

PAULINE MURPHY SPEAKS:

I began playing shuffleboard as a park shuffler for approximately 3 years, learning to shoot but never realizing the strategy involved. Things changed when I registered to play the 2014 Polk County Senior Games in Lakeland for the first time. I was told to just listen for my name and a court number to be called and to go to that court. Following a few wins I was instructed to go to court 9. I was unaware that I was playing my final match and did not know I'd won gold until it was announced.

One of the other shufflers asked which club I belonged to and the questioning look on my face gave away the fact that I was not really aware that shuffleboard clubs existed. He suggested that I should consider joining Lakeland which I did shortly after the Senior Games.

I began playing amateur tournaments the following season and as a former athlete, still loving competition, I was "hooked" in no time. In February 2015 I played an amateur tournament in Sanlan and placed 2nd in main. Marlene Corbeil happily informed me that I'd won 4 Reiny Points to which I responded "what does that mean"? A little naive to say the least. In March of that year I played and actually won the Reiny tournament, still one of my most exciting accomplishments.

In the 2015-2016 season I earned enough move-up points to become a State Amateur in October 2016. Again I qualified for the Reiny tournament and placed 1st for the second time.

I have had a lot of luck along the way and also need to thank some people who were instrumental in helping me achieve my goals. Ed Perkins, a Lakeland Pro, has spent numerous hours instructing new amateurs like myself. Diana Morrison, a member of the Central District and State Hall of Fame, has been one of my biggest supporters, always ready to offer a "tip" or an encouraging word. I have also had the pleasure of both practicing and playing a tournament with Earl Ball, another Hall of Fame member, whose reputation precedes him. Shuffleboard has been and always will be a learning experience for me.

Of course, as with everyone, I have had bad days and, at times, what I felt were extensive slumps. Sometimes it seems the harder you try to correct things the worse they become. The best advice I can offer anyone is "never give up" and the best advice I have ever been given is "relax, play your game and things will be fine". I am definitely my own worst critic.

Another memorable moment occurred early in the 2016-2017 season when I played a pro tournament with Peggy Savage. At the beginning of the game I asked if she had any advice. Her words of wisdom were "you play your game, I'll play my game and we'll have some fun". We placed in main and thanks to Peggy I earned instant pro. I opted to defer pro status until the following October since I felt I needed a lot more experience before I would be ready.

This year I will again have the pleasure of playing the Reiny tournament, this time as a State Amateur. I have served as Vice-President in Lakeland Shuffleboard Club and as the Central District Amateur Representative. I have only named a few who have helped me along the way, whether as friends, partners or mentors. A special thank you to the pros for their guidance and encouragement. Shuffleboard has been a journey, encompassing meeting new people, enjoying

the competition, and striving to improve my game. It became evident that even a loss can be a positive experience if I learned something. We cannot always win but we can always learn.

I hope in the future as I improve that I can have the same impact on other amateurs that the "special" shufflers have had on me.