

The Board Talk

Published monthly by George & Donna Wilber

503 E. Sheridan Rd., Lansing, MI 48906

Phone: 517-371-2538 or 517-484-4976

Vol. 16, No. 6

June 1999

"Little" Bourbon Scores Big Again at 39th Annual

By George & Donna Wilber

- 42 Teams Vy for \$13,130 Pot
- Long/Broka Top the Field
- Creakbaum/Long Inducted
- Dell/Knox Win Preliminary Draw

Hoosiers claim that the Spring doubles tournament at the American Legion Post 424 in Bourbon, Indiana, is the longest-running shuffleboard event in the nation. There may be some challengers for that record out there somewhere, but can they claim 39 years without skipping a beat? (If they can, we'll likely hear from them.) No. 39 was held on May Day 1999 and it attracted 42 teams, plus sponsors, from eight states (Indiana, Michigan, California, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Texas, Maryland and Missouri) vying for a hefty \$13,130 pot.

Faces have changed. Rules have changed. Hosts and directors have changed. Weights, boards and wax have changed. What has not changed in the 39 years is the desire of participants to list in their "resumes" a win at Bourbon.

And the Winners Were.....

According to the lively sponsor sale, conducted by the energetic and entertaining Mikel Johnson, the favorites were Bill and Billy Melton of Oklahoma, John McDermott of Michigan and Rick Boyer of Colorado, Len Dell and Rick Niblett of Maryland, and Terry Dowell and Bobby Voorhis of Indiana (just to give you an idea of the top talent in this event). The next tier of favored teams were Dave Boaz and Jim DeWitt of Indiana, Ron Huddleston and Steve Walker of Oklahoma, and Buddy Broka and Jim Long of Indiana.

Bidders are not always right and some of the "giants" fell by the wayside during the marathon, but the intense competition kept spectators glued to their seats until exhaustion drove them back on the road again. And, if you are concerned about the future of shuffleboard, consider this: four father-and-son teams -- "Squirrel" and Matt Westhaver of Indiana, Bill and Billy Melton of Oklahoma, Jeff and Alonzo Cottrell of

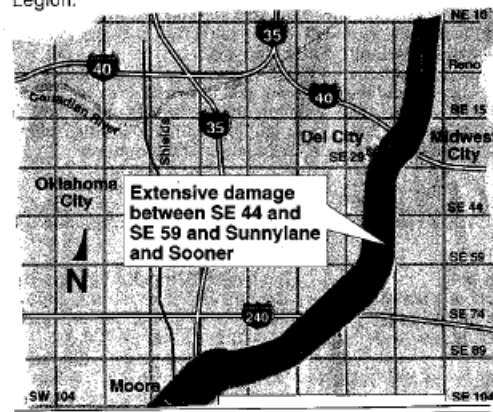
Michigan, Gene McCleod of Missouri and Mark McCleod of Indiana -- participated in this event and three ended up in the money!

(continued on Page 8)

Thank God! Shufflers O.K.!

Within hours of the departure from Bourbon of Oklahomans Bill and Billy Melton, Ron Huddleston, Steve Walker, Rick Jones, Ron Gamble, and Dave Davidson, a deadly tornado ripped through their state, leveling communities and claiming lives. Since that tragedy hit the headlines, those Oklahoma shufflers and The Board Talk have received countless calls from concerned members of the shuffleboard network. We are thankful to report that, as far as we know, all of the "family" are O.K.

We're also glad to report that the American Legion 73 in Del City, site of the Southwest Open, host Don Crall and all his boards (even though just a block away from the tornado path) are also O.K. As Bill Melton said along with this map (those of you who have been there will recognize street names): "The shuffleboard gods had to be at work to save the Legion."



Bourbon Tourney (cont. from Page 1)



An emotional moment is shared by Bourbon No. 39 winners Buddy Broka and Jim Long. With his usual carefree style, after the big win, Jim proclaimed to the small crowd that stayed for the grand finale: "I've been inducted, I won the tournament. Drinks for everybody in the house!" However, "last call" had been issued an hour or more before. Maybe those hearty souls can collect later.



They had to beat second-place finishers Jim DeWitt and Dave Boaz, both from Indiana, to take the crown.



One of four father and son teams in the tournament, Mark McLeod of Indiana and his dad, Gene of Missouri, took third place honors.



Fourth place went to Oklahomans Ron Gamble and Rick Jones.

Finishing fifth and sixth were Don Keppel and Bud Esterline, Terry Dowell and Bobby Voorhis, all of Indiana. Taking seventh and eighth were Bill and Billy Melton of Oklahoma, and Jeff and Alonzo Cottrell of Michigan.

Creakbaum/Long Inducted

It wasn't just the tournament that attracted shufflers to this annual event. They came to pay their respects to two inductees into the Indiana Shuffleboard Hall of Fame -- Larry Creakbaum and Jim Long, affectionately known as The Red Baron and The Silver Fox. They joined the esteemed Emmett Wilcox, the first inductee, and tributes to them and more to follow will be displayed in the American Legion Post 424, now officially the "home" of the Indiana Shuffleboard Hall of Fame.



In addition to their Indiana Shuffleboard Hall of Fame plaques, the two inductees received a tribute from The Dixie Belle, Downey, California.

At the induction ceremony conducted prior to the sponsor sale for the open doubles tournament, tributes were paid to Larry and Jim by John McDermott on behalf of The Shuffleboard Federation; The Dixie Belle, Downey, California, personally delivered by Paul Weber; video testimonials taped

and hosted by Jerry Siebert of Lansing, Michigan; and a "you can't have one without the other" duet from the publishers of The Board Talk.



Larry and Jim, along with first Indiana inductee Emmett Wilcox (above), received a caricature of themselves, presented by committee member Sheryl Cockerill.

The one tribute that really reflected the sentiments of the large crowd that had gathered for the event was presented by former Oklahoman Pam Worsham in her "Ode to Long and Creakbaum."

"Oh, the stories I've heard of these two playing shuffleboard all through the night.

"The stamina they had to develop, to keep the goal in sight.

"It was never about the money, though these boys have made their share.

"It was for the "W", the fun and the story, and because they both really care.

"We played with them and against them, saw hitting and sticking and lagging.

"A precision duet between them, with yelling and cussing and bragging.

"Each excels in his own right and always plays his best,

"But it's through their special partnership that they've out-performed the rest.

"Forty years in Indiana, they've been the cream of the crop.

"If you wanted to win in this state, this pair was the team to top.

"We can't forget to recognize those who stood by through thin and thick.

"Neither would be here today without the support of Patti and Vick.

"They stayed in and tended the home fires, raising kids and grandkids and such.

"Long and Creaky are quick to give credit to these women who sacrificed much.

"And so we come now to honor them, as they have honored the game,

"With speeches and plaques and photos in their fifteen minutes of fame.

"When I came to Indiana, I didn't know if I'd ever belong,

"But three of the reasons I've stayed are: shuffleboard, Creakbaum and Long."

Everyone expected the honorees to team up (as they have so often since 1973) for the 39th Annual Bourbon Spring Doubles, but sadly, Larry lost one of his best friends and had to serve as his pallbearer the day of the tournament. However, "Creaky" was there in the late evening/early morning hours to cheer Jim and a different, but highly-regarded partner, Buddy Broka, in their quest to capture the 1999 crown.



Among the large crowd was Jim Long's coach and mentor, Bob Creiger, shown here with Board Talk George.

Over \$4400 in Preliminary Draw

On Friday afternoon, 48 players signed up to form 24 teams in a single elimination draw partner event, competing for a share of a pot of over \$4400. Len Dell of Maryland drew Jerry Knox of Indiana to take first place honors. Gene McLeod of Missouri and Rick Jones of Oklahoma finished second. Third went to Ray Miller and Brian Collins of Indiana, and fourth went to Rick Niblett of Maryland and Connie Langhoff of Indiana. Fifth and sixth places were taken by Carrie Clifton of Michigan and Buddy Broka of Indiana, Mark Holland of Michigan and Beef Camp of Indiana.



Jerry Knox of Indiana and Len Dell of Maryland drew each other to take first place in the draw. (Sorry, Lenny, your spot on Page 1 went to the tornado!)

(continued on Page 10)

Appreciation from Terry and Bill:

Director Terry Dowell and host Bill Niswonger extend appreciation to all the players and their fans for their participation in the tournament and the induction ceremony for The Red Baron and The Silver Fox. "You were a great group of people and we look forward to seeing you all in the future," they said.



Three of the key people in the 39th Annual Bourbon Spring Tournament (from left): sponsor salesperson Mikel Johnson, American Legion 424 host Bill Niswonger, and tournament director Terry Dowell, who received a plaque of appreciation from the Legion.



Still smiling after many long hours of keeping the brackets straight was another key person, Larry Ross.

What's the Mystique of Bourbon?

Bourbon is a small town nestled in mid-America farmland, surrounded by Amish communities. Its main street offers a view of a buffalo operation; well-kept homes with freshly-mowed lawns and flowering trees and bushes; a walkable business district with the usual drug store, grocer, gas station, restaurant, tavern, funeral home and post office (and Moon Leather Works by Fritz, designer and creator of shuffleboard paraphanelia and more). Just across the railroad tracks that run through town, with a whistling train that rumbles through at infrequent intervals, is the American Legion 424 (few shufflers go beyond that point, so they don't know what may be on the other side of town). In the Legion's parking lot the first

week of May, you'll see cars, vans and motor homes with license plates, not just from Indiana, but several other states.

The Annual Bourbon Spring Doubles doesn't offer the amenities, attractions, number of events and boards as other major tournaments. The nearest motel is 12-15 miles away (and after a grueling day and night-long marathan, that's a long haul). So why does this annual event attract some of the top players in the nation from the East Coast to the West Coast and places in between? It's a bit of a mystique.

"I'm not sure what it is," said Bill Melton from Oklahoma. "We drove 2,000 miles for 47 and a half hours just to play for a few hours. But we'll probably be back again." Bill and son Billy, who had won No. 34 and No. 35, finished in the last money spot this year, small compensation for the long trip.

Why has Paul Weber made many trips from California to Bourbon? "We always have fun when we come here and I get to meet new people and see old friends like Beef and Marge Camp, Bobby and Debbie Voorhis, and Larry Summy and others that I wouldn't have the opportunity to see unless they come to the Reno tournament." One year Paul was among 18 California shufflers who made the trek to Bourbon. The framed tribute to the inductees delivered by Paul was signed by those Dixie Bellers who enjoyed that memorable experience.

New Faces This Year

In addition to some of the top players of the nation, there were some first-timers.



For example, out of the contingency of 12 shufflers representing Stober's Lounge in Lansing, Michigan (home of the Rudy Stober Memorial Tournament), eight newcomers had listened to the Bourbon "war stories" from the four veterans for years and decided to try their luck.

One of those eight first-timers was a lovely, fun-loving lady known as E.T., respected locally as a good player, but completely untested in major tournament events. She was a bit uncertain about

testing her talents in new territory, but decided to give it a try. E.T. didn't have a partner going in, so just put her name in, hoping to find another shuffler who was looking for one. She ended up paired with Bus Voorhis of Indiana. They didn't finish in the money, but they had a good time trying.

"The people at Bourbon were just great! They made me feel at home and I look forward to going back again," E.T. said, and perhaps it will become an annual tradition for her.

And just maybe that simple statement is the answer to the "Bourbon Mystique."

Bourbon Spring Doubles Honor Roll

(Editors' Note: The first report The Board Talk received about the results of the Bourbon Spring Doubles was in 1986, two years after we started publication. If there is information out there regarding the results of other years, please send it along and we will publish it.)

Year	No. Teams	Winners
1986	46	Bobby Voorhis/Dave Boaz, Indiana
1987	49	Lee McDonald/J.R. Lopez, Michigan
1988	(No Report)	
1989	51	Earl Kelly/Rick Boyer, Texas
1990	49	Bobby Voorhis/Jerry Warr, Indiana
1991	54	Jerry Siebert/Bjerne Sunde, Michigan
1992	42	John McDermott/Lee McDonald, Michigan
1993	61	Bob Perry, Illinois/Buddy Broka, Indiana
1994	64	Bobby Voorhis, Indiana/Jim Allis, Washington
1995	51	Bill and Billy Melton, Oklahoma
1996	/U**	Bill and Billy Melton, Oklahoma
1997	33	Glen Davidson, Oklahoma/Mikel Johnson, Indiana
1998	40	Jerry Knox/Ray Miller, Indiana
1999	42	Jim Long/Buddy Broka, Indiana

**1st National Shuffleboard Hall of Fame Tournament

Notebook *(continued from Page 7)*

they've never seen play. Reputation should not be a consideration. In our opinion, age or the number of nights a person plays is immaterial; it's the SKILL that counts. HOWEVER, if a player is rated a "1" only because he won on a 4-person team event and a 6-person draft team (and by 23 raters), that definitely should set off some alarm bells!

Nobody said the system is perfect, but with everybody's help, we'll get there!

This is just our opinion and we welcome feedback from other raters.

More on the Florida Open

The tournament (Florida Open) was held March 26-28 in Mims, Florida. Quite a few shufflers traveled from distant states (New York, Michigan, Maryland, Texas, Mississippi) to enjoy a week away playing shuffleboard and seeing old friends. This was accomplished, but with much less enjoyment than had been anticipated.

The tournament itself was run very well, but our hosts lacked southern hospitality. No food was provided unless purchased from (the host establishment) -- only microwave food -- no snacks. One can only wonder as to why 50-50 raffles were held. Each shuffleboard game cost players 50 cents. No motorhomes were allowed to park on the (host establishment) property overnight even though space was available. Sponsors were solicited for a \$75 fee for which their name was printed on a piece of paper and posted on the wall. Twelve sponsors were counted, equalling \$900. This money went where?

The topper to this whole weekend was that pool players and local patrons were charged one price for their drinks and the shuffleboard players were charged a higher price. Thursday night beer was \$2 per can/bottle to all the people in the establishment, but when the tournament began, beer was \$2.50 per can if you played shuffleboard, but \$2 to all other people. A glass of water cost \$1 and ice cost 50 cents. In New York State, this would be breaking the law. I wonder how the State of Florida handles discrimination?

I guess we assumed that the hosts agreed to host this tournament knowing what it entailed. The attitude of this establishment seemed to be one of complete indifference and rudeness to shuffleboard players, their wants and their needs. It was also assumed that the shuffleboard players would bring a significant amount of business into this tavern over several days, having a positive affect on tavern revenue. If prices had been fair and equal and good food available, we're sure profit would have been realized.

Maybe when considering an establishment as a

(continued on Page 22)