

# FRED LINDRUM

MELBOURNE INMANN

An unlearned observer writes.....

*I dropped in at the Inman v Lindrum, junr, billiard match the other night. When I arrived, the Englishman was in play, and was just finishing a break of **88**. What an interesting looking **creature** is this Inman ! As he bends over the table his expression is one of **pained** concentration and terrible **gravity**. One would think, looking at him, that each stroke of the cue was a **penance** --- a part of a self-set **ritual**. Away from the table, his face --- somewhat **birdlike** in profile --- resumes an expression of **lifeless superciliousness** --- that of an **aesthete** thrust into a mob of **Philistines** against his wish. He seems to be apart from the crowd.*

***Lindrum**, on the other hand, appears to be much more at **home**, though he looks much more out of **place**. His place, I should imagine, would have been behind a **grocer's** counter, **weighing out sugar**, if heredity and early training had not made him an expert cueist. He is a healthy looking juvenile, quite **undistinguished**, and the happy possessor of a most **inartistic grin**. On occasion he can scarcely conceal this grin, as, when requesting his opponent to move out of the way, he was deafeningly applauded, much to Inman's discomfort.*

*And that little incident showed me that a billiard crowd differs but little from a **football** crowd. Palpably biased in favor of the youth --- probably through the pure sentiment of nationality --- this crowd was inclined, on occasion, to applaud his showy shots and fortunate ones, and to deny Inman a good deal of credit for less obvious generalship. Naturally enough, Inman, both by age and experience, is the greater **\*\*\*\*ian**, and is consequently not altogether attractive to the mere amateur maker of "hundreds-up" in a pub.*

*There are few experts in a crowd, few educated sufficiently to appreciate **strategy** behind a seemingly motiveless shot : but there are many I should think, quite intelligent enough to perceive the **skillful** and the **superficial**. I should not go so far as to say that this crowd was "**one-eyed**", but its friendliness to its countryman gave him immense confidence. I saw him knock up **156 "off the red"** with remarkable ease, the ball returning to within a **few inches** of its previous position after every shot. That earned for him a round of well-merited applause. But I should like to see him in a losing position and among an **antipathetic** crowd.*

## FRED LINDRUM AT MOREE

*.....The name Lindrum is now practically a bye-word in the billiard world --- his recent meritorious and persistent play with the Queensland prodigy, **Gray** --- clearly demonstrating that he is fully entitled to the designation of "**champion of New South Wales**"..... In the game with Matthews..... compiled.... 28, 95, 21, 13 and 221 (217.... off the red).*

*.....He is a quiet unassuming young chap, slow to converse and speaks only when spoken to. His age was the topic for discussion amongst the crowd, and after the usual congratulations, a representative of the "News" got going.*

*"About your age, Mr Lindrum. Some say you are 25, others that you are not 20".*

*"Wrong, Sir --- I am **22** years old. --- Quite a colt, yet".*

*"Is it a fact that you claim New South Wales as your birth place".*

*"No, it is not. I'm a Victorian born in Melbourne in '88".*

*"Where did your first important game of billiards take place".*

*"I'll tell you. When I was about **18** I was living in **West Australia**. I took a fancy to manipulating the cue, and after a little practice I entered for the championship of the West --- and won. That was really my first game".*

*"Your opinion of Gray, Mr Lindrum ?.*

*Young Gray is a wonder. You know he and I met for a considerable time in Sydney. He always conceded me points. I noticed that every time I met him he was improving fast especially in the losing hazard shot --- that's his special stroke. My biggest break to-night was obtained by what is now termed "**the Gray shot**, or losing hazard".*

*"But you accumulated that particular break off the red. Did you purposely get rid of the white ball?"*

*"No. I always prefer to give an exhibition with the **three balls** on the table. In my opinion, and with all due respect to Gray, scoring with only **two balls** is not, strictly speaking, billiards".*

*"How do you make that out. Is it not a more meritorious feat to accumulate a break with only two balls than with three ?"*

*"Perhaps it is, but in my own opinion, I would rather give the public a **fair** exhibition with three balls than a **good** exhibition with two. To play billiards you must necessarily have three balls on the table, and when one of the balls are absent it appears to me I am not playing billiards. I like playing the **all-round game** every time".*

*"Since you left Sydney, what has been your best break ?"*

*"At Tamworth. I met a man named Barry. I conceded him 300 in a game of 750 up. I won by 350. My principal breaks were **409** and **165** --- an average of 62½ . My opponents highest break was 35".*

*"About your game to-night --- were you in good form ?"*

*"Yes, I felt pretty well. Weston opened well --- in fact, I thought he was going to beat me. He played a slow --- too slow, for my fancy --- but good game.*

*"How was the table ? Did you find it fast ?"*

*"The table is a splendid one. But, you see, **wet weather** has a tendency, at first, to cause the cloth to '**give**'. I fancy it 'gave' a little to-night. To-morrow, if the day is **fine**, the cloth would revert back to its normal condition --- that is **fast**".*

*Just here the youthful champion referred to his treatment while in Moree.*

*"Since Mr Smart and myself arrived in Moree we have been treated splendidly --- especially by Mr Walker, who took us everywhere and introduced us to all the leading sports of the town. Then there was Mr Stanton, of the Central, who kindly placed his **motor car** at our disposal".*

*"And about the marker, Mr Lindrum. Did he give satisfaction ?"*

*"Yes, in every way. Marking a game, as you know, is a very responsible job. Some country markers --- enthusiastic billiard men, who have never seen a big break made --- lose their heads when a professional comes along. They seem to get carried away with the game and neglect the scoring. Not so with your local man (Mr Smith). He kept perfectly cool and registered every score that was made".*

*"Now, about your future movements, Mr Lindrum ?"*

"Ah, you touch me in a weak spot, when you ask that. I play at Inverell, Amidale and Manilla, and then return to Sydney. I remain there for a month or so, and then set sail for **England**. It is my intention to meet all comers --- I bar none --- and if perseverance, practice and confidence counts for anything I hope to make a name for myself in the billiard world. Before you go I will tell you a story about **Gray's** perseverance. On one occasion he and I were staying in the same hotel. It was my intention to get up early and devote a few hours practice before breakfast. I got up at **6 o'clock**, went into the billiard room, and who should I find there but Gray. I said to him, "You're early at it this morning?" "Early," he replied". "Why, I've been here since **4 o'clock**". That will show you what a persevering lad Gray is for his work. He practices **six** hours a day for **seven** days and never feels tired".

## SPORTING LIFE

21 SEPT 1911????

After a certain amount of doubt had arisen in **England** as to the likelihood of Fred Lindrum making the trip for the present season comes the news that the young Australian sailed on Tuesday from Sydney by the P and O ss **Malwa**. The announcement is sure to create general interest, for the **furore** caused by his fellow-Australian's play has only served to accentuate the keenness felt in English billiard circles to see Lindrum in action. **Reece's** tour last Summer has further served to bring home the great possibilities of Lindrum's play.

It will be remembered that Reece and Lindrum met on three occasions, Lindrum winning the first two games, while Reece took the last in very easy fashion. 'A **charming** style and a most **attractive** player', is Reece's verdict on Lindrum and his play, and it is a verdict that is endorsed by all who have seen him play.

Lindrum comes as a **free agent**, having declined an offer from Messers. Burroughes and Watts to participate in the Soho-square Tournament owing to the fact that he doubts his ability to play in such class company with **ivory balls**. However, the tour is certain to be a financial success, for Lindrum's style is one that will appeal to English enthusiasts. He has great capabilities as a **red-ball expert**, without rising to George Gray's heights; but he has a better conception of the **all-round** English game than has Gray. It may be taken for granted that strenuous efforts will be made in the coming months to bring the **pair** together in a serious match, but Lindrum is coming over without anything yet having been fixed up in regard to such a meeting.

## CURTAIN RAISER

?? ????? ???

Fred Lindrum follows in Gray's footsteps so far as curtain raisers are concerned, and opened his English season at Liverpool in a game against one **Collins**, who is a player that I feel sure **Frank Smith** could concede **3000** points in **9000**, Lindrum caught and passed his opponent in the fifth thousand, and eventually secured an easy victory. Lindrum is evidently following in the cultivation of the "**red loser**", at which he was proving himself an adept out here, for he contributed one big effort of **548**, comprising **480** red hazards. Should the **Australian champion** follow up with the red ball he is a likely customer for the world's championship. By the time he has had a trial or two in the "outer" he should be fit to give a fine display in his official opening against **Tom Reece**.

## JOHN ROBERTS V F LINDRUM JUN

The large attendance and keenness of the spectators showed that the interest yesterday afternoon was unabated in the exhibition match at **Alcock's parlor**, in which John Roberts

concedes Fred Lindrum **3000** points in **18,000** up. With the scores at 11,751 to Lindrum and 7918 to Roberts, the former resumed play, and added 29 to an unfinished break of 52. Roberts followed with a nice break of **162**, at the conclusion of which he was caught in two minds between a red winner and a cannon and missed both. Three solid innings of **117**, **68** and **158** respectively were then put in by the younger player. These were very correctly played, but for some time after this the players were somewhat **lackadaisical**, both missing ordinary shots. Further breaks of 53, 48, 40 and 35 came from Robert's cue, while Lindrum had runs of 74, 44, 79, 42 and 31 unfinished. Lindrum reached his points --- 626 --- in 17 cues, after **1 hour and 25** minutes play, and averaged **36.8**; while Roberts, with an aggregate of 423, had an average of a shade under **25**.....

..... The play was sensational in the evening. Lindrum added 185 to his unfinished break of 31, making **216**, by all round play, and then he lost the white objective ball, and continued to play with his own and the red. By fine, clean striking, principally into the **middle pocket**, he scored very rapidly. When he had added 291 off the red a **spectator** entering the room and taking a seat seemed to put him off his play. The shot was a forcing loser into the right hand top pocket, but he missed, and the break was brought to a conclusion for **507** full. Lindrum received a great ovation for his masterly innings. The break in question was his own **record**, his previous best being **435** against **AE Williams** in Sydney.

Roberts scored 14 in his next hand, and broke down, and Lindrum subscribed 28 when he gave a miss. Roberts had a blank and Lindrum ran to his points, with 120 unfinished. He aggregated **624** in **50** minutes, while Roberts only recorded **14**. Lindrum had the fine average of **312** for the session. Roberts has been suffering from a **heavy cold** during the last few days, and has not been at his best. In addition, he has struck his young opponent in a particularly brilliant mood. Lindrum is not far behind young **Gray** as a hazard striker, and that, combined with all round brilliancy, makes him, on present form, a particularly hard opponent to overcome. Concluding scores :-- Lindrum (rec. 3000, in play) 13,000. Roberts 8,356.

**WORLD'S RECORD FRED LINDRUM'S RECORD .. by Frank H Hart.**

So far as my memory serves, no one has ever approached the record of Fred Lindrum, in making **173** consecutive cannons under the present rules. To fully appreciate his achievement it has to be remembered that **ball-to-ball** are limited to **25** in succession. The break may then be continued only by the intervention of a hazard or indirect cannon.

Beginning along the top-cushion, Lindrum worked round the corner pocket, and then accomplished the unique feat of steering the three balls past the right-hand **middle-pocket**, ending up on the opposite side of the table after almost completing the boundary circuit.

The break, which extended from the afternoon session into the evening session, yielded **532**, all but **3** of which were from close cannons. I have seen **Tom Reece** manipulate the balls along three cushions at the top end, but never did he attempt to work them past the **middle-pocket**, where the danger of preventing one of them from disappearing has been regarded as insuperable. Fred Lindrum is worthy of all kudos for setting a new standard for **apostles of "touch"** throughout the world.

**NURSERY CANNONS BY FRED LINDRUM .....The Sporting Globe 1923**

Very popular with every billiardist --- class and ordinary players alike --- are nursery cannons. To play these shots with any continuity the most delicate touch is required. There is

something about nurseries **that tickle the fancy of the spectators**, who imagine that a run is likely to be broken when the balls become out of position.

Of course, you have to keep them only a few inches apart, and always have to remember that continuity is only gained by keeping your striking ball well in front of the two object-balls. If the striker's ball happens to get on the side at all it is always difficult to manoeuvre back into position again.

Now a sequence of **25** cannons is allowed for nurseries, and if one wants to continue he must break the sequence by an **indirect shot** --- that is by playing with the assistance of the cushion.

When playing the nurseries you generally run the balls along the cushion slowly, and if u come to the corner --- the pocket --- you have to manoeuvre the balls round again. It is easy enough to explain when playing, but most difficult to follow unless you see a champion affecting the **turn**.

I hold the **world's record break** for nursery cannons, having made **562** (elsewhere says **532**) when playing my brother **Walter**.

This article also haz a nice photo of Fred playing nurseryz along the top-cushion. He iz reeeking out over the left side cushion. He haz a two-finger hold of the cue about 300mm from the end. And he iz uzing a boucle bridge. His chin iz 200mm off the cue, ie the same az for all hiz shots, ie az for top-of-the-table & hazardz.

## BILLIARDS REMINISCENCES .....

.. BY H.S.

Probably no one ever saw **Roberts** taken at a disadvantage. Once, when he was playing Fred Lindrum, i remember him making so obvious a **foul** at nursery cannons that i felt sure he would stop without waiting for the inevitable protest. But while Lindrum was getting up to protest, Roberts made two little cannons at lightning pace, and declined to accept the protest.

**"Your know the rule, Mr Lindrum ; you must protest on the shot, not afterwards."**

**"But, i hadn't time to protest, Mr Roberts,"** said Lindrum. Roberts went on with his break without condescending to argue the point, to the great amusement of everybody, except Lindrum. This, it should be said, was only an exhibition game. Roberts would not have resorted to such tactics in a match with money on it.

## WHAT IS A BALL-TO-BALL CANNON ??

Some trouble over rule interpretation arose last week in the game between **Williams** and Lindrum, at **Melbourne**. During a run of cushion cannons by Williams, in order to break the sequence of ball-to-ball cannons, he first played off the cushion and made a **direct cannon**. Lindrum objected that such procedure was not in accordance with the B.C.C. rules, under which the game is being played. His objection was over-ruled by the marker, and Williams went merrily on his way driving the spheres along the rails. As the point raised by the Australian champion is a rather important one, it is well that it should be made clear. B.C.C rule 19, which governs limits to ball-to-ball cannons reads :-

**Consecutive ball-to-ball cannons are limited to 25; on the completion of this number the break shall only be continued by the intervention of a hazard, or indirect cannon.**

The rules of the Billiard Association are less explicit, they simply say :-

**No player shall make more than twenty-five consecutive ball-to-ball cannons.**

And the question arises **what is a ball-to-ball cannon**. And does not ball-to-ball mean from one ball direct to another ball without any intervention? If that is granted Lindrum is right and Williams wrong.

The Australian contended that to carry out the meaning of the rules it was necessary on or before the twenty-fifth stroke was made that the sequence of cannons should be broken by the striker playing from the first object-ball to the cushion, the cue ball then making contact with the second object ball. That is his idea of the indirect cannon demanded in the rules. William's stroke was not an indirect cannon. He certainly fired at the cushion, but when his ball came away it made contact from **ball-to-ball** direct --- not indirect, as the code stipulated.

**This is another example of the rules not being clearly phrased** so that the meaning should be perfectly clear. In their next game an understanding as to procedure on this point should be arrived at before the game commences, otherwise there may be trouble if the marker reads in a different interpretation of the rule to that given by the marker in the Melbourne game.

## LINDRUM V STEVENSON

### **Vibration**

A rather peculiar incident brought a Stevenson **399** break to an untimely end. When striding along in great style the English champion attempted a slow screw into one of the top corner-pockets. Putting plenty of stuff on his ball, he just over-screwed to the elbow of the pocket instead of the opposite shoulder. As soon as the ball hit the cushion the spin brought it over with a bump, but instead of taking the side, it twisted round on the lip of the pocket, & the marker a moment later called the score.

Great applause awarded the announcement, & while the noise was agitating the atmosphere the ball fell into the pocket. Stevenson was standing by, & remonstrated with the official for calling the score before the ball -- so he asserted -- had stopped **spinning**, but others had little doubt that it was **vibration & not spin** that caused the over-balance.

There is a special rule in the Billiards Control Council book dealing with cases such as this, which reads -- **A ball which has stopped on the edge of a pocket shall, if it falls in from vibration, be replaced -- if it balances momentarily on the edge & falls in, it must not be replaced.**

### **Referee's Duties**

Another **Billiards Control Council** rule which is an improvement on the **Billiard Association** code, is that relating to the duties of the **referee**. In the latter rules the referee **does not** interfere in cases of foul strokes or other breaches, unless appealed to.....

.....but the Billiards Control Council law states -- The referee is responsible for the proper **conduct of the game, & must of his own initiative intervene should he observe any breach of the rules.**

This is a point that should have the effect of protecting a modest or bashful player against an opponent who might take advantage of his weakness & transgress the rules. Some players when they know that they have committed a breach immediately **retire** from the table, whereas others go on until they are pulled up by the official.

Unfortunately, **referees** are not always appointed to the position, & the onus is put on to the **marker**, who, in most cases, is **too weak** or diffident to assert his power, & the cute player takes advantage when occasion arises in a break to run through for a cannon which could only be made by **pushing** the balls. Hence much notice should not be taken of big breaks made in a game which is not in charge of a strict referee. Take **championship games**, where play is a trifle keen, & compare averages with **exhibition games** & you will find the averages greater by at least **a third**.

### **Loser Limit**

The second meeting between Stevenson & Lindrum ended disastrously for the latter, who was defeated by **4228** points. The game was **18,000** up, with **Bonzoline balls**, & Lindrum had a start of **4000** points, the hazard stroke being limited to a break of **75**.

.... it came as something of a shock.... to find Stevenson put in a fine run of **141 off the red** ball on Thursday evening.

The champion stated.... that he was within his right, as firstly the sequence of 75 was **broken by a winning hazard**, the loser only being limited -- & second, it was **only Lindrum who was barred from exploiting the stroke**.

.... i feel sure that had Lindrum been aware that Stevenson did not bar the **dovetailing** of **winners** he would have made a much better finish of the game, for he finds the winner a valuable assistance in the compilation of his big breaks off the red ball.

LINDRUM V REECE

ALCOCKS MELB JULY 1914

Most popular of the English cueists that have visited Australia, **Tommy Reece** is always sure of the warm welcome that greeted him last week on his third trip to Australia. A strong and pleasing personality, combined with exquisite pose and dainty manipulation at the table, are strong factors in the Lancastrian's game. He may not be as great a point-maker at a pinch as **Inman**, but as a stylist Reece is away ahead of the English champion. And in exhibition billiards style counts. Nothing very startling in the way of breaks characterised the first week's play, save Reece's nursery cannon record referred to elsewhere, which was an especially fine piece of ball control .....

..... Reece was evidently in fine touch last week, and has, if anything, improved his rails nurse cannons. Several times during the first few days in the match with Lindrum he made large runs by his favorite method. Second day he ran a sequence of **90** close cannons, and on Wednesday eclipsed that performance by making **four** runs of **25** ball-to-ball cannons, the number allowed before contact with cue ball and a cushion has to be made under the rules. This run was included in a **303** break, counting **103** consecutive cannons (**206 points**), with **97** from other

strokes. So far as i am aware this is an Australian record in a public game from that system of point compiling.

The Australian, though not so expert as Reece on the close cannon, is improving rapidly in that feature of American billiards. On Tuesday he gave evidence of gentleness of touch by making **19** close cannons in the **centre of the table** by soft contact from ball-to-ball. Such billiards proves that the touch is there, more especially as immediately afterwards he got the **Crystalates** on the rail, and pushed the spheres along **32** times successfully until a **foul stroke** ended the run. With two such artists at close-cannon play the public should gain a good insight to that style of play --- but it can be overdone.

..... Lindrum has gone back. He has lost his abandon. That lightning-like quickness for seeing and getting to his shot --- that has all gone. In its place is the more slow, methodical, not-quite-sure-what-is-the-proper-game-to-play which one associates with the other Fred --- **Weiss**

..... **Reece** is much the same. On the first day the pace of the table surely puzzled him. It was the same which **boy Lindrum and Miss Roberts** had smoothed out for two weeks, and the nap was flat. Tommy prefers a table on the **slow** side, with a **nice rich nap** that stands up like a Papuan's wool, so that he may hold the balls along "the fence" for his favorite stroke. On this table they were like **quicksilver** in a changing temperature. .... On the first couple of days their displays were moderate, occasioned, as pointed out at the time, by an extra superfine cloth, which gave the balls more pace. **They had the cloth changed** to one with more nap, and as it settled down the form of both players improved considerably.

..... This game has been one of the greatest struggles for supremacy i have seen for years. .... What the game may have lacked in breaks was more than made up in the quality of the billiards. They were clever and bright. The game seemed to be different to the previous one. It was full of vim and life, with finesse, anxious looks, spirited exchanges, and a general desire for points, that enthused onlookers. .... Reece took his defeat in good part, promising to make amends if he met the Australian in London **with ivory balls**. Asked how he thought Lindrum would get on with them, Reece said :

"My opinion is that he will do excellently with them. He is such a good natural all-round billiardist that he can't very well go wrong. You see, his strength is that he plays all shots well. He is not weak in any particular stroke. Why, he plays the close-cannon now almost as well as i do. But he should go to London. Such skill is wasted here, with only two or three games a year".

..... Owing to the **outbreak of the war**, and the opposition of the amateur championship, interest was not too well maintained the last sessions of the game .....

## LINDRUM JUBILANT

The Australia is more than pleased with his showing in Melbourne last week --- especially during the last session. My **423** on Saturday was the best compiled break of my career. It was mostly made by all-round billiards, & i only went into hand about **3 times**, so you will see there were very few losers in it. No, i was not troubled to any great extent by the limitation of losers, though, of course, it sensibly affected breaks..... The experience is a good one, & has buoyed



me with the confidence that no matter what alteration (if any) may be made in the **rules** i will have as good a chance as most of those now taking part in big billiards.

## REECE WINS LAST GAME

..... Reece soundly defeated Lindrum in the final game of his tour, & returns home today from Melbourne with the fresh scalps of Stevenson & Lindrum dangling on his belt. Our frail youth is evidently failing, as he did against John Roberts last year, when, after opening brilliantly he faded & faded away, until the cue was like a **supplejack stick** in his hands.

**I am sore afraid that the 7 months in England, during the bleak season, when everything is white & cold & damp, will cause Lindrum to sigh for the golden sunshine of his own bright land, make him discontented, lose nerve, ambition to excel, & play up generally with his prospects. He is not of the same robust physique, nor has he the temperament, of George Gray.**

## FRED BEATS TOMMY IN HIS FIRST MATCH IN ENGLAND 1911??

Fred won by **661** points after being **1188** behind. .... now and then the Australian had recourse to the **"All-red route"** --- his best run from that source being **417** .....

"Do you intend using the losing hazard stroke to any extent?" he was asked.

"The **'tomato'** i call it." Replied Lindrum. "No : just here and there for exhibition purposes. **But if i meet Gray ---- every time !** It is the only way to beat him. He gets rather annoyed when he finds that others can play the same stroke, and the knowledge affects his game."

In connection with the Lindrum -- Reece match and a break of **401** by Lindrum, the "Sporting Life" states :--

"Favoring the **top pockets** at the ratio of **3 to 2** strokes, Lindrum revealed quite a new phase of the **'Gray' stroke**. Unlike his countryman, Lindrum very rarely affects the **running--through stroke**, and is apparently indifferent how far down the object ball comes so long as it is in the scoring zone for top or middle pockets in **half-ball shot**. It was the unanimous opinion of the onlookers that Lindrum's methods are much more attractive than **Gray's**, chiefly by reason of so many **long losers** being included, and the freer style of cueing, but that he lacks the mechanical accuracy of his younger countryman. Lindrum is not the master of the run--through like Gray, and it was a shot of this variety which beat him in the end."

"Australia is proud of him, and Australia is right."

" there is something about Fred Lindrum himself, or about his play -- probably the former -- which counts distinctly for popularity."

"There is nothing of the **canaille**, nothing uncouth, about this player from **'down under'**."

"He is a **gentleman** first, and a billiard-player out to win afterwards."

## ENGLISH CLIMATE ABOMINABLE

A London paper states that Lindrum felt the **cold weather** in London very much, and could barely keep up his circulation.

"Any criticism or comment upon Lindrum's first work should be base upon the knowledge that the Stadium, where he has played, has been most bitterly cold and draughty -- altogether the most unsatisfactory place, apart from the top of Snowdon or on the deck of an ocean liner in a hurricane, that could possibly have been chosen. Each game has been played with the shades swinging about. **The spectators all wore big overcoats, with collars turned up**, whilst all whose business compelled attendance are suffering from severe colds."

## NEWSPAPERS

When Fred Lindrum left Australia for England last year it was generally anticipated he would make a great name for himself among billiardists in the old country. ....

"I practiced **assiduously**," he said, during the course of an interview, "but was never able to produce a semblance of my Australia form. Even in matches which i won i did not show true form." "When i met him Inman showed excellent form during the two weeks of **icy-cold weather** and **storms** which almost **froze** one up, and made good billiards, so far as i was concerned, impossible."

Lindrum remarked that generally he had a most enjoyable time in England, despite the **extreme cold**, which so affected his **touch** that it was only on rare occasions he felt like being able to hit a ball truly, and big breaks were out of the question. "I did not play the red ball as a scoring medium to any great extent, except in my games with **Reece** and **Collins**, against whom i made breaks of **584** and **582**. In those games i had **fast tables**, while most of the other tables were altogether **too slow for red-ball play**."

## FRED LINDRUM SENIOR

Saw **Manchester** in total **darkness** at 12 o'clock noon, caused by a **fog**. **Ugh !** England is not looking too rosy, and, with **shipwrecks**, coal and other **strikes**, **murder** cases, **divorce** suites, and **suffragettes** breaking windows, all business is **topsy turvey**. Nuff sed.

## FRED, ON HIS TRIP ETC

"Unfortunately for me the **Winter** was of exceptional **severity**, and during the whole of my stay i never felt like playing billiards. Not only were the **chilly blasts** disconcerting, but the majority of the tables on which i played were altogether **too slow** for my style of play. Often and often i sighed for the **fast-running cushions** that i had been used to in **Australia**. But it was a vain regret."

"Doubtless my friends out here wondered why i **discarded red-ball play** in most of my games. The only reason i can advance was that, **punch** the balls as i may, they would not run to the desired position, so i had, perforce, to adopt other methods."

"I did not play the **red ball** as a scoring medium to any great extent, except in my games with **Reece** and **Collins**, against whom i made breaks of **584** and **582**. In those games i had **fast tables**, while most of the other tables were altogether **too slow for red-ball play**."

"I frequently saw **Miss Ruby Roberts**, the world's lady champion billiardist. She has improved her billiards considerably, and made a **222 break** just previous to my leaving London."

"I saw two of England's best amateurs play -- **Mr H A O Lonsdale** and **Major Flemming** -- but neither of them was in the same class as our **Mr J B Belfield**, either in knowledge of the game, style, or execution. In fact, the majority of amateur players in the old country did not appear to be up to the Australian standard.

"I saw **Gray** and **Stevenson** play, and think George has improved muchly in his red-ball play, but that **peculiar set of his when down on the stroke** will, in my opinion, always militate against his advancement in the **all-round game**. He is now on a two years world's tour with Stevenson, during which they have contracted to play with **Bonzoline** balls. Playing daily with such a master of the game as **Stevenson** should brighten up his game considerably, but my friend **has much to unlearn**. George has grown taller, without filling out, but the continuous strain of his many hours practice daily is telling its tale, and he does not look **so well** as when he left Australia."

**Inman's** "easy defeat of Reece in the championship was a surprise to the critics ; but, strange to relate, it was mainly brought about by **an extra fast running cloth**, which nullified Tommy's efforts in the sheet-anchor of his system -- **close cannon play**. Reece lost heart before half the game was through, and never afterwards looked like a winner. Billiards is a peculiar game if one's nerve goes."

"Amongst the young players who are coming to the front, the most proficient appears to be **W Smith**, of Darlington, who will probably be invited to take part in Burroughes and Watts next tournament. **Tommy Newman**, whom **Mr John Roberts** has in hand, is being boomed as a coming champion, but if he ever reaches that high elevation i will be much surprised for he has about **the worst style of any player of experience that i have seen**.

"There is a New Zealand youth now in Victoria, name **McConachy**, who is said to make **300** and **400** breaks by the all-red route.

"Yes. I have had a hit with **ivory** balls, and fancy they will suit my **touch better than composition**, as they **run faster**, and as they do not require to be "**punched**" as hard as the composition to bring them back to the **middle pocket range**, they do not interfere with one's touch for **top-end tactics** or **close cannon play**."

## LONDON LETTER ALCOCK'S SPORTING REVIEW AUG 1913

Fred Lindrum junior had to postpone the commencement of his game with **Aiken** owing to a singular accident. Walking through a **cab rank** one night, Fred startled a **horse** which was nosing in its feed bag. The animal threw its head up, & caught Lindrum under the arm, jerking the limb up suddenly. Fred thought the injury was not serious, but the pain intensified, & an **X-ray examination** showed that a piece of bone had been **chipped off the shoulder**. Fortunately, he obtained relief from massage of the muscles, but the accident has handicapped him temporarily at billiards.

## FRED BEATS WILLIAMS 16,000 TO 11,457 ALCOCKS MELBOURNE 1913

During the second week Lindrum had some fine sessions. Not only did he register breaks such as **600** and **570**, with sessional averages of **166, 110, 221**, for the week, but the billiards displayed was so bright and skilful as to make one wonder how he managed to lose so many games in England.

After only scoring **1018** to Williams' **3501** during the first four sessions, not even his greatest admirer expected that Lindrum would manage to win, by more than a thousand -- even though he was confident himself that he would win by at least **3000**. But to have **4543** in his favor is quite a revelation.

Each time the Australia got the running, **Williams** would rise from his seat and **walk out** of the room, leaving the door wide open, and each time young Lindrum had to stop playing to go and **shut the door**. These antics are positively unfair, contemptible, and unsportsmanlike, and do not redound to Williams' credit. .... When Williams again plays, a red ball room should be provided, lit by a soft blue haze ; it should be provided with a telephone to the marking board and a comfortable lounge ; he could then retire in comfort and await his call to arms.

Both of Lindrum's big breaks in Melbourne terminated unfortunately -- just as his **706** at Sydney did. In the **800** effort a party of four entered the room, and in making for their seat one of the bunch dropped his hat. Lindrum looked around, lost sight of his ball, and failed next hit on a long, thin loser in similar fashion to the Sydney episode. The **821** was cut **15** short of **George Gray's 836** by a **kicking ball**. Lindrum said that he sighted and played the last stroke correctly, but his ball kicked, and jawed in the pocket as a result. Both of these happenings might have been obviated, the first by not allowing visitors to cross the line of fire, or go to seats during a break ; the second, by player wiping his ball more frequently -- a detail which Lindrum omits too frequently.

Lindrum is having another easy win in his fifth meeting with Williams. The youth has quite surpassed anything else he had done the way of averages for the first week's play. His record of over **70** for thirteen sessions being upsides with the world's best records for a week's play. Generally Lindrum has laid himself out to deal with the **red ball**, with now and then a break at **top end** with a sequence of **nursery and rail cannons**.

Fred Lindrum set a further seal of greatness on his skill last week by climbing up amongst the world's records with breaks of **800** and **821** on following days. The former was two points only behind Stevenson's acknowledged record, while the **821** levelled up with the break that was denied to **John Roberts**. It is the highest break ever made in Australia under the present rules, with the sole exception of **George Gray's 836** compiled in the same room less than two years ago. The youth's play all the week was of the highest order, as, unlike Gray, he did not rely on hazards in the middle pocket all the time. Now and then a bout at the top-end and close-range shots would be played ; then a sequence of long hazards, alternated with the easier and surer middle-pocket loser.

## REECE'S OPENING GAMES

Our English visitor, **Tommy Reece**, opened his Australian tour before the members of the Victorian Amateur Billiard Association on Tuesday, having **Charles Memmott** as his opponent. The veteran was in receipt of **200** start in **700** up, but could not hold the Lancashire

Lad, who won by **139** points. On Friday evening members of the Commercial Traveller's Club were delighted with Reece's exhibition.

The public game commenced at Alcock's Rooms, Elizabeth Street, Melbourne, on Monday afternoon, with **Memmott**, who is in receipt of **2000** in **7000**. ..... The visitor was seen to advantage in his favourite role as a **close cannon player**. One break of **288** included **58** close cannons, and in another run of **177** there were **55**.

## FRED TELLS HIS VIEWS

Billiards is not a two ball game. It should be played with the three balls, and i think that those who control the game should invite alterations of the **rules**, that the three balls should be brought into play more frequently than my young friend **George** does.

Well, does not Gray have to start his game with three balls.

Yes. I admit that, but in most of his big breaks he **potted the white** right away, so as to get it off the table and **out of the way**. That is what i mean by making a **two ball game** of it.

Can you blame him?

No, certainly not; but i am sure that it will not be allowed to continue, and for that reason. It would not be justifiable for players to lay themselves out to **perfect** that stroke, and **neglect** other scoring methods.

But are you doing so yourself?

Yes; i admit that i am, but much against my own desire. I was always a strong hazard striker, and while the loser is allowed, and the public appreciate it as they are doing, well, why should i not experiment as well as the others? But i get awfully **tired** of it at times and feel impelled, even when going strong in a big break, to **mix** it a little at the **top end**. The trouble is, however, that when one mixes his game, he gets mixed up himself, and plays neither section perfectly.

Well, my advice is to keep on with the red as long as the rules allow it.

That is my intention. I recognise what a medium it is for big breaks -- even if **tiresome**.

What playing conditions lend themselves to red ball play.?

A **fine, fast cloth**, with true, **fast cushions** all the time. With a **slow cloth** and **irresponsive cushions** it takes some **hard hitting** to get the red down to the proper position for the **middle run through**. And when it does not come down some inches past the **centre spot**, those **fast, dangerous, swinging, long losers** have to be resorted to, and one has to be keyed up to concert pitch on them all the time, or he will soon be looking at the other fellow doing the scoring. Certainly most tables get **faster** as the game proceeds, but with a **light cloth of fine texture** one is enabled to get going right away, instead of **spoiling** his **average** for the first few sessions.

## FRED'S 840, 830 AND 1,239

The Australian record is handed over to another youth in the person of Fred Lindrum, jun. **George Gray's break of 836 (831 off the red)**, made in Melbourne on August 25, **1909**, has been lowered by his young countryman, Lindrum, in his match with **Tommy Reece**, in Melbourne. During the first couple of days play the young Australian appeared to content himself with a display of his all-round powers, holding the red ball hazard in reserve for emergencies. Reece was sailing along easily, and becoming familiar with the **bonzos**, so much so, in fact, that

on Wednesday evening he closed with a lead of **352** points. Evidently young Lindrum was now awakened to the responsibilities of his position, for on Thursday afternoon, after a run of **132**, he opened fire on the Englishman with a break of **736 unfinished**, and in the evening session he brought this to the total of **840**, of which **669** were off the red ball. A scene of excitement and enthusiasm occurred when it was known that Lindrum had beaten Gray's record, and the Australian champion was overwhelmed with congratulations. The break might easily have been enlarged, but the applause came too soon, and Lindrum stood back at an easy "loser." The youth is now on the job with the red ball, for he supplemented the above contribution with another **830 (819 off red) and 553 (447 off red)**. If Lindrum nurses himself, i predict that ere long he may be in receipt of the world's acclamations upon his compilation of a new world's record break. .... Lindrum's **840** break is a world's record for **Bonzoline balls**.

"Watch me tomorrow," said Lindrum, after Wednesday night's session, "I'm going to play the red ball seriously, monotonous or not." Reece, who was in play, opened yesterday's session with a try for a screw cannon, but he failed to come to grips. His breaks were **141** (brightened with **20 picturesque nursery cannons**), **70**, and **133 (129 red)**. Offsetting this, Lindrum made **132, 95 and 66**. So far the play has been consistent, but it possessed no features of special interest. Reece at the concluding shot of his **133** break had essayed a red loser into the middle-pocket. The balls **kicked**, and went wide of the mark. Lindrum, who secured a good leave in consequence, started at all-round scoring, and though he was out for hazards, he had to keep to all-round play for some time. It is not always that the loser game can be forced, though it looks obvious enough. Not until he had made **192** at mixed play did the **white come into position for potting**, with plain sailing ahead for in off the red afterwards.

From the first shot of a great loser sequence Lindrum was plainly in touch. He divided his attention about **equally between the middle and corner pockets**. Unlike Gray, he took the middles for the most part at **half ball**, and whatever may be the merits of the run-through, the thinner contact was certainly effective in the Australian's hands. The red always came back well in the centre of the table, and if it pulled up at all short, Lindrum, putting on a little pace, was sure of one of the corners. At these long hazards his delivery was exceptionally fine. The effect was seen in the moment of contact. On striking the red, the cue ball would check for an instant, spring away with a short curve, and then it would find its pocket, without even grazing the jaws.

Motionless, and with a face like a mask, Reece watched the fine lead that he had established decreasing rapidly. "**4348 all**," called Shaddock, amid loud applause. "On the stroke, gentlemen -- silence please." And amid dead silence Lindrum added **324** more to his score. "The end of the session, gentlemen; Mr Lindrum, **4,671**; Mr Reece, **4,348**. "The break -- what is the break?" "Give me a chance, gentlemen," shouted Shaddock, and the tumult died down. Then he answered, "**726 unfinished; 564 off the red**." The applause broke out again, and Lindrum bowing hurriedly, disappeared.

In the evening Lindrum carried his unfinished break of **726 to 840 (678 red)**. This is the Australia record under the present rules, and it is a world's record for **Bonzoline balls**. As Lindrum kept piling three upon three the tension amongst the onlookers increased. When he got to **821** (Gray's red record) Shaddock did his best, but he could not hold the house in hand. Lindrum stopped and chalked his cue. "That's the Australian record, i think," said Reece, and he walked over to Lindrum and shook hands with him cordially. Lindrum junior was elated ;

**Lindrum senior** took it all as a matter of course. "I've been making him practice losers on a **slow table** for the last day or two," was his only remark. Lindrum, plainly feeling the strain, broke down at three shots later.

Practically the whole of this afternoon's session in the Lindrum -- Reece match was monopolised by the Australian, who, after making **96**, ran to his points with **549** unfinished (**540** off the red). The session lasted an hour. Lindrum had all the evening session to himself, and carried his break to **1215 unfinished**, and thus broke his Australian record of **840**, made last week. No fewer than **1206** were made off the red. The early part of the break was made almost entirely at **the top pockets; but later on he devoted himself to the middle pockets**. There was loud cheering by the crowded audience when Lindrum reached the **thousand**. The applause was renewed at the end of the session.

## FRED LINDRUM V CLARK MCCONACHY

..... **McConachy** is only a young fellow --- he has just turned **21** --- and he has seemed for the greater part of this week to be too much **weighed** down by the importance of the occasion. He has broken down through what has looked like pure **nervousness** or over **anxiousness**. Frequently when a difficult shot is attempted he does not give himself time to **settle** down for it. Even when going at his top **Lindrum** seldom is **careless**, and always takes time to **study** his shot, and there is never anything **wearisome** about the champion's play --- indeed he is always **graceful** and **speedy**, without, however, being **careless**.....

## FRED LINDRUM IN ENGLAND 1928

Fred Lindrum arrived in England last Thursday, fit & well, & to find a full program of matches arranged for him.....

I am delighted with everything -- is how Lindrum described his look around London, which he had not seen for **17 years**.....The conditions here are ideal. I am in splendid health & expect to play well. I shall use the same composition balls as in Australia, & have already begun to practice.

The reference to the playing media is interesting. The make of ball in general use in Australia is the **Bonzoline**, while **Crystalate** balls have been adopted in England. .... Fred Lindrum said that the weather conditions after the **Esperance Bay** left **Fremantle** were most unpleasant, & that the **heat** in the **Indian Ocean** was unprecedented. Not long before the **steamer** reached **Colombo** a **3 year old girl** fell out of a **porthole** & was never seen again. This sad event & acute mental distress of the mother cast a gloom on the **Esperance Bay** for the rest of the voyage.

Hazard... witnessed the start of Fred Lindrum's game against Inman.... While Lindrum did nothing exceptional, he revealed himself a great player, strongly equipped at all phases of the game, & consistent enough to beat almost anybody if things go right for him. Like most of the Colonials, Lindrum is an exceptionally strong hazard striker. Losing or winning hazards come alike to him. Only once did he fail to sink the red. But he is no red-ball specialist. His game is an all round one, & therefore attractive to watch. He played one sequence of **close cannons** along the top rail which would have done credit to **Falkiner**. Indeed, he resembles Falkiner in **delicacy of touch**. The cue is balanced in the **finger tips & held well up the**

**butt**, in striking contrast to the majority of the English professionals, who favor a hold at the **extreme end** of the cue.

## MORE ENGLISH GRUEL FOR FRED LINDRUM

**Match with Willie Smith** The first meeting between the pair provided one of the most remarkable games in history..... The.. fortnight's billiards in Newcastle.... Smith amassed **30,900**... average **163**.... the most amazing scoring in the history of the game. Fred Lindrum was defeated by **19,178 points**..... .... Smith topped the 1000 thrice.... **1140, 1108, & 1041** -- but he had other breaks of **980, 964, 933, 925, & 908**. Altogether he made **21** breaks of **500** or over....But in the midst of all this justifiable laudation of Smith's wonderful performance, let us not forget the man who looked on, who never wilted under this terrific onslaught, & who, at the end of it all, paid a sportsman's tribute to his conqueror. Fred Lindrum may have taken the biggest beating any professional has ever had, but he was not disgraced. Lindrum played extremely good billiards, in the circumstances, all through the fortnight, & he had his pertinacity rewarded at the penultimate session, when he outpointed smith to the tune of **1143 to 585**.

**George Nelson's** opinion in the Leeds Sports Post -- Fred Lindrum was very ill advised to tackle Willie Smith after being in England such a short time. After the long journey... he should have at least **2 months** practice.... to be at his best.

**Fred Lindrum returning** Fred Lindrum was unable to begin his return fortnight's match with Smith last Monday owing to indisposition. Cabled later in the week -- Owing to continued ill health, & his consequent inability to find his form, Fred Lindrum has cancelled his remaining engagements & will leave for Australia on February 6. Lindrum says -- I was **medically examined** at Manchester during the last week of my matches against Tom Newman. The doctor advised me to leave England immediately as the climate did not agree with me. If i remained i would become seriously ill. Accordingly, i will leave for Australia on February 6, which is my **41st** birthday. The match against Willie Smith was abandoned because i could not do myself justice. The English public has treated me well, but i think i shall never return owing to the effect of the climate on my health.

**Hazard, Sporting Life, London** Fred Lindrum has never felt comfortably warm since he arrived in England. This is his sole reason for playing far below his real form. Possibly Lindrum made a mistake in taking on Smith & Davis on level terms, but Smith's amazing defeat of him by 19,178 did not break his heart, as i have heard it said. Lindrum is a likeable man, & is made of sterner stuff than that. Everyone is honestly sorry that he has secured so few bouquets. Hazard recalls that, apart from Gray, hardly any of Australia's too infrequent visitors have enhanced their reputations in England. **He wonders whether Walter Lindrum, after brother Fred's experience, will make the trip to England next season.**



# GEORGE GRAY

OBITUARY GEORGE GRAY

Billiards and Snooker, June 1970

Former World Billiards champion George Gray has died at Melton Hill, **Townsville** aged **78**. At the age of **16**, he made a world record break of **836** against **Fred Lindrum** in Melbourne & he was later to teach **Walter Lindrum** & in **1910**, as an **18** year old, he visited Britain to seek stronger opposition. In **1911** he took the World Billiards championship from **HW Stevenson** & held it for **18** years.

Born at **Albert Park**, Melbourne on March 28, **1892**, Gray received all his education in **Brisbane**. Fond of **athletics**, running, swimming & jumping, he fell one day while broad-jumping at the Brisbane Exhibition Ground & **broke his left arm**. Unable to jump or swim any more he went to his father's billiard room in the Carlton Club Hotel - later the Carlton in Queen Street. At not quite **11** years of age he took up a cue & a world champion was born.

After much practice he mastered the art of scoring the majority of his points from in-offs & pots. Others later tried to copy him but in **1926** the Billiards Association decided to limit consecutive hazards to **25** & put a stop to this kind of break compiling. He is the author of the book "**Red Ball Play**" of which **50,000** copies were published.

Gray played in almost every country in the world including England, continental Europe, Africa, India, Japan, China & the United States. He spent some years in **India** under the patronage of the Gaekwar of Baroda & other potentates. Mr Gray met & married his wife, Sophia, in **China** & gave up billiards as a profession when he left China in **1928**. The Grays settled in **Townsville** in **1936** & Mr Gray opened a billiards saloon. Mr Gray is survived by his wife & **two sons**.

## GEORGE GRAY JUNIOR

Following on the news concerning young Lindrum's skill with the cue at the Antipodes comes the report that the above young man has made **435** points off the red out of a break of **545**, which, if true, means that the record for that class of break held by **Inman** has been beaten easily by a boy of **fifteen** years of age. The table is said to have been a standard one, and other reports tend to show that, at any rate, both Gray and Lindrum have a fine knowledge of the game.

## TO THE NEW AUSTRALIAN BILLIARD STAR

Alcock's Sporting Review

14 January 1911

Little boy Gray, come chalk up your cue  
I've finished my break, & they're waiting for you  
The Red in the middle, your ball in the D  
So in off, & in off, & never mind me.

London Punch.

## DEATH OF GEORGE NELSON

The Billiard Player January 1957

*George Nelson, great authority on billiards & former Yorkshire professional billiards champion, died, at the age of 79, at his Leeds home on December 11<sup>th</sup>.... Nelson was the manager of the manager of the famous red-ball wizard, George Gray.... Nelson laid great stress on aim at billiards & declared Gray to be the finest aimer he had ever seen. Nelson commented to Gray one day on his favourite test for accuracy of aim, namely, placing the red & object white near the middle spot, with just sufficient room for the cueball to pass between, leaving, in fact, no more than a 64<sup>th</sup> of an inch margin.*

***If a player can go through the 2 balls & back again then he should go on scoring for a week.*** Gray said he thought he might do it once out of 10 tries. ***If you do it i will buy you a new hat,*** replied Nelson. Gray did it at the third & again at the 4<sup>th</sup>..!!

## DEATH OF HARRY GRAY

Billiards and Snooker May 1937

*The death is reported last February of Harry Gray, cueman & father of George Gray, who put up some wonderful red breaks in England & elsewhere. The late Mr Gray was 77 years of age, & in his day was one of the foremost billiard players in Australia. He leaves a wife & large family. Professional billiards & snooker are rather flat just now in Australia. **Walter Lindrum** has not been reported playing anywhere professionally of late. He had a friendly match with **Don Bradman** in **Adelaide** recently, when Don left the cueball in baulk & Walter politely cannoned & played on for the rest of the night.*

## HARRY GRAY

## ROBERTS HOTEL SYDNEY 1888 ??

*There he played a number of matches against **Hislop**, champion of South Africa, and an exhibition game with **Charley Memmott**, in which Gray was credited with making a break of over **1100** by aid of a **corner jamb**. I saw the run, and it was certainly the most remarkable break that it has been my lot to witness.*

## MEDLEY

The Billiard Player July 1956

*When George Gray, the red ball wizard, was making his 1000 breaks off the red, a humorist wrote--*  
***Billiards used to be played with two white balls & one red ball. Now it is played with one white ball, one red ball & one Gray.***

## BILLIARD BALLISTICS

George Nelson The Billiard Player November 1935

*George Gray was the best player of long losers i ever saw, & it is a fact that on the table i put up for him to practise on in Leeds, **he actually wore two grooves in the woodwork** of the baulk -end cushion, where the cue went over it for the long losers in either top pocket.*

*.... Gray's father used to **stand behind** Master George when he was practising, & if that **cue butt** came a bit high, down, very severely would come Gray senior's **hand** on it with the result that poor young George got the **jump**, not the ball.*

*However, seeing that Gray afterwards made a world's record break practically every week for the first 6 months he played for us, the importance of the **horizontal butt** will be seen.*

# 1000 BREAK AT LAST GEORGE GRAY'S TRIUMPH

Alcock's Sporting Review 14 January 1911

*It has come at last!! Playing against **Lovejoy** in London early in November George Gray reached the goal of all billiard players of a past & present generation, & gained the distinction of being the **first** player to make a **four-figure break** off the balls. Mr Gray will make a **1000** break this afternoon, remarked the **spot boy** at the hall where the Australian was playing Lovejoy, & the pressman to whom the prophesy was addressed replied All right, my boy. I will give you a **shilling** if he does. About an hour later the reporter was called upon for that **silver coin**. Amid a scene of unparalleled excitement George Gray had fulfilled the spot boy's expectation, running up a marvellous **1002** unfinished.*

*Resuming operations at the **middle pockets** he kept the red ball running up & down the central line of the table, & deviating very little to the right or left, with marvellous precision & those businesslike strokes of his. Suddenly the red ball ran out of its accustomed line. It came too far down & away to the left. Gray turned his attention to the hitherto undisturbed **white**. He played a very nice **short jenny** into the left middle-pocket. It brought the ball into the open, & two losing hazards of a simple kind were played into the left middle-pocket. They led up to a **cannon**, which put the red in play again. But the object white ran into awkward quarters, about 5" from the top cushion, & some 19" wide of the left top pocket. This position allowed just sufficient room for the cueball to find an open way to the pocket, & it provided not a few exciting moments, when Gray had to turn to a **long losing hazard** there, as if not covering the pocket the ball **interfered** with the player taking proper **aim** owing to its being in the **line of sight**.*

*The break had barely turned **400**, when Gray became detached from the red ball. He was quickly operating from the D again, however, & this time it was to stay there until he had beaten all preceding records. The fifth, sixth, & seventh hundreds were of the commonplace order.*

*With the reaching of the **800** it began to dawn upon those present that a new set of record figures might be in the making. From this point, with the mounting total of the break being whispered round, the tension began to grow. Unmoved by his even progress towards a record, the player went steadily on.*

*The excitement was intense as Gray, at **981**, became **unsighted**, & paused before getting up from the table & taking fresh aim. It was desperately keen work now through the next **six** hazards. The player showed that he felt the strain. Above all others, his **father**, seated under the marking board to the right of the player, was most concerned. Unable to restrain himself, & evidently misinformed of the actual figures, he **jumped** up & impulsively **kissed** his son when still **one** point was needed to complete the 1000. There was a scene of enthusiasm, the spectators cheering to the echo. For a full minute the hall was an animated scene. When at length order was obtained another strain was put upon the player & all present.*

*A strong reaction has come over young Gray. His nerve had momentarily left him. But the will power of the youngster soon came to him, & never a better shot than the loser at the right middle-pocket, which caused his break to read **1002** (unfinished), & presents him with the strongest scoring force of the day. As the cueball disappeared the cheers rang out afresh, & now, all smiles & happiness, Gray, who had been at the table just under the **hour**, received a whole host of congratulations as well deserved as they were nicely received.*

At night, after adding **141** points, all scored by red-ball losing hazards, Gray **failed** at a long shot at the **left top pocket**, although he had previously made two good strokes there past an **awkwardly** placed object **white**. With the total of his break at **1143**, the **contact** with the red was made much **too fully**, & the hazard missed. A great ovation was extended to Gray.

The second break of **1058** was made in instalments of 302, 750, & 6, in a game of **9000** up with **Cook** (receives **2250**), begun on November 14.

Playing against **Earnshaw**, at Accrington, on December 30<sup>th</sup>, young Gray crossed the **1000** mark for the fourth time, & by a curious coincidence duplicated his record of **1143**. In his match against **Diggle** last week Gray broke the world's record twice with breaks of **1200** & **1318**.

An Expert, who writes the Saturday article on billiards in the Daily Telegraph, says -- It is really an **entertaining** experience to undergo the **sensation** of witnessing one of Gray's prolonged efforts for a first, then a second, & a third time. I can write, not only for myself, but for others whose feelings have been told to me -- & there is very little difference among them all.

At the first acquaintance with the Australian youth, there are many things to note beyond his actual stroke play. There is his **appearance**, his **mannerisms**, & **style** of play to arrest the attention when it is to be found wandering away from the course of the balls. The extraordinary **tenacity** of purpose manifested in going for the red ball whenever a chance to get his ball in hand, the true direction of the red up & down & around the table to the scoring points below the centre spot, & the steady going, flowing character of his shots, all comes fresh to you.

A big chain of losing hazards does not **pall** upon you, for you are learning something with every added link. **But** a second, third, & subsequent **exposition** are **difficult to withstand**. While admitting the wonderful skill which enables the strong willed young player to keep the red ball under proper control & place three points after three points to his score with machine like accuracy, the process **wears you out**.

Wait until Gray meets a player of the first rank & plays a match on level terms, said the British critics, & since there was no other way of getting over that kind of obstacle we waited. Last week **E Diggle**, one of the very best English professionals, came along, & a match of 8000 up on level terms commenced. At the end of the first day's play the Australian had a lead of 540, which was increased at every session, until the finish in Saturday last gave him a victory by 4177 points -- more than half the game, the final scores reading -- G Gray **8000**, E Diggle **3823**. Gray's reply to the critics was to beat Diggle by a bigger margin of points than any English player he has yet met. In view of Gray's decisive victory it is important to note that **Stevenson**, against whom Gray is matched, can only concede Diggle **1000** in **9000**.

**Interview With A Williams**..... I have the opinion that a big sequence of red losing hazards is extremely **monotonous** to watch & that eventually a **limit** of **25** consecutive shots, as in the case of the **ball to ball cannons**, will be necessary.

..... From a gate point of view Gray is easily the biggest attraction in **Billiardopolis** today. All his London matches drew full houses, & the prices for reserved seats were **10s**, **7s6d**, & **4s**. There seem to be something **fascinating** about those red losing hazards after all.

..... Gray ... is a striking personality, which is perhaps only equalled in the person of **John Roberts**, whom he greatly resembles in his **hustle** for the quickest route to the next shot. If the young Australian were not the great player he undoubtedly is he would still be a popular **entertainer** by reason of his own personal qualities, of which his **quiet**, **unassuming** manner & entire **absence** of side are by no means the least.

In a chapter on **The last of the losing hazard game**, JP Mannoek was marvellously prophetic. Take this quotation as an example..... (Comment -- Here Mac haz typed Mannoek's original article almost in full).

**BILLIARDS EXPOUNDED JP MANNOCK 1904**

*This article concludes my prolonged treatise on the losing-hazard game & the control of the red ball.....*

*..... I have clung so tenaciously to these losing hazards because i am so satisfied of the value -- not realized by even the leading professional players -- that they possess. The great power that they exercise -- & must inevitably exercise -- upon the game, is, in my opinion, the force of the billiards of the future. I incline strongly to the belief that the top-of-the-table game has been overdone. Because John Roberts brought it into fashion, every aspiring professional naturally sought to cultivate it. They were not to blame in this. To see Roberts scoring with ease & celerity & the minimum of exertion could not but attract, & create, imitators of his original methods. They have cropped up in goodly numbers, though, with but a few exceptions, Roberts' high standard has been unapproached.*

*Everything for the top-of-the-table has been the order of going for these past ten years. The hours & hours, & days & weeks & years, that have been mostly wasted in its pursuit by one & another of popular cueists will never be known, though they may be guessed at. And has the quality of first-class billiards improved with it? That is a very open question. For owing to advantages in the way of increased opportunities & ceaseless playing by three or four of the front rank, they have reached a higher plane of ability than their contemporaries of a decade back, John Roberts, naturally, apart from the argument. Better implements, too, have helped in no inconsiderable degree to the somewhat improved state of things. But, withal, i take leave to doubt whether the present standard would not have been higher, or, at least as high, if instead of the top-of-the-table game the great professional players had cultivated the simple, but sound, losing-hazard play.*

*Given a good-class player, who will spend the same amount of time on the losing-hazard game that has been done on the top-of-the-table game, i would not like to venture an opinion on what the bounds of his scoring might not be. A few seasons ago Roberts made many breaks of over 300 with only the red ball upon the table. What might he not have done if he had worked the object white in combination with the coloured ball ? I am certain that, had he adopted such a scoring policy, some really wonderful records would have been created by him in this line. The work may be a trifle more arduous, but it is so sure. The spectators, too, i am convinced, would prefer it to the unknown mysteries of those delicate arrangements inseparable to the play around the billiards spot. It is more their own game, simple & plainly to be understood in all its bearings. What produces livelier satisfaction or more genuine applause than a string of losing hazards off the red ball ? Go where you will it is the same. The onlookers are seeing something that they understand, & thy appreciate it. Too often the top-of-the-table game intricacies are as Greek to them. They know the points are coming, but how it is done they cannot tell. Say what one will the top-of-the-table game is rising to a pitch at which it threatens to rival the spot stroke in its monotony. Nothing, nothing, but to get the balls along the top cushion is the aim of the star artists.*

*Billiards is a game that has undergone, & in the certain nature of things is bound further to undergo, many legislative changes. In America it is the same too, as on the Continent. Whenever any single stroke detracts from the all-round character of the play it has been put aside. We have seen the spot strokes & push strokes disappear, & in the pocketless game many restrictions have been enforced to kill the one-time endless runs of cannons.*

*I may be ahead of the times or i may not, but all the same i venture to prophesy that the game of the coming generation will be the losing hazard game. As fashions vary in everything, so will the fashion of the top-of-the-table game die out or be compulsorily wiped out. If we manage to get a young & gifted player, with a level head enough to break away from the top-of-the-table fetish & go in whole heartedly for the commonplace losing hazards, then will the older hands be asking themselves many & not easily answered questions. Hanging & hanging on to the lucrative red ball, he will set the billiard world ablaze by the magnitude of his breaks. Every tongue will go to chorus the same approval that went up when Roberts first exposed his hand.*

*Please do not think that i am building castles in the air, or that the losing hazard is a monomania with me. I put it forward because i know its good qualities, & what it may produce. What i want is to see it taken up & fostered & nourished as the "top-of-the-table" game has been, & then you, too, will appreciate the why & wherefore of my support to it.*

*It may, & will, mean a slower game, but, in the place of the fleeting impression of a cannon or a winning hazard that the top-of-the-table game gives, you will have a defined stroke every time to watch. There will be few, or none, of those bugbears in the way of the balls covering, which even the best performers cannot avoid when engaged in the close work by the top cushion.*

*All will be assured easy travelling to the skilled player, & the panorama of his strokes will be more acceptable & understandable to those who may watch them. If breaks of five, six & seven hundred are not at least as plentiful as now, point me out as an unworthy prophet. But there is no fear of that.*

*Now what i want to know is, who, of the present celebrities, has the courage to take up with & abide by the losing-hazard game.??*

## THE SPORTSMAN

MANNOCK 1911

*Gray has beaten his Australian records in England, which is certainly a notable achievement, but there is an aspect of the case that apparently has been overlooked. The tables have been specially made to suit his play, & the cloths have been extremely fine. **He has been playing upon the fastest tables i have ever seen.** The tables were built for the losing hazard game played by Gray. Every endeavour has been made to create playing conditions favourable to Gray --- not his opponents --- & produce something akin to the **fast-running Australian tables.***

*What we want to see, but what appears to be remote, is Gray performing on an ordinary **hotel table**, as the English professionals do.*

*.....It is a pity that the gentlemen who coached him did not teach him **a correct stand.** He is **ungraceful & unsteady**, & that causes the player to miss a great many strokes that are not run-thru losers into the middle-pockets. He does not shine at the all-round game as he might have done if he had been taught to **stand properly.***

## BEST BREAKS OFF THE RED BALL BY ENGLISH PLAYERS

Alcock's Sporting Review 14 March 1911

372 Roberts December 10 1898	294 Osborne March 16 1906
354 Stevenson April 16 1909	279 Dawson January 18 1909
348 Roberts December 1899	
300 Inman October 11-12 1906	

The following are the highest breaks made in England by professionals by all round play, exclusive of the anchor cannon efforts

3304	WJ Peall	821	J Roberts	625	M Inman
1392	J Roberts	802	H Stevenson	577	T Aiken
1143	G Gray	791	E Diggle	567	C Harveson
985	E Diggle	748	C Dawson	545	F Bateman
823	Dawson	645	T Reece	541	F Weiss

## HOW TO MAKE LOSING HAZARDS

From Pearson's Magazine by George Gray Alcock's Sporting Review 14 March 1911

.....My father made me the subject of an experiment. He had a theory that, whereas to acquire the necessary skill for **top-of-the-table play** would take me many years, **losing hazard** play could be acquired in less than **half the time**, & would yield bigger results. On these lines, then, he proceeded with my instruction, & was called a **madman** for his pains by all of the Australian billiard public. Their standing **joke** for many a long day was the **old crank** who thought he was going to make a **champion** out of a **little boy** by teaching him losing hazards. It is possible, by means of hazard play, to make **100** points in **six & a half minutes**, though it would be **impossible** to keep on at this rate.

## GRAY'S LATEST 2196 UNFINISHED

Alcock's Sporting Review 14 April 1911

George Gray, the Australian billiards prodigy, easily beat all his previous records in the recent match against **Harveson**. He made an unfinished break of **2196**, including **540** consecutive losing hazards, thus fulfilling prediction of **Stevenson** that he would reach a break of 2000.

## GRAY & HIS CRITICS

Alcock's Sporting Review May 13 1911

The fantastic efforts of press writers to undermine the security of Gray's position as a showman have had a ludicrous ending. One critic more venturesome than the others went so far as to suggest that Gray's **habit of slowing the cue to rest on the cloth after a stroke, & making a lateral movement with the tip, raised the nap sufficiently to check the object-ball on the desired spot.**

This theory was not only **insulting** to the Australian youth --- who was practically accused of employing **unfair** means to render his big breaks off the red possible --- but it was ridiculous from a scientific aspect, & has been laughed to scorn by all who have studied the game here.

By his remarkable victory, says *Sporting Life*, Gray has proved beyond question that as a scoring force he stands alone. His actual play has been a **revelation** of the perfection to which his special stroke may be brought. His **bridge** & cue **delivery** are beyond improvement, &, more-over, has come on to a startling degree as regards the **ease** & **celerity** with which he works up positions. The **brain** is behind the cue all the time.

By defeating Inman, Gray has conquered a player who is incomparably the finest exponent of safety play in England. A born **strategist** & **tactician** to the finger-tips is Inman, & yet this wonderful boy Gray has won by more than half the game. The idea of stopping Gray has been killed.....

Inman, however, battled pluckily & doggedly against overwhelming odds. At times he showed attractive play, especially at the **spot end game**, & this despite the fact that he never felt at home with the balls, which he described as being very much **smaller** & **lighter** to the touch than those he is accustomed to. To use his own words -----

**..... I felt as though i daren't hit a ball, it was like playing with three peas, after being used to the ordinary ivory balls.**

Mac's comments -- New ivoryz were obviously uzually the full size allowed, ie  $2^{6/64}$ " , whereaz special match Crystalates were often only  $2^{5/64}$ ", the minimum size allowed for a ball being  $2^{4/64}$ " which for some stupid reazon iz the stupid size now foisted on stupid billiardz playerz by the stupid powerz that be.

Many good judges of billiards in England claim that George Gray possesses a **general knowledge** of the angles of the table, the dynamic effects of a ball rolling with & against the nap, & execution in **masse'** strokes, which is little, if any, inferior to the best English cueists.

This was exemplified in his game last June with Inman. The latter buoyed himself with the belief that his great knowledge of the finesse of billiards would enable him to **cramp** Gray's game, by resorting to **safety** tactics. The theory was however illusive, for several of Gray's **big breaks** sprang from safety shots by Inman.

..... Once, after Inman had recorded a fine double century break, from which Gray got in & was playing his favourite loser, he was only enabled to use the centre pockets & the top left receptacle, owing to **Inman's ball** being right in the **jaws** of the top right pocket. When Gray had made about 150, a voice broke the silence with a remark, **Give him a chance, lad.** Gray did!! Half a dozen strokes later he **downed Inman** & left a **double-baulk**. For **three** entire sittings **Inman** had only **two** visits to the table, & **failed to score a point**.



..... I once **retired** from the match i was playing against George Gray, but at the time it did not become news. It happened like this. We were playing at the Athenaeum, Manchester, & as in the previous four weeks we had been playing at Edinburgh & Glasgow, i had not seen Leeds for 6 weeks, & was naturally anxious to get home. The train service from Manchester to Leeds was very bad, the last night train leaving Manchester at 8:50, on the Saturday night, so i said to Gray.....

Look here, young feller-me-lad, you had me in the chair for 2 days without a shot, so i want you to oblige by running clear out tonight. I've got a taxi at the door with my luggage on it, & i want to catch the 8:50, so get busy on that all-red rout of yours.

He did, & although we only started play at 8 i caught the 8:50, but as he wanted **660** for game when i left, i was rather anxious to see Monday morning's paper. Gray had gone to game alright, & in my opinion, at that time, Gray could have gone to game from any day in the week. I saw him make 20 odd **1000** breaks & one **2000** odd unfinished, **but Gray only stopped when he wanted.**

## MORE MEMORIES

George Nelson

Billiards and Snooker August 1937

Though he had well passed the allotted span, i was sorry to see recorded in Billiards and Snooker the death of my old friend Harry Gray, the father of the famous George Gray. It brought back to my mind many memories of that hectic 12 months i had in 1910-11 with the two Grays, when the newspapers of that time devoted more space to George's doings than to any other subject. To give you some idea of our Press prominence at that time i think i cannot do better than relate the following incident.

We were so popular with the Press that this august body actually entertained us to a dinner at that leading restaurant, Simpson's in the Strand. It was no hole & corner event either, for present were the Editors of Reuter, Press Associations, & many of the leading newspapers, the guests of the evening being, George Gray, Harry Gray & yours truly. It was a dinner worthy of Simpson's, & as our American friends might say, that's a mouthful. The after-dinner speeches went their usual course, & the Editor of the Press Association proposed the toast to the guests of the evening. As a sop to the billiard reporters poor old Bert Young was put up to second this toast. I am afraid he had dined not wisely, but too well, for this is how he did it.

Well gentlemen, all i can say is if it had not been for George Gray,  
George Nelson & Crippen, it would have been a damned poor year.

It was the year of the Crippen sensation & so you see he was evidently our only rival in the news. Ah me, i was a serious young man then & did not appreciate the humour of this priceless but unconscious putting of newspaper fame in its proper place. But whatever offence it then gave me has been wiped out, & the longer i live the more i relish thus being put in my proper place. This did not end the evening's hilarity, for later Harry Gray thought he ought to have a word, & when he got on to his feet he unconsciously got one back for us by starting his speech with....

.... Mr Chairman, gentlemen & the Press.

And the rest was drowned in loud laughter. Harry Gray wondered where the joke was, & i still smile at the memory of his puzzled face. Well, i could go on telling you funny stories of

that famous 12 months, when George Gray broke records practically every week, till the cows come home, but i must give a few lines to the memory of the old man.

Harry Gray undoubtedly provided the brains for his famous son, for it was one of those rare cases where the brains of the elder were transmitted to the younger. It has often been said that skill at billiards runs in families, the notable instances being John Roberts & father, the Bennett brothers, & the Lindrums. But it stands to reason that if a man is born with a father who has special knowledge of any particular subject, if the son will give his time to study & practise that subject, he is one of those lucky fellows who starts off with a big advantage over the average student.

It was thus with the Grays -- the old man was not only a very good player & an ex-Australian champion, but he was a one-idea person, & that idea was that a skilful young player if given the proper training would soon make world's record breaks off the red. Without being as keen as Gray or as correct technically, i had the same idea of red-ball play, & the files of the Yorkshire Evening Post will prove that not having the time to train myself, i tried to train several young Yorkshire players on the all-red route long before Gray was ever heard of. That, of course, was why i, whilst others scoffed, believed in Gray & was instrumental in bringing him to England & becoming his English manager.

Harry Gray had all the theory of red-ball play before George was born. Indeed, an interesting incident that threw light on this was that when i was playing Gray in London, we had with us to see the match, the Australian doctor who brought George into the world. He joined us later at dinner & there he told me that in the year George was born they began to think Father Gray was going a bit funny, he was so full of stories of 1000 breaks off the red.

The old man told me he tried to teach his elder sons how to do it & one called Leslie bitterly disappointed him for in his early days he showed much more gift for the game than ever George had.

But George had that greater gift the infinite capacity for taking pains which is so near all genius. As an instance of this, when Gray came to England in 1910 he stayed with me for 10 weeks & at my Leeds Kirstall Road rooms i had a private room fitted up for him to practise in. Well, he was up & away down to that room before breakfast & seldom came back without doing a solid 10 hours practice, sometimes more. When i asked if he would like a few days off he said...

**No, that's nothing, for the last 5 years i have always practised 7 days a week & always put in at least 70 hours practice a week.**

And there was the perfect combination of the old man's 30 odd years practical experience, plus any amount of theory, with the perfect machine in George Gray's young & perfect body. George had exceptionally good eyesight & he had modelled his stance on a study of anatomy so as to best stand the strain of the 1000 breaks he so readily made off the red.

In the first 6 months he played under my management, George Gray made 23 world's record breaks, his best being **2185** unfinished against the late **Cecil Harveson**. In my opinion Gray could have doubled the size of any of these breaks had he so wished. Indeed, i honestly believe he could have made a **5000** break at that period.....

## GEORGE REID

..... You in Australia cannot realise how much he has improved since his advent in England. I have seen the best billiards for the past 10 to 15 years. I say his improvement is almost incredible. When he made that huge break [2000] at Nottingham i journeyed down especially from London to see it. I had the honor of presenting the winner with a cheque and a pearl pin, given to Gray by his admirers in Nottingham. I saw all his big break. It was **insinuated** that Gray, by **striking the nap** of the cloth after the execution of each stroke **affected** the progress of the ball. (Mr **Reece**, disgustedly : "**Piffle**"). Yes, it was **piffle**. We know where that suggestion emanated from No ; it wasn't from the players.....

## PLAIN TALKS TO BILLIARDS PLAYERS TOM AIKEN 1924

In April **1913** Aiken set out for a tour in Australia with George Gray. The trip proved a great success in every way, & Aiken brought back many happy memories with him. In addition to his games with Gray, he played successfully against Lindrum & Williams. Against the latter, in Sydney, he put up a fine break of **545**. It was with Gray in this tour (at Brisbane) that Aiken & the Australian took part in a joint performance which is perhaps unique in billiards. Gray resumed the session with an unfinished break & carried it to **1126**. Aiken's immediate reply was to run to his points with **519**. **One** hand by each, & the **session** was finished !!

..... About the same time i was told of a humorous incident that happened to the late **John Roberts** when on tour in Australia. He had strolled into the billiard-room of the Hotel Metropole, Sydney, & was at once accosted by the precocious **boy marker**. 'Give you **fifty** in a **hundred**, sir', said the lad. Roberts stopped, &, without uttering a syllable, produced a **card** from his pocket & handed it to the boy with great solemnity. The card, of course, designated Roberts as the '**Billiards Champion of the World**'. Not taken aback in the least, the boy looked up & said, 'All right, sir ; I'll just give you **thirty**'.

..... I remember when i was touring in Australia with Gray, his father took me into a **little billiard-room in Brisbane**, where, he said, his son had been practising the red-ball game for **ten** hours a day!! This seems almost incredible, but i can vouch for the authenticity of it. It certainly shows what a professional has to go through before reaching the top of the tree.

Another interesting fact Gray told me was that he fixed a **wooden peg** into each of the **two top pockets**, barely leaving enough space for the ball to go through, & that if George **knocked the peg out** when playing the long loser, he had to **play the stroke again**.

