

Miller Lite fame a trickster

Pool shark's 'practiced' shots hit the mark

By Tom Prentiss

The E.F. Hutton of billiards showed off his talents Saturday before a crowd of 200 in the Nebraska Union ballroom.

Steve Mizerak, who has won more than 35 major pool titles, impressed the audience by sinking shots most pool players can only dream of—or make by accident.

He performed various trick shots, sometimes using cues as obstacles accompanied with a sense of humor that would earn Rodney Dangerfield respect.

Mizerak is perhaps best known as the pool player on the Miller Lite commercial who hits difficult combination shots and then says all it takes is "practice, practice, practice."

The Lite Beer commercial took about 8½ hours to film, he said.

The producer had to make sure the foam on the glass of beer was full. That, along with making the series of shots, accounted for the time problems.

Mizerak then lined up the balls as they are in the commercial and showed the audience how it was done.

He made the first two shots, but on the final combination series, the cue ball left the 15 ball just shy of the corner pocket.

Precision touch

Mizerak swept it in with his cue as the crowd applauded.

With the precision touch of a Cartier jeweler, Mizerak sank shot after shot that

left most in the crowd murmuring: "Only he could have sunk that shot."

Yet while exuding a confidence that rivals papal infallibility, Mizerak showed he was human by missing some shots. He has a standing rule that he gets three tries on each trick shot.

Once after missing on the third try, Mizerak looked disappointedly at the errant ball and said, "That shot is impossible." The crowd erupted with laughter.

Humor is an important part of the Mizerak performance. He constantly milks the crowd, using a delicate sense of timing on his jokes that kept many spectators from thinking the exhibition was purely a "spectator sport."

A few spectators got a chance to challenge Mizerak in a game of eight-ball.

Enjoyable game

The first victim to fall to the surgical talents of Dr. Mizerak was Scott Johnson of Alpha Tau Omega fraternity. Johnson broke and sank four balls before missing a shot.

Mizerak then strolled to the table and asked Johnson, "Enjoy the game?" He then proceeded to clear the table.

Johnson said he was pleased with his performance because he hadn't played any pool in more than a year.

After polishing off another competitor, Mizerak was challenged and almost beaten by Tim Miller, a UNL student from Grand Island.

Mizerak played him solely by using his left hand, often not even resting it on the rail for balance. When Miller was one shot away from winning, Mizerak kiddingly wiped the balls into the pockets, telling him that he doesn't give anybody a chance to beat him.

For his next trick, Mizerak enticed Linda Steele of Springfield, Mo., to be a part of a trick shot.

Laying her on her back at one end of the table, he placed a chalk cube between her teeth.

He then placed a ball on the cube, and

from the rail below attempted to hit the ball off Linda's mouth and into a corner pocket.

He failed on all three tries but each one was a little closer than the time before.

Mizerak closed by taking three cues and laying them so the tips touched. He placed the cue ball at the pointer where the tips met. Then he used one cue as a lever to lift the other two with the cue ball balancing at the apex of the pyramid.

After several tries, Mizerak succeeded in his trick and brought the crowd to a standing ovation.

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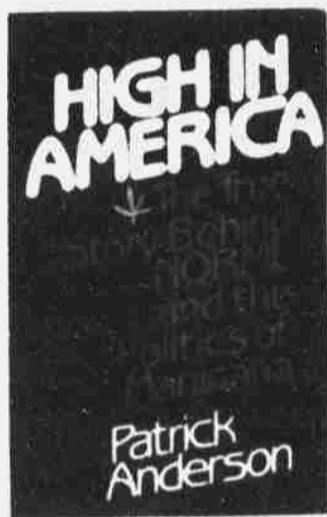
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