

Frisko Eddie's Revenge: The Return

A series by Balboa Ron Schweikert

(In the last episode, Frisko Eddie and Long Beach Lil had arrived in Longview, Washington, at a place called "O'Brian's Pub." Lil had warned Eddie that "The Man" might be there and she wasn't sure he was ready for him. Eddie had played some money games with Portland Pete and then -- in walked "The Man.")

Lil spotted the moderately tall, slim built player they called "The Man" just after he entered the front door of O'Brian's Pub. She had been expecting his arrival, probably because Portland Pete and he teamed up a lot, and the word was out.

Lil waved to him after he entered, and his smile widened as he made his way over to her spot at the bar. They shook hands and even gave each other a short hug. After they exchanged all the greetings and introductions, along with some small talk, "The Man" looked at Eddie and said: "I've heard a little about you, Eddie. I understand you made a pretty good showing in Seattle. I guess you're here to repeat that show. Am I right in that, my man?"

Now, Eddie had shot pretty good against Portland Pete, but had only been able to break even after six games. He knew there was more depth to his game if he really "got on." He was obsessed with the notion of beating this legendary "Man," so he replied: "Your guess is right, my friend. How about we get this board in shape and play a little serious shuffleboard?"

The man looked intently into Eddie's eyes then and said: "I'll be glad to accommodate you, Eddie, but understand this: I know precisely what's going through your mind, because I've been exactly where you are now many years ago. I'm not going to play you for peanuts here, because I know you have something to try to prove.....and so do I, I guess. So, if you want to begin for \$500, best out of three, to start with, O.K. Otherwise, I won't bother opening up my case here and Lil and I and the rest of us can all get drunk and tell 'war stories.' O.K.?"

Eddie looked over at Lil then. Before he could say anything, she reiterated her earlier statement: "This is your show, Eddie. I'm going to sit this one out. You're on your own, Champ." Eddie felt let down, even though Lil had made it clear beforehand how the action would go.

Eddie gave Lil a look of disdain then, and turned to face "The Man." Eddie looked him squarely in the eye as he remarked: "O.K. We'll do this thing, but I won't play someone without a name. What's yours?" "The Man" smiled at him then and replied: "Well, now, I guess that's fair. My given name is Glen....Glen Dawson."

The patrons started to close-in now, when they saw that some very serious shuffleboard was about to take place. The crowd was very quiet, but you could hear whisperings of side-bets and other muffled conversations as well. The board was spray-waxed, and then sprinkled with Jet Lightning Fast powdered wax. It was decided that both men would play with their own personal weights. After the coins were in, the two approached the window side of the table and flipped for the hammer. Eddie called "heads" and won the toss.

Both men were very cautious for the first several frames. It was strictly weight-for-weight, but Eddie was ahead due to the strength of his lag. He ended up winning the game 15 to 10. The next game was a little different. Glen started to zero in on his lag and was also able to "wrap" a couple of weights on Eddie as well. It was very close, with Eddie losing 15-13. The third (or "rubber") game saw both players amazing the silent onlookers with spectacular shots. It was a great game to watch. The score was 13 to 12 in Eddie's favor. Eddie left a very short deuce on his last weight.

Glen sized up the board, sprinkled some wax on the rails, and picked up his hammer weight with his right hand. Eddie's deuce was in the center of the board. There was utter silence in the room then. Glen opted to shoot his shot freehand and, after his release, it became obvious that he wasn't trying for a "hit and slide" -- he was going for the three lag! Eddie's heart was pounding as the weight hung momentarily in the four zone, then gently toppled off the end! Eddie gave out with a loud "Yes!" and went over to Lil, as she was holding the "stake" -- and he also wanted the expected accolades she would certainly give.

She did smile and congratulate him. The Glen man wasn't smiling when he came over though. He said he should have made that lag and won the game. With a look of disgust on his face, he snapped: "O.K. Frisko, this is the way it is. I think I'll stand a better chance if you have some pressure on you. We'll jack it up to \$1500 for the next series. Take it or leave it."

He walked away as Eddie turned once more to Lil. He said: "Man! What a stroke of luck! I was going to try to kick the ante up some myself. I can beat this guy! I'm better than him; he might even be starting to go 'over the hill.'"

Lil gave him a whimsical look then and said: "Don't you even think that way, sonny boy. I won't tell you what to do, but, if it was me, I'd be curious about why your opponent there just lagged off the board on his last shot."

--CONTINUED NEXT MONTH--