

Bay Area Reporter

Overpassers' Russo Scores 3rd MVP

Rick Ritt, May 18, 1989

Honored as their team's most valuable players, a dedicated group assembled at Park Bowl last Saturday morning to battle for this season's San Francisco Pool Association MVP Championship.

Proudly representing their teams were Ron Barulich, Poo Bear Davis, Jay Moore, Carl Carr, Lauren Ward, Glenn Judd, Millard Pate, Diane Sim, Jim Dreer, Ted Samora, Drew Hasele, Royal Senn, Barry White, Jim Russo, Ross Lisser, Mindy Donnelly, Joe Yanko, James Freeman and Torri Connelly. Several were playing in their first major individual tournament, an experience both exciting and nerve wracking.

Ted Samora, who captains the Castro Station Express, got a shaky start in an effort that would eventually land him in the SFPA record book for the first time. He suffered the dread of every tournament player, a first-round loss. It was by a close 2-1 score at the hands of Jim Dreer.

Banished to the losers' bracket, Samora then eliminated Drew Hasele, Ross Lisser, Barry White, Poo Bear Davis and Torri Connelly before his second loss stopped him in fourth place with a 12-6, .666 record.

Glenn Judd is the smooth-stroking rookie from the Bear Thuggs and was the second-highest-rated player in the field with a .742 average for the season. He began with victories over Millard Pate, Jim Dreer and Carl Carr before losing his first games of the day in a 2-1 edging by Jim Russo, A subsequent 2-0 blanking by Lauren Ward left him in third place, scoring 7-4, .636 for the day while earning his first league trophy.

As the field's highest-rated player and a four-time former winner of the contest. Ward was stunned in a first-round upset loss to Carl Carr of the Detour de Force, proving that laurels don't win 8-ball games. There are no tomorrows in the losers' bracket, where she subsequently faced and defeated Jay Moore, Ron Barulich, Royal Senn, Carl Carr, Ted Samora and Glenn Judd.

The Overpassers' Jim Russo had won the MVP twice before and was in his element on the Park Bowl's 9-foot tables, having logged countless pool-hall hours honing his skills. His ease with the cue makes the game seem deceptively simple. He was untouchable as he blanked Ross Lisser, Barry White and Torri Connelly. Glenn Judd gave him his first loss before falling, 2-1.

The two former multiple winners, Ward and Russo, met in the final clash for the title, with Ward needing two consecutive match victories to topple her undefeated opponent.

Lauren seemed up to the challenge as she ran the table in the first game from Russo's open break. Jim dropped several balls on his next break but missed his first shot, throwing his tip in

the process. Once again. Ward methodically ran down to the match-winning 8-ball and took aim at the corner pocket. Russo's eyes lit up when the pocket rejected the shot and in a matter of moments he cleared his balls and snapped in the 8 to knot the match at 1-1.

In the final game Ward's first inning ended with a safety that clustered some balls on the wide-open table. The pool fairy cut Russo a break when he missed a shot while breaking out the cluster. The missed ball marauded around the table and caromed into a pocket. Russo ran out the remaining balls flawlessly and claimed the crown in a 2-1 match that was played in less than 15 minutes.

Jim scored an awesome 10-2, .833, in his third MVP victory, and Ward carded 14-6, .700, in her seventh top-four finish in the contest's 13-season history.

League tournament action continues hot and heavy as we qualify our individual competitors for West Coast Challenge XIX in the coming weeks.

The top two finishers from next Saturday's Women's WCC Qualifier at the Cinch will be the first to receive invitations to the event, held in San Diego, July 11-13. The inners might choose to celebrate that night at Jock's Night Out at the elegant Downtown Club, a benefit for Team San Francisco.

On Sunday, May 21, a new tournament for players rated under .500 will also be held at the Cinch. A good turnout will help ensure this event's inclusion on next season's calendar.

Good luck to the league's top 16 teams, which launch into the playoffs next Tuesday. Dial JOE-POOL for the latest SFPA updates.