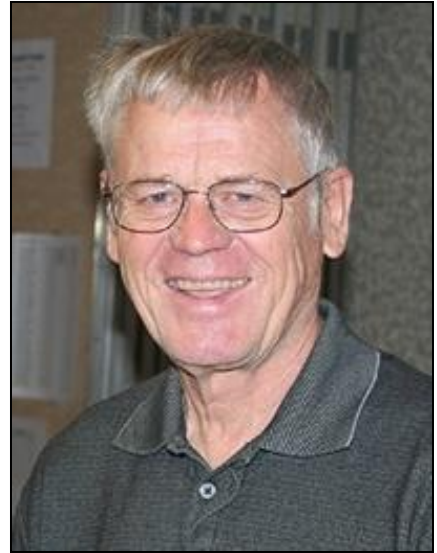


THE RED BARON SPEAKS

January 2010 – Larry Creakbaum

Since I just returned from the Houston Holiday Open where over 150 players registered entered and that was before the final event the doubles had closed. A large amount considering players had to leave home on Christmas day or the day after and staying at a place that is normally beyond a shuffleboard players budget. I was employed in the aviation industry for most of my career and reporters only wrote negative articles. They never tried to write anything positive. I could do that with every shuffleboard tournament but I refuse to do so and focus on the positive. The Hilton NASA is a beautiful place and the shuffleboard layout nice except for one thing; the long trip to the bathroom. Even healthy players were huffing and puffing by the end of the week, and for me, a lot of rest stops along the way. My legs took three days to get rested after all the trips to the bathroom and passing through two airports on the trip home. Maybe next year they could put up a sheet in a corner with a bucket, or a port-o-pot outside the front door to the Hilton. And for those of you who saw my swelled elbow as I turned away from the water cooler and fell as I started to walk before I thought, I went to the doctor after I returned home and received a medication and it will turn out fine.



The events started behind schedule and the gap widened as the days went by. There were no announced reasons for the delays but the crowd was in a happy mood and every one appeared to have a good time and accept the fact. Besides it gave more time to enjoy the company.



Traveling space available, and my son having informed me that if I did not leave by the first flight on Thursday, there were no seats until Saturday, and the final event in which I was playing suddenly ended with a split, I bolted for the airport Thursday evening to catch the last flight to IND and made it with five minutes to spare. I used a wheel chair pusher at the IAH airport and he took me by the way of what he called the scenic route through a security check point with hardly anyone in line. On let down into IND I realized I had slept the whole 2+ hour trip. I was tired when I got home at 12:00 in the morning but not sleepy so I tried to do some home accounting chores and found my mind would not function well enough to add two numbers on the calculator so I went to bed and stared at the ceiling.

As for the games, there was the normal griping about the boards but I still say it is the same for every one and the player who learns the curves, hooks and speed in the boards the quickest will win. I do think, and this goes for boards at all the events, the boards are getting to fast. This comes from one who started playing more than fifty years ago when a golf course sand trap

would have been faster than the boards. The open doors to allow the smoking room to air out and the rain in the middle of the week make it difficult for any board adjuster. I say this after having made the second worst shot of my career; it goes back to being too tired to think. The boards were spaced for enough apart in which I could get my walker through which was nice.

I asked to see a copy of rules and was told they were in the computer and never did receive a set. The incident that happened had nothing to do with rules but the flyer promoting the event. A team entered with a minus one, a one, a two, and a four which adds to six as noted on the flyer. After the team had sold in the sponsor sale, they ruled that the four must play as a three and the two was replaced with a three and the team resold. The flyer did not say a four was even eligible to play and did not say a four had to play as a three. Worst yet the team had entered the day before and it took until the second day and after the sponsor sale for the incident to be brought forth. The displaced player had no chance to be on another team. I had thought and made a small effort to put a team together basically the same way with a minus one, a zero, myself as a three and a four. but was unsuccessful. Goes to show the promoter has to be careful how the flyer is worded and the player not to assume anything.

In summary, the Hilton is an excellent place to stay, the food was great, my new friends and old friends' suburb, and the bathrooms clean and well kept, but what a walk to get there. If my legs do not get stronger by next year I will take a wheel chair.

I am afraid the day is coming when I must call it a career even though the six person draft team I on took second and could have been first except for my ill-fated shot as we would have been on top of the split. I am not sure my legs could have made two more matches with trips to the bathroom.

I will close now but not with a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, but with a Happy Day. I want you all to have a merry or happy day not two days a year but every day. So, Happy Day.

