

Campus Corner, April 2010

Betsy Sundholm

Calling all college-bound pool players!

Part 3 of a 3-part series

The final part of this 3-part series, which investigates pool opportunities for players entering college, features a Q&A with leaders of five of the nation's top pool schools, including the only school that offers scholarships based on pool performance and a school whose billiards club thrives despite the lack of a campus pool room!

The University of Akron

- Q&A with Matt Lynch, 2009 Club President and ACUI 9-Ball Championships contestant

The University of Akron student center has one 7-foot, two 8-foot, and ten 9-foot Brunswicks. The campus club, named "College Billiards Tour Association (CBTA)," has 30 active members, each of whom pays \$25.00 per semester for dues. The CBTA meets once a week for 4 hours. The first portion of the meeting is a business session that lasts 30-60 minutes, during which leaders decide programming, develop plans to attend tournaments, practice, watch tapes/DVDs, compete, and decide trips to be taken. Then, play/practice/competition ensues for the rest of the four hours.

How and when does your club recruit new members? During the first week of school, student organizations set tables up in the student union, soliciting students to join their orgs. However, we also recruit at our weekly programming and whenever the opportunity arises.

If the team travels to tournaments, are the traveling members expected to pay their own expenses? Our university covers almost all of the gas expenses and around half of our hotel and registration fees. We are responsible for food and anything else.

Leadership structure of the club

PRESIDENT : (1) represents the organization at meetings, on campus, and elsewhere; (2) seeks opportunities for the club, i.e. fundraising, programming, competition, etc.; (3) works with the treasurer in preparing and composing the budget for the coming year.

VICE-PRESIDENT: (1) acts in the absence of the president, (2) chairs all committees, (3) seeks other college pocket billiards team for competition, (4) makes arrangements for the team to travel to competition, and recruits new members.

TREASURER: (1) collects dues, (2) keeps current records of the collection and disbursement of funds and payment of bills, (3) assists the president in the preparation of next year's budget.

SECRETARY: Handles paperwork and member information. Responsible for sending out club emails and contacting members and event contacts. Helping with budget paperwork as well.

CORRESPONDING SECRETARY- Assists the secretary in anything they need as well as help the other officers with their duties. Basically it's a support position to help the rest of the officers.

Does your club have an advisor? What is his/her level of control over Billiards Club operations?

The advisor has impeachment authority when the decisions made by members are detrimental to the existence of the club. The advisor can also overrule use of club's finances when they are not being used ethically and according to university policy.

Is the club funded by the university?

In part, yes. The club submits an operating budget, which includes rental of the game room for the year (\$1200), club tournaments, and any special programming such as bringing in professional players. The University of Akron examines the request and grants the club an amount to work with. We can appeal their decision and present more evidence for why we need the funding to the board making the monetary allocations. Whatever amount not received is produced through fund-raising efforts and club dues. Travel money is a separate application process and is based on each individual trip. Our Club Sports governing body is given X amount of money by the university and has to divide it up among the traveling clubs fairly. They look at how you're benefiting yourselves and the university as one of the key factors in money allocation. The maximum funded amount per trip is \$1000, but we generally are granted \$500 to \$700 as is the same with the other clubs.

What sort of support for your club is received from your school?

In addition to the funding described above for travel, we receive some help towards our rental expense. In addition, other groups collaborate with us to invite 8-time World Pool Champion Nick Varner to our campus. An advisor is provided for our club by the university. Our club has a website link and information about us on the school's recreation center website. The school holds recruitment days in the beginning of the semester to let the student body know what clubs are available to them.

How does your school/club determine which students participate in ACUI regional tournaments?

Through a campus-wide tournament, coordinated and directed by the game room staff. This event is separate from the CBTA.

Tell me about the Scholarship Tournament at your school.

In 1998, University of Akron alumnus Mr. Barry Lefkowitz decided to establish a set of scholarships for students who love to play pool. As the 1965 and 1966 University of Akron men's pool champion, Barry knew what it is like to love playing pool and knowing the pain of paying your own way through college. Concerned about the rising costs of the college experience, Barry thought of a fun way to help students subsidize these costs—by having them compete in the games he loves, and making the prizes scholarships bearing his name.

Moving on his idea, he donated the funds for the establishment of the University's pool room—which is appropriately named The Barry Lefkowitz Billiards Parlor ; and then he began the foundation that awards these scholarships—one in 8-ball during the fall semester, and one in 9-ball during the spring semester. Each of these tournaments pays the first, second and third-place finishers \$1000.00, \$500.00, and \$250.00 respectively. This is the largest tournament held on campus, and each participant receives meals and gifts. There are usually 75 to 115 participants. The tourney is free to enter and is a double elimination race to one. Barry has elected to use this format to even the playing field so that all students have a better chance of winning. He also has a rule that once you place in a certain discipline, you are single elimination for any future tournaments in that discipline. If you place twice in a discipline, you are no longer allowed to enter that tournament . This is another way to make

sure that his money is equally available to all students who love the game, not just the best ones. This is the only tournament of its kind in the country.

Sam Houston State University

Responses from Gary Roark, Team Coach

Although not a household name when it comes to collegiate powerhouses in traditional sports, Sam Houston State University (Texas) has been a consistent supporter of ACUI pool tournaments for decades, sending as many as 16 students to the ACUI regional events every year, and up to 6 to the National Championships. This success is largely due to the passion and drive of one man: Gary Roark, Manager of the “Kat Klub” Game Room at the Lowman Student Center for nearly 3 decades. The Kat Klub houses 10 9-foot tables and 2 Valley bar boxes. The hourly rate for the 9-footers is \$3 per person; bar boxes are coin operated, \$1 per game.

Tell me about your billiards team, Gary.

“The ‘Sam Houston State University Team’ is the official billiards club at Sam. The Team is geared for competitive players only; it is highly selective and limited to about 20 players. I founded the Team in 1985 and, much like a varsity coach, am responsible for selecting players to be on the team based on their skill level. The club used to be bigger (around 100 players) but I made a choice to be more selective, focusing on competitive players. Recruiting isn’t generally necessary because high schools come to us. The Team was established so long ago that kids are now seeking us out because their parents attended Sam. Meetings consist of practice, talking about what’s coming up the next month, who’s going to the tournament, etc.

The Team meets weekly for practice, but the Kat Klub is naturally a hangout for team members every day, whenever they’re not in class. Players who are selected to be on the team must pay \$10 upon acceptance, which pays for their first tournament. Members are responsible for buying their own team shirts, which are only available to Team members.

Team members are held to a high disciplinary standard. A 2.5 GPA is required for club membership. I check regularly to make sure they’re going to class. Players are placed on probation until their grades pick up. No gambling is allowed; if a member is caught gambling, or if their GPA doesn’t improve, they’re kicked off the team.

For ACUI regionals and nationals, SHSU pays for everything; this travel is funded by student union fees. In a roundabout way, funding also comes from Kat Klub revenue, but the money for ACUI travel is allotted in the student union budget. If anyone on the team travels to tournaments other than ACUI, they are responsible for their own registration fees and travel expenses. Sam competes with Baylor, Rice, UNT, Texas A&M, and about 12 other regional schools once a month.

The Lowman Student Center provides additional financial support, with free practice for the top 15 Team players. We try to give them an incentive....free practice if they’re going to an upcoming tournament. If you qualify for regionals, you get free practice time from then until the end of the school year. If you go to Nationals, you get free practice all the time.”

Leadership structure of the club

There are three officers, elected by the players: President, Vice President, and Secretary/Treasury. Student officers organize and run the tournaments with other Texas schools and manage the club website. Gary tracks attendance and handles most administrative duties.

University of Tennessee Knoxville

Responses from Amy K. Anderson, Game Room Manager

The University of Tennessee Knoxville's "Down Under" has eleven 9-foot Brunswick pool tables, as well as 12 bowling lanes, 2 table tennis tables, 2 foosball tables, and 4 X-box consoles. Students pay \$4.00 per hour per table, while non-students pay 10-20% more.

Although there is no formal Billiards Club, there is an active tournament schedule and strong ACUI representation by UTK. Says Amy, "I've tried to form a club, but it's never taken off. The closest thing to a club is our Membership Card called 'Pool Sharks,' which I started in 2008. Students can purchase a card, and with it they earn free practice anytime, except when there is a wait list. The cost of the card is \$80 per year or \$50 per semester. They get a card and we keep a list of members at the counter."

When ACUI rolls around in February, the winners of the Intramural Pool Tournament are selected for regionals. Furthermore, Amy runs 2-5 additional tournaments throughout the semester; the prize is free ACUI entry. The budget for ACUI and other competitive travel varies from one year to the next, depending on how the university's budget looks as a whole. The leadership of the Union asks Amy to send people who are going to be most competitive. 20-25 players go to ACUI regional tournaments (multiple sports).

The level of financial, administrative, and promotional support available to clubs is, "Whatever Amy is willing and able to do," Amy says with a chuckle.

University of Michigan

Responses from Matt Gacioch, Club President, and Rebecca Schreuder, Graduate Assistant Manager

The Michigan Union Billiards & Games Room (BGR) features 17 Brunswick 9-foot tables, 2 foosball, 6 X-box, and 2 Wii stations. Hourly rates range from \$2.25 to \$8.50, depending on number of players and the time of day. The Michigan Billiards Club or "B-Club" was established in the early 1990s. It was originally created as a revenue stream for the BGR, and at the time was administrated entirely by the BGR Management. The majority of membership dues were retained by the BGR, and the B-Club was given a small portion for prizes and awards at the end of the year. Since 2007, though, the B-club has five officers: a President plus VPs of Tournaments, Membership, Publicity, and Finance. The BGR Manager continues in an advisory role but has no formal vote in club affairs. The B-Club receives funding from campus government and pays a rental fee to the BGR each semester.

B-club membership dues are \$20 per semester, and there are about 30-35 active members. In return for \$600 per semester room rental, the B-club and its members receive:

- Free usage of up to 12 tables every week for 2-hour club meetings
- 33% off pool/video game rental outside meeting hours
- Free rental of \$1.00 Cuetec cues

- 25% off cue locker rental
- Funding consideration for intercollegiate events (UMTPC, VTTPC, IBC)

The Michigan Union Billiards & Games Room also hosts the University of Michigan Team Pool Championships (UMTPC), which is the largest intercollegiate pool tournament in the U.S. Teams of four players represent each school in Modified Straight Pool, 8-ball, and 9-ball, vying for individual trophies and an all-around title. The BGR has also hosted numerous pro exhibitions, BCA-BEF Junior National Championships twice, ACUI regional tournaments dozens of times, and ACUI Nationals twice. www.umich.edu/~billiard

University of Western Ontario

Responses from Ryan Hux, WBS President

The University of Western Ontario is included because it does not have a staff advisor or even a game room on campus, but their student-driven club, named the “Western Billiard Society,” (WBS), thrives nonetheless.

Membership dues for the WBS are \$15 per student, and the club has about 60 active members. The WBS meets weekly on Sundays for up to 4 hours, usually for a small tournament and socializing. Members are recruited continuously, but primary recruiting efforts take place in September during “Western Clubs Week.”

Although the student union does not have tables or support the WBS financially, a local pool establishment in London (Ontario) is a great supporter of the WBS. Club members can play for \$5 per hour at Stokers anytime. The WBS has not competed in ACUI regional tournaments for several years, but they have sent a team to the UMTPC every year since its inception. For nearly ten years, the WBS has hosted the Intercollegiate Billiards Championships. The IBC is an 8-ball tournament open to all college students. Nearly a dozen Canadian and American schools have been represented at this tournament every year. <http://www.usc.uwo.ca/clubs/billiards/links.html>.

The WBS receives no funding from the university, so everyone who wishes to travel for competition is expected to pay his/her own expenses for the trip. “As far as I am aware there are no other post-secondary institutions in Ontario with a billiards club,” says Ryan. “Canada is a big country, and population centers are spread out over thousands of kilometers. If there are clubs in other Canadian provinces, travel time and expenses would make potential trips infeasible. We have had players from other Canadian institutions participate in our tournaments, namely the University of Guelph, Fanshawe College (London) and the University of Waterloo. But the people we have hosted from these schools are usually friends or family invited by club members to come out. Every year we aim to spread the word to Canadian and U.S. schools to increase participation in the IBC and make it a truly international event.”

The common thread for successful collegiate billiards clubs, with the exception of UWO, is consistent leadership from a permanent staff member at the University. The best advice for college students who wish to see their club thrive is to establish a good relationship with the student union or student activities department and *nurture* that relationship. Game Room Managers and Student Activities

professionals are more likely to be in a position to advocate for student clubs – both financially and philosophically. Register your club every year, and follow all the rules. Establish a presence for your club, even if there is only one pool table. **PLAY POOL IN THE STUDENT UNION.** This will improve the likelihood that your club will receive funding from your school!