

# *For What It's Worth . . .* IN DEFENSE OF SHUFFLEBOARD

*This article is reprinted from THE TORCH, the school newspaper of Bexley High School, Bexley, Ohio. LAURA FUHRMAN, the author, is one of our Ohio "Junior" shufflers. She placed 2nd to Adele Pearson in the 1987 National Open Singles. We think it is an excellent piece of journalism and reproduce here an excerpted version for the pleasure of our PREVIEW readers.*

With my last opportunity to write a column, I have decided to address a topic that I feel is far too often neglected, and actually underrated — SHUFFLEBOARD. I am thinking about it this time of year because Spring Break is about to begin and I'm looking forward to going to Florida to visit my grandparents and play my favorite sport.

When many people think of shuffleboard it may call to their minds images of sticks, stones and cavemen at play. There is also the Love Boat "cruise-ship" image it has acquired. My goal, however, is to prove that it is definitely more than a simple game — or even a game at all. *Shuffleboard is a sport!* In fact, I think its qualifications speak for themselves. First of all, shuffleboard is known internationally. Shufflers from Canada, Japan and the United States compete. Ohio itself is also an important place as far as shuffleboard is concerned. We may house the NFL Hall of Fame in Canton and the College Football Hall of Fame at Kings Island, but Ohio is also the proud home of the Shuffleboard Hall of Fame at Lakeside. State and national tournaments are held here. Perhaps the biggest step shuffleboard took this year was during the national competition held in Las Vegas. The largest sum of money ever awarded in a shuffleboard tournament — \$30,000 — was given away. This may be an indication that the prominence of shuffleboard is on the rise.

Some will say that their biggest complaint against shuffleboard is that it is not as strenuous or physically demanding as other sports. True, Shufflers don't tackle and body-slam one another all over the court, but since when are these the only displays of endurance? Try a match that lasts six hours in the summer heat (when most tourneys are held) where you're one disc away from winning or losing and are back and forth for hours. Yet shuffleboard is not only physically exhausting, it's mentally demanding as well. The shuffler constantly has to outguess his/her opponent. When you only have four discs to work with, most of the time you have to play to what you think your opponent's next shot may be. Yet none of this strategy makes much difference unless it can be executed. This is where the shuffler, in a sense, must have a combination of the qualities of many different classes or pros. She/he must have the aggressiveness of a football player, the endurance and persistence of a swimmer, the slyness of a chess player, and the composure of a bluffing poker player. What sets shuffling apart in all of this is the element of chance involved when you're trying to control things from the other end of the court. For no matter how much skill, aim or precision you have, when you're shooting from the other end of the court, 1/64th of an inch can mean all the difference.

After playing in many major tournaments and placing in a few, I have come to see shuffling as it deserves to be known — a SPORT in the finest sense of the word. So, the next time you're in Florida or Lakeside or even Upper Arlington, stop and play. Try it — for as parents once said about vegetables — "You don't know what you're missing!"