

Ronda Lynn Day – R.I.P.

Jay L. Carlton

Many times it is hard to put into words how you honestly feel or how to go about expressing the love and admiration you have for another person. The best road to take is to go with what you know. And that is what I will do with this very good friend that passed away this month, July 9, 2011.

Ronda Lynn Day

As reputations for female pool players go Ronda Day's rep could be deemed moderately good. It may not have reached the level of say Rhonda Bartram or Julia Gabriel or Jan Clark or Suki Cooper or Lajuanina Henry or Jackie Moody or Donna Glascock or Mary Stillwell or a dozen other ladies that were better known in Pool League circles. But for one incredible weekend – that all changed.

And the date it changed was Saturday February 7, 2004.

It was the 54th Singles "Open" All-Star tournament when members of the Missouri 8 Ball fraternity became aware of whom Ronda Lynn Day was.

A little insight: Ronda and husband Victor had been playing league pool several years out of the old Starlite Café & Billiards in Hazelwood at that time owned by Gary Lutman. They stayed on and continued playing there after Kathy Arens took it over and changed the name to Action Café & Billiards.

Not many paid much attention to Ronda Day. What I mean is they didn't pay much attention to her until they drew her for a match. Ronda was a pretty good player. Sneaky good! If you violated the 'turn' rule, take a seat; her chances of getting out multiplied.

I had the pleasure of teaming up with Ronda for a 'doubles' event a few years ago. The venue was Rich Schenk's Teachers Billiards on Highway 94, St Peters, Mo. I noticed Ronda sitting nearby watching husband Victor practice before starting time. I asked why she wasn't playing. She explained that Victor had partnered up with Darrell Anderson.

Well that's not fair I said. Let's you and I partner up. She said okay and that's how it happened.

We did not cash from this event but one thing Ronda always got a kick out of was the fact that we lasted longer than Victor and Darrell lasted.

Take a wild guess who Victor's partner was for the next 'doubles'?

As I said, the change took place Saturday February 7th. Ronda Day was on her way making believers out of skeptics and critics alike. Close to 300 players signed up for the 54th event.

Ronda made the cut from Saturday's elimination rounds with three fast wins. When she came to the tournament board to let me know she had won her third match you should have seen the smile. To say she was elated would be an understatement. It was a "brighten up your afternoon" type of smile.

That third win qualified her for a return trip for Sunday's action. This was a new plateau for her. She had never before made it to Sunday. I congratulated her and wished her luck.

Her first opponent Sunday was David Lawrence. It was a 2-1 win and she was on her way. This victory seemed to help calm her nerves. Pretty Patty Wells was Ronda's second opponent and she too went down, 2-1. Someone quipped that Tim Finnegan (her third opponent) was more than nervous with this match against Ronda than he was against the two guys he faced before her. It happens. Some guys get that way when playing girls. This third win put Ronda in the money.

Ronda's 4th match was against Jeremy Cardwell, and he was hangin' tough. When it looked like Ronda's winning streak was about to end Jeremy got a bad lay-up on the '8' and missed the kick for a good hit. Ronda quietly took ball-in-hand, placed it in position and ran her last two balls plus the '8' for another 2-1 squeaker. From there it was all up hill.

Irrespective of what happened from this point forward Ronda's weekend was complete. She had won a few matches, earned (as she put it) a little shopping money; and once again produced that Helen of Troy smile.

But it wasn't over. There would be more matches to play and more memories to come. To some participants this tournament might bring on pressure, or would at least bring on a show of excitement or... something. But not Ronda! If ever a gal kept her cool, her composure, it was this one. Nothing was bothering her this afternoon. Whatever nervousness she may have had Saturday had completely disappeared, vanished. It was almost prophetic, like this was supposed to happen.

Her next opponent was Steve Lowery. Steve put up a good match but he also went down.

Her run was interrupted by Elliott Kite, but only temporarily. Being on the one-loss side did nothing to discourage this girl's confidence. By this time she had her own groupie section. Many were watching Ronda's matches and heartedly rooting for her.

She picked up where she left off by knocking out Pete Potthast, 2-0. They were falling by the wayside. And if this girl had been any calmer, any more reposed I would have thought there was ice water running through her veins. By this time hubby Victor had been eliminated and took a seat near the sidelines.

The win over Pete Potthast moved Ronda into the 5/6 spot. Her 7th victory was the defeat of Rob Royer. Now she was in the final four, a spot where only three other female competitors had ever reached from the "open" tournament.

Rule of thumb states: 'The higher up you get, the harder the competition'. And it held true against Ronda. It took a very good '5' level player in Jay Ackay to eliminate her. But it wasn't easy. As most all of her matches, this also went the three games. Ackay was defeated by Billy Wimberly who in turn was defeated by eventual winner Rich Sager.

For this most unusual and astonishing weekend Ronda Day was there, mixing it up, mowin'em down, and creating her own personal nitch in Missouri 8 Ball History.

Sager may have won his 6th Championship but it was this little gal everyone was rooting for.

It has for me a poignant memory, profoundly moving in the most delightful sense. You should have seen the look and smile on her face after coming to realize what she had accomplished. So refreshing. A 4th place finish. Up there with the big guys. An awesome feeling. And everyone was so happy for her. Not many wives can say that they finished higher than their husband in this rigorous "open" event. Ronda Day can say it... and usually with a shy grin.

After the event I wrote: "Lucky Ronda?" (Notice the ? at the end.) Which asks, was she *really* lucky, or did she play the game with skill and adroitness, adept under pressing conditions? It doesn't matter a hill of beans. It has no bearing on the outcome. All that matters is what happened, happened; and it happened to one of the nicest and neatest gals to ever pick up a pool cue.

One player standing by the tournament board expressed his admiration of her cue ball control this way: "The table could be laid out like a minefield and the cue ball would breeze right around them."

Let me say this about that: I witnessed several of Ronda's matches that weekend and personally speaking I wish I could guide my cue ball through a minefield without running into obstacles and blowing my game apart. I mentioned to him how much trouble we would be in if either of us happened to draw her. Not this weekend. She was on the best roll of her pool-playing career.

For those who may have missed Ronda's weekend performance, she knocked off seven opponents on her way to her 4th place finish. It was good for \$500. (Can do a lot of shopping with \$500.)

After 54 All-Star events Ronda Day became only the fourth female to finish in the top four spots.

And here's the kicker to this weekend story: Ronda had no intention of playing in this tournament. It was a last minute decision.

That's right. Victor had signed up and she was there to support him. Then figured that since she had to be there anyway, why not get in.

About a half hour before starting time she approached me and asked if she could sign up? I checked the category she would be in. There were a couple openings and I said sure. She paid the entry fee and now (with all due respects to Mr. Paul Harvey), now you know... the 'Rest of The Story'.

February 7-8, 2004

Results of 54th Missouri 8 Ball All Star Singles Tournament

Place	Player		Winnings	Place	Player		Winnings
1.	Rich Sager	'8'	\$1,048 & Trophy	9/12.	Jim Crosby	'6'	\$150
2.	Billy Wimberly	'6'	800 & Trophy	9/12.	Bill Owens	'5'	150
3.	Jay Ackay	'5'	650 & Trophy	9/12.	Rich Norris	'5'	150
4.	Ronda Day	'3'	500	9/12.	Brian O'Leary	'4'	150
5/6.	Larry Baker	'6'	350	13/16.	Jack Mayer	'6'	100
5/6.	Rob Royer	'4'	350	13/16.	Ed Enders	'5'	100
7/8.	Denis Dunbar	'6'	250	13/16.	Matt Auclair	'5'	100
7/8.	Pete Potthast	'5'	250	13/16.	Jerry Smith	'3'	100

17/24. The following players were \$50 winners: Don Weber, Steve Lowery, Jeremy Cardwell, Tracy Moore, Bill Cloyd, Elliott Kite, Tim Finnegan and **Patty Wells**.

There were 24 players that cashed. Ronda Day's 4th place finish takes its rightful place along side the other ladies from the "Open" singles event.

The other ladies are:

First place (twice) – Julia Gabriel

2nd place – Rhonda Bartram

3rd place & 7th place – Mary Stillwell.

I'd say she was in pretty good company.

It was always a pleasure when meeting Ronda Day at tournaments and such. Even though she was on the shy side and many times spoke with a whisper, there was no mistaking she always made you feel like a good friend. She and Victor made a perfect couple. They were married many years.

Ronda was only 54 when cancer took this lovely, delightfully, charming lady; and for those of us who really knew her, Ronda Day will be sadly and sorrowfully missed.

Ronda Lynn Day

Oct. 10, 1956 – July 9, 2011

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