

Action Billiards Chapter 3

This is the man in black here again to introduce another Action Billiards' program, the next chapter from the annals of The Midwest 9-Ball Tour. For the weekend of Saturday February 22nd and Sunday February 23rd, 2003 the open division featured 56 stars, co-stars and a supporting ensemble of locals as well as line-jumpers from Tennessee, Illinois, Oklahoma, Michigan, Arkansas and Nebraska. Our starring cast of characters reads as follows: Two former Missouri State 8-ball and 9-ball champions Handy Andy Quinn and Runout Rich Sager. Local champions Iron Mike Borgmeyer, Jerry Terbrock, Ryan Huelsman, Dizzy Dean DeForest and two-time winner of the tour, Kevin Gabriel.

Also in attendance were noted line-jumpers that read like a Who's Who: John Schmidt (Mobile, Alabama), Gabe Owen (Tulsa, Oklahoma), James Baraks (Rock Island, Illinois), Pam Bell (Milwaukee, Wisconsin), the very talented tattooed lady who has everyone shaking their heads from Milwaukee to Mexico, the Hardwick sisters, Allison and Chelsea, (Evansville, Indiana) and Jon Hennessee (Manchester, Tennessee) to name a few.

And of course I would be remiss if I didn't mention a quote I reported several years ago that Dave Matlock (Kansas City, Mo.) is retiring from the circuit and pro competition, moving to Florissant, buying a home and will join my Monday night Missouri 9-ball team. Let's face it, anyone who says "give me a mud-ball on a bar-box and the world has the last two" will find an open spot on my team any time. Remember that you read it here first (just in case it actually happens).

If you have been with us before you will know that Action Billiards' competitions are compounded of mystery, and suspicion and dangerous adventure. In these challenges are tales calculated to intrigue, to stir your nerves, to offer you a precarious situation and then withhold the solution until the last possible moment. And so it is the case with the third episode of the Action Billiards' presentation and the performances of those previously mentioned, along with others, we again hope to keep you in-suspense.

California Bob Strachan, who has exercised the disciplines in the contiguous 48 states and several foreign countries, with his partner Kathy Arens, the first lady of Hazelwood, co-produced the proceedings. The two-day play was under the direction in part by Evelyn and Dan Dysart, and written by the competitors themselves. And so, having said that, we now bring you details of this circumstance.

From the onset there was doubt as to the number of participants that would make the trek to Hazelwood Mo. The snow began falling two hours prior to auction time and the parking lot was like Mother Hubbardville. Except for the wall of snowflakes ringing havoc on the pavement, the premises were bare and the temperature wasn't getting any warmer.

Approximately 30 minutes later players began to roll in; 30, 35, 40 and so on until 56 were registered for the open division. There were 15 ladies for their event. The weather forced only a half-hour delay.

Evelyn announced that there would be four open bids. The four open bids went in this order: (1) John Schmidt-\$300, (2) Dave Matlock-\$280, (3) Gabe Owen-\$180, and (4) Andy Quinn-\$160. How prophetic is this, all four would be in the top 12 finishers and three of the four cashed in the cal. The surprise is the one that did not cash. With the auction completed and the board drawn Evelyn began assigning tables. There were 4 flights of 14 players each. Four players cashed out of flight #3, three from flight #2, three from #4 and only two from flight #1.

John Schmidt came out of flight #1. He made his presence felt immediately when he opened up with an overwhelming rout of Runout Rich Sager, 9-2. The following two matches ended 9-7. A 9-2 walkover of James Baraks put Johnny in the final four on the undefeated side. But Baraks wasn't finished by a long shot. He rallied hard from the one-loss side by putting out Dave Matlock 9-5 and Chad Vilmont 9-2 before going down to Gabe Owen. James finished in a tie for 5th place.

Jon Hennessee took out flight #2. Jon got to the final four by putting together great scores of 9-5, 9-1, 9-4 and 9-5 against Chad Vilmont. That put Jon in the final four where he would meet John Schmidt. Chad went to the one-loss side where he won his next match good enough for a tie for 7th place.

If there were such a thing as a cakewalk with the talent involved this day it would be Handy Andy Quinn on his way to the final four from flight #3. I believe that there was close to even distribution of talent in all four flights but Andy made it look easy. His victories of 9-1, 9-3, 9-7 and 9-0 showed remarkable concentration on his part. After going down 9-0 to Andy, Ryan Huelsman regained his composure and won his two follow-up matches both going the limit, 9-8, one was against Chuck Ralston who finished tied for 9th and the other against Iron Mike Borgmeyer who wound up tied for 7th with Vilmont.

Gabe Owen rounded out the quartet by taking out the 4th flight. With scores of 9-7, 9-1, 9-6 and 9-6 over a tough Trafton Clark, that set up a spotlight meeting with Andy Quinn. Clark went to the one-loss side where he ran into a determined Mike Borgmeyer and was defeated for a 9th place tie.

When talent and determination from two outstanding players bump heads it depends who gets that one lucky break. Who can stay at the table the longest, which can keep their opponent in the chair waiting, wanting, hoping. We can't say enough about the final matches that were witnessed Sunday. John Schmidt and Jon Hennessee went to the hill for an exciting 9-8 squeaker, Schmidt claiming victory. The same can be said of the Quinn/Owen battle. It was 9-6 Andy, but could have gone to either player all the way to the end. For king of the hill honors Schmidt edged out Quinn by another whisker, 9-8.

Hennessee and Owen went to the one-loss side where they were victorious in their follow-up matches. They then met for third place honors. Jon came out on top 9-6 putting Gabe 4th on the cash list. Hennessee then went down to Andy Quinn 9-2 for a third place finish. This set up a Quinn/Schmidt rematch. John wasn't about to go double hill with Andy again. He's too rough a customer. Schmidt turned it up a gear and tore off a commanding lead. He took out the final 9-3 for the first place prize of \$1,000.

<u>Open Division: 56 players \$2,000 added</u>		<u>Auction Payback</u>	<u>W-L Records</u>
1.	\$1000 John Schmidt	Mobile, Alabama	\$820 63 37 .630 2.
2.	650 Andy Quinn	St. Peters, Mo.	585 65 37 .637 1.
3.	450 Jon Hennessee	Manchester, Tenn.	350 64 42 .604 3.
4.	350 Gabe Owen	Tulsa, Ok.	235 57 42 .576 5.
5-6	200 Ryan Huelsman	Cahokia, Ill.	175 48 56 .462 6. ***
5-6	200 James Baraks	Rock Island, Ill.	175 51 35 .593 4.
7-8	125 Mike Borgmeyer	O'Fallon, Mo.	
7-8	125 Chad Vilmont	Clinton, Iowa	
9-12	75 Chuck Ralston	Poplar Bluff, Mo.	
9-12	75 Trafton Clark	Cape Girardeau, Mo.	
9-12	75 David Matlock	Kansas City, Mo.	
9-12	75 Justin Bergman	Fairview Heights, Ill.	

*** Notice Ryan Huelsman's stats. Here's one that seems hard to believe. Ryan finished in a tie for 5th with a losing record. Obviously he won more matches than he lost, he would have had to finish 5th, it's the actual games played being referred to here. Huelsman was 48 and 56 for a .462 won-loss percentage. Ryan won four double-hill matches (4x9-8= 36-32), plus another 9-6 win making his record 45-38. Then we tag on his two losses, 0-9 and 3-9= 3-18. That's 48-56, but good for 5th place. When is the last time you heard of a 5th place winner out of a field of 56 to have a losing record? A dubious honor at best. But let's put another spin to the story. Ryan finished higher than 50 other players and \$200 better. If there is a moral to the outcome it would probably be-- Numbers or only numbers, it's the cash in hand that really matters.

The ladies' division didn't hold many surprises. The two favorites going in were Pam Bell and Gail Lave. They didn't disappoint their fans. Both won their first three matches before meeting. It was a double-hill situation with Pam coming out on top to be the lone survivor on the winner's side. Gail came back from the one-loss side to again meet Pam. She would have to defeat Pam twice to take out the tournament and was looking good after winning the first contest 7-5. But Pam turned on in the second set and downed Gail 7-3. All in all it was a very good ladies tournament.

Another highlight would be the Allison Hardwick story. This Evansville, Indiana young lady (she's 13) has been making a name for herself the last couple of years and gaining much respect among her competitors. She lost her opening match 4-7 to Kristen Werner. From the one-loss side she made a terrific turn around. She reeled off five matches, 7-5, 7-4, 7-4, 7-1 and 7-1 before being knocked out by Gail Lave, 7-3. Most agree that she's a future champion. By the way, the following weekend Allison ripped off the event at Jim and Amanda Lee's place in Poplar Bluff. We'll see her on TV one of these days. And while we're at it, let's mention Allison's younger sister, 10-year-old Chelsea. She already possesses talent, skill and creativity in her 9-ball game. Give this little gal a couple more years and you'll be reading great things about her. Those 13 and 10-year-old Indiana girls play rough, mister.

Local girl, 16-year-old Kristin Werner certainly is a head-turner. Not only is she attractive but also can play one fine game of 9-ball. After winning her first match 7-4 over Allison Hardwick, Kristin ran into Gail Lave. From the one-loss side Kristen put together a 3-set run 7-5, 7-4 and 7-2. That called for a rematch with Allison. This time it was Allison who was victorious and Kristen had to settle for fourth place money. Not bad kid, keep it up. A lot of your fans are rooting for you.

<u>Ladies: 15 players \$500 added</u>				<u>Auction Payback</u>	<u>W-L Records</u>	<u>Flight</u>
1.	\$375	Pam Bell	Milwaukee, Wis.	\$130	40 22 .645	1. 1
2.	\$250	Gail Lave	Springfield, Mo.	90	44 30 .595	2. 2
3.	\$175	Allison Hardwick	Evansville, Indiana		42 29 .592	3. 2
4.	\$ 75	Kristin Werner	St. Peters, Mo.		31 29 .517	4. 2

Local lefty Julia Peace Gabriel took a giant step forward toward her goal at the pro level. The reason she missed the Action Billiards tournament was she opted to play the Hunter Classic Tour that was held in Austin Texas the same weekend. She not only qualified for the entry-paid pro event but also won the Texas shootout. Those who are familiar with these tournaments know it is based on a point system.

J.P. was mired six fathoms below sea level 75th place on the list with only 50 points until she took out the Hunter Classic. At the end of the two-day affair Julia came out on top and picked up the 200 points for the win. That hefty gain catapulted her into second place. Only 15 points separate her from being numero uno. Good luck and congratulations J.P. We are all behind you.

Sidebar #1: Two guys showed up looking and acting like a couple of wannabe characters right out of 'Poolhall Junkies'. They were more like 'Hey Dude, We Lost Our Game'. There was an exception however. They had more flash and dash than talent. One opened his first match by blasting the '9' into the side pocket on the break for a fast 1-0 lead. The guy showed some cockiness with a mild sense of humor when he immediately began a strut. The strut lasted once around the table. Bad mistake Clyde. His opponent (we'll call him Cool Hand Luke) tolerated the act and said nothing. The strutter broke the second game, didn't make a ball and lost his lead when Luke ran out the rack. Turned out that the guy's game was about as phony as Milli Vanilli. When Luke finished him off 9-1 the strut and sense of humor faded faster than any other one-hit wonder.

Sidebar #2: Has anyone got a violin? Poor Chuck Absher; his final match read like a Ripley's Believe it or Not. Chuck won the toss to break the first rack. Chuck pocketed a ball but managed to hook himself on the '1' ball. A kickout produced nothing and that's what Chuck saw for the remainder of the match, nothing. Because the winning player racks his own rack, Chuck didn't get back to the table again. You read it right, not once did Mr. Absher reach the table. After his opponent ran out that first game he continued on to break and run out the next eight games for a 9-zip rollover. Who was Chuck's opponent? Maybe you've heard of him. Some hacker named Matlock, Dave Matlock. The least Dave could have done was pay for the whole match. I mean come on Dave, have some respect.

Sidebar #3: Local boy Ken Martin thought that he would enter the field for the first time and try his luck against the big boys. Ken drew a bye the first round. When he did get to play his first match it was against Tulsa Gabe Owen. For a newcomer like Ken it was not a very auspicious beginning.

The match begins and Ken wins the first game. Right now he's on an emotional high. Not many new guys win their very first game in the Bigs. He's up 1-0. Ken is ahead of Gabe Owen. Ain't nothin' to this game, right? Nine games later Ken was wondering how he lost control. "I had him," says Ken. "He was mine. I owned him. For at least 30 seconds I was the man."

Ken's wife, whose name really is Barbara, was consoling him after his next match also ended 9-1. Something to tell the grandkids about, huh, Ken.

Okay, okay, so the results had no real mystery connected with it; suspicion-not; dangerous adventure-hardly; intrigue-forget it. And the 'sitting on the edge of your seat' suspense or excitement value hardly rivals Armageddon. But, hey, it was a great tournament with outstanding players. The competition was excellent theater from the moment the curtain went up until the last act concluded from both the open and from the ladies' division. All tournaments have their moments and this produced some of the best. So join us next time for more action from Action Billiards #4 coming your way in the near future.

For future reference: www.actionbilliards.net. The next time you're passing through the St. Louis area stop in and say hello. We have 21 bar-boxes and four 9-footers for your play. We are located at 7125 N. Lindbergh Blvd. corner Highway 270 and Lindbergh in Hazelwood.

Your hosts: California Bob Strachan and Hazelwood Kathy Arens. For all the gang at Action Sports Café and Billiards, good luck and good shooting.

Yours truly, Jay Carlton