

CUESPORT ARTICLES WITH A TWIST

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Sunday Times (Sydney) Sun 6 Sep 1925 Page 11

Some years back the "Billiards Times" gave an account of what must surely have been the slowest game for money ever played. The game took place in a saloon in the vicinity of Walworth-road, London, and there was much betting on the result. After reading the following account of the play, as taken from a paper of the day, the question presents itself as to what induced the players to contest a thousand up instead of a "hundred up."

The report stated: "Owing to the marked want of brilliancy and execution on the part of the two players, the first 500 took six and a quarter hours, at which time Mr. Shee had overtaken and passed his opponent, getting 70 ahead. We only watched the game for one and a half hours, during which period, unfortunately, there was but little scoring. We call to mind, however, one very brilliant break of three by Mr. Shee and a prettily-played break of two by Mr. Newsham. The hour of midnight, however, arrived long before the 1000 was reached, and the conclusion of the match was wisely postponed until the following Saturday, as each player required at least a week's rest and change of air after his exertions. Mr. Newsham won the game by 76 points, his opponent failing in the latter part of the game to make those brilliant breaks we noticed earlier in the match. The game was carefully marked by T. Bailey. The poor fellow was, however, much exhausted.

AUSTRALIAN BILLIARD TABLE

(Special to "The Daily News")

LONDON, November 3.

Messrs. Burroughes and Watts are exhibiting a billiard table constructed for King Carol of Roumania, of Australian walnut. This is considered the only wood capable of resisting the Roumanian climate.

The Mercury (Hobart) Tue 7 Sep 1948 Page 3

Knights Of The Cue

THE crowd which watched the opening session of the Australian Amateur Billiards championships at Launceston yesterday soon became so used to seeing good shots that they expressed by a well-modulated "Oh" their surprise when the 1947 Australian champion, T. Cleary, missed a shot. (Usually the amateur billiardists I play with express equally as much surprise if their shots come off.) Three times Cleary got into the 90's, only to fall down on what, by his standards, was a comparatively simple shot. However, the atmosphere of the title games is something worth experiencing. It includes a very precise referee in traditional white gloves, and an electric clock to mark the two-hour sessions. Incidentally, visitors commented favourably on the idea of the electric clock, and as the red second hand crept to the end of the last of the 120 minutes "Time" was announced in a stentorian voice. The usual "gentlemen please" was not added in this instance.

WHEN Arthur Bull decided to build a home, he designed the billiard-room first. Then he made the rest of the house "fit in".

The house was designed—and re-designed—several times before the architects produced a plan which satisfied them, Bull, and the

requirements of the building site.

Main problem (apart from the billiard room) was a large rock on one side of the site.

"The architects finally decided to build the billiard-room on top of the rock," Bull says.

They built the rest of the house above a garage at the side of the rock.

Naturally, the billiard-room dominates the house. It is 32ft by 24ft, and has big bay windows.

The house itself is next to Wollstonecraft (Sydney) Bowling Club.

The garage occupies the basement and on the first floor, in addition to the billiard-room, are the hallway, lounge room, dining room, kitchen, offices, laundry and two bedrooms.

There are two more bedrooms and a bathroom on the top floor. The rest of this floor is taken up with two sun decks.

Interesting angle in the construction of the house are two large girders which support the concrete roof of the billiard-room and the bedrooms on the top floor.

Fittings of the house are in silky oak. The doors are walnut.

But as far as Bull is concerned, these rooms are only to "live in."

As NSW amateur billiards champion, Arthur Bull still gives top priority to the billiard room.

Mrs. Bull did not object to the priority given to the bil-

liard-room when the house was built.

She is a billiards fan and always watches her husband's matches.

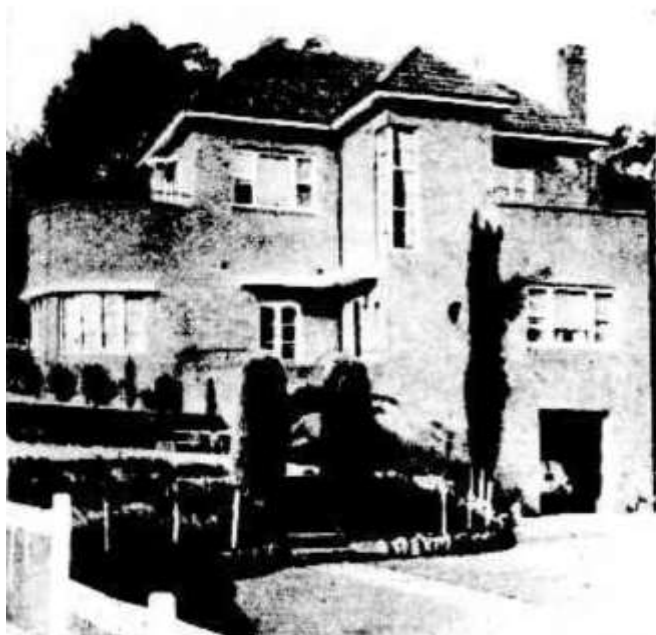
Bull, who finished third in the Australasian amateur billiards title, at Auckland recently, has surrounded his billiard-room with sporting trophies.

He represented Australia at the 1924 Paris Olympic Games as a sculler, won his first NSW billiards title in 1936.

In Adelaide three years ago he became the first player to beat the Empire champion Bob Marshall in 16 years, when he won a four hours match by 18, averaging 33 each time he went to the table.

Marshall has spent many hours practising on Bull's table, which is described by leading professional player Clark McConnachy, as one of the best in the country.

McConnachy, leading claimant to Walter Lindrum's vacant world professional title, says the room was the best private billiard-room he has ever seen.



Bull's Wollstonecraft home—with billiard room on left.

In snooker or billiards we have felted table and balls which are pushed about by collision with others... the first being driven by hitting it with a cue.

The edge of the table—the inner edge—hangs over the surface and has a recess below this overhanging edge.

Is this overhanging edge on which the rolling ball strikes in any special position? How high above the surface is it? How high in terms of the diameter of the ball? Or is it just anywhere?

Did you pot yesterday's billiard balls? The overhanging inner edge on the table is in a very special place. This edge, with which the ball collides, is seven-tenths of the radius of the ball above the table top. Exactly seven-tenths. Can you speculate on the reason for this? Another good problem in analytical mechanics. And important to billiard players.

Why the hustlers don't lose

"NEVER GIVE a sucker an even break." Everyone knows this homily, but it's perhaps a little less obvious that it originated in the pool room.

Here, over the green baize table and in a smoke-filled room, many a sucker and his money have been parted.

And one of the key figures involved in relieving the sucker of his money has been (and still is to a certain extent) the hustler, who, unbeknown to his hapless opponent, makes a living out of playing pool.

Morally dishonest? Probably, but the law can't do anything about it, and so the hustler lives on the periphery of honest society, frowned on by most of the honest citizenry but not really breaking the law.

Everyone who saw the 1964 movie "The Hustler," with Paul Newman and Jackie Gleason, knows what hustling is all about, although the movie portrayed a rather over-dramatised and idealised version of how a professional pool-room habitue operates.

In "Hustlers, Beats and Others" (Pelican, \$1.20) sociologist Ned Polsky gives an inside look at the American hustler as he really is.

Professor Polsky is an academic who believes in doing his research where the action is (to use a piece of poolroom argot).

He spends, he says, a great deal of his time playing billiards, and he has for many years. He modestly confesses that at three-cushion billiards he is considered "a far better than average player."

As a sociologist he is fascinated by what makes the hustler tick . . . and how, when and why he operates.

Polsky has a good grasp of what hustling in pool-rooms is all about (of course, hustling has other meanings: it can apply to

performing a similar conning trick on the golf course or elsewhere, or to prostitution).

Some of the author's best friends, one gathers, are hustlers, beats and others, and Professor Polsky doesn't seem to mind a bit of poolroom hustling himself from time to time, although he seems to frown on the hustlers themselves as people.

The author comes across as a rather pompous man who is very intent on debunking the work of other writers and sociologists. But his book is still intriguing because of the candid (and by the sound of it honest) study of an adroit and skilful con man.

So how does a hustler snare his man?

Cont.

First you must consider the environment. Billiard playing and pool rooms are far less a way of American (and Australian) life than they once were.

The heyday of the billiard player was in the 1920s and 1930s, during the depression.

The reasons why men hung around pool rooms then are pretty obvious. But there was another reason: it was the golden age of the lifelong bachelor, the man who spent most of his living, waking hours in a poolroom.

Today, with a more prosperous society in which more people marry, and younger, that kind of bachelor is rarer.

The pool room made something of a comeback in the mid-1960s with the advent of the film "The Hustler." But now, says Polsky, it seems to be sinking again.

But the hustler is still around, perhaps a thousand or so of them professionally, shifting from smoky pool room to

smoky pool room, always on the lookout for a sucker who wants to shoot pool.

And if they can't find him, they'll play each other.

But when they find a sucker ready to put money on the table, the hustler's expertise comes out.

First of all, a good hustler must be a good con man. That is, he must be able to get his sucker to the billiards table.

In this, he is unlike other con men. They pretend to have more expertise than they really possess; the hustler pretends to have less.

He must persuade or suggest to his sucker that he is not as good as the sucker; or, failing this, that the sucker needs a handicap which will prove to be woefully inadequate.

The hustler can do this by all sorts of variations on a theme: by cursing and swearing when he "misses" a shot (and deliberate missing in pool games is hard

to detect because deviations of only fractions of an inch, or sophisticated variations of spin or jump are often employed), or setting up a sucker with easy shots.

It is not infrequent for a billiards game to go on all through the night and well into the next day, as they did in the film.

It will only be at the very end, when the sucker is absolutely whacked, that the big money will really gush across the table. Here the hustler needs not only a good eye and a steady hand, but real stamina... "Heart" as they say in the game, this meaning game-ness as well.

Billiards is also an unusual game in that the hustler can go on playing well almost into senility; unless his eyesight fails he is likely to continue as a skilful player, maybe even getting better — certainly canner.

Cont.

To people who play pool 12, 15, 18 or more hours daily for much of their lives from perhaps the age of 8 or 10, incredible shots (sinking half a dozen balls from one strike, say) are not really exceptional. Such shots were shown in "The Hustler" faithfully.

This devotion to the game (whichever speciality it is) is what distinguishes the real pro hustler from the amateur.

The real hustler lives, thinks and breathes pool; he has little time for women, recreation or any outside interest.

He'll live in a crummy hotel room, or in the likely event of his being broke in the pool room itself.

His con can be quite complex. For example, it's not unknown for a pair of hustlers to agree, by a system of signals, to play a game like this:

Hustler A plays Hustler B for \$70. A's side bets with spectators total \$100 and B's side bets with spectators total \$380.

Therefore A deliberately loses to B, paying him \$70 plus and paying spectators \$100, with B collecting the \$70 from A and \$380 from spectators.

Later in private they settle up and split the profits from the spectators: \$140 each.

Another variation is to encourage spectators to bet on one hustler who is consistently losing to another.

When the betting really hots up this trend miraculously reverses itself and the final winner makes a big profit, which they share out in private.

Nine in one hand *—Ossie claims it's* *a record*

Ossie Williamson, of Concord, would be the first to admit he is something of an odd-ball.

And he has made a claim to the Guinness Book of Records to prove it.

He believes he is the only man in the world who can hold nine snooker balls in one hand.

This picture and a visit to the Coronation Club at Burwood this week

By PETER SPOONER

proved he can do it with comparative ease.

Ossie has the build of a man born and reared in the bush but his hands—while large—are not the size of hams.

He was born at Coala-

mon in NSW, lumped wheat as a job and tossed sheaves as a sport.

He now captains the Coronation Club's snooker team which has won the R. P. Dawes competition two years in a row.

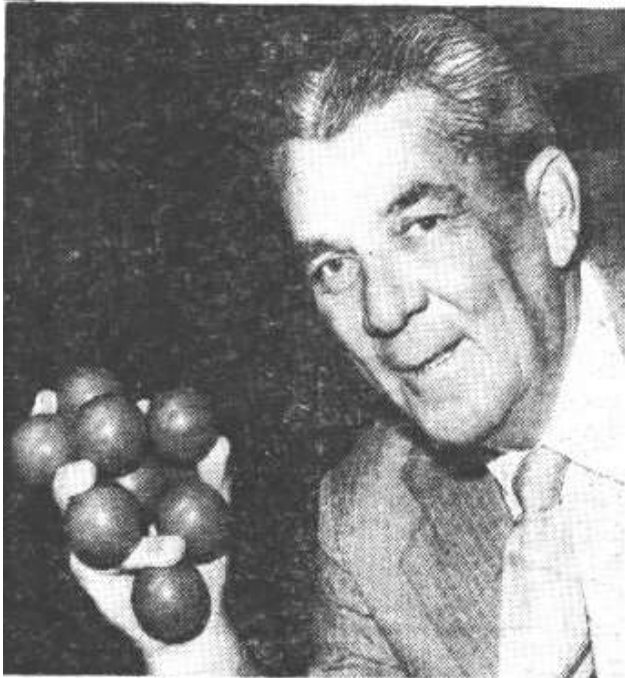
He was introduced to billiards and snooker years ago at Wagga Wagga and made enough money in small bets to eat.

Between games he taught himself to pick up eight snooker balls in his right hand. A friend, Leo Harry, taught him how to pick up the ninth ball.

Ossie doesn't give away his secret—just a few hints. And they are:

- Wash your hand to get rid of perspiration before attempting the feat.
- Exercise the fingers and hand regularly.
- Practise where to place the balls when they are picked up one by one.

Ossie admits he has won the odd dollar off would-be challengers but denies he is a hustler, although his grandfather, Billy Williamson, was once arrested riding with the Ned Kelly gang.



Ossie Williamson . . . nine snooker balls in one hand.



The Age, (Melbourne) 13 Oct 1991, Sun, Page 63

■ SNOOKER

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Willis snooker:
A grade: Lanies 7 d Bentleigh Club 5 (highest break A. Hicks 86); Brunswick 7 d Yarraville 5 (highest break S. Ebejar 32); Glenhuntly 7 d UQ2 5.
B grade: Bentleigh Club 8 d Dandenong WSC 4 (K. Chamberlain 24); Brunswick 11 d Glenhuntly 1 ((R. O'Sullivan 28); Melton 9 d UQ2 3; Bentleigh RSL 7 d KNOX 5 (G. Gafopolous 32).

The Sydney Morning Herald, 17 Dec 2001, Mon, Page 21

"Peter is mad, he's like a psycho . . . It's like playing an amateur, he has no class at the table and is very awkward. Sometimes, you can sit and read the paper for half an hour before he takes a shot." Snooker world champion Ronnie O'Sullivan has some harsh words for rival Peter Ebdon.