rail, and bounce left to make contact with her 6-ball. It did, but not before it hit the side rail in front of it first and bounced softly off to touch the 6-ball. After it did, neither ball hit a rail.

Most of the in-person spectators and even the commentators in the booth (screens in front of them, but watching the live action) couldn't immediately figure out what exactly had happened. Anybody that had been watching the stream as the balls and rail made contact (at a very slow speed) could see that the cue ball had hit the rail first, 6-ball second and nothing hit a rail afterwards. Commentators and streaming spectators alike saw the replay a few times before the referee stepped back to the table, picked up the cue ball and presented it to Centeno.

With ball in hand, Centeno dropped the 10-ball, leaving herself in excellent position for the 8-ball and put it into the side pocket to claim the 2026 Oneida WPA Women's 8-Ball Championship title.

NEXT GENERATION OF AMERICAN WOMEN SHINE AT THE 2026 USA NATIONAL POOL CHAMPIONSHIPS

Story and photos courtesy USA Cue Sports

Dubuque, Iowa — Experience and emerging talent shared the spotlight Thursday as two national champions were crowned during the 2026 USA National Pool Championships, with the future of American women's cue sports on full display.

April Larson captured the 2026 USA National Women's 9-Ball Championship, while Savannah Easton claimed the 2026 USA National Women's 10-Ball Championship in a breakout performance that highlighted one of the strongest fields assembled in recent years.

The final standings in the 2026 USA National Women's 9-Ball Championship were:

- **Champion:** April Larson
- **Silver Medalist:** Savannah Easton
- **Bronze Medalist (Tie):** Ashley Benoit

- **Bronze Medalist (Tie):** Jordan Helfery

The final standings in the 2026 USA National Women's 10-Ball Championship were:

- **Champion:** Savannah Easton
- **Silver Medalist:** April Larson
- **Bronze Medalist (Tie):** Sofia Mast
- **Bronze Medalist (Tie):** Jordan Helfery

While Larson and Easton split the two national titles, the championships also showcased the remarkable depth of young American talent. In the Women's 10-Ball Championship, three of

the four medalists: Savannah Easton, Sofia Mast, and Jordan Helfery represent the next generation of elite American champions, underscoring the bright future of women's cue sports in the United States. Easton further demonstrated her consistency by reaching the finals in both disciplines, earning a national championship and a runner-up finish during an outstanding week of competition.

The 2026 USA National Pool Championships continue to establish themselves as one of the nation's premier cue sports events, featuring more than \$45,000 in added prize money—more



2026 National Pool Championships



April Larson

than double last year's purse—and providing athletes the opportunity to earn national titles while qualifying to represent the United States at upcoming WPA World Championships.

"Congratulations to both April Larson and Savannah Easton on tremendous championship performances," said Shane Tyree, Chief Executive Officer of the Billiard Congress of America. "What impressed me just as much as the champions was the incredible

depth of talent we witnessed throughout the women's divisions. Seeing so many young athletes competing for national championships is exciting for the future of our sport. The pipeline of talent continues to grow, and these athletes are proving they are ready to compete on both the national and international stage."

Ed Liddawi, President of USA Cue Sports, added, "The future of American women's cue sports has never

looked brighter. Savannah's national title and runner-up finish, April's championship performance, and the outstanding showings by Sofia Mast, Jordan Helfery, Ashley Benoit, and the entire field demonstrate the strength of our development pathway. These championships celebrate excellence today while building the Team USA stars of tomorrow."

The Billiard Congress of America and USA Cue Sports extend their sincere appreciation to the event's sponsors and partners whose support helps make the USA National Pool Championships possible: Aramith Billiard Balls, Diamond Billiard Products, Iwan Simonis, Master Chalk, and The Predator Group. Their continued commitment helps elevate the championship experience for athletes and fans alike.

Fans can re-watch all the featured table matches at the USA Cue Sports YouTube channel.



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SHANE VAN BOENING

CAPTURES FIRST 2026 USA NATIONAL 9-BALL CHAMPIONSHIP TITLE

Story and photo courtesy **USA Cue Sports**

Dubuque, IA — July 7, 2026. Billiard Congress of America Hall of Famer Shane Van Boening added another milestone to his legendary career Tuesday, defeating a field of the nation's top players to capture the 2026 USA National 9-Ball Championship during Day 2 of the 2026 USA National Pool Championships.

Van Boening's title run highlighted a day of intense competition as players battled through the newest premier event on the American calendar.

The final standings in the USA National 9-Ball Championship were:

- **Champion:** BCA Hall of Famer Shane Van Boening
- **Silver Medalist:** Hunter Lombardo
- **Bronze Medalist (Tie):** BCA Hall of Famer Rodney Morris
- **Bronze Medalist (Tie):** Brandon Shuff

The 2026 USA National Pool Championships continue throughout the week, bringing together the country's best cue sport players to compete for national championships across multiple disciplines. The event features more than \$45,000 in added prize money, more than double the prize from last year and starting to set the stage as one of the most prestigious competitions in for American cue sport athletes.

"We congratulate Shane Van Boening on another incredible national championship and commend every competitor who has helped make

this year's event such an outstanding showcase of American pool," said Shane Tyree, Chief Executive Officer of

the Billiard Congress of America. "The USA National Pool Championships represent the very best of our sport,



Shane Van Boening

from elite competition to sportsmanship and we're proud to provide a stage where America's top

players can compete for national titles and earn an opportunity to represent the USA and compete in World Championships. The momentum surrounding cue sports in the United States continues to grow, and this event reflects that progress."

Ed Liddawi, President of USA Cue Sports, added, "Congratulations to Shane on a well-deserved championship and to Hunter Lombardo, Rodney Morris, Brandon Shuff, and the entire field for an exceptional display of talent. These championships celebrate excellence, create opportunities for our athletes, and continue building a stronger future for competitive cue sports throughout the United States."

The Billiard Congress of America and USA Cue Sports extends their sincere appreciation to the event's sponsors

and partners whose support helps make the USA National Pool Championships possible: Aramith Billiard Balls, Diamond Billiard Products, Iwan Simonis, Masters Chalk, and The Predator Group. Their commitment to the sport continues to elevate the USA National Championship experience for athletes and fans alike.

Fans can watch featured table matches throughout the week by subscribing to the Billiard Congress of America and Billiard Education Foundation YouTube channels.

For complete live scoring, tournament brackets, and streaming from all 32 competition tables, visit DigitalPool.com.

The 2026 USA National Pool Championships continue through the week with additional national titles still to be decided, promising more outstanding competition from many of the nation's top cue sports athletes.

ABOUT BILLIARD CONGRESS OF AMERICA

Founded in 1948, the Billiard Congress of America is a non-profit trade organization dedicated to growing a united, prosperous and highly regarded billiard industry through BCA leadership. The BCA seeks to enhance the success of its members and promote the game of billiards through educational, marketing and promotional efforts, an annual industry trade show, tournaments and other programs designed to encourage billiards as a lifestyle and make pool everybody's game. The Billiard Congress of America also oversees management of USA Cue Sports, the Billiard Education Foundation. For more information, visit bca-pool.com or call 303.243.5070.

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JUSTIN BERGMAN

CAPTURES FIRST 2026 NATIONAL 10-BALL NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

Story and photo courtesy USA Cue Sports

Dubuque, Iowa — Justin Bergman added another prestigious title to his accomplished career to claim the 2026 USA National 10-Ball Championship.

Bergman showcased his trademark precision and consistency throughout the event, earning the national title in one of America's premier cue sports competitions.

The final standings in the 2026 USA National 10-Ball Championship were:

- **Champion:** Justin Bergman
- **Silver Medalist:** Hayden Ernst
- **Bronze Medalist (Tie):** Manny Perez
- **Bronze Medalist (Tie):** Brandon Shuff

The 2026 USA National Pool Championships continue throughout the week, bringing together the nation's finest cue sport athletes to compete for national championships across multiple disciplines. Featuring more than \$45,000 in added prize money—more than double last year's purse—the championships continue to establish themselves as one of the premier events in American cue sports.

"Congratulations to Justin Bergman on an outstanding performance and a

well-earned national championship," said Shane Tyree, Chief Executive Officer of the Billiard Congress of America. "Events like the USA National Pool Championships not only crown our nation's best players but also create meaningful opportunities for athletes to represent the United States on the world stage."

Ed Liddawi, President of USA Cue Sports, added, "Justin's championship run was a tremendous display of skill, composure, and competitive excellence. We also congratulate Hayden Ernst, Manny Perez, Brandon Shuff, and every athlete who competed this week. These championships continue to showcase the incredible depth of talent in the United States while providing a pathway for our athletes to compete internationally and proudly wear the Team USA colors."

The Billiard Congress of America and USA Cue Sports extend their sincere appreciation to the event's sponsors and partners whose support helps make the USA National Pool Championships possible: Aramith Billiard Balls, Diamond Billiard Products, Iwan Simonis, Masters Chalk, and The Predator Group. Their continued commitment to the sport helps elevate the championship experience for both athletes and fans.

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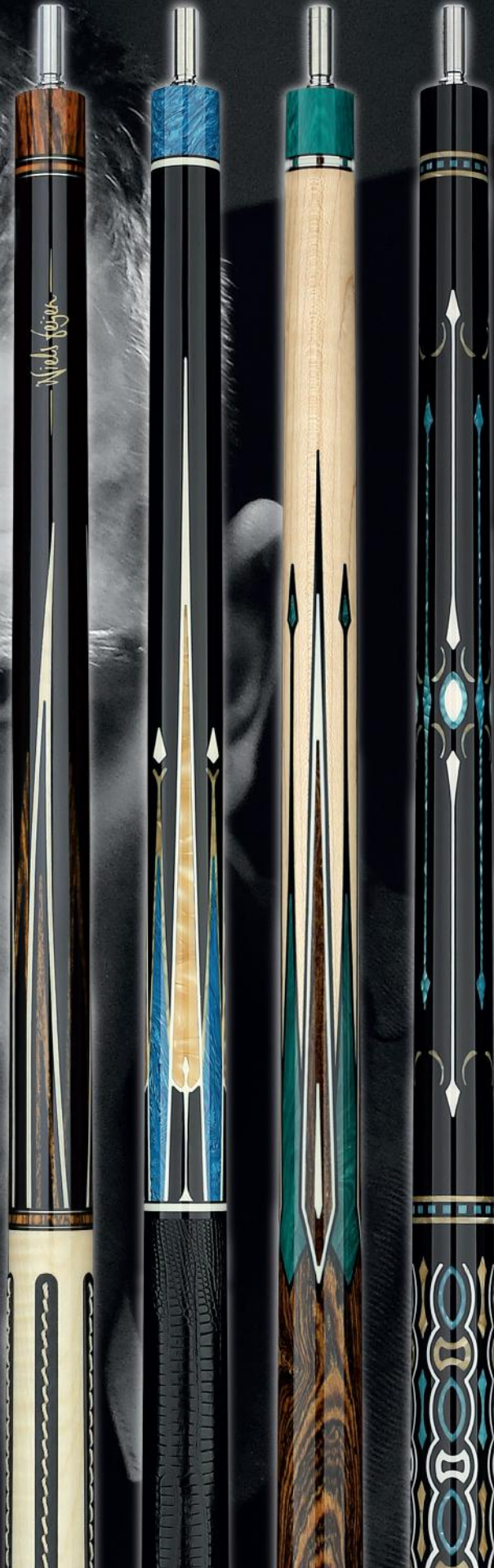
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POCKETS RICHEST FIRST PRIZE IN CUESPORTS HISTORY

Story by Michael Day - www.totallysnookered.com

Chinese ace Wu Jiaqing collected what is understood to be the richest prize in cuesports history last weekend when he won the 2026 Duya Legends Golden Nine International Tour Global Finals title.

Wu defeated compatriot Zheng Xiaohuai 140-82 in the final in Beijing to scoop the jackpot of 10 million Chinese Yuan; this equates to over £1.1 million/\$1.4 million, although this is before tax is removed.

Sanctioned by the World Pool-Billiards Association, the tournament

was branded by organisers as the 'Pinnacle of World Competition' and played to 'Golden Nine' rules. This cuesport discipline is essentially 9-ball pool played on a small-sized snooker table with a napped cloth.

Unlike traditional 9-ball that you would see at the Mosconi Cup, though, a points system is used to

determine the winner of matches, with various amounts awarded for a break-and-run, a table clearance, a frame/rack win, and foul shots from an opponent.

Over 600 players took part in these flagship 18-day Global Finals; shortly before the action began in China's capital city, an announcement was



made that the top prize had been doubled by sponsors.

The Chinese Pool and Heyball scenes in the Far East are becoming increasingly lucrative with massive jackpots on offer. Only a few weeks ago, seven-times world snooker champion Ronnie O'Sullivan made his major competitive debut at the Huacai World Open where he won a couple of matches before bowing out in the last 32.

However, it is common to see somewhat disproportionate pay-outs elsewhere in such events. At this competition, whilst the winner claimed around £1.1 million, there was a massive drop to approximately £165,000 for the runner-up.

Come the closing stages of these record-breaking Global Finals, it predictably became an exclusively Chinese affair with all the international players eliminated. In the semi-finals, Wu defeated defending champion Chu Bing-jie 118-84, meanwhile Zheng saw off last year's runner-up Zhou Long 129-89. Zhou went on to claim the bronze medal, getting the better of Chu 138-77 in the bronze medal match.

In the five-hour title decider, Wu broke free from his opponent after a close start and managed to keep him at an arm's length to score victory and secure the bumper winner's purse.

Another chapter in the incredible story of "Little Genius" Wu

This title triumph is another major accolade added to Wu Jiaqing's super-impressive career CV, and the 37-year-old was visibly emotional



formerly known as Wu Chia-ching

during his post-match interview in the arena.

Born in Taiwan, Wu dramatically shot to fame in 2005 as a 16-year-old when he won the World 9-Ball Pool Championship.

On home soil in Chinese Taipei, Wu – known back then as Wu Chia-ching – strung together the final five racks from 16-12 behind to deny compatriot Kuo Po-Cheng 17-16 in the final to become the youngest-ever winner of the global crown, a record that still stands today.

Since then, though, Wu's life has been far from straightforward and his pool career has been stop-start, although in the same year as his world 9-ball success, the "Taishan Shentong" (Little Genius from Taishan) also won the world 8-ball pool title.

After taking residency in Singapore – it is understood he primarily moved there to address health issues – Wu was banned by the Taiwanese billiards association and he didn't play competitively on the major stage for a few years.

In 2011, Wu moved to Shenzhen in mainland China to live with his uncle and officially switched allegiances, changing his name to what we know him as today – Wu Jiaqing. Having faced some ridicule over the switch, Wu returned to Taiwan the following year to complete his military conscript, although he was discharged early due to chronic leukemia.

It wasn't until later in the decade that Wu started winning major accolades again. In 2016 he became the China Open 9-Ball champion – a title he reclaimed three years later – and in 2018 alongside playing partner Liu Haitao he won the World Cup of Pool for China.

In more recent times it appears that Wu has mainly focused his attention on the Chinese Pool scene, perhaps indicated by his impressive and very lucrative glory in Beijing last week.

“ IN 2011, WU MOVED TO SHENZHEN IN MAINLAND CHINA TO LIVE WITH HIS UNCLE AND OFFICIALLY SWITCHED ALLEGIANCES, CHANGING HIS NAME TO WHAT WE KNOW HIM AS TODAY – WU JIAQING. ”

ULTIMATE POOL USA RETURNS TO KANSAS CITY

Story by **Mary Kenniston** - Photos courtesy **Ultimate Pool USA**

This past weekend, players and fans returned to Side Pockets in Blue Springs, MO for Ultimate Pool USA's Kansas City Open 2026.

One of the largest venues in the Midwest, Side Pockets has thirty tables, multiple eight foot HD big screens and more than sixty dining/drinking seating table options in 16,000 square feet of entertainment space.

Played on Brunswick Tournament Elite tables, this year's iteration of the Kansas City Open consisted of six events – the Open, the Shootout, the Women's Open, the Junior Open, Mixed Pairs and the 10-Ball Showdown plus the Rocket Runout featuring Rodney Morris facing a challenge by Dennis Hatch.

Over the past year or so, Ultimate Pool USA has cemented itself into

the American pool scene with major events and league franchises all over the country and players from all over the world are flocking to their events.

The Kansas City Open was no exception with Ultimate Pool USA Hall of Famer David Matlock leading the pack. BCA Hall of Famers Johnny Archer and Rodney Morris also joined the fray as well as past Ultimate Pool USA champs Tom Cousins, Chris Melling, Justin Bergman, Gerson Martinez Boza, Joe Prince, Joven Bustaman-

te, Ricky Evans, Kaden Herrbach and Gavin Mathew.

Roberto Gomez, Shane McMinn, Eric Charlton, Oscar Dominguez, Sky Woodward, Tyler Styer, Shane Thompson and Manny Perez were there as well as Ultimate Pool League Operator Alex Olinger.

Juniors Hayden Ernst, Sam Henderson, Shane Petrick, Peyton Lynch and Jax Pongpanik were spotted as well as ladies Amy Beauchamp, Nicole Obarowski, Rachel Lang and veteran Gail Lave.

Played on seven foot tables with International Eight Ball Rules, the tournament kicked off this past Thursday with the opening rounds of the



Justin Bergman

Shootout. After many matches, on Friday night it came down to Dennis Hatch and Roberto Gomez in the finals. In a close and hard fought match, Gomez took the title with a 6-5 win.

This was followed by the Mixed Pairs Championship. Again, Dennis Hatch was in the finals with his partner, Charlie Simpson. They battled Sky Woodward and Tatum Cutting for the title but this time, Hatch was in the winners circle joined by teammate Charlie Simpson.

Also on Saturday night, Ultimate Pool USA also announced the second inductee into their Hall of Fame – Justin Bergman.

To quote the UP USA in their Facebook post, “Justin has been a huge part of the Ultimate Pool USA journey, producing some incredible performances and becoming our most successful player in the Shootout format.

A fantastic player, a fierce competitor, and someone who has made a major impact on the game, Justin now joins David Matlock in the Ultimate Pool USA Hall of Fame.”

And just hours after the announcement of his impending induction into the UP USA Hall of Fame, Justin Bergman defeated Joven Bustamante in a



Roberto Gomez

dramatic six ball shootout to take the Kansas City 10-Ball Showdown!

With this title, Bergman has now won every event offered by Ultimate Pool USA – the 10-Ball Showdown, the Shootout, the Open and Mixed Pairs.

Next up was the Junior Open – Hayden Ernst defeated England's Cohan Bradford 6-4 in the finals. Ernst can now add this title to the UP USA Junior National title he won in November.

The Second Chance Junior tournament was won by Jax Pongpanik who defeated Joseph King 4-0.

This was followed by the Women's Open which was won by another English player, Amy Beauchamp. Beauchamp has six world titles and many other professional titles on her resume. She edged out Tatum Cutting 5-4 and added her first UP USA trophy to her collection.

The Second Chance Women's Open title was claimed by Jessica Main who bested Sarah Stephens 4-3.

The main and final event of the weekend, the Florida Open, was won by Gerson Martinez Boza who defeated Justin Bergman 5-3. This is just the second UP USA event for the young Peruvian as he now claims back to back Open titles after winning the Florida Open crown this past May.

Brady Behrman took the Second Chance Open title with his win over Brad Guthrie 5-0.

Congratulations to all the newly minted Kansas City Open champions!

Ultimate Pool USA thanked every player, fan, referee, staff member, sponsor and viewer who helped make the Kansas City Open 2026 another incredible event and congratulated all the champions and finalists.



Amy Beauchamp

HAYDEN AND EASTON

WIN SIX GOLD, A SILVER AND BRONZE AT 2026 JUNIOR NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

Story by **Skip Maloney - AzB Staff** / Photo courtesy **Billiards Education Foundation**

Wins qualify them both (and others) for USA seats at the World Junior tables

It is remarkable, in and of itself, that Louisville, KY's Hayden Ernst and Las Vegas, NV's Savannah Easton, combined, brought home six Gold, a Silver and Bronze medal from the 38th Annual Iwan Simonis Junior National Championships, hosted by the Billiards Education Foundation (BEF) at the Grand River Center in Dubuque, IA last week (Sun., June 5 – Sat., June 11). Four of those eight total medals qualified them for World Junior competition.

At 15, Ernst, who won his first of 11 Gold Medals at the age of 13, will represent the US in World Junior competition for the fifth time. He earned the right to represent the US this year by winning Gold in both the 16U 9-Ball and 10-Ball events. He also earned

Gold medals in 18U Boys 8-Ball and 18U 14:1 Straight Pool competition, which are not among the World Junior events.

Easton, who attended her first BEF Junior National in 2021 at the age of 11, won her first Gold medals the following year, winning the 14U 9-Ball event and 19U 8-ball event that year. She would go on to win a total of 11, winning this year's world-qualifying Gold medal in the 18U Girls 10-Ball event and her Silver qualifying medal as runner-up in the 18U Girls 9-Ball tournament. She added another Gold medal for winning the 18U Girls 8-ball and a Bronze medal, finishing 3rd in the 18U Girls 14:1 Straight Pool tournament.

According to Easton's mother, Tiffany Easton, pool wasn't on her daughter's radar until the Covid epidemic.

"We were not familiar with anything about junior pool," she told BEF representatives. "We hadn't put her in any leagues or tournaments (because, at the time), Savannah was a hockey player; travelled with (Las Vegas') Jr. Golden Knights."

"She uncovered our pool table cover, which was my laundry table at the time, during Covid," she added, "because she was bored at home."

Savannah asked her parents to sign her up for the 2021 BEF event, at which she went 'two and out.'

"It lit a fire in her," said Tiffany Easton, "and she told us she would win the next year."

And she did, winning Gold twice.

"For the next eight months, she was travelling to play ice hockey and travelling a little for pool," Tiffany went on to say, "and we told her that she had to pick one of the two."

"The rest," she added, "is history."

That history is part of what is even more remarkable about both Easton and Ernst. It's about what these two teenagers accomplished in the past year or so, prior to their arrival in the Hawkeye State to compete for all those 2026 Junior National titles. Ladies first.





Savannah Easton came to the week-long Junior Nationals having already made 2026 her best recorded earnings year as a professional. She began reporting earnings to her AZBilliards' profile in 2021 at the age of 11 and over the next five years, she climbed the AZBilliards Money Leaderboard, from #553 in 2021, improving her earnings every year. By last year, she'd climbed to #70 on the Leaderboard and this year, a month beyond the middle of it, she's already at #33. She is the first female in BEF Junior National history known to have entered the championships while among AZBilliards Money Leaderboard's Top 50 competitors. And as if that weren't enough, she also came to the BEF Junior Nationals this year as the current #6 in the Women's Professional Billiards Association's (WPBA) rankings; the highest WPBA ranking for any female competitor in a Junior National Championship.

Hayden Ernst began his professional career a little later than Easton; a year later, to be precise. He ended his first recorded earnings year with AZBilliards in 2022 and finished at #1,820 on the Money Leaderboard. And like Easton, kept improving. Last year was his best recorded earnings year (fin-

ishing at #298 on the Board) and a little over halfway through this year, he's just shy of being halfway to making this his best year (currently at #286 on the Board). An added note to Ernst's climb up the professional ladder has to do with his attendance at this past year's Derby City Classic in January. The Classic is among the most prestigious US professional tournaments in the same way that the BEF Junior Nationals are recognized as the country's most prestigious events for junior competitors. At this most recent Derby City Classic, Ernst finished 'in the money' in three of the Classic's events; 9-Ball, One Pocket and Bank Pool. He didn't win any of them, but he became the first junior competitor to compete in the BEF Junior Nationals in the same year that he accomplished that feat of three 'in the money' finishes at the Derby City Classic. The Classic has been described as a 'brutal adult field,' with between 500 and 700 players per discipline, at which juniors who cash even once are rare.

The BEF Junior Nationals have a history of sending its winners into the professional ranks. It's become an event that features junior competitors who've already climbed a number of rungs up the professional ladder.

This year's Junior Nationals drew 93 unique competitors (some, of course, competed in multiple events) and for the second year in a row, became part of the USA National Pool Championships, which included the USA Cue Sports Pool Championships and the annual Wheelchair National Pool Championships. In effect, bringing all three events of the professional and junior ranks of USA cue sports all together, literally under one roof.

Easton and Ernst, of course, are not the only competitors to be successful at this year's BEF Junior Nationals, many of them familiar as competitors in previous years and, like Easton and Ernst, with a lot of professional experience already on their resumes.

Bondurant, IN's Brendan Greene, for example, who recorded a modest, 'in the money' finish (5th) at the UPUSA Iowa Open's Junior Division in April of last year, joining the AZBilliards database for the first time. Greene will make his debut on Team USA in the World Junior competition as a result of winning this year's 18U Boys 9-Ball Championships and bringing home a Silver medal as runner-up in the 18U Boys 10-Ball Championships.

Joining Greene among the boys who'll be on Team USA are, among others, Georgia's Colston Harrelson (Silver medal, 16U Boys 9-Ball/Bronze medal, 16U 10-Ball), and 13-year-old Gavin Mathew from Texas (Bronze medal, 16U Boys 9-Ball/Silver medal, 16U Boys 10-Ball).

Other female competitors, whose names you might recognize, will also be among the varied Teams USA, thanks to their performances in this year's BEF; Sofia Mast (Gold Medal, 18U Girls 9-Ball/Bronze Medal, 18U Girls 10-Ball), Skylar Hess (Bronze medal, 18U Girls 9-Ball), and Jordan Helfery (Silver Medal, 18U Girls 10-Ball).

Full finishes for all of this year's BEF Junior National Championships are listed below.

JUNIOR NATIONAL 8-BALL CHAMPIONSHIPS

18 & Under Boys

Name (Age)	Location	Result / Prize
Hayden Ernst (15)	Louisville, KY	Gold Medal, \$500 BEF Scholarship
Brendan Greene (17)	Bondurant, IA	Silver Medal, \$250 BEF Scholarship
Jordan Witkin (18)	Algonquin, IL	Bronze Medal
Colston Harrelson (16)	Alto, GA	Bronze Medal

18 & Under Girls

Name (Age)	Location	Result / Prize
Savannah Easton (16)	Las Vegas, NV	Gold Medal, \$500 BEF Scholarship + \$500 Michael Repici Scholarship
Jordan Helfery (15)	St. Joseph, MO	Silver Medal, \$250 BEF Scholarship
Sofia Mast (18)	Wesley Chapel, FL	Bronze Medal
Taylor Perkins (18)	Frankfort	Bronze Medal

14 & Under Coed

Name (Age)	Location	Result / Prize
Gavin Mathew (12)	Frisco, TX	Gold Medal, \$50 PoolDawg.com gift certificate
Peyton Lynch (14)	Linn, MO	Silver Medal, \$50 PoolDawg.com gift certificate
Damon Kahler (14)	Appleton, WI	Bronze Medal
Eric "Chip" Allyn (12)	Elk River, MN	Bronze Medal

JUNIOR NATIONAL 14.1 STRAIGHT POOL CHAMPIONSHIPS

18 & Under Boys

Name (Age)	Location	Result / Prize
Hayden Ernst (15)	Louisville, KY	Gold Medal, \$500 BEF Scholarship
Eddie Vonderau (18)	Blacksburg, VA	Silver Medal, \$250 BEF Scholarship
Anthony Atkinson (16)	Spotsylvania, VA	Bronze Medal
Brendan Greene (17)	Bondurant, IA	Bronze Medal

18 & Under Girls

Name (Age)	Location	Result / Prize
Sofia Mast (18)	Wesley Chapel, FL	Gold Medal, \$500 BEF Scholarship + \$500 Michael Repici Scholarship
Jordan Helfery (15)	St. Joseph, MO	Silver Medal, \$250 BEF Scholarship
Savannah Easton (16)	Las Vegas, NV	Bronze Medal
Alyssa Albert (16)	Coal Township, PA	Bronze Medal



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14 & Under Coed

Name (Age)	Location	Result / Prize
Gavin Ray Mathew (12)	Frisco, TX	Gold Medal, \$50 PoolDawg.com gift certificate
Dalton Nelson (10)	New Lisbon, WI	Silver Medal, \$50 PoolDawg.com gift certificate
Eric “Chip” Allyn (12)	Elk River, MN	Bronze Medal
Donovan Seymour (12)	Raymond, CA	Bronze Medal

Highest Overall Run

Name (Age)	Achievement	Prize
Eddie Vonderau (18)	43 balls	\$500 BEF Scholarship

JUNIOR NATIONAL 9-BALL CHAMPIONSHIPS

** Indicates World Junior Championships Qualifier division.

**** 18 & Under Boys**

Name (Age)	Location	Result / Prize
Brendan Greene (17)	Bondurant, IA	World Junior Qualifier, Gold Medal, \$500 BEF Scholarship
Robert Orta (18)	Odessa, TX	World Junior Qualifier, Silver Medal, \$250 BEF Scholarship
Harrison Leinen (18)	Waconia, MN	World Junior Qualifier, Bronze Medal
Jordan Witkin (18)	Algonquin, IL	4th Place Alternate

**** 18 & Under Girls**

Name (Age)	Location	Result / Prize
Sofia Mast (18)	Wesley Chapel, FL	World Junior Qualifier, Gold Medal, \$500 BEF Scholarship + \$500 Michael Repici Scholarship
Savannah Easton (16)	Las Vegas, NV	World Junior Qualifier, Silver Medal, \$250 BEF Scholarship
Skylar Hess (17)	Queenstown, MD	World Junior Qualifier, Bronze Medal
Jordan Helfery (15)	St. Joseph, MO	4th Place Alternate

**** 16 & Under Boys**

Name (Age)	Location	Result / Prize
Hayden Ernst (15)	Louisville, KY	World Junior Qualifier, Gold Medal, \$500 BEF Scholarship + \$500 Michael Repici Scholarship
Colston Harrelson (16)	Alto, GA	World Junior Qualifier, Silver Medal, \$250 BEF Scholarship
Gavin Ray Mathew (12)	Frisco, TX	World Junior Qualifier, Bronze Medal
Noel Montano (15)	Colorado Springs, CO	4th Place Alternate

14 & Under Girls

Name (Age)	Location	Result / Prize
Tiffany Tang (13)	Tallahassee, FL	Gold Medal, \$50 PoolDawg.com gift certificate
Jordyn Randell (13)	Sun City, AZ	Silver Medal, \$50 PoolDawg.com gift certificate
Avery Castel-Brandt (11)	East Moline, IL	Bronze Medal
Mary Jane Zuber (12)	Albuquerque, NM	Bronze Medal

12 & Under Boys

Name (Age)	Location	Result / Prize
Donovan Seymour (12)	Raymond, CA	Gold Medal, \$50 PoolDawg.com gift certificate
Austin Dubs (12)	Surprise, AZ	Silver Medal, \$50 PoolDawg.com gift certificate
Dalton Nelson (10)	New Lisbon, WI	Bronze Medal
Eric “Chip” Allyn (12)	Elk River, MN	Bronze Medal

JUNIOR NATIONAL 10-BALL CHAMPIONSHIPS

** Indicates World Junior Championships Qualifier division.

**** 18 & Under Boys**

Name (Age)	Location	Result / Prize
Eddie Vonderau (18)	Blacksburg, VA	World Junior Qualifier, Gold Medal, \$500 BEF Scholarship
Brendan Greene (17)	Bondurant, IA	World Junior Qualifier, Silver Medal, \$250 BEF Scholarship
Jordan Witkin (18)	Algonquin, IL	World Junior Qualifier, Bronze Medal
Robert Orta (18)	Odessa, TX	4th Place Alternate

**** 18 & Under Girls**

Name (Age)	Location	Result / Prize
Savannah Easton (16)	Las Vegas, NV	World Junior Qualifier, Gold Medal, \$500 BEF Scholarship + \$500 Michael Repici Scholarship
Jordan Helfery (15)	St. Joseph, MO	World Junior Qualifier, Silver Medal, \$250 BEF Scholarship
Sofia Mast (18)	Wesley Chapel, FL	World Junior Qualifier, Bronze Medal
Tiffany Tang (13)	Tallahassee, FL	4th Place Alternate

**** 16 & Under Boys**

Name (Age)	Location	Result / Prize
Hayden Ernst (15)	Louisville, KY	World Junior Qualifier, Gold Medal, \$500 BEF Scholarship + \$500 Michael Repici Scholarship
Gavin Ray Mathew (12)	Frisco, TX	World Junior Qualifier, Silver Medal, \$250 BEF Scholarship
Colston Harrelson (16)	Alto, GA	World Junior Qualifier, Bronze Medal
Shane Petrick (16)	Bellaire, TX	4th Place Alternate

BILL LARSON AND DERRICK BONDS

CROWNED WHEELCHAIR NATIONAL CHAMPIONS AT 2026 USA NATIONAL POOL CHAMPIONSHIPS

Story and photos courtesy **USA Cue Sports**

Dubuque, Iowa — The wheelchair divisions took center stage Friday at the 2026 USA National Pool Championships, where Bill Larson claimed the 2026 USA National Wheelchair 8-Ball Championship and Derrick Bonds successfully defended his national title by capturing the 2026 USA National Wheelchair 10-Ball Championship for the second consecutive year.

The championships showcased the nation's premier adaptive cue sport athletes while highlighting remarkable consistency from several competitors, including Bret Clifton, who earned silver medals in both disciplines, and Hydre Goldberg, the only female competitor to medal in the wheelchair divisions while also advancing to the final 12 of the Women's Open 10-Ball Championship.

The final standings in the 2026 USA National Wheelchair 8-Ball Championship were:

- **Champion:** Bill Larson
- **Silver Medalist:** Bret Clifton
- **Bronze Medalist (Tie):** Charles Interrante
- **Bronze Medalist (Tie):** Derrick Bonds

The final standings in the 2026 USA National Wheelchair 10-Ball Championship were:

- **Champion:** Derrick Bonds
- **Silver Medalist:** Bret Clifton
- **Bronze Medalist (Tie):** Tom Davis
- **Bronze Medalist (Tie):** Hydre Goldberg

The wheelchair championships once again demonstrated the depth of

talent within adaptive cue sports. Bonds' successful title defense reaffirmed his place among the nation's elite competitors, while Clifton's runner-up finishes in both events showcased exceptional consistency throughout the week. Goldberg's dual accomplishments of earning a national medal while competing successfully against the nation's top women in the open division underscored the growing strength and inclusiveness of the championships.

"Congratulations to Bill Larson and Derrick Bonds on outstanding national championship performances," said Shane Tyree, Chief Executive Officer of the Billiard Congress of America. "The wheelchair divisions continue to be one of the most inspiring and competitive parts of the USA National Pool Championships. Derrick's repeat championship, Bret's incredible consistency across both disciplines, and Hydre's outstanding performances across multiple



USA National Championships 8-Ball medalist (L-R) Bret Clifton (Silver), Bill Larson (Gold), Derrick Bonds and Charles Interrante (Bronze)

divisions all speak to the remarkable level of talent these athletes bring to our national stage.”

Ed Liddawi, President of USA Cue Sports, added, “These championships represent the very best of our sport. Every athlete who competed demonstrated tremendous skill, determination, and sportsmanship, and we are proud to celebrate their accomplishments. Congratulations to Bill, Derrick, Bret, Charles, Tom, Hydred, and every competitor for helping elevate adaptive cue sports in the United States.”

The Billiard Congress of America and USA Cue Sports extend their sincere appreciation to the event’s sponsors and partners whose support helps make the USA National Pool Championships possible: Aramith Billiard Balls, Diamond Billiard Products, Iwan Simonis, Masters Chalk, and The Predator Group. Their continued com-



USA National Championships 10-Ball medalist (L-R) Bret Clifton (Silver), Derrick Bonds (Gold), Hydred Goldberg and Tom Davis (Bronze)

mitment helps provide a world-class championship experience for athletes and fans alike.

Fans can re-watch all the featured table matches at the USA Cue Sports YouTube channel.

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MIDWEST BILLIARDS & CUE EXPO A ROARING SUCCESS: VAN BOENING TOPS LIST OF EVENT WINNERS

Story by Mary Kenniston / Photos courtesy Pool Action TV

Big Dog Billiards in Des Moines, IA hosted their annual extravaganza and, as usual, it was a huge success.

Owners Jim Landrum and Randy Hanson and their Executive Assistant Jeremy White welcomed the hundreds of pool players, fans and cuemakers to their beautiful room this past week to show their stuff.

This 12th Annual \$15,000 added event featured four events – Big Table Nine Ball, the Making It In America One

Pocket Championship, a Banks Ring Game and Bar Table Nine Ball.

Promoted by PoolActionTV.com with special sponsors Pat Diveney of Diveney Cues, Cuetec and “Ann Arbor Derek” Pogirski, local sponsors included attorney Joseph J. Long, Smash Billiards, Hanshew Jump Cues, Simonis, Lomax Custom Cues, Aramith, Durbin Custom Cues, Dia-

mond Billiard Products, Inc., CueMaker Supply, Inc., SharpShooter Vision, PoolPlayer Perks, the Action Palace of Dayton, OH and the Fort Worth Billiards Superstore of Fort Worth, TX.

Defending one pocket titlist and BCA Hall of Famer Shane Van Boening was spotted as well as 2026’s Beasley Open One Pocket winner Roberto Gomez, reigning Derby City Classic Banks Ring Game winner Devin Poteet, current Making It In America’s Kennesaw, GA one pocket champ Josh Roberts and 2025’s Rack & Grill Open 9 Ball winner Brandon Shuff. Other players included Chip Compton, Danny Olson, Manny Perez, Chase Stumfoll and Albania’s Eduard Bregu.

This year’s event kicked off this past Wednesday with the \$2,000 added Big Table Nine Ball Mini. Fourteen players paid a \$200 entry to compete in this race to seven, winner break single elimination event. Following the players auction and draw, play began.

Notching victories over Dave O’Keefe (2), Shane Van Boening (2) and Josh Roberts (4), Devin Poteet made



Brandon Shuff and Shane Van Boening



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the finals. Cal Boll had wins over Uland Danuser (2), Tyler Ramos (3) and Danny Olson (5) to join him there. It was Poteet who claimed the title with his 7-3 defeat of Boll.

Thursday evening saw the beginning of the \$10,000 added One Pocket Championship. Twenty eight players played in this modified entry tournament. The entry fees for this event were modified according to each player's FargoRate and known ability – \$400 for 740 and over, \$300 for 620-739 and \$200 for 619 and below. Races were 3/3 with one extended race to four in the finals.

Players received 1,000 points for attending plus ten points for every dollar earned. All winners side matches received cash plus 25% of the field received additional payouts.

Play began after the players auction, meeting and draw.

Determined to defend his title, Shane Van Boening secured wins over Cal Boll (0), Demetrius Jelatis (0), Josh Roberts (1), Chip Compton (0) in his march to the hot seat match.

After a first round bye, Brandon Shuff also mowed down Danny Olson (0), Matthew Eddy (0) and Devin Poteet (2) before losing to Van Boening (1) in

the hot seat match. Shane secured his seat in the finals (1) and Shuff headed west to await an opponent.

West side action saw Roberto Gomez eliminated by Compton (1) and Poteet survived a squeaker over Olson (2). Compton then knocked out Poteet (1) and faced Shuff for a seat in the finals. Gomez finished in fourth place.

Compton and Shuff played hard to reach the finals but it was Shuff who prevailed (1) and looked to avenge his loss to Van Boening. Compton finished in third place.

However, Van Boening was having none of it – he had a title to defend and he did. Van Boening won the first game but Shuff won the next 8-0 to tie it up.

Van Boening responded with an eight and out which included three cross corner banks and a combination on the out ball – score 2-1.

It was Shuff's break – he had a chance to tie it up. After a long safety battle, however, Van Boening got the first opening and won the game to make it 3-1.

Although it was Van Boening's break, Shuff drew first blood and won the game 8-0 making it 3-2.

Again, it was Shuff's break, Shane played a fantastic kick and pocketed the ball and ran two more from there. Shuff got just one ball as Van Boening won the match to win the tournament.

Although he played tough, Brandon went down 4-2 with a well-earned runner-up finish.

On Saturday night, the \$1,000 added Banks Ring Game began. An eight player invitational, the entry fee was \$250, it was single elimination with banks paid by rail. When all was said and done, it was Josh Roberts who



Devin Poteet

was left standing after eliminating the always tough Devin Poteet for the title.

While the one pocket championship was winding down, the \$2,000 added Bar Table Nine Ball Championship was in full swing.

Played on seven foot Diamonds, this double elimination event featured races to seven on both sides. Tournament Directors Brandon and Ashley Jacobs had their hands full with the 185 player field.

Chase Stumfoll, Brian Parks, Gary Lutman, Whitey Walker, Cal Boll and Gordy Vanderveer were just a few of the names in the field.

After many matches, the field was pared down to two – Whitey Walker and Jamison Gall. The match was close but Walker pulled away at the end to win the tournament 7-5.

Congratulations to Shane Van Boening, Devin Poteet, Josh Roberts & Whitey Walker for becoming this year's Midwest Billiards & Cue Expo champions!



Josh Roberts

CYNERGY



Shane Van Boening

GENERATION II

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SOUTH DAKOTA'S TANNER PRUESS

NAMED 2026 ACS OUTSTANDING INSTRUCTOR OF THE YEAR

Tanner Pruess of Rapid City, South Dakota, was named the 2026 ACS Outstanding Instructor of the Year at the International Certified Instructors Summit held in Dubuque, Iowa.

The award recognizes excellence in cue sports instruction and is presented annually to an instructor who has demonstrated exceptional commitment to student development, teaching, and advancing the profession of billiards instruction. Tanner received the honor before a gathering of certified instructors from across the United States and around the world.

An ACS Level III & Advanced PBIA Instructor, accomplished competitor, and author of the Pool Confidence Guide, Tanner has built a reputation for helping players bridge the gap between practice and performance. He specializes in helping students improve not only their mechanics, but also their confidence, decision-making, and execution under pressure. Through custom online training programs, private instruction, and the Pool Confidence Guide, he works with players of all skill levels to develop skills that hold up in real competition.

"It is incredibly humbling to be recognized by a group of instructors that I have looked up to and learned from," said Pruess. "Some of the most rewarding moments in instruction are not tournament victories, but seeing a student accomplish something they once thought was out of reach. Helping others grow and succeed is what makes this work meaningful."

In addition to his instructional work, Pruess is a two-time VNEA World Sin-

gles Champion and has earned numerous city, state, and regional titles throughout his competitive career. His unique perspective as both a high-level competitor and instructor has made him a sought-after instructor for players looking to improve their performance in competition.

During this year's Summit, Tanner also presented a featured session titled "Execution Under Pressure: 10 Lessons From a Competitor," sharing lessons learned through years of competition and instruction on how players can perform more consistently when it matters most.

Pruess credits much of his success to the support of his family, students, mentors and fellow instructors who have contributed to his growth

throughout his career. Tanner is sponsored by Jam Up Apparel, Keith Hansen Kues and Breakroom Billiards in Rapid City, SD.

The International Certified Instructors Summit brings together instructors from a variety of cue sports disciplines to share knowledge, advance teaching standards and promote excellence in player development worldwide.

ABOUT TANNER PRUESS

Tanner Pruess is an ACS Level III & Advanced PBIA Instructor based in Rapid City, South Dakota. The author of the Pool Confidence Guide, he is known for combining high-level competitive experience with practical instruction that helps players improve execution, confidence, and performance under pressure.



Tanner Pruess

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MANILA ROARS BACK: **THE REYES CUP AND PHILIPPINES OPEN POOL** **CHAMPIONSHIP RETURN FOR 2026**

The World Nineball Tour, in partnership with Puyat Sports, is thrilled to confirm that both the Reyes Cup and the Philippines Open Pool Championship will make their highly anticipated return to Manila this October.

Both events are set to be broadcasted live and for free on the One Sports YouTube Channel with linear airing on One Sports & One Sports+ and digital streaming on Pilipinas Live and WNT TV — delivering nine days of unmissable world-class nineball action that will once again cement the Philippine capital as the global home of the sport.

Reyes Cup • 15–18 October 2026

Team Asia return to defend the Reyes Cup as back-to-back champions fol-

lowing their commanding 11–3 victory in 2025. With the rivalry set to intensify once again, one question remains: can Team Rest of the World finally break Asia's grip on the trophy?

Leading Team Asia is the legendary Francisco 'Django' Bustamante, returning as captain with his sights set on a historic third consecutive title. Taking charge of Team Rest of the World for the first time is Ralf Souquet — one of the sport's all-time greats — who arrives determined to lead his side to a first-ever Reyes Cup triumph.

Philippines Open Pool Championship • 20–24 October 2026

Immediately following the Reyes Cup, the world's elite return to Gateway Mall — scene of one of the most breathtaking weeks of nineball in recent memory. The 2025 inaugural edition set a new benchmark for what a Matchroom Major can be: a brutal single-elimination format, a Colosseum-like arena that placed players at the heart of a roaring crowd, and Spain's David Alcaide crowned champion after a masterclass of compo-



sure under the most intense pressure imaginable.

The Tour returns to that same stage, that same format, and that same electricity in 2026 — with a world-class field ready to go to war once more. Home fans will be desperate to see reigning World Champion Carlo Biado go one step further and claim the title on Filipino soil.

“The Philippines is the home of pool — and these two events prove it every October. The talent we have here in Asia is incredible, but it is the fans who make Manila like nowhere else in the world. When that crowd gets behind you, it is something you never forget. I am so proud of what the Reyes Cup and the Philippines Open have become, and I know our fans will make October 2026 very special once again.” — Efren ‘Bata’ Reyes

“We are very happy to partner again with Matchroom Multi-Sport and Puyat Sports to bring and broadcast the biggest billiards events this 2026. We’ve had this partnership since 2024 and we are thrilled to continue and ensure that Filipino billiards fans have access to these events, on any device as we offer multiple platforms where to watch these events.” — Mr. Christopher C. Lizo – Officer-In-Charge, Cignal

“Bringing both the Reyes Cup and the Philippines Open back in 2026 fills us with enormous pride. With the Reyes Cup returning alongside the Philippines Open at Gateway Mall, and Filipino fans who are simply the best in the world, we cannot wait to welcome everyone back to Manila for another unforgettable October.”— Mr Aristeo “Putch” Puyat

“October in Manila has become the unmissable moment on the World Nineball Tour calendar and 2026 is going to be bigger than ever. A new captain and Team Asia arriving as back-to-back champions means the Reyes Cup has never had more riding on it. Then the Philippines Open picks straight up with the format and atmosphere that made it one of the stand-out events of 2025. Two world-class events, ten days, one incredible city — we cannot wait.” — Emily Frazer, CEO of Matchroom Multi Sport

Further details on the full broadcast partner list, ticketing, and — for the Reyes Cup — the qualification cut-off, tournament format, and venue will all be announced in the coming weeks.

For all the latest news and announcements, follow Matchroom Pool on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube.

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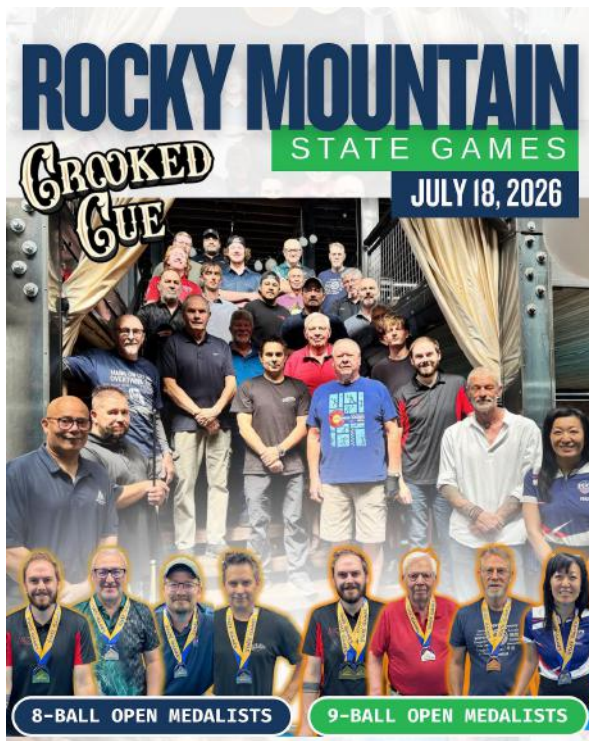
Story and photo courtesy **Samm Diep-Vidal**

Billiards has officially returned to the Rocky Mountain State Games (RMSG), Colorado's Olympic-style amateur sports festival produced by the Colorado Springs Sports Corporation, promoted by event commissioner Samm Diep-Vidal, and directed by USA Cue Sports national tournament director, Jose Burgos.

This year's Games featured more than 40 sports and took place during the third week of July, marking the first appearance of billiards in the lineup since 2019. The billiard competition was hosted at The Crooked Cue, located in the heart of downtown Colorado Springs. The venue celebrated its second anniversary that same weekend, adding to the sense of community pride surrounding the event.

On July 18th, athletes from across Colorado competed for gold, silver, and bronze medals in two unified divisions: 19+ Bar Table 8-Ball Open and 19+ Big Table 9-Ball Open. A total of 21 athletes registered for 8-Ball and 16 athletes entered the 9-Ball field. Ladies and Youth categories were originally offered, but due to limited registration, those divisions were consolidated into the open brackets.

With only two divisions, athletes were permitted to compete in both. Local regular, Lucas Taylor went undefeated in both events to claim double-gold. Taylor captured the 8-ball title after defeating last year's Senior State Games gold medalist, Jim Calderon of Pueblo, on the 7-footers in the top floor. Afterward, the 9-ball finals delivered even more drama. Taylor jumped ahead 3-0 against Paul Drinnon, another Senior State Games medalist,



before an unexpected miss on the 6 ball shifted momentum. Drinnon rallied to close the gap to 3-4, but Taylor regained control and closed out the set 5-3 to complete his sweep.

Event Results:

19+ Bar Table 8-Ball Open Division

- **Gold:** Lucas Taylor (Colorado Springs, CO)
- **Silver:** Jim Calderon (Pueblo, CO)
- **Bronze:** Joe Campana (Colorado Springs, CO)
- **Bronze:** Jason Cowan (Colorado Springs, CO)

19+ Big Table 9-Ball Open Division

- **Gold:** Lucas Taylor (Colorado Springs, CO)
- **Silver:** Paul Drinnon (Colorado Springs, CO)
- **Bronze:** Samm Diep (Denver, CO)
- **Bronze:** John Attwood (Colorado Springs, CO)

"We're so grateful for The Crooked Cue and their loyal support. Thanks, also, to The Sports Corp and all the athletes who attended," said Diep-Vidal. "We already have ideas for improvements for next year and look forward to growing this event," added Burgos.

The Rocky Mountain State Games (RMSG) are Colorado's official Olympic-style sports festival, conducted annually in Colorado Springs and organized by the Colorado Springs Sports Corporation. The Games feature over 40 sports each year, offering competitive and recreational opportunities for athletes of all ages and skill levels. The RMSG promotes fitness, community engagement, and the Olympic values of excellence, friendship, and respect.

For full results and future event details, visit <https://www.coloradospringssports.org/events/rockymountainstategames/>.

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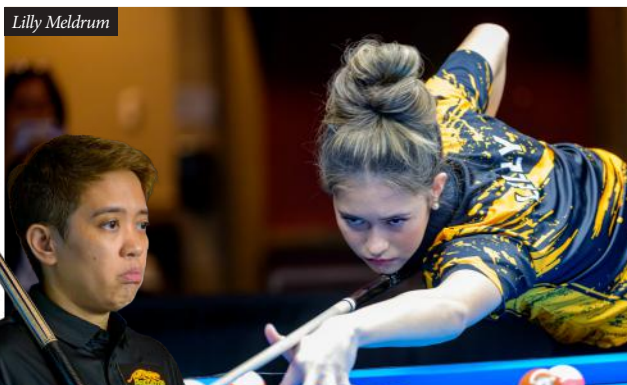
Kennedy Meyman



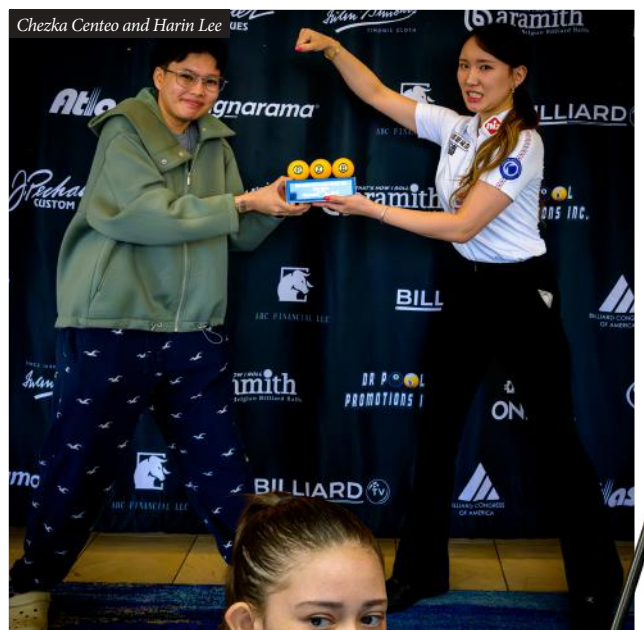
Ashley Benoit



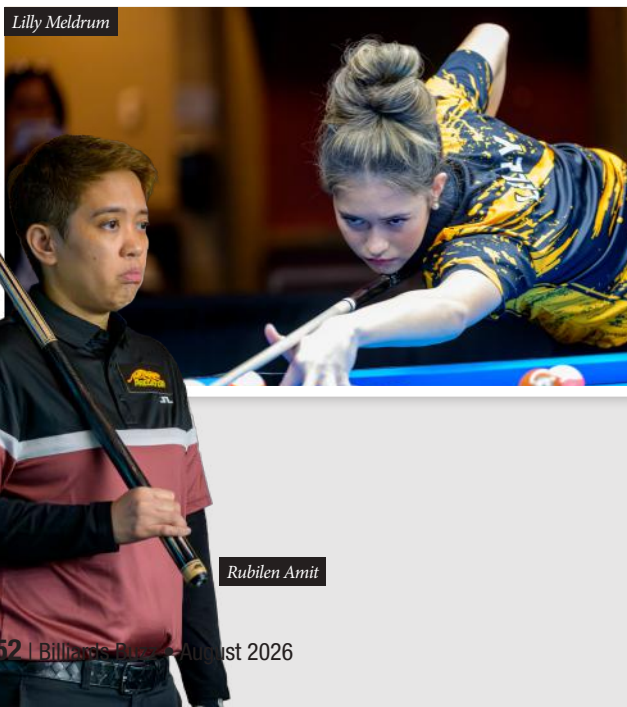
Kristina Tkach



Lilly Meldrum



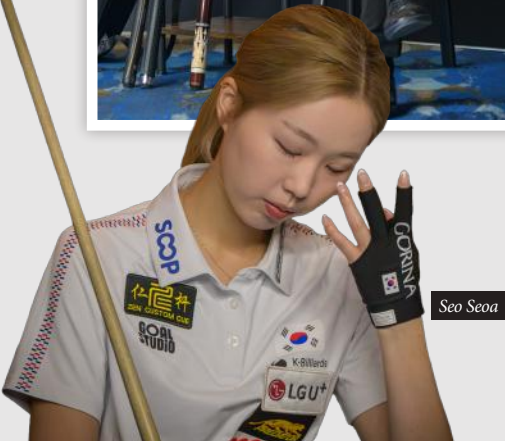
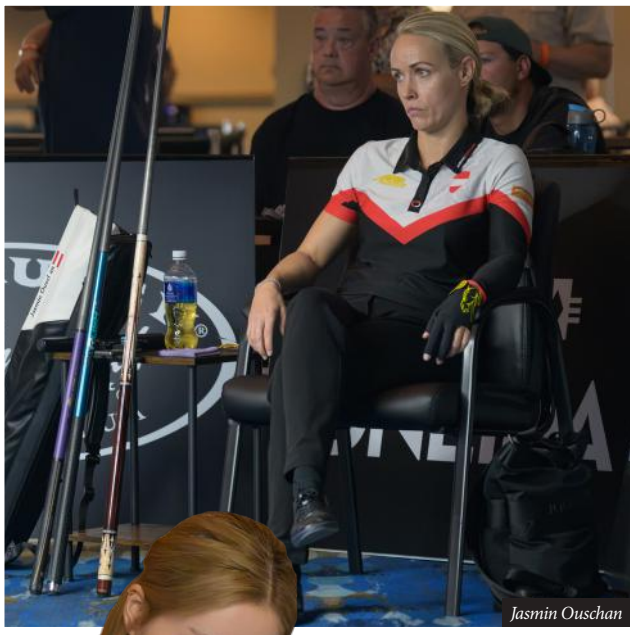
Chezka Centeo and Harin Lee



Rubilen Amit



Sofia Mast



Tourney Results

Jul 01 - Jul 05

2026 Indonesia International Open

Indonesia

- 1 Carlo Biado \$25,000
- 2 Paolo Gallito \$12,000
- 3 Bernie Regaliaria \$6,000
- 3 Irsal Nasution \$6,000
- 5 Anthony Raga \$3,000
- 5 Jonas Magpantay \$3,000
- 5 Raymart Camomot \$3,000
- 5 Ruslan Chinakhov \$3,000
- 9 Aivhan Maluti \$1,375
- 9 James Aranas \$1,375
- 9 Jeffrey Consigna Roda \$1,375
- 9 Lee Vann Corteza \$1,375
- 9 Liu Cheng \$1,375
- 9 Mi Le \$1,375
- 9 Oliver Villafuerte \$1,375
- 9 William Millares \$1,375

Jul 05 - Jul 11

2026 USA National Men's 9-Ball Pool Championships

Dubuque Iowa Dubuque, IA

- 1 Shane Van Boening \$5,500
- 2 Hunter Lombardo \$3,100
- 3 Brandon Shuff \$2,000
- 3 Rodney Morris \$2,000
- 5 Harry Leinen \$1,000
- 5 Manny Perez \$1,000
- 5 Oscar Dominguez \$1,000
- 5 Payne McBride \$1,000
- 9 Adam Behnke \$600
- 9 Dylan Spohr \$600
- 9 Justin Bergman \$600
- 9 Justin Martin \$600

Jul 05 - Jul 11

2026 USA National Men's 10-Ball Pool Championships

Dubuque Iowa

Dubuque, IA

- 1 Justin Bergman \$5,500
- 2 Hayden Ernst \$3,100
- 3 Brandon Shuff \$2,000
- 3 Manny Perez \$2,000
- 5 Harry Leinen \$1,000
- 5 Oscar Dominguez \$1,000
- 5 Robert Orta \$1,000
- 5 Tommy Tokoph \$1,000
- 9 Greg Hogue \$600
- 9 Hunter Lombardo \$600
- 9 Payne McBride \$600
- 9 Rodney Morris \$600

Jul 05 - Jul 11

2026 USA National Women's 10-Ball Pool Championships

Dubuque Iowa

Dubuque, IA

- 1 Savannah Easton \$5,000
- 2 April Larson \$3,000
- 3 Jordan Helfrey \$1,300
- 3 Sofia Mast \$1,300
- 5 Ashley Benoit \$1,000
- 5 Emily Duddy \$1,000
- 5 Melissa Helland \$1,000
- 5 Skylar Hess \$1,000

Jul 05 - Jul 11

2026 USA National Women's 9-Ball Pool Championships

Dubuque Iowa

Dubuque, IA

- 1 April Larson \$5,000
- 2 Savannah Easton \$3,000
- 3 Ashley Benoit \$1,300
- 3 Jordan Helfrey \$1,300
- 5 Ada Lio \$1,000
- 5 Emily Duddy \$1,000
- 5 Melissa Helland \$1,000
- 5 Sofia Mast \$1,000

Jul 08 - Jul 11

2AM Prague Open 2AM Billiards

Prague

- 1 Wiktor Zielinski \$10,000
- 2 Dominik Jastrzab \$5,000
- 3 Oliver Szolnoki \$2,500
- 3 Szymon Kural \$2,500
- 5 Ariel Castro \$1,250
- 5 Arseny Sevastyanov \$1,250
- 5 Michal Gavenciak \$1,250
- 5 Mykola Moroz \$1,250
- 9 Denis Grabe \$750
- 9 Dimitri Jungo \$750
- 9 Ivan Rudenko \$750
- 9 Ivica Putnik \$750
- 9 Jan Meisner \$750
- 9 Jeremi Nowak \$750
- 9 Marcel Price \$750
- 9 Niklas Dohr \$750

Jul 11 - Jul 11

The West Coast Women's Tour 2026 Stop 3

Family Billiards

San Francisco, CA

- 1 Yen Huynh \$425
- 2 Lela Andrews \$315
- 3 Donna Mae Bulanadi \$225
- 4 Shanon McHone \$165
- 5 Emilyn Callado \$115
- 5 Naomi Callado \$115
- 7 Kelly Cibart \$80
- 7 Motoko Siguenza \$80
- 9 Alexis Iwan \$50
- 9 Alice Loo \$50
- 9 Carla Macias \$50
- 9 Melinda Huang \$50

Jul 11 - Jul 12

Sullivan Pool Tour Stop

Shooters Family Billiards

Wayne, New Jersey



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- 4 Stefano Barahona \$250
- 5 George Latko \$100
- 5 Mike Zimny \$100

Jul 11 - Jul 11

Q City 9-Ball Tour Stop

Borderline Billiards

Bristol, TN

- 1 Niko Konkel \$400
- 2 Scott Largen \$200
- 3 Brady Brazell \$100
- 4 Shawn Martin \$55

Jul 13 - Jul 15

2026 Asian 9-Ball Pool Championship

Vietnam,

- 1 Luong Duc Thien \$10,000
- 2 Kun Lin Wu \$5,000
- 3 Pin-Yi Ko \$2,500
- 3 Ping-Chung Ko \$2,500
- 5 Alexis Ferrer \$1,500
- 5 Jui An Hsu \$1,500
- 5 Keishin Kamihashi \$1,500
- 5 Tae Young Ko \$1,500
- 9 Ameer Ali \$750
- 9 Bader Al Awadi \$750
- 9 Carlo Biado \$750
- 9 Derin Asaku Sitorus \$750
- 9 He Wen Li \$750
- 9 Jin-Hu Dang \$750

Jul 13 - Jul 15

2027 Asian 10-Ball Pool Championship

Vietnam,

- 1 Ping-Chung Ko \$10,000
- 2 Mohammad Soufi \$5,000
- 4 Naoyuki Oi \$2,500
- 4 Raymund Faraon \$2,500
- 8 Albert Januarta \$1,500
- 8 Aloysius Yapp \$1,500
- 8 Chia-Chen Hsieh \$1,500
- 8 Derin Asaku Sitorus \$1,500
- 16 Ali Nasser Alobadili \$750
- 16 Ameer Ali \$750

- 16 Johann Chua \$750
- 16 Jonas Magpantay \$750
- 16 Mazen Berjaoui \$750
- 16 Pin-Yi Ko \$750
- 16 Po Cheng Kuo \$750
- 16 Sean Mark Malayan \$750

Jul 15 - Jul 19

2026 Midwest Billiards and Cue Expo One Pocket

Big Dog Billiards

Des Moines, IA

- 1 Shane Van Boening \$6,800
- 2 Brandon Shuff \$3,500
- 3 Chip Compton \$2,100
- 4 Devin Poteet \$1,500
- 5 Danny Olson \$900
- 5 Roberto Gomez \$900
- 7 Aaron Goodwin \$630
- 7 Josh Roberts \$630

Jul 17 - Jul 19

Jersey Girl Billiards' Rack Attack Natural Born Women's Event

Racks Billiards & Bar

Vernon, Connecticut

- 1 Ashley Benoit \$300
- 2 Rachel Lang \$200
- 3 Joanne Vienneau \$100

Jul 17 - Jul 19

Jersey Girl Billiards' Rack Attack

Racks Billiards & Bar

Vernon, Connecticut

- 1 Michael Philip Piedad \$1,600
- 2 Ashley Benoit \$1,500
- 3 Larry Guilford \$700
- 4 Brooke Meyer \$500
- 5 Kenny Hoke \$320
- 5 Kevin Guimond \$320
- 7 Jordan Emerson \$250
- 7 Ray Enos, Jr. \$250
- 9 Bob Mendenjian \$200
- 9 Matt Bonarrigo \$200
- 9 Mike Zingarella \$200
- 9 Mitch Stone \$200

Jul 18 - Jul 19

NWPA Tour 2026 Stop 4

Players Sports Bar

Kennewick, Washington

- 1 Kathie MacDonald \$600
- 2 Sheila Clark \$465
- 3 Melyssa Chasteen \$320
- 4 Andy Camping \$220
- 5 Nancy Measer \$140
- 5 Sarah Myers-Mitchell \$140
- 7 Lisa Van Winkle \$90
- 7 Malini Baker \$90
- 9 Evelyn Hazlett \$65
- 9 Jeanne Christiansen \$65
- 9 Linda Massey \$65
- 9 Nicole Donisi \$65

Jul 18 - Jul 19

2026 Rack Race Stop #15

The Rack & Grill III

Aiken, SC

- 1 Kim Davenport \$720
- 2 Jason Brown \$460
- 3 Randy Flakes \$300
- 4 Larry Jackson \$220
- 5 Bradford Still \$140
- 5 Tracy Prescott \$140
- 7 Calvin Le \$100
- 7 Jimmy Lee Wheelin \$100
- 9 Ed Kleiss \$60
- 9 Jim Jennings \$60
- 9 Mento Long \$60
- 9 Paul Song \$60

Jul 18 - Jul 18

Q City 9-Ball Tour Stop

Sticks & Stones Family Billiards

Rock Hill, South Carolina

- 1 David Honeycutt \$300
- 2 Travis Guerra \$150
- 3 Zach Martin \$100

Jul 18 - Jul 19

Jas Makhani 9-Ball Open

Breaktime Billiards & Sports Bar

Clemmons, NC

- 1 BJ Ussery \$1,800
- 2 Justin Martin \$1,000
- 3 Monaim Neffati \$750
- 4 Jason Potts \$500
- 5 Michael Robertson \$375
- 5 Nathan Childress \$375

7 Eddie Vonderau \$300
 7 Scott Inness \$300
 9 Joao Sias \$225
 9 Joe Hyatt \$225
 9 Josh Williams \$225
 9 Justin Toye \$225
 13 Cameron Beauchemin \$180
 13 Clay Davis \$180
 13 Davin Greene \$180
 13 Justin Mawyin \$180

Jul 22 - Jul 26

2026 Oneida World Women's 8-Ball Championship

Oneida Casino

Green Bay, Wiscnsin
 1 Chezka Centeno \$30,000
 2 Kelly Fisher \$20,000
 3 Savannah Easton \$13,800
 3 Tzu-Chien Wei \$13,800
 5 Chieh-Yu Chou \$8,500
 5 Chihiro Kawahara \$8,500
 5 Marharyta Fefilava \$8,500

5 Rubilen Amit \$8,500
 9 Jasmin Ouschan \$4,250
 9 Kristina Tkach \$4,250
 9 Kristina Zlateva \$4,250
 9 Meng-Hsia Hung \$4,250
 9 Pia Filler \$4,250
 9 Seo Seoa \$4,250
 9 Shui Ching Chiang \$4,250
 9 Sofia Mast \$4,250
 17 Brittany Bryant \$2,500
 17 Chia Hua Chen \$2,500
 17 Kaylee McIntosh \$2,500
 17 Sakura Muramatsu \$2,500
 17 Samia Konishi \$2,500
 17 Wan-Ling Wang \$2,500
 17 Yuki Hiraguchi \$2,500
 17 Yum-Mi Lin \$2,500

Jul 25 - Jul 25

Q City 9-Ball Tour Stop

Action Billiards

Inman, SC
 1 Landon Hollingsworth \$640

2 Aaron McClure \$400
 3 Scott Green \$200
 4 Michael Vinesett \$140
 5 Bill Fowler \$100
 5 Derrick Bridges \$100

Jul 25 - Jul 26

Carolina Billiards Circuit Stop 7

Dot's Cue Club

Rocky Mount, NC
 1 Mickey Krause \$1,220
 2 Nathan Childress \$920
 3 Monaim Neffati \$700
 4 Jason Rogers \$500
 5 Justin Martin \$325
 5 Steven Page \$325
 7 Adam Davis \$200
 7 Graham Swinson \$200
 9 Delton Howard \$100
 9 Greg Kane \$100
 9 Jason Trigo \$100
 9 Mike Davis \$100

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Upcoming Tournaments

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER

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.

The West Coast Women's Tour 2026 Stop 4

Aug 01

Buffalo Billiards
Petaluma, California

Florida Open

Aug 04 - Aug 09

Caribe Royale
Orlando, Florida

Arizona Open

Aug 13 - Aug 16

Quechan Casino and Resort
Yuma, Arizona

Phoenix Open

Aug 18 - Aug 22

Metro Sportz Bar
Phoenix, AZ

2026 U.S. Open 9-Ball Championship

Aug 25 - Aug 30

Embassy Suites Hotel Dallas-Frisco
Frisco, TX

NWPA Tour 2026 Stop 5

Aug 29 - Aug 30

Legacy Billiards Bar & Grill
Spokane, Washington

53rd Annual Texas Open 9-Ball

Aug 31 - Sep 07

Skinny Bob's Billiards
Round Rock, Texas

Turning Stone Classic XLII

Sep 03 - Sep 06

Turning Stone Casino
Verona, NY

WPA World 10-Ball Championship 2026

Sep 19 - Sep 26

Vietnam

Women's Open

Sep 19 - Sep 26

Vietnam

Mixed Doubles Open

Sep 19 - Sep 26

Vietnam

NWPA Tour 2026 Stop 6

Sep 26 - Sep 27

Bobalou Billiards
Roseburg, Oregon

West Coast Women's Tour 2026 Stop 5

Sep 26 - Sep 26

The Jointed Cue
Sacramento, CA

2026 Predator Women's World 9-Ball Championship

Sep 28 - Oct 05

Bali

Men's Open

Sep 28 - Oct 05

Bali

2026 Predator WPA Men's Doubles World Championship

Sep 28 - Oct 05

Bali

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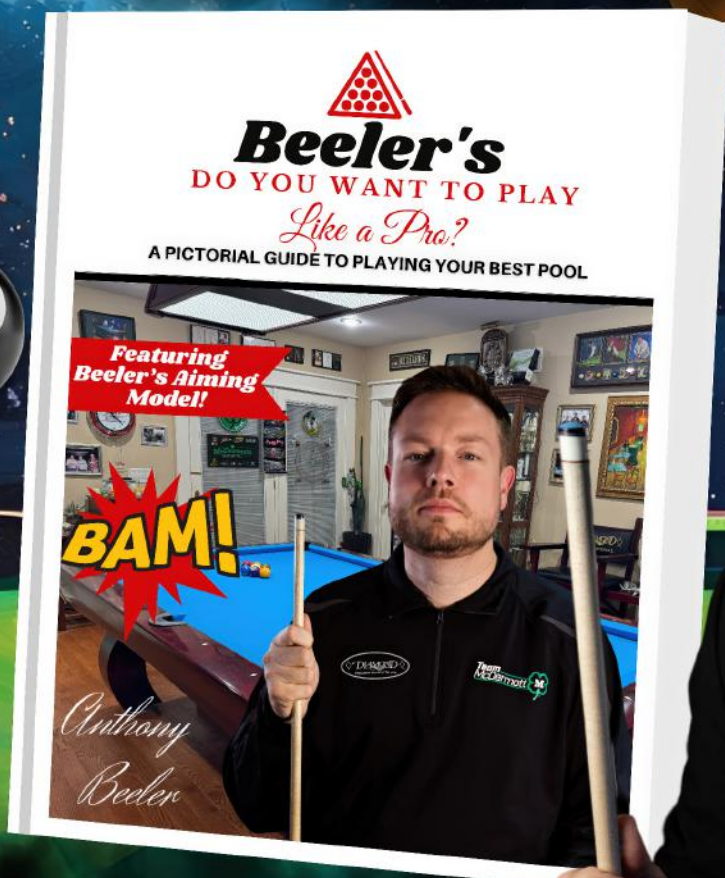
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 Carlo Biado	 PHI	83.700,00 US\$	↑
 Wiktor Zielinski	 POL	82.294,00 US\$	↓
 Wei-Tzu Chien	 TPE	74.775,00 US\$	↑
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