

Frisko Eddie's Revenge: The Return

A series by Balboa Ron Schweikert

(In last month's episode, Frisko Eddie and Lil arrived at the home of "Tacoma Tim" in a little town outside of Tacoma called Puyallup. Tim was about to relate the story of the "Mystery Shuffleboard Man.")

Things at Tacoma Tim's house were pretty relaxed now -- after the three of them had consumed several 12-year-old scotches. Tim began his yarn about the "Mystery Shuffleboard Man." He had sworn that this was a true story.

He started by saying: "Now in the year 1963, as I said, we had the biggest tournament this state had ever seen to that date. There were 15 shuffleboards lined up there in this great hall. The tournament had actually started on a Friday night, but it was mid-afternoon on Saturday that this 'Mystery Man' and one of his friends walked in the door. No one seemed to notice them or paid any attention."

He went on with his recollection: "Now, during those days, very few had their own weights, but it was arranged so the players could rent a set to play and practice with. If I remember right, you had to put down a \$20 deposit for a set at the main counter. Anyway, the 'Man' went to the counter and got him a set of weights. He strolled over to one of the empty tables and began to freehand a few. You have to understand that this was typical for a 'hustler' to do -- because in those days, freehanders were looked down on as amateurs or 'Fish.' Only those who shot the pure Jersey weight, or some close variation of it were considered 'Pros.' They all shot the rail.

"As he was casually free-handing the weights back and forth, one of the tournament players did take notice of him. He remarked to a couple of his friends: 'Hey, isn't that the guy who was in here last night? He challenged Hoquiam Joe to a game of singles for fifty bucks (which is like \$500 in today's money). He got beat pretty bad. In fact it was all over in one game! This guy must be crazy to come back here for more of the same.'

"They watched him shoot for awhile; then one of the guys, whose handle was 'Longview Lenny,' said he was going to challenge that 'Fish' to a game of singles. The other two guys told him to go ahead and, if he needed it, they would back part of his action as well. Then Lenny walked over to the opposite end of the board from where the 'Man' was shooting. As the Mystery Man shot a practice weight, Lenny reached out and grabbed it before it came to a full stop. He shouted on down the board to the Man, asking him if 'all he ever did was practice -- and how would he like to be in a real game.'

"The Mystery Man replied with: 'I was in here last night, and I didn't do very well -- but I feel a little better

today, so O.K., what did you have in mind?' Now, this Lenny was far from being one of the best players, so he said, 'how about a game for \$60?' (He figured that he and his partners would split the bet three ways.) The Man said the arrangement sounded O.K. and with that, his friend (whom he called the 'Sergeant') proceeded to prepare the board for play. Lenny and his two friends were snickering at each other, knowing they had a sure thing.

"They way they used to work it then was to play mostly singles (and doubles also) with continuous challenges," said Tim. "That way, if one man kept on winning, he could hold the board all night -- or even two days or more if it was a marathon session.

"The game got underway. They went weight-for-weight for a few frames and the score was tied at 7-all. As the game progressed, they began to notice that the Mystery Man was shooting more and more Jersey weights off the rail. It was all right-handed, though. The score was finally 13 to 12, in Lenny's favor. On the final frame, Lenny put up a short deuce in the center. Now, the Man would normally have opted to hit-and-go (by the rules then, he still would have kept the hammer), but instead, he sized up the board, let go, drove Lenny's weight off the board and slid in for a three! Maybe it was luck, but the looks on Lenny's and his friends' faces were first of surprise, and then disgust. They didn't believe it, and wanted revenge.

"What happened then is that the Man beats Lenny a second time. The score was 12 to 15 this time. By now, the word was starting to get out and they figured they had better have Lenny give it up and bring in a stronger player. They ended up having a guy from Spokane, whose name was Lucky, step up and give a challenge. Now, this man was much better at the game and he decided to jack-it-up a little. He asked the Man if he wanted to go for \$100 this time. The Mystery Man said, 'don't worry about the horse, man -- just load the wagon. Let's play!'

Tim searched Lil's and Eddie's eyes then to "check their temperatures." Then satisfied, he continued: "The way it went from there was that the Man took Lucky out in three straight games. They were all close, with the Mystery Man coming in with the lag to win the games. Then an even stronger player came in and challenged. The Man turned in a repeat performance on him. The tournament was winding up now, with only a couple of the final play-off games left. Amazingly, most of the spectators had shifted down from the tournament end of the hall to where the singles action was taking place.

"We had a 'Blue Law' in effect during those days, which meant that the booze was shut off at midnight on Saturday, and it was getting close to that time. The

crowd was really into this thing now, and they were determined to see the 'Man' lose. Finally, the best player at the tournament was sent in to 'take this man down.' He was from Seattle, and he was called 'The Ace.'

"The excitement level was really high now, as the game was about to start. Suddenly, the Mystery Man's friend, 'Sergeant,' started running back and forth, shouting out for side-bets. He said he would cover any and all bets. Believe me, a whole lot of money went on the line then.

"Now, during the first game, we saw the Man bring in the left-hand also, with a perfect Jersey style. It was something to behold! He never missed a weight, and it seemed he could lag a three (and often a four) at will! Every time he released his lag in a frame, he would snap his right-hand fingers and then lower and raise his fist as the weight would settle into a three or four. It seemed like the weights were merely extensions of his hands and he could place them exactly where he wanted to."

Lil's and Eddie's eyes were locked on him now, awaiting the ending. Tim paused for a moment, then said: "Needless to say, he beat 'The Ace' badly for three straight games. Even though the Mystery Man was taking the Ace -- and the crowd's money -- during the last game, they actually started to applaud every time he'd lag a three! When The Ace gave up, he shook hands with him and respectfully told him he had never played anyone better. The crowd cheered the performance."

Tim's voice lowered then as he said: "Then, almost as he had made his entrance, he was gone. He was never heard of before and never to be seen or heard of again. It's rumored that one or two people do know who he really was, and where he is now. Maybe they do. Maybe. I wonder -- don't you.....?"

--CONTINUED NEXT MONTH--

More Upcoming Events

Michigan

ST. PAT'S TOURNEY AT WETLANDS, ROYAL OAK

The Wetlands Bar & Grill, 1008 N. Woodward Ave., Royal Oak, will host its 2nd Annual St. Pat's Tourney on March 15-17. Action will start with an A-B Draw on Friday night, \$25 entry, 11 point games. An open doubles on Saturday, \$25 per player, and an open singles on Sunday, \$50 entry, will be a "constant action" format. All events are single game, double elimination, played on three in-house boards.

For details, call The Shuffleboard Federation, 810-380-9300, or Mike Papa at Wetlands, 810-543-2626.

National Shuffleboard Hall of Fame

The Board of Directors, at our meeting during the PCSA Extravaganza VIII in Las Vegas, discussed the proposed "over 60" requirement for induction into the Hall of Fame. For the next year or two, we will get all the over-60 people who are deserving into the Hall of Fame. When they are all in, then we will decide on what age to go from there -- 55-50-40?

We will not address the application fee at this point because it will take time, but it's something to think about for the future. Philadelphia, Maryland and Tulsa sent in contributions with their nominations. This is a good thing -- better to volunteer now than have a rule on it later. Be sure that the people signing petitions for Hall of Fame inductees are players and ask for a donation. Put players' names, addresses, phone numbers, and how much they donated. We need to keep records. It's better for the committees of each area to have their own records and their own way of doing their own thing. I'm sure all of you will work to make this a better game.

I was told that some people are saying that the Hall of Fame is just for the "big guns." I know when I was just starting to play, all we had to look forward to was beating the big guns. Now, at least I can say I beat the big guns, they beat me, and I have some great memories. Now, we have the opportunity to go back in time and bring the past to reality. So, do all you can to help in your own community. Real soon, it will all begin to make sense.

Thanks to all of you for your feedback on all subjects, particularly to Darrol Nelson of Oregon, Manny Lane in Arkansas, and Ken Strong in Texas.

Glen Davidson, Chairman
National Shuffleboard Hall of Fame

Editor's Note: Send your petitions for induction, contributions, ideas and feedback to NSHF Secretary Louise Freer, 189 Barry Ave., Lansdale, PA 19446. And, most members of the Board of Directors will be at the 1st Annual Hall of Fame Tournament, held in conjunction with the 35th Bourbon Doubles, at the American Legion in Bourbon, Indiana, on May 4. Use this opportunity to provide your input to these individuals who are contributing their time and effort to this worthy cause.