

AMOA-IFPA'S 1ST. ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL PINBALL WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

As I flew into O'Hare, I really didn't know what to expect from the 1st AMOA-IFPA International Flipper Pinball Tournament. I had been to the AMOA show in New Orleans, a couple of Pinball Expos, and a few assorted pinball events....but a tournament?

I arrived late and went right to my room at the O'Hare Marriot, Pinball Expo revisited, but at about 11:50 p.m. I had an urge to checkout the tournament scene. The Marriot Airport Shuttle guy wasn't exactly sure why I wanted to go to the Hilton across from O'Hare, instead of a departure gate, but he took me anyway. The hotel seemed fairly deserted, it was after midnight and I wondered if I would find any action at all in the tourney hall.

I found my way to the room and was very surprised to find the place jumpin! A pretty big room with about 50 games on three walls and a large headquarter area upfront with a podium, loads of trophies, and judges tables. The center of the room was filled with tables and chairs for cooling down, gearing up, or just zoning out. Throughout the tourney there were people there in various stages of all three!

This night (early morning) there were about 30 people still playing, talking, and having a good time. I'm not sure how I saw all this because I was so tired, my eyes were blurry. I decided to come back the next day fresh.

After a breakfast at the Ramada listening to Rob Berk make plans for Expo 91, we went over to the Hilton. Now you're really talking a big group! Most all the games were in use, CHECKPOINT, TITLE FIGHT, HARLEY-DAVIDSON, HOOPS, FUN HOUSE etc. Teams were huddling and planning strategy. Individuals were psyching up for their matches. Lots of big names from the big three were float-

ing in and out. Alice and Jeanette from Williams/Bally/Midway were at the company booth passing out tons of plastics. The prize of the day seemed to be the rare HARLEY symbol. Most people though were into the games and winning.

Talking to Rick Stetta was a true experience. He was very involved in his desire to spread the word about pinball and was very intensely involved in the tournaments. A major league pitcher, knows mostly every pitch he threw in a given game and what the count was at the point when he threw a certain pitch, but somehow I never thought Pinball people would remember this much detail...

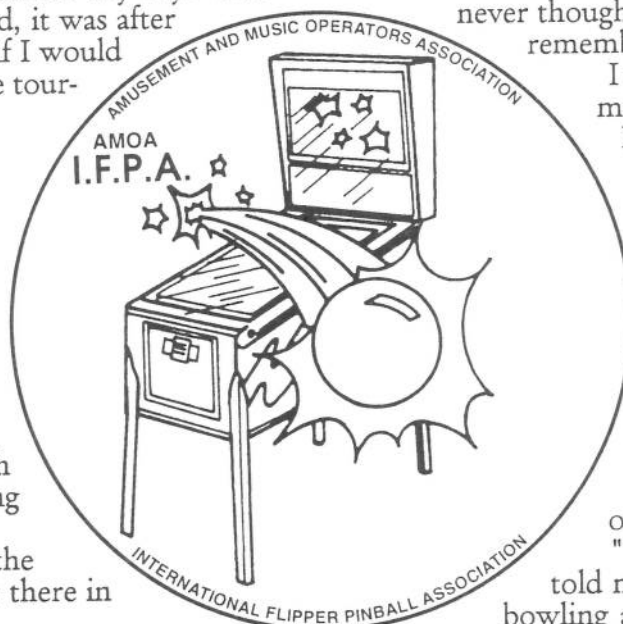
I asked him how he managed to win the Expo 90 Flip Off, "I played a 7.0 on CHECK-POINT to bring me in as third qualifier with 7.276 & 5.5 and then I played 7.6 beating out 3.2, 1.299 and 1.1 in the finals". Now remember, this was about a tournament which occurred four months before this one.

"The initial attraction" he told me, "was when I was in a bowling alley when I was 10 years

old. I saw the row of pinballs which were small flipper electromechanicals. Back then, I was drawn to them and I asked Mom if it was ok to play. We were just there for bowling and pool and she wasn't a pinball fan so she said no.

But I knew deep down inside, I can still remember this day, I knew it was something I would be involved with later on... and I was not mistaken.

"I played in a friend's garage and once or twice when I was in a 7-11 store, but I caught the bug at 15 years of age. I was playing games that came out in 1975 like WIZARD, CAPTAIN FANTASTIC, ROGO, HANG GLIDER,



SPIN OUT and a whole lot of others from that era. I've stuck with pinball even in the dismal times during the video age because I figured that I would play them right to the end. I didn't realize they would make a sweeping comeback. I'd like to think I gave pinball, and at least some local players, a spark of hope with my determination, even though it couldn't have had a comeback without a nation-wide interest.

"I've played poorly this morning but great last night, I'm going to do the very best I can. I may play extremely well and turn it around with the very nest ball. There is no telling with pinball. Basically what I'm after is a first place single." Rick seems to know what he wants and how to get it!

Sharon Harris is the President of the IFPA and spoke to me about the beginnings of the organization, "In late 1989, after the success of the 100th anniversary of the jukebox, the industry was looking for a way to promote itself and Dick Hawkins, President of D&R Star Operating Co. and Gil Pollock, President of Premier Technology, came up with the idea why not do a 60th anniversary of Pinball. The goal is to promote the world-wide awareness and increased play of Pinball".

The establishment of league programs and the Pinball tournament was through the use of operator education and marketing, and through the media to create a bigger public awareness. Last summer, MTV did a four minute spot on Sharon's family collection which ran 6 times. Entertainment Tonight and the Smithsonian magazine were at the event.

Another top player and tough competitor, Dave Hegge, was there gearing up for battle. "I just fell in love with the game when I was a little kid," he said. "I was probably 10 or 11 years old. I just played a couple at a camp ground and played them and played them. I played a lot in high school, about 2 or 3 nights a week.

"I won the 89 & 87 Expo Flip Out. Pinball is kind



Rick Stetta shows a bit of his winning style on his way to the overall championship

of like playing pool...as long as your reflexes are good you can play well. People who are really good at pool, when they don't play for a while, can still kind of get the feel back right away.

"In 1979 I bought my first game and I haven't really improved since then but I think I've held my own. I was happy to buy a car when I was 16 so I could go out and play Pinball. My parents were a little unsure about it, but my father is happy when he hears that I have done well.

"It's hard to say how I'll do in the tournament because you can get a couple of bad games really easy". Rick told me how his style is

to take the game as slow as he can, set up shots.

"There is some degree of luck to Pinball" Rick said, "I would never say it is 100 percent skill. You kind of create your own luck and that's what is good about Pinball. Sometimes



people who aren't that good will have a real great game. They get lucky rolls and bounces and I think that's what keeps Pinball kind of good. It's a hobby you can enjoy, unlike stamps, you can play it. It's a good way of relieving



Gill Pollock of Premier congratulates IFPA's Sharon Harris

stress.

"There was a time when Pinball almost died, and I even tried getting into videos, but got too aggravated!

"I'm gonna try my best today. My goal is to at least make the final four."

Doug Young the Exuecutive direction of the International Dart Association as well as the IFPA took the dart organization as a model, "We took the good parts and applied it to Pinball," he explained, "There has been a history in the industry of making the high score most important. Our concept is a broader based team concept and team winning as the key. That is where we ran into dissapointment from these

players who by their nature are concerned about score. We are talking about people here who when they play, they may set a brand new record on that game every time they play it. To them high score is important. That wasn't taken into consideration as much as group involvement of family and team play.

A lot of people who are perspective players, are not league oriented, especially those people out on the west coast. We want to develope an easy enough program so that no one shuns away out of a feeling of apprehension over getting started. Another goal is to standardize the set-up of the game to make people feel more comfortable with it.

"This tournament is a springboard to get enough interest and publicity to set up a very precise league program. We don't expect this to happen in one year. It took the National Dart Association 4 to 5 years to get a good program together and we are using this as a spring board.

While most attendees enjoyed the weekend, there was some discontentment in the ranks. People felt that after paying to get to Chicago and a hotel, they shouldn't have to pay for game play.

The reason, I am told, is that the organizers felt that since all the entry fees were given back out in prizes and awards, the event needed some way to help pay for itself. Another consideration was that the dart associartion tournys are run the same, no dough-no throw!

"To this point the IFPA has been on paper and ads, but now people see we do exist and we have the where-with-all to put 80 of the latest machines in one place and attract people from all over the United States, and the World, and offer them an exciting promotional event".

Doug and Sharon put on a great event and if this is any indication of things to come, the IFPA should be making it's presence felt for some time to come. pGj



Roger Sharpe of Williams comperes on Premier's HOOPS as Rob Berk (right) and Mike Boon look on.

IFPA TOURNAMENT RESULTS

MEN'S SINGLE EVENT: 1st. Rick Stetta, 2nd. Dave Hegge, 3rd. Ren Peticca, 4th. Dallas Overturf, 5th. Stere Richdorff, 6th. John Ross, 7th. Toy Towery, 8th. Tom Olund, 9th. James Jefferson, 10th. Randal Stevens, 11th. Lee Moscaritolo, 12th. Ken Benson, 13th. Dan Taradash, 14th. Jim Shird, 15th. Tim Connelly, 16th. Rob Berk.

WOMEN'S SINGLES EVENT: 1st. Jeri Lock, 2nd. Teresa Bybee, 3rd. Barbara Setta, 4th. Thresa Theis, 5th. DeeDee Meland, 6th. Diane Hawkins.

MEN'S TEAM EVENT: 1st. Be The Ball- Dale Rice & Dan Wilson, 2nd. Berk's Bombers- Dave Hegge & Corky Stacy, 3rd. Steve & Ken- Steve Richdorff & Ken Sharpe, 4th. Cleveland Coin- Buck and Ron Goodreau, 5th. The Alliance- Sam Fields & Malcome Rimmer, 6th. Transfer- Lee Moscaritolo & Dallas Overturf, 7th. John & Gene- John Ross & Gene Klein, 8th. The Mysterians- Rick Miller & Gary Flower.

WOMEN'S TEAM EVENT: 1st. The Coils- Barbara Chablewski & Jeri Loch, 2nd The Pinheads- Michele Vellard & Levecca Love, 3rd. The Flippettes- Brenda Zincke & Debbie Kimbler.

MIXED TEAM EVENT: 1st. King & Queen- Rick Stetta & Barbara Setta, 2nd. Earthshakers- John Kelly & Jeri Lock, 3rd. Popcorn- Jeff Schiekau & DeeDee Meland.

HIGH SINGLE BALL (HARLEY DAVIDSON): 1st. Jeff Fuerer- 10,060,810. 2nd. John Ross- 2,552,630. 3rd. Dave Hegge- 2,398,310.

SINGLE FLIPPER DOUBLES (CHECKPOINT): 1st. Lonnie Mihin & Mike Pacak- 15,628,060. 2nd. Tom Olund & Dennis Clark- 9,253,700.

HIGH GAMES SCORED DURING COMPETITION: CHECKPOINT-Toy Towery- 27,945,440; Ren Peticca- 22,977,710. HARLEY-DAVIDSON- Rick Stetta- 49,281,380; Dallas Overturf- 37,650,370. FUN HOUSE- Rick Stetta- 45,970,490; Lee Moscaritolo- 42,226,990. HOOPS- John Ross- 50,752,890; Dale Rice- 23,898,250.

FEMALE FLIPPERS

While nobody wants to be sexist (least of all, me!) there has appeared to be a very heavy slant toward male Pinball play at all levels of the sport. Recently, however, the woman player has made her presence felt...as shown in the IFPA results. One such player is Barbara Chablewski. Barbara and her teammate, Jeri Lock, placed 1st. in the Women's Team Event.

I caught up with Barbara and a friend, Mark Weyna at the Chicagoland show a few weeks ago, and I asked her to tell me about her involvement in Pinball..."I remember going to bar-banquet places with my parents when I was three or four years old, seeing Pinball machines and being fascinated by them...but never getting to play because all the men were attacking the machines. I never really got to play...just sat there peeking over the glass trying to watch the guys play. I feel that way now a little too but I'm in there, making my way!"

"I've got a weird way of playing. I'll go to check out a game...won't even read how to play it...just go and play it...check it out a few times. Then, little by little, I figure out what I want to do." Barbara says she bowls and swims in meets and doesn't warm up. It messes up her performance...just go for it!

"The majority of my girlfriends don't share my enthusiasm. They say, 'Oh, Pinball...that's nice. But one, whose father works for Don Murphy, is really involved...and when we found out about the connection, it was great! We have a bond. So now she comes over and plays games. She thinks it's great."

Mark and Barbara own a nice mix of games including KINGS AND QUEENS, FIREBALL, FOUR MILLION B.C., BLACK KNIGHT, ELECTRA, and about ten more. Barbara says that although women's scores are lower than men's she beats Mark sometimes and is always trying to improve...some day...who knows?