

Bill Melton Honored by Board Talk - "Tops" in 2004

Like a fine wine some things only seem to get better with age. That label certainly describes 69 year-old Bill Melton who closed out an already impressive year with yet another pro singles title at the 2004 Houston Holiday Open this past December. In just nine tournaments in 2004, Bill finished in the money twenty-three times including eleven first place finishes and three pro-player MVP awards. Bill, already a member of the National and Oklahoma Shuffleboard Halls of Fame and long recognized as one of the best players in the history of the game had such a dominating year in 2004 that even Darrol Nelson acknowledged that Bill deserves to be considered the top player in the country for 2004. Other players and pros agree with Darrol (quotes follow...):

"Bill was the best. Bill has always been a great competitor and an especially tough one for me to play. We've played some great matches over the years. Based on his record last year, I think he deserves to be recognized as the number one player in 2004". ...Darrol Nelson, January 2005

Other top pros such as Houston's Diana Hagen of Houston, Texas, who calls Bill, "the smartest player in the game," echo similar sentiments.

".....there is a lot more to shuffleboard than just banging weights. The ability to not only make a shot, but make the right shot....the strategy involved is what distinguishes truly great players, like Bill Melton. In 2004, whether it was singles, doubles or team events, Bill Melton was always in the money."Diana Hagen, January 2005

A quiet soft-spoken man, Bill Melton has been playing shuffleboard for fifty-six years and has been among the elite few for most of that time. He got introduced to shuffleboard at the very young age of 12 and has been blasting weights ever since. As a young boy of 12 years of age, Bill started collecting and selling pop bottles (that was before the "can" packaging days) for spending money. The grocery store offered him 2 cents per bottle and a local bar in Pearson, Oklahoma where he lived offered him 3 cents per bottle. Bill was no dummy, he did the math and of course cashed in for the highest offer. The bar owner took a liking to Bill and invited him in to watch wrestling on a television and their friendship blossomed. The bar had a shuffleboard in it and that was how Bill got started playing and loving this game. This bar owner had so much caring and trust in Bill that he even turned the bar over for Bill to run while he was on errands, etc. on occasion as Bill got a little older. When the bartender passed away, his wife came up to Bill and said "Bill, I want to show you something." She took him to a store room where her husband had saved and kept every single pop bottle that he had bought off of Bill in those early years. The bar owner simply loved Bill and was helping him out as a young man while not letting Bill know for all those years.

Although Bill is not one to seek the limelight, Bill's tournament record, with the exception of Darrol Nelson's is unmatched. When asked how many tournaments he had won over the years, Bill genuinely claims he doesn't really know. He just plays the game to have fun and perhaps win a few bucks. Well, not only has he taken home more than a few first place trophies and prize envelopes, he has also played the game with unparalleled style and grace.

Unfortunately, for the rest of the shuffleboard world Bill Melton shows no signs of slowing down. In addition to being a fixture at most regional events in the Oklahoma and Texas area, Bill continues to travel to all the big tournaments around the



country. And if one Melton is not enough, his son Billy is a top-ranked player in his own right. In fact, one of Bill's second place finishes last year occurred when Billy topped his dad for the pro singles title at the Board Talk Open 2004.

Not one to rest on his laurels, I'm sure that Bill is looking forward to 2005 and an opportunity to continue his winning ways. In fact, Bill has already got a jump start in 2005 with taking two first places in the January 2005 Heartland Handicap Open, grabbing first in both the Bring Partner and Draw Draw Partner events. Way to go Bill! Keep on slamming!

On a personal note (from Tom & Lynda French), Bill has been one of our idols and mentors since we started playing this great game and one of the strongest The Board Talk supporters and promoters since it's founding in 1984. He is the one responsible for us having a home board when we first started playing. We're very proud of our "Melton" board. The Board Talk, as most of you know, has had many struggles for survival over the years. Bill many times, since 1984 has beat the bushes to get supporters, subscribers, and advertisers. As Bill told us recently, "Closure of The Board Talk is very sad. I can recall the days before 1984 with no formal means of communications and I truly know how much The Board Talk pulled this sport together at a national level and helped the growth of the sport when prior to 1984 the sport itself was headed the wrong direction at a fast pace."

In fact, at our first Board Talk Open 2002 tournament in Vegas, Bill received a The Board Talk "Pioneer Recognition Award" as "Subscription Hustlers" that were awarded to Bob Lewis of Arizona, Bill Melton of Oklahoma (who was unable to attend the ceremony, but joined us in Vegas a couple days later), Glen Davidson of Oklahoma, and Diana Hagen of Texas.

There were several times during The Board Talk's first struggling years that George and Donna Wilber (The Board Talk Founders and prior publishers) were ready to declare: "We just can't do this another month." Then, in the next day's mail would come a packet of subscriptions from Mr. Shuffleboard himself, **Bill Melton of Oklahoma**. This happened several times and being the modest guy he is, he probably didn't recognize that the fate of The Board Talk rested in his hands many times. How many of those initial subscriptions were paid from his own pocket is unknown (like the pop "bottle" story in reverse), but renewals were not a problem in most cases. In fact, after Bill returned from Vegas in 2002, he sent us the very first The Board Talk subscription from China (now that's what we call "hustling" subscriptions)! Obviously, Bill is one of many of us that are very distraught about this final closure of The Board Talk. He has been a dedicated supporter since it's inception. Thank you Bill from the bottom of our hearts for always being there and supporting us (and the Wilbers). We only wish we could have cloned more like you and all the others, such as yourself, along the way. Bill, we admire you for not only your shuffleboard skill and mentorship, but we admire you tremendously for being the wonderful, honest and caring person that you are and always will be, both within the sport and otherwise!

-- From & By: Tom & Lynda French, The Board Talk Editors/Publishers, and the Houston Texas "cartel", and the entire shuffleboard community!