

Like a Child

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More than anything else, playing pool reminds me of being a child. I started playing pool at four years old, but that is not the sole reason why the game gives me that feeling; it may not even be the primary reason. There are many aspects of the game that bring out pure child-like responses. It touches places in all of us that are difficult to put into words. It provides solace and security in a world spinning at an unrelenting pace. It ignites a passion that is often subdued by the daily grind of life.

There is a wide-eyed innocence in most of us; a youthful, somewhat naïve view of the world that allows us to believe that all things are possible. We believe there are right and a wrong ways to do things, and doing the right thing is the best way to live life. We believe in love and living life to the fullest. We believe in individual growth and the evolution of life. Sometimes the grind of life wears us down, dulls our senses and alters our perceptions. Thank goodness for pool halls because pool tables are inside pool halls and everything about the game of pool is alive; from the shattering of a rack of balls to the sound of the balls as they drop into pockets. As a child, everything about the game was fun. I played at home, the local YMCA's, and family gatherings. I loved the sound of the balls crashing together, pocketing balls and the ability to get better and better as I got older. The game has always been a source of pleasure for me.

We live in a constant state of discovery. We often forget that, and although we are no longer children, the learning never ends. Each time at the table, we are learning and/or reinforcing something. Every shot is an opportunity to learn something about yourself and the physical world

around you, and the game never lies. It will show whether the people playing it are having fun or not, skilled or challenged, friends or foe. It will reveal the child inside or the altered individual that may not realize how much fun it is to play this game, win or lose.

I love to watch people having fun playing the game. There is nothing like the look of pure pleasure on someone's face. That look is evident in so many forms while playing the game; pocketing balls, running racks, playing safeties, winning matches, learning how to stroke shots, etc. I love the look of amazement that people have when they find out the game is much more difficult than they thought it was, and it does not deter them from wanting to learn more about it. The game is fun to play, challenging to play well.

When we are children, there is a youthful exuberance to everything we do, and a belief that we can do it even without any experience doing it. We teach our children to try and that nothing ever comes without effort. We expose them to as many things that might peak their interest and hope they carry that youthful exuberance with them as they take on the challenges that confront them. Playing pool is not challenging, it is fun. It is fun to play the game whether you make shots or miss them, win games or lose them. The challenge comes with the desire to play the game better. The challenge lies with dealing with the frustration of not being able to play as well as you would like. As a child, I wanted to play the game, and I wanted to play the game well. The child in me says that I can be a champion. I hope that the child in me can handle the obstacles that life puts in front of me.