

# Editor's Picks & Pans

by Mark Whiteside

## Do It For The Game

by Robert Campbell



**W**hile attending the BCA National 8-Ball Championships in Las Vegas, I stopped to visit with my friend and colleague Bob Henning in the Bebob Publications booth. He had a potential paying customer in the booth, and since they come first, I started perusing the offerings displayed on his tables. Bob sells an extensive selection of billiard books and videotapes in the Bebob booth. A pocket-sized, brightly colored book cover depicting a billiard scene caught my eye, and I looked closer. I found that it was a copy of a newly released book by Robert Campbell. That name may be familiar to many of you, as Bob Campbell entertained and informed you with his monthly billiard publication, *All About Pool...Everywhere*, during the entire decade of the Nineties. A severe health problem now under control, a second marriage, and the arrival of twins made him change his priorities and give up the time-consuming task of making a monthly magazine. Apparently, the ability to work at his own pace instead of always having approaching deadlines agrees with him better now

When I sat down with the book at our temporary home, one evening after returning from the Riviera, I just didn't want to put it down. I stayed up several hours reading page after page, and really enjoying it. The next evening, I read until I finished it. Thankfully, it's only about 175 pages long, or I would have gotten real-

ly worn down. The book grabbed me, and held my attention very well. In a manner of speaking, it could be considered historical fiction, which, I must say, is my favorite reading material. The skillful blending of fictional characters with actual people, places, and events really makes the story come alive for me.

The central character, Brian Dwyer, is a third generation pool player who had given up the game to compete in the professional world. The book opens with Brian returning to his hometown to bury his father. The previous 2 years had seen Brian's professional and personal lives crumble, with the death of his mother and sister, his wife's death from cancer, estrangement from his grown son, the loss of his job, and a slide into the grip of alcohol. Upon entering his old stomping grounds, a combination bar and poolroom called *The Cue*, he is swept away by the memories that lingered there for him. He had been one of the best in the area as a teenager, but hadn't played in years. His journey from that low

point in his life back to respectability is the story that Bob tells.

It has been said that we write best about what we know about the most. As a former 'hatchet man' for a corporation, a cancer survivor, a pool player, a poolroom



owner, and on his own second marriage, Bob is intimately familiar with his material. Although the book is not an autobiography, his experiences gave him the ability to create very real characters that you seem to already know. The personalities who populate *The Cue* are just like the ones that really do hang out in rooms all over America. Having spent my fair share of time in these establishments myself, I felt like I was reading about people that I already knew, and the antics that Bob has them go through were right on target. Life has its ups and downs, and Brian has a real roller coaster ride, with failed love affairs, lost pool matches, and business setbacks along the way. The blending of a fictional character, Brian, with the players who actually participate in the Joss 9-Ball Tour added even more realism to the story.

I don't normally review a book unless I think it is worth buying. I've only written one review giving a negative opinion about a book, and in that case my problem was with the way the subject matter was romanticized. So, since virtually every review I write is positive, how can I best describe my opinion of this offering? This is the most entertaining fictional portrayal of pool that I have read since I began doing pool publications about 5 years ago. I think a lot of baby boomer pool players will find pieces of themselves and the characters they have known in the pages of this book. ♦

