

Ask Allison

by Allison Fisher

The Four T's

This month I just wanted to share a little of my background and how I learned what it took to be a good player. If you have any questions you would like to have answered, please write to me through my website at www.allisonfisher.com.

I started playing snooker on a 6-foot table when I was 11 years of age. I then progressed on to a 12- by 6-foot table a year later. When I was about 13 years of age I found out about a club that opened up for children between 11-17 years of age on Saturday mornings. About every other week my Dad used to drive me 40 minutes to get there. It was in Worthing, Sussex. I used to love going there and lining up with around 40 children to get in. We were put in to groups and competed in a league against each other.

They awarded certificates for different categories: best performance, highest run, best dressed, most improved, sportsmanship, and even refereeing. I think back and feel that this is a great way to be introduced to the game. I learned about everything to do with my sport there, not just performance. There were two adults running the club—one was Jim Meadowcroft, a professional snooker player and former UK quarterfinalist, and the other Frank Sandell, a coach and long-time friend of Jim's.

They took me under their wing and gave me a one-piece cue, as the one I had wasn't really up to par. It had a screw-in tip and was a Christmas gift, my first cue. Frank occasionally took me to a club and would help me with my game. I remember he used to talk about the 4 T's. He said the ingredients of a good player are:

Talent, Timing, Technique, Temperament, and Luck.

I used to play many sports at school at a very high level. I played field hockey, netball, basketball, and I threw the javelin. Once I started to play snooker I had to make a choice, for I wanted to be really good at one thing. From being good at sports, it was obvious that I had the talent. Years later when I was 16 years of age a gentleman approached my parents at a tournament. He offered to coach me free of charge. I gave it a try, and I loved it. I

went to see Frank Callan for one weekend and learned so much. He has taught a vast majority of top male snookers players over the years, such as Steve Davis and Stephen Hendry.

I worked on completely changing my stroke for the next few months. I put a new rhythm and a hesitation in. It had me in tears on occasion, but I believed and trusted in him. I owe a lot to Frank because through him I learned



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about technique and timing. To this day I still use everything I learned from those days and incorporate it when playing and teaching. Temperament is what makes the game interesting and full of different characters. I am very reserved when I play and very serious. That is the only way I can be. If I were to joke around for the amusement of the crowd, I would lose my focus. That doesn't work for me, but it does work for other players as a way to relieve their own stress. It is funny because

away from the table I am completely different as a person. I guess the way I am works for what I do.

As far as luck goes, I have had my fair share and a little more over the years. But I have to say that I have served a very long apprenticeship, I didn't get good overnight nor did any great player. It takes a lot of good quality practice and work. Nothing can be taken for granted, which is why top players continually find ways to improve their game. I used to play Karen Corr at snooker spanning many years, and she has changed her game dramatically to win events. She used to hit the balls hard and have a free, loose stroke. But as many players learn, you have to be able to control the stroke in order to control the balls. Basically you get out what you put in. Both Karen and I have worked very hard on our strokes in order to be better players. If you really want to do well at the sport, you need to watch players with good habits and compare that with your own habits. I wish you lots of luck, but more importantly *fun*, on the journey. ♦