

The Board Talk

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Southwest Open Sets Record!

- 192 Players from 15 States
- \$142,540 Total Pot
- Bill Melton Inducted in Hall of Fame

By George & Donna Wilber

It was HOT in Del City, Oklahoma, over the 4th of July week, but COOL in the air-conditioned American Legion Post 73. There was HOT action on the 21 boards days and nights prior to and throughout the Southwest Open, but host Don Crall, directors Ron and Sharon Huddleston and their staffs never lost their COOL. The latter had to be a challenge because Southwest Open No. 6 attracted the largest participation -- 192 players from 15 states -- of any shuffleboard event in recent history, and a total pot of \$142,540, not quite enough to top the 1996 North American Championships, but certainly appealing enough to keep competitors on their toes.

Okies Win "Warm-Up" Event

Billed as a "warm-up" event for those who came early, the Tuesday night bring-your-own 4-person team tourney turned out to be a major event with 18 teams (72 players) competing for a share of the \$19,700 pot. It took until Wednesday evening before a victor emerged.



It was good to see Sam Summers (left) back in action and he proved he's still got what it takes to be a winner. He led his Oklahoma team of Sally Goff, Fred Washington and Bud Hillburn to first place.



The Texas team of David Williams (right), Bobby Williams, Jeri Billard and Johnny Ballard took second place honors.



Rick Boyer (left), Morey Balins, Fred Compean and Kenny Hawkes, of Colorado finished third.

110 in Open/Pro Singles

An unprecedented 110 players signed up for the singles, 16 in the pro event and 94 in the open graduated entry handicap event.

The "cream of the crop" rose to the top with 0 rated players claiming the first three places in the open singles. Steve Burkett of Oklahoma claimed the biggest share of the \$20,800 total pot, with that tough lady from Oklahoma, Rena Fleming, hot on his heels. Buddy Broka

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Southwest Open (continued from Page 1)

of Indiana took third place, and Ron Blalock of Oklahoma finished fourth. Johnny Wayne Crawford of Texas and Larry Creakbaum of Indiana tied for 5th and 6th. Terry Dowell of Indiana and Bob Hunt of California took 7th and 8th.

In the 9 through 12 winner's slots were D.J. Lane of Oklahoma, Bobby Williams, Angie Snyder (a 3-rated player on her way up) and Dale Koteras, all of Texas.



Sylvia Martinez watches open singles winner Steve Burkett count his money.

The pros displayed the skills that have earned them that designation as 16 of the nation's best competed for a share of the \$21,400 pot. In some awesome, crowd-pleasing matches, the pro singles climaxed with Darrol Nelson of Oregon settling for third and John McDermott of Michigan pitted against Bill Melton of Oklahoma in the finals. Bill took the first two matches from undefeated John, then the two pros took an extended break for the marathon draw partner sale. In the third match, Bill decided to start his Hall of Fame induction celebration early by adding one more notch to his belt.

150 in Draw Partner Events!

If the singles go down in history as a super biggie, the 1997 SW Open draw partner events, with 150 entries, will be recorded right along side of it.

Forty-five teams of 2's through pros (no two pros could draw each other) and 29 teams of 3's, 4's and 5's kept the 21 boards humming until closing on Thursday night with survivors returning on the 4th of July morning to continue narrowing the field of contenders. At stake was a total pot of \$31,665 for the two events.

Pro Darrol Nelson of Oregon drew 2-rated player Tom Clubb of Texas and took top honors in Event I. Another pro, David Williams of Texas, and Fred Washington of Oklahoma finished second, with Lillie Kidd of Texas and Len Dell of Maryland in third place. Pro Bobby Voorhis of Indiana and Ron Bowers of Texas took fourth place. Tied for 5th and 6th were Brian

Walker of Texas and Chuck Muehlhauser of Missouri, Tom Galvin of Nebraska and Larry Pearson of Washington. Frank Mako of Washington and Harvey Walden of Tennessee, Tom Hendrix of Oklahoma and Johnny Ballard of Texas, took 7th and 8th spots.

In the Beginners/Pretty Good Draw, Mahlon Nobles of Texas and Bobby Kimbro of Oklahoma were top winners. Shane Summers of Oklahoma and Del Ammerman of Texas took second place honors. Bill Wilcox of Indiana and Jorge of Texas finished third, with Pam Worsham of Oklahoma and George Best of Texas in fourth place.

162 Players in Draft Team Event!

There were 27 teams of six players each in Friday's draft team event, with pros and 0's serving as captains, vying for a share of the \$24,330 pot. In the highly-competitive, marathon event, it was Texan Bobby Williams' team of Harvey Kidd and Mike Renick, also from Texas, Mark Melton and Bob (Flash) Kimbro of Oklahoma, and Woodie Cockrum of Missouri, who took top honors.

Finishing second was Rick Boyer's (Colorado) team of Dino Fleming (Oklahoma), Gene McCleod (Missouri), Gwen Vogt (Colorado), Tre Cameron and Bob Houchin (Texas). Louise Freer's (Pennsylvania) team of Al DiBella (Pennsylvania), Mike Johnson and Bill Wilcox (Indiana), Jerry Sabourin (Missouri) and Nancy Rice (Texas) took third place honors. Rounding out the winner's circle was the team of Larry Pearson of Washington, consisting of Steve Burkett and Pat Kinard of Oklahoma, Bo Hyman and Anna Nguyen of Texas, and Phil Gardner, Oklahoma/Arizona.

115 in Three Event Tournaments

There were three events on Saturday, finishing on Sunday -- a bring partner handicap (with a total of 0 or more), a singles for 2 rated players, and a beginner/pretty good singles, with 115 players competing for a share of the total \$24,645 pot.

In the bring partner handicap, it was Jim (not Doug this time!) Buhl and Darrol Nelson of Oregon in the top spot. Taking second place were Bill Melton and John Breathwit of Oklahoma, with Dino Fleming and Billy Melton finishing third.

Jack Scott of Texas, one of the primary organizers of the Houston Holiday Open, was winner of the 2 rated singles. Shari Foust of Oklahoma claimed the No. 2 spot, with Jerry Sabourin of Missouri in third, and Chuck Muehlhauser, also of Missouri, in fourth.

"We're going to have to hire an armored car to take this guy home," said Bus Voorhis of the beginner/pretty good singles winner Bill Niswonger of Indiana, who along with sidekick Bill Wilcox had a pretty good week.

Shane Summers of Oklahoma took second place, with Mary Brown of Indiana in third (Mary also won the drawing for The Shuffleboard Federation weights).

Other Highlights:

-- Earning the most points for the added money, a round-trip airfare to Reno for the North American Championships, and the title of MVP went to Darrol Nelson of Oregon.

-- Jerry Hancock of Texas was winner of the drawing for the Triple Crown weights. Madge Goff won the first drawing and donated the weights back to sell more tickets to benefit the National Shuffleboard Hall of Fame.

-- The National Shuffleboard Hall of Fame was a real winner. Up until this event, the American Legion 424 in Bourbon, Indiana (represented at this tournament by Bill Niswonger), was the top contributor with \$1,000. Don Crall of the American Legion Post 73, host of the Southwest Open, met that challenge with another \$1,000 donation. Add to that the ticket sales and a 1/2% cut of the tournament entry fees and sales, and the total came to \$1,800 for this event.

-- A total of 1,644 games of shuffleboard were played during the week-long Southwest Open. That compares with just under 1,100 last year and includes the constant round robins that were going on.

-- Action halted on Sunday morning for a moving moment of silence for the late Billy Chiles of California. MC Ron Huddleston summed up the thoughts of the huge crowd at the end of that 60 seconds of silence (and it was silent) in that huge hall: "I don't know about you, but I saw that gentle man lagging a 4." The applause that followed verified that thought.

-- The American Legion staff barbecued 270 lbs. of chicken for the 4th of July buffet, served along with all the trimmings, courtesy of Post 73. Host Don Crall said next year, it will probably have to be upped to 300 lbs.!



(left) Board Talk George congratulates director Ron Huddleston for a super tournament, while (right) Sharon's doggie, Maggie, wonders: "Why is Mom counting all that money instead of paying attention to me?"



National Shuffleboard Hall of Fame Update:

Larry Creakhaum (The "Red Baron") of Indiana, member of the NSHF, served as the Master of Ceremonies for the Bill Melton induction. He reported the results of the Board of Directors meeting in Del City, attended by four of the six directors: Larry, Glen Davidson, Louise Freer, and Bob Hunt.

During this official meeting, Dave Arndt of Tacoma, Washington, replaced retiring Jim Foran on the Board of Directors.

The board voted to expand the board from the minimum of five directors called for in the by-laws to a more nation-wide representation. Larry called on "anyone who would like to serve in this volunteer position, and has the ability and resources to travel" to please step forward. If you are interested, please contact Secretary Louise Freer, 215-661-0108 or 610-397-7586.

The next NSHF meeting will be held at the North American Championships in Reno, Nevada, scheduled for Oct. 27-Nov. 2 at the Sands Regency.

Larry reported that no decision has been made on the location of a permanent Hall of Fame. Whatever that decision, he said, it will be an expensive venture and needs the volunteer contributions of shufflers across the country during 1998.

(For further background information on this event, see "As The Puck Turns," Notebook, the NSHF President's report, Ray Boyett's report, and "Faces.")

Why They Come....Why They Return to the Southwest Open

Kenny Hawkes, Colorado, a Repeater:

Kenny Hawkes of Colorado has missed only one (last year's) of the six Southwest Open Tournaments. Why does he keep returning? There are several reasons:

"First, when I came here, I learned what 'Heartland' was all about. I grew up in Chicago, where if you say 'hi' to someone you meet on the street, he's likely to grab your wallet or your woman (and not necessarily in that order). Here in Oklahoma, when you make eye contact with someone, you're expected to say 'hi.' It's the same on the road. If you're on a two-lane highway, slower travelers will pull over on the shoulder to let you pass. You don't find that kind of courtesy in other parts of the country," Kenny said.

"Second, this is the best facility in the nation to hold a shuffleboard tournament. Just look at it," he said, pointing to the spacious room with its air conditioners, smoke eaters, fans, and 18 boards (3 more in the bar).

"Last, but certainly not least, Ron and Sharon Huddleston run the very best tournament. They're fantastic! Everything goes smoothly and once the events

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Southwest Open (continued from Page 9)

get underway, they figure out which boards will be available for round robins or open play, so we don't have to wait for hours to play again."

Why did Kenny miss that one SW Open? He was saving to buy an RV to join others in the American Legion's 5-acre park. That goal was achieved and he's not likely to miss another!

**From the West Coast, Larry Pearson:**

For Larry Pearson of Washington, participating in the 1997 SW Open was a first. He was one of a contingency of seven who made the long trip from the Pacific Northwest. "I am impressed," he said. "They have treated us royally here. The facilities are fantastic, the

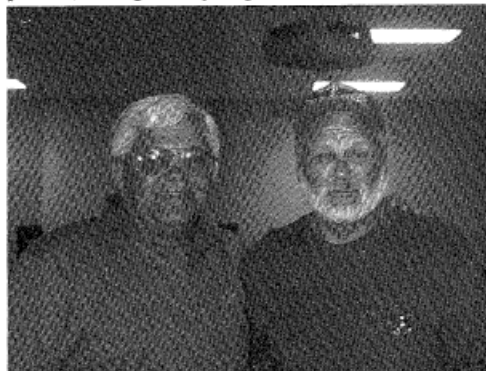
boards are consistent, and it's just a great tournament!"

(See more of Larry's observations in Notebook.)

From the East Coast, Len Dell:

It was also a first for Len Dell and Rick Niblett of Maryland. Len summed up the experience with one key word: OPPORTUNITY!

"This is an opportunity to play with and against the top players in the nation. When you play the best, you play better yourself. The competition here is great and the pride of winning is everything!"



Len Dell (right) and Rick Niblett of Maryland, first-time SW Open participants, earned themselves some respect during the week-long event. They'll be back!

And In Between, Woodie Cockrum:

Woodie Cockrum, long-time player and promoter from Missouri, sees formats like the SW Open and a growing number of other tournaments as the "salvation" of the sport of shuffleboard.

"It gives the 3's, 4's and 5's an opportunity to compete and even win. They're the future of our game. The pros, the -1's, the 0's, can't last forever. If the game is going to survive, we must have players to take their place. If we can keep those young beginners involved and enthusiastic, some of them will become the pros of tomorrow," he said.



Woodie's sister, Jolene Lembke of California, was also at the SW Open and planned to stay with her brother and sister-in-law Jean for a week and help Woodie introduce local players to the A-B-C Draw.

A Word from the SW Open Director, Ron Huddleston.....

One Thousand, Six Hundred and Forty-Four games of shuffleboard were played at the Southwest Open this year. We advertised this tournament as a shuffleboard vacation and 192 players showed up for a week of pure shuffleboard fun and competition. Sharon, Don, myself, and the American Legion Post 73, hope each of you had as much fun as we had in seeing everyone enjoying themselves and their vacation, playing a sport we obviously love.

To Dave and Rena Fleming, Cliff and Sally Goff -- thank you! To the Oklahoma players who helped setting the boards -- thank you! To Billy Poole and Madison, Inc. for the coozies -- thank you! To Bill and Mike Melton for four planks -- thank you! To The Shuffleboard Federation for the wax and spray -- thank you! (I did not see one mush hit all week in 1,644 games. What does that tell us?)

For those of you who vacationed with us for the first time, we hope you left with a feeling of pride that shuffleboard competition has moved a step forward, and to those of you who recommended the Southwest Open to your fellow players, we hope you left with the feeling that it was as good as you told your fellow shufflers it should be.

We all should and could take a tremendous amount of pride in these three "little items" many may have overlooked this week: (1) Seven different times I had players come to me and tell me they had played a board I

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From Director Ron (cont. from Page 10)

called them up on and knew it was an oversight on my part. Sounds like the honor system in golf and it brings tears of pride just to be able to relate it to the rest of the shuffleboard world. (2) Two gentlemen put the fun and pleasure of 190 other players ahead of their own disappointment in one event. Heretofore, it would have been a big scene and dampened the happiness of the entire event. Those two gentlemen are Rod Cameron and Troy Thornton. It's a pleasure to have people like you two in our sport. (3) Give yourselves a hand on this one! Forget shuffleboard for a second and just think about a room full of 200 competitors who have been competing since 10 a.m. (some drinking at 9 a.m.) and it's now 14 hours later or midnight and it is the fourth day of this kind of schedule. Still, everyone is laughing, shooting their best game, shaking hands and congratulating winners, and wanting to know what time we start tomorrow. You bet we are proud to be a part of the shuffleboard family!

We think it is a combination of all these "small things" that we hope made your vacation week a pleasant shuffleboard experience.

And from the NSHF Chairman, Glen Davidson.....

The 1997 SW Open is over and a record or two has been broken. Thanks to all the Hall of Fame officers for being there and to Larry Creakbaum for serving as M.C. for the Bill Melton induction. David Williams did a great job for his partner, Bill Melton, in the induction ceremony, with a tear or two, sharing how Bill had taught him to play and to win in the game of shuffleboard.



Glen congratulates Charlie Sawyer, local player and promoter, for receiving an outstanding achievement award from the NSHF for his dedication.

I met Charlie Sawyer in the early '80s at the Hilton Inn where we all played. He was there every week learning the game. We organized a league and Charlie was captain of his team for two leagues. He helped his

team learn and play with good sportsmanship and fair play. After retirement, Charlie still runs a round robin every week on Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays, at the Bristol Station.



Pete Humphrey, a retired Air Force pilot and former owner of the Bristol Station, also received an outstanding achievement award during the Bill Melton induction ceremonies.

Pete has been the key figure here in Midwest City and Del City for shuffleboard players. I met Pete a few years back. He had an 18 foot board then. With a little encouragement from all the players, he bought a regulation 22 foot board, placed it against the West wall and it's been there ever since. Pete has put on tournaments as well as shuffleboard parties and kept the game going for 15-20 years.

Congratulations to both of these men for their contributions to the game. And congratulations to Bill Melton on his induction, and to all the winners at the Southwest Open.

Thanks to American Legion Post #73 and Don Crall for the \$1,000 donation to the NSHF.

We're heading to Quilcene, Washington, now to see Jim Foran inducted into the Hall of Fame.

Welcome to
The World of Shuffleboard

Morgan Sue McLaren
Born April 20, weighing
2 lbs., 4 oz.

Congratulations to Parents Penny & Jack McLaren and Grandparents Bonnie & Sonny Morgan, Saginaw, Michigan

REMINDER!

The new address for The Board Talk is: 503 E. Sheridan Rd., Lansing, Michigan 48906