

Out With the Old, In With the New

The DCC Gets a Facelift

by Samm Diep

The old, dark hallways and the seedy Derbyshire are no more. Now in its eleventh year, the Derby City Classic sported a new, more respectable appearance when the Executive West Hotel venue found itself replaced by the Horseshoe Casino & Hotel, located across the Ohio River in Elizabeth, Indiana. The previous winners took early exits this year and in their places were the fresh faces of the new champions, including one repeat runner-up who finally left his mark.

An attempt to give Derby a cleaner image meant that dress codes would be strictly enforced and players would be on their best behavior. The accepted neat and un-torn attire allowed cotton or dress slacks, collared shirts, and dress or tennis shoes. When asked about the new dress code, "We've always had a dress code," said Ken Shuman, tournament director and head referee.

This new image also meant that no money could be seen changing hands. Throughout the tournament rooms and hallways were signs posted: "SIDE BETTING is strictly prohibited on Horseshoe Southern Indiana Property. Anyone who violates this policy is subject to eviction and arrest." These were in direct contrast to the erstwhile "No NO Gambling" signs. There were no reported offenders. "Harrah's has over fifty properties, and there's a potential for more events at their other locations. We want to make a good first impression," said Paul Smith, one of the tournament directors.

A New Venue Brings New Champions

The dates for this year's highly anticipated Derby City Classic were delayed a couple weeks to January 23 -31 in hopes of entic-

Not content to walk away with first place in the 9-ball banks division, John Brumback also scooped the All-Around Champion honors as well in a close race.



In addition to scoring top honors in the one-pocket event, John "Mr. 403" Schmidt beat out the rest of the field in the inaugural Accu-Stats Game Show.

ing more participants. Without the amateur and three-cushion side events coinciding this year, the DCC was the sole attraction. The three main divisions were 9-ball banks, one-pocket, and 9-ball.

Forty 9-foot Diamond Pro-Am tables were set up for the occasion, each with Tour Blue 860 Simonis cloth and Super Aramith Pro balls. On the main level, there were 16 tables in center court, 2 more off to each side, and the featured Accu-Stats table and arena in the back. On the second floor were tables designated 21 to 40 dispersed in four rooms. The three main areas upstairs included two rows of seats that overlooked the tournament tables below.

Day one kicked off at 1 p.m. with the first round of 9-ball banks following the draw and players' meeting at noon. Each round was a completely random draw, and all players had a single re-buy option immediately after a loss. By the end of the first day, a record five rounds were played in less than nine hours. Some familiar faces missing from the banks line-up were previous champs Nick Varner, Dave Matlock, and last year's hometown hero, Larry Price.

Gregg Banks on Another Victory in the Ring Game

The first offspring event to conclude was the 9-ball banks ring game. Annual announcer Grady Mathews took sign-ups and started the show promptly at 8 o'clock. It was limited to the first six players to sign up. Unfortunately for Tony Chohan, he showed up two minutes too late. First on the waiting list, Glenn "Piggy Banks" Rogers jumped at the opportunity to fill his spot. Joining Rogers were five other familiar names: Brian Gregg, Shannon Daulton, Louis D'Marco, Darrell Abernathy, and Jason Miller.

This year's buy-in was reduced from the usual \$3,000 to \$1,500 to encourage more participation. Each player began with \$1,500 in chips, and the stakes started at \$50 per banked ball. Unlike in the main event, the ring game format used a 10-ball rack rather than 9, making it more difficult to pocket a ball in the break and creating more traffic for longer games. Kicking at a ball was also allowed with a minimum of two rails.

All six players started off shaky, making only one or two banks here and there. But as the stakes got higher, so did the quality of play. By the time it was up to \$1,000 per bank, Gregg was ahead by \$3,200. Entering the final rack, Gregg banked four and out for all the marbles. Gregg pocketed \$6,000 and secured his fourth consecutive bank ring game victory, while Daulton took home \$3,000 and his third consecutive runner-up status.

"Brian Gregg played the best bank pool that I've ever seen, and I've been around the sport for fifty years. When he gets down to the end, he just seems to play better and better," declared Mathews, who has run the event for seven years.

Technical Issues = Delayed Matches

A few unexpected technical hiccups caused some confusion for players. This was the first year the tournament draw was not scrolling on a TV channel in the hotel rooms. Under normal circumstances, being second or third on deck would give a player plenty of time to stroll to their room and unwind a bit before coming back to their match. However, the lengthy trek from the hotel elevators to the tournament entrance did not necessarily make this a feasible option.

A hotel golf cart made round trips to and from the elevators and tournament area. Without it, it was a brisk 20-minute round trip walk, minimum. Because of this hike, most players opted to hang out in the tournament room while waiting for tables to become available. Others chose to do some shopping with the vendors, making sure they didn't go too far because the match announcements could not be heard that far away from the tournament room.

A new tournament software algorithm was implemented this year to allow rounds to advance without having to wait for every match to be completed. "This should eliminate the problem of unpredictable waits between rounds as the final matches are winding down. Of course the number-one consideration was making sure



Runner-up in the All-Around Champion race, Johnathan "Hennessee From Tennessee" Pinegar was fresh off his win at the Music City Open.

the new draw is as perfectly fair and random as the old method. It's taken two years to work out the details," said Greg Sullivan, Diamond's executive director.

Ironically, the upgrades made to help expedite match rounds were not working properly and ended up slowing down the scheduled draws. Losses and buy-backs were not consistently reflected. A couple of rounds had to be corrected because players were left out. The technical issues caused mass scheduling confusion over the initial days. Plans have been made by the tournament staff to address these issues for next year.

The Banks Are Open

Nine-ball banks, also known as short rack banks, or just simply banks, usually draws the largest field of the three main events. The game is played with nine balls, and the format is a race to three games. This year's 395 entries were slightly down from last year. The tournament staff did not seem too alarmed, understanding that it was the first year at a new venue and there was a storm approaching.



Reigning world 10-ball champ Darren Appleton is a force to be reckoned with in any division he enters.

