

## **“An Update on Tom Ross”**

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by Dr. Dave Alciatore (with help from Tom Ross)

Tom and I have been good friends for many years. We first met as monthly columnists for *Billiards Digest* magazine. In 2010, after over a year of work together, Tom and I released the “Video Encyclopedia of Pool Shots” (VEPS) DVD series. I could not have created VEPS without Tom’s wealth of knowledge, experience, and prowess at the pool table. Because of my friendship and respect for Tom, *Cue Times* asked me to work with him to provide an update on how he is doing.

Since 1978, Tom has taught over 4,500 pool students from every walk of life and every level of play from beginner to National Champion. He has also published countless instructional articles for *Cue Times*, *Billiards Digest*, and *Ozone Billiards*. His articles have appeared monthly in *Cue Times* since 1998.

For about 20 years, Tom worked at *Shakespeare’s Pool Hall* (now closed) and then the *Skylark Lounge* on Broadway in Denver. He was a well-liked bartender at the *Skylark* and hosted a weekly pool seminar where he freely shared his pool knowledge and helped inspire countless people of all walks of life to appreciate and love our wonderful game. Tom also taught private lessons for many years.

Unfortunately, soon after Tom and I released the VEPS DVD series, he suffered a stroke (in November, 2010). That’s why the following clause has appeared with Tom’s articles in *Cue Times* in recent years: “*Due to an ongoing health issue, Tom will not be contributing new articles for a while. For now, we will dip into his vast archives while he’s on the mend. Please keep Tom in your thoughts and prayers.*”

Tom’s stroke affected muscle control on the right side of his body and affected the part of the brain that controls speech. Tom didn’t lose his personality and mental faculties ... he’s still as sharp and personable as he ever was ... but his ability to communicate is not what it used to be. He can understand everything he hears, and he can read, but it remains difficult for him to express himself with speech and in writing (although, he has shown slow but noticeable improvement each year). Fortunately for us, Tom was a very prolific writer before his stroke, and *Cue Times* has hundreds of articles to continue to share in the future. Hopefully, you have learned from Tom’s past articles and continue to look forward to and learning from the ones you haven’t seen yet. I, for one, look forward to reading Tom’s article each and every month.

Since the stroke, Tom no longer works at the *Skylark Lounge* or gives lessons; however, he has found other things to keep himself busy and active. He is in two pool leagues (straight pool on Mondays, and 8-ball/9-ball on Wednesdays, both at *Felt Billiards* in Englewood). His game is not what it used to be due to the reduced control in his right arm, but he still enjoys the game and embraces the challenge of trying to improve. His favorite game lately is straight pool. He played straight pool competitively for many years in his early pool career. His high run in the past was 93. Since his stroke, his new high run is 24, which is quite good given his post-stroke

symptoms. Tom loves the challenge that straight pool provides, and looks forward to continually trying to better his post-stroke high run.

Tom has no trouble finding people to play pool with him. In fact, some people who feared playing him in the past (because he was too good) are more than happy to line up to challenge him now. I have to admit that I look forward to playing sessions with Tom now that I actually have a chance to give him a decent game. Luckily, Tom sees the fun in this and is happy to oblige the “challengers” who now have a glimmer of hope.

Tom has many other interests these days as well. He loves to fly fish, and he has also found a renewed passion for golf. The loss of full muscle control on his right side has affected his finesse and speed control at the pool table, but it has less of an effect on his golf swing. He also enjoys spending time with his loving dog Castle who has been with him since just before his stroke.

We hope you continue to enjoy and benefit from Tom’s instructional articles that will continue to run in *Cue Times*. If you see Tom at *Felt*, on the links, or by a stream, please say hi and thank him for everything he has done for the pool world.

Good luck with your game,  
Dr. Dave