

Universities Pool Council

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FEATURE ARTICLE

TITLE: Paul Edwards, Hall Of Fame Interview



The UPC celebrated its five-year anniversary last season, and in recognition of this milestone we decided to establish the UPC Hall Of Fame, with Paul Edwards, once of the University of Nottingham, becoming the first official inductee for his fantastic contribution to university pool. Paul received a plaque in recognition of this achievement at last season's BUSA-UPC Championship/Trophy event.

The UPC Hall of Fame was been set up to recognise individuals who make an outstanding contribution to university pool, and few can argue with Paul's record – following his graduation from University of Nottingham in 2007 he has left behind quite a legacy!

In 2003-04, he became the first player to win the UPC Eight-ball Individual championship. In a remarkable feat, he retained his title in 2004-05. With a field of around 240 entrants, Paul had to battle through seven matches and so back-to-back wins at this level will be hard to replicate. Then, in Paul's final year (2006-07), he won his third Individual title in four years.

Whilst his individual titles will be the most remembered, Paul has also captained Nottingham to win the UPC Nine-ball Championship in 2006-2007 and captained English Universities to victory in the Home Nations in 2005-2006 and 2006-07, also winning the UPC Masters Individual event at the 2005-2006 event.

This summer, the UPC caught up with Paul to find out what he's been doing since his university days, and to look back over his achievements in university pool.....

Q. Good to see you Paul. What are you up to these days?

A. I'm working in London now, in recruitment.

Q. Are you still playing pool?

A. I am, but more American pool – I joined the GB9 ball tour this year and can honestly say it's the best tour I've ever seen. I don't really get time to practice so haven't done as well as I'd hoped but I'm hoping to finish the season in the top 32, which will mean I'll be seeded for next year.

Q. What does it feel like being our first HoFer?

A. I was pretty surprised! I wasn't aware there was even going to be a HoF in place so I'm very happy.

Q. In four years, you only lost one match in the BUSA-UPC Eight-ball Individual Championships, which is an incredible record. Luck or skill?!!!

A. I think it's just a case of playing smart pool. In most cases smart pool won me the match, but occasionally I would need a bit of luck/mistake from my opponent – with a race-to-three that's natural.

Q. Which title win meant the most to you, and why?

A. I think it was the second one – I really didn't feel I was going to lose in that tournament at any stage and to retain the title showed I was no fluke. Also, I think I played the best pool toward the end of that tournament in the semis and final.



Q. What was it like starting as tournament favourite each year, and defending the title?

A. The first match is horrible, but once you get the ball rolling it's fine. I would feel more pressure on the first round than the final.



Q. How did you find the balance between the individual and team championships?

A. I loved the team event, but it's completely different to the singles. You need to have a totally different outlook on every frame because if you make a mistake, it affects all your teammates. In the singles, you've only got yourself to blame for losing.

Q. What did you enjoy most at UPC events?

A. The finals, semi finals of the singles! And the banter at UPC events is awesome – Ulster, UWE, Durham, Strathclyde, etc – it makes the team events so enjoyable.

Q. Do you have any regrets?

A. I should have had more practice sessions with our Nottingham team focussed on the rules. We had a bunch of talented cueists but not 8-ball players – if everyone was strong on the tactical side I feel we could have won the team event.

Q. What would you say were your strengths, and weaknesses, as a player?

A. My strength is probably focus, but if I'm not focussed it's my biggest weakness. I think I know when to attack a frame and when to wait for a better moment pretty well. Another weakness of mine is complacency occasionally.

Q. What was your favourite match that you recall, and why?

A. I think the semi against Nikki Murtaugh going for my second title, because I was 3-0 up in a race-to-four and he had only hit the cue ball once (to break) then I took the 4th with a nice finish too. Also, my friend (and GB9ball player) Neil Raybone was playing McCulloch on the other table in a lengthy match, so it was nice for me to be finished quickly.



Q. Can you remember much about your only defeat, to.....?

A. Ian McKay – I remember going 2-1 down and thinking to just keep things tight and not leave any finishes for him. We had a huge tactical frame at 2-1 and he played a miracle shot to bring his last ball out and land on it – fair play to him.

Q. Would you have done anything different, with the benefit of hindsight?

A. Against Ian in that match I started far too casually and lost the first frame thanks to a silly error. In a race-to-three the first frame is vital. I also wish I'd played a bit more 9-ball at that time as I would have liked to have won that individual event.



Q. Other than that, what would you say was your toughest match?

A. Two stand out for me; the final in the first year against Ricky Taylor for one – I was 4-2 up and thought I had the match won then he brought it level to 4-4. Thankfully he broke dry in the decider...! Secondly the match last year against Martin Pratt was very tough. He made things difficult for me, kept me under a lot of pressure

and we were in really sticky conditions which only increases the pressure.

Q. What other players have you rated during your time at UPC events?

A. Mark McCulloch is a tough opponent, Stevie Graham was a good shotmaker, and Ricky Taylor is a good attacking player. Neil Raybone obviously knows his way around the table, and Carl Caney was also tough to play against.

Q. What advice would you have to any would-be champions?

A. Take things one ball at a time – short races require careful play. Literally one error (or less) can lose you the match.



Q. Nottingham University reached the Team Championship final for the first time this year, without you, narrowly losing to UUC in a tight final. Any regrets you didn't do an MBA?!!

A. Yeah a little, they did really well. I think Adam will do a great job with the team, and I really hope he gets his hands on the snooker individual title – he is a great snooker player.

Q. With your success in the individual championships, it is often overlooked that you have also been in two winning England teams at the BUSA-UPC Home Nations. What was that like? Any memories? Hardest match?

A. I never really turned up and played well at the Home Nations, except for the year I won the Masters. I remember losing to Wales in Glasgow – we played poorly in the final. Hardest match was in the semis of the Masters against Carl Caney. I won 3-2 but I don't think either of us made a mistake, and he forced me to go for a very tough finish at 2-2.

Q. What is the atmosphere like at these events? How does it differ?

A. It's very different. I struggle, because I feed from the larger buzz around the venue at the domestic event. The smaller field of players often made me feel slightly complacent at these events. They are still great fun though and you get to know people you never spoke to before the Home Nations.



Q. What would you like to see happen in University pool over the next few years?

A. I would like to see it expand! I noticed you now have secured Great Yarmouth, which is excellent. The UPC have done a superb job with University pool and I wish the UPC the best of luck with pushing it forward!

Q. Finally, will we see you back?!

A. You never know...

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Notes to editors:

The Universities Pool Council (UPC) is the governing body for pool at higher education level in the United Kingdom. It is recognised by the British Universities Sports Association (BUSA), Scottish University Sport (SUS) and the English Pool Association (EPA).

The UPC organises national nine-ball, eight-ball and women's eight-ball championships for teams and individuals. The UPC also organises the Student Home Internationals representative event.