



GB 9 Ball Tour



Britain's official professional 9 ball pool tour

www.gb9balltour.com

Chair person's report for the 2008 AGM to be held on 21 March 2009

Looking back...How we did in 2008.

2008 heralded a new future for American Pool in Great Britain as GB9 successfully completed its first full season.

Feedback from players proved that the format adopted by GB9 was a winning formula with only 2 minor changes to the original format being implemented. In line with the Euro Tour GB9 adopted the same break rule and rack position with the 9 ball being placed on the spot. In response to player feedback we also made some small changes to the ranking points awarded in each of the 3 tournaments to achieve greater consistency and fairness throughout the placings.

In line with our objectives at the start of the season we introduced live internet scoring, which saw the number of hits on our website during a GB9 event rise to 137000 - a staggering figure for a national tour. We also recruited an experienced professional tournament referee to cover all events.

All six events attracted a full field with guaranteed prize money. The end of season qualifiers exceeded our expectations by attracting a total of 80 entrants for 36 places. Coming into 2009 with the UK deep into recession the committee did wonder whether the economic climate would impact the number of players applying to join GB9 in the new season. This concern was quickly dispelled as we had a total of 180 players either rejoining, entering a qualifier or joining the reserve list, which even outstripped the numbers applying in 2008. We now have approximately 100 on the reserve list in addition to a full 128 player field.

All 6 events ran very smoothly generating very good feedback from players and spectators alike including the world's very best players (e.g. Majid, Hundal, Drago, Peach, Appleton), all of whom immediately submitted their applications to rejoin the tour at the end of the season.

The tour has generated extensive coverage in magazines (Cuesport, Snooker Scene, Billiards Digest, Inside Pool) and internet sites (AZ Billiards) around the world unlike any other national tour.

On behalf of all its members GB9 would like to offer our sincere gratitude to all of our sponsors and supporters who helped to make our new tour such a great success including:

- Howard Miller of Rileys Pool & Snooker Clubs and all the managers and staff of hosting venues.
- Aramith Billiard Balls (Saluc)
- Klaus Zobrekis and Z9 Billiard Cloth
- Big Dave Knight, Andy Watts and Pro9.co.uk & The Pro Shop
- Simon Clarke and White Horse Press (Poole) Ltd
- Pete and Ange Williams of Cuesport TV
- Craig Hirst – of Hirst Accountancy
- Joe Matthews – Cue repairs
- Gre Leenders and David Morris of EPBF for help and support

Looking forward...Objectives for 2009/10

Having set up such a successful and well respected tour our primary objective is to continue the momentum and ensure we continue to deliver exciting professionally run events. Additionally, for this year we have the following two key objectives.

1. Development of the game

Having introduced a very successful professional tour in the UK, GB9 understands the importance of raising the profile of American Pool in our country particularly at the grass roots level and at regional / county level. It is also vital that a new national governing body is established to replace the previous organisation (BPPPA), which will shortly cease to be a member of the EPBF. Whilst GB9's ultimate responsibility to it's members is to continue the GB 9 Ball Tour we will be working with other interested parties to ensure these vital structures are put in place to protect the long term future of our sport.

2. Table conditions

In the current economic climate GB9 understands the pressures facing the leisure industry and particularly the constraints this may inevitably place on the ability of host venues to support large scale table refurbishments for tour events. It is becoming increasingly difficult for GB9 to find venues around the country with the required 16 tables in the high standard players might expect for a pro tour event. With a limited choice of venues and a limited budget available for table recovering we have to accept the realities these constraints will bring to our events. In truth we have the following realistic options available in order to address this as we go forward:

1. Continue as we are and accept that some tables may be in poor condition.
In our view the situation is becoming increasingly difficult to sustain because there are occasions when one or more of the 16 tables can be considered largely 'unplayable', for example if a rail is severely damaged. Due to the format and timing of matches it is very difficult for organisers to run the event to schedule if they do not have 16 tables at their disposal.
2. Increase tour fees to enable GB9 to subsidise some of the table refurbishment costs.
Typical costs of a table refurbishment for a GB9 event is estimated at circa £3000 or £140per player per year. We believe this will take the annual fees to a level where we would find it difficult to attract players.
3. Change the GB9 match schedule to work with 12 tables by lengthening the event i.e. start at 9am on Friday morning.
The 12-table format would enable us to consider many more suitable and attractive venues around the UK, including places we do not currently visit e.g. Wales, Scotland, West Country, South Coast etc. This would also give us a much better chance of finding clubs where the tables are already in good condition or can be brought up to standard within a reasonable budget. The downside is that a Friday start time would affect many players who find it difficult to take time off work.
4. Change the GB9 match schedule to work with 12 tables by reducing the races from 9 to 7 in the Challenge/Pro event before the Quarter final and in the main event before the last 32.
This would allow us to reduce many of the sessions from 90 mins to 60 mins and complete all of the matches at similar times to the current schedule (Friday night to Sunday night).
Whilst players would obviously prefer longer races we believe this solution is worthy of consideration due to the benefits it will give us in terms of venues and table conditions.

Our objective is to consult with all of our members and consider all available options to improve table conditions within the constraints we face. We will then take the decision that is in the best interests of the tour and best reflects the views of the majority of our members.

Final word...

As always we will be very pleased to hear how our members feel we can best achieve our aims in the coming years. Remember GB9 is different from other tours. This is YOUR tour and the GB9 Committee are working for YOU. Please send your views to me at the email address quoted on our website.

May I wish all of our players, sponsors and supporters the very best 2009.

Lee Rigby
1 March 2009