

## Beating the Odds From Last to First - A Ken Martin Special

Headlines: "March 10, 2008 more troops head to Afghanistan; the *Exxon Valdez* heads to the Supreme Court and Kickin' Kenny Martin's 8-ball Division #104 team out of Fucifino's is headed for the wire."

On this date Martin's Marauders are .004 out of first place and making the best showing in three sessions. As the new season got under way, skeptics were less than optimistic and saying that their chances of seeing daylight were just slightly better than seeing daylight on the dark side of the moon. Sure, they finished at the bottom last season. That was last season. It's over. It's gone. Done. History. This is now. The present. No way will Ken Martin stoop to doom and gloom. The glass is always half full for this positive thinking guy.

Kickin' Kenny Martin took over as team captain a couple sessions back. And now pulled off what most consider odds-against possibilities. Going from last place (66th season) to first place in the 67th winter 2008 season is quit an accomplishment. The regular lineup with brothers Dave and Larry Stafford, Josh Treadway and Chuck Buban were in need of help and Ken did what was necessary to kick-start his team to put it on that fast track to the finish line. A change was needed if they were to once again become a decent and competitive unit. What turned this beleaguered team around? A couple things. One: Ken called Kipp Esteep and talked him into returning to action after taking the season off. Two: Kipp's coaching and place in the starting lineup would prove invaluable.

From the beginning it was obvious the layoff didn't hurt Kipp's stroke. As week after week passed Kipp's spot at the top of the Top Player sheet not only remained but the distance opened up with each passing match. He shot his way to the top of the All-Star sheet taking out the Top Player Award 23-6 .793 in this tough division. A lot of plusses were needed.

As they say in books, there are no guarantees. After 15 weeks, Kenny's gang was in second place. But their final week was against the first place team and Bullet Bob Pendergrass, and the situation was two-fold. One: Ken had to win the match just to tie for first place. Two: They could *not* allow their opponent to win eight games. Had they scored 8 wins, even though they would have tied with a 12-4 record, their games won/lost percentage still would have left Kenny's team in second place. They won 9-5. Each team ended at 12-4 but Ken's games won/lost percentage jumped ahead .550 to .534. Yes, a lot of plusses were added. And everyone played a big part uniting together in a common purpose to bring this team back to respectability.

So, how did Ken Martin and his Fucifino's gang do June 29th, 2008 in Missouri 8 Ball's 67th 4-Player Championships? **THEY WON.** Yes!

They opened up by taking a 9-5 decision from Bottle Cap. Followed that up with a 10-6 win over New Classic's #105; a 12-11 squeaker over the Wedge #103 where Ken had to give them 6-games on the wire and pulled off a great come-from-behind victory by having to win the last 7 games.

And for the Championship Trophy - Ken played a one-game playoff with Mandi Tebeau from Jay Carlton's Fucifino's team, also from Division # 104.

From last - to first - to winning the Championship Trophy. What a great season and a great story to go with it. Congratulations to Kickin' Kenny Martin and his Fucifino's gang. It was a well deserved win.