



Three Cushion Billiard News

"Three-cushion billiards in America, an endangered species"

By Jim Parker

As humankind, we've come to learn it's far better to have tried to succeed and fail, than to have never tried at all. As Americans, we've long since learned to rise-up from whatever our hardships and failures, and begin again. ... The next time however, extracting from our past experiences, a more complete understanding of our subject along with a newly tempered will to succeed.

In my mind, one would be hard-pressed in finding a game as delightfully interesting and entertaining as three-cushion billiards. Yet in America, it would be equally as difficult in finding a game that has with exception of a handful of dedicated billiard patriots, promoted itself as poorly as three-cushion billiards. Representing a miniscule niche of the traditional pool hall society that itself is fast becoming a vestige of Americana, to a large extent still clings to promoting itself as it did when its contestants arrived at their tournaments on horseback in the 19th century. While three-cushion billiards in other nations has maintained an affluent popularity, American three-cushion billiards has been on a steady declining trip into oblivion for generations. The fact that not even

one American born citizen has won a world three-cushion title in some 38 years is proof of that. And what few organizational leaders do exist in this country, appear to be forever squabbling amongst themselves over petty and frivolous difference of opinions. Ironically, opinions that have yet included even the most basic requirements necessary in boosting our nations popularity of three-cushion billiards.

Tournaments and their statistics, such as, how many points are scored per inning, how many innings per game and how many games per tournament has been the front-line news this division of American billiards has whispered to one another for decades. All of which in terms of gaining the interest of new recruits into the rank and file of three-cushion, is about as effective as requiring two years of geometry and another full year of trigonometry before a newcomer could even pick-

Up a billiard cue. And to an overwhelming extent, there's few things in this world a three-cushion player would prefer, than society thinking the games all that complicated ... when to enjoy playing it for its face values as a social outlet and hobby, its not. Throughout the history of three-cushion billiards in

America there have been numerous organizations that have set out to build and maintain the games popularity. Today's surviving three-cushion association is a composite of two separate organizations. By the falling-off of membership in both groups, they agreed to merger in 1988 with the hopes of building a united front and expand the games borders. While in theory a noble idea, in reality a failing one.

With the exception of one Korean immigrant to the United States winning the world title in 1993, today's surviving US national three-cushion organization, lacking world title holders itself, relies almost exclusively on reporting information regarding current champions from other countries. Countries that have unlike the US three-cushion players, managed to maintain and promote the game to a sound degree of popularity within their respective nations.

Most all of us have come to learn the traditional statement regarding the three most defining words related to successful real estate investments ... location, location and location. A similar rule of thumb exists within the pages of successful advertising and marketing of all goods, services and recreational interests ... exposure, exposure and exposure. No matter how wonderful the product, if the public is not made aware of, by exposure to, whatever its benefits, they simply haven't been given a fair opportunity to form an accurate commodity evaluation.

As opposed to investing energy and marketing dollars into more creative advertising that could ulti-

mately stimulate greater interest to a broader range of the general public, the game of three-cushion billiards (along with all cue games for that matter,) to an overwhelming extent simply invest into the hosting of in-house, pool-room tournaments. Pages and perhaps books could easily be written explaining reasons why the average US citizen has absolutely no interest in even walking into a pool-room in the first place. How then, would this most important potential student of the game, the general public, become interested in spectating of all things ... a game of three-cushion billiards they know nothing about? And a question even more unanswerable by sound logic, why would this same public audience respond to this unknown game that's presented to them within an environment they would just as soon avoid? ... They haven't, they wouldn't and never will!

The acceptance of three-cushion billiards, or rather lack of it by the American public for the past 50 years is proof of that. Today in America, trapped somewhere between the 1952 retirement of our nations illustrious 52-time world billiard champion, William (Willie) Frederick Hoppe, up-to the writing of this story, three-cushion billiards, like a colossal Mammoth of the Antarctic, remains frozen in time. Can this profoundly wholesome game ever again rise-up and become any more than today's empty-shell of what it once was ... and if so, how? To be continued...

Willie Hoppe Is Popular Champion



AH-HA-AAA - THE CHAMPION MISSES A BILLIARD

THE NAILS ON HIS \$100,000 HAND OUT SHINE THE BALL

HOPPE'S GOTTA FIGHTIN' POSE LIKE OLD TERRIBLES

WILLIE HOPPE
IN ACTION

Willie Hoppe will write a series of nine articles for The Post, beginning tomorrow.

Schaefer a year ago was a huge surprise. The sympathy of every lover of billiards went to Hoppe in defeat. The glacial hand was extended by just as many when he regained his title by defeating Schaefer.

"How come Schaefer happened to beat you, Willie?" is asked.

"The old mental hazard turned the trick," he replied. "Early in the match I failed several times to make shots that I should have executed. I began to think that I was off my stroke, that I couldn't make them. The old mental hazard was constantly in front of me. Rarely have I ever been so afflicted. I had a half-dozen big chances but failed to take advantage of them. Championship poise was lacking in that match. There you have the reason of my defeat."

Hoppe is one champion who always tries to give the fans a run for their money. He takes every exhibition seriously, plays his very best and is disappointed when he fails to do something unusual, something the fans really expect a champion to perform.

It is really surprising what a little thing will do with a champion's game. Recently I saw Hoppe perform in Cleveland at the Cleveland Athletic club. After practicing for a few minutes he came back and sat down beside me, saying:

"The crowd is going to see poor billiards this afternoon. That table is just like asking a big league ball player to perform on a sanded diamond. The cushions are livelier than the ball they used in the big league last year."

Hoppe was right. It required a flock of innings to complete the afternoon's play. In the evening the cushions were changed and Hoppe demonstrated why he is champion, by running out his 300 points in two innings, getting 294 and an unfinished run of 96.

Hoppe is playing in fine form at present. Four times since regaining his title he has run out blocks of 300 points in exhibition matches.

BY BILLY EVANS

Willie Hoppe, famous billiard star, is a champion, every inch of him. He is not only plays but looks the part. Title holders of the Hoppe species do much to elevate the game of billiards. May he reign for a long, long time.

I have known Willie Hoppe for years. He is the same Hoppe today he was 20 years ago, when he was first startling the billiard world as the "boy wonder." Success has not changed him in the least.

Most Popular Champion

Hoppe is one of the most popular champions in the history of all sports. A fable, always the gentleman, Hoppe makes friends the moment he steps up to the green table to start a match or exhibition. His clean-cut manner immediately wins you over.

Hoppe does not view his coming match with Jake Schaefer with any great alarm. He has the greatest regard for Schaefer's remarkable ability, but feels that he will be able to retain the title.

"When players are nearly equal in ability, getting the breaks means everything," remarked Hoppe to me recently in discussing the coming match for the championship.

"It is impossible to describe just what I mean by breaks. There are no many little things that can play a definite part in the final result whether they break for or against you. Any fellow who has ever indulged in any brand of sport will understand just what I mean when I make reference to the important part the break of the game plays."

While every champion in any branch of sport sooner or later is threatened, the defeat of Hoppe by

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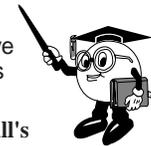
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