

AT THE TOP OF HIS GAME

EARL BALL IS ONE OF THE BEST OF OUR TIME



If you have been around the world of shuffleboard for a while, you've no doubt heard the names of some of the greatest shufflers of their time. These names are recorded in the Halls of Fame and from time to time on the lips and minds of today's top players. Earl Ball is one of those who on occasion will recall some of those greats, and may himself be a name that is not only known in our time, but no doubt will be forever engraved in the shuffleboard history books.

Many of us never heard of, or seriously considered playing shuffleboard until we decided to spend our retirement years in Florida. Although shuffleboard is generally believed to be a retirement activity, those who really become involved, soon realize that it can become extremely addictive and exhilarating game. Many of us play just for fun and never become engaged in serious tournament competition. Others value the contest and find that shuffleboard competition can be intense but rewarding. Some become so encompassed that it becomes part of their daily lives. Winning a game, match or tournament can be very exciting and thrilling; losing can cause sleepless nights and anxiety.

Every individual sport, whether it's a major sport like Tennis and Golf, or lesser sports, such as Bowling or Archery, all have contestants who excell to the summit. The game of shuffleboard is no different. Since 1928 when the Florida Shuffleboard Association was founded, there have been many champions that reach the pinnacle, some for a short time, others sustain for longer periods and establish records. The FSA was recording individual's points back in the 70's, but the modern era point system wasn't until the 2002/03 season. There were many excellent

shuffleboard champions long before this, but unfortunately no record's are available to compare today's champions with those of yesteryear. Today's shuffler wishing to play in National, State and District tournaments to acquire individual points creates a grueling schedule to maintain and is for only for the most committed. We have many of "our time" top tournament shuffleboard players right here in our Zephyrhills Shuffleboard Club.

At this time, Earl Ball is at the very top of the shuffleboard tournament world. Earl has recorded 732 FSA points, is in 8th place over-all and 3rd among men, only 7 points behind Jacques Bergeron and chasing the all-time leader Glen Peltier, with 1279 points. He also trails Glen by 10 in the race for the most FSA wins. Earl is definitely devoted to catching Glen and chances are he will do it. Earl is also the Central District point's leader, with 325, 75 points ahead of Max Tate. At the National level, Earl again is top dog with 336 points and his 17 National titles are second to none. Earl is a perennial FSA and CD Masters contestant has been inducted into four Halls Of Fame.

Earl started playing at Betmar in 1996 at the very early age for shuffleboard of 52. Currently at age 69, and playing tournaments for almost 17 years, there's a good chance if he keeps his health and continues to play at his high level, he will set records that may never be broken. Earl holds many other individual accomplishments in addition to those mentioned and just keeps adding to them each year.

David Earle, another great ZSC tournament shuffler, said, "Earl never plays for fun and always plays to win. He is a fierce competitor whether in a tournament, a pick-up game or frolics, but if you get to play with or against him, and pay attention, you will learn a lot about how to play this game."

Earl has raised the bar for shuffling in Zephyrhills and by doing so, probably has influenced us all to become better players. Earl is definitely committed to the game and been a great ambassador for our sport. He has served as ISA President and represented the U.S. in many International events in numerous countries.

Earl is always talking and promoting shuffleboard to anyone who will listen. He has contributed countless articles to this website, for which I am very grateful. He has written numerous editorials for several newspapers and for "The Shuffler" when it was online.

Congratulations to Earl for his dedication to become one of the elite to ever play this great game of shuffleboard, in our time.

Chuck Moulton