



Michaela Tabb Free to press interview

Michaela Tabb is one of the Worlds leading Snooker and Pool referees, gracing major events all over the Globe. A recent stint at the Wembley Masters, where she refereed that amazing semi final between Ronnie O Sullivan and Mark Williams, followed a week in Las Vegas at the Mosconi Cup where Europe took on the USA in a Ryder Cup Style format. Now Michaela has joined the team at Snooker Legends for the launch of a new project which will see Legends of the game, and former World Champions, returning to famous snooker venues, including the Crucible, to lock horns once again across the green baize.

So Michaela, the first obvious question has to be how do you think you will get on with the great Hurricane, Alex Higgins a legend of the game notorious for his treatment of referees and bad behaviour?

I am so looking forward to refereeing all the Legends and I have no concerns at all about working with Alex! We actually worked together last October and Alex treated me utter respect which I really appreciated. I have to say I was a little nervous having never met him before, never mind refereed him, but it all went very smoothly... That doesn't mean to say he will be like that every night on Tour though!! What I would say is Alex was my idol when I was little and he is the reason I used to watch snooker as a child so if he does decide to throw a 'wobbly' then I will still treat him the respect that he has earned, at least on the first few occasions!

I think it's fair to say that refereeing the World Final represents the pinnacle of any snooker referee's career, you were awarded that honour last April. Has the climb to the top of your profession been a tough one and did you encounter any sexism on the way from the 'old school' who in the past didn't even let ladies into their snooker clubs let alone officiate matches for them?

It was such a huge honour for me to be asked to officiate that final, it was everything, I mean everything that I had worked so hard for... It was a long hard journey to reach that point because you learn so much of the job through experience so I have been learning since day one. Even though I had started my career as a 9 ball pool referee on television for Matchroom, that didn't prepare me for the actual game of snooker... I know when I started there was a lot of scepticism around my appointment and I knew that I had to give 110% every time I went out to match to overcome that. I also understand where it all came from as I had emerged through a route that was totalling against the tradition. What gave me great encouragement was the response from the players - I will never forget the kind words that came from Jimmy White and Ken Doherty in the beginning which gave me such a boost. They knew that things needed to change and they all knew that I would make mistakes along the way but I was being given a little leeway - thank goodness I didn't make too many or I wouldn't be here today!

Speaking of Jimmy, he spearheads the legends tour, it seems as if the more 'senior' players like him, and Alex, are still as popular as ever with the snooker public. Many point to today's stars as having no character... as someone who must see them away from the table do you think that judgement is fair, or is it just that with so much at stake nowadays players don't get the chance to really express themselves and show their other side?

I believe that as the money increased in our tobacco days, the 'job' became more serious which resulted in the loss of characters around the table. There are many characters within the game and some great humour away from the table, but they have to go to work just the same as the rest of us...

Moving onto Legends, we've got some serious snooker, John Virgo's cabaret and trick shots and the chance to get meet with the fans at a VIP reception and afterwards for autographs. How much do you enjoy meeting your fans and do you think you've become a role model for other women who may fancy referring as a career?

I love meeting the fans; they play such a big role especially in our sport. I think the VIP reception is a superb idea as we are under no time constraints like we are at the end of the night so we can really enjoy the chats. I have always felt it was important to always try and sign autographs and have pictures taken as the fans were a huge support to me when I first started and they have continued the journey with me... I like to think I am a role model for other women in the game. I always try to help out and I have the mobile numbers of all the lady refs that I have met so we can stay in touch! I am always ready to pass on advice and experience as I was lucky enough to have a mentor when I started and it is such a big help. I am waiting for more women to come through as it will be great to have some female company; the men aren't very good at talking makeup and hairstyles!

For details of where to meet Michaela and for all dates for these Snooker Legends go to www.snookerlegends.co.uk