

Racking up a trophy

Right on cue, these Stokers show their stuff

BY TOM STEVENSON



League members present a check for last year's profits to representatives of Esther's Pantry

A group of gay pool sharks from Portland recently showed the rest of the nation they are able to compete with the best.

Six players from the Portland Lambda Pool League competed in the Barbary Coast Invitational, a top billiards tournament held in San Francisco, and came away with the second-place trophy. The tournament was held in conjunction with the West Coast Challenge, an annual California Gay Billiards event.

The invitational featured eight select teams from across the nation: two from San Francisco; two from Long Beach, Calif.; one from Palm Springs, Calif.; two from New York City; and the Portland squad, which called itself the Stokers.

According to Ron Rasmussen, the event was a special one, with hosts pulling out all the stops to make it a top-notch tourney.

"It was an extremely well-run event," he says. "The San Francisco League ran two separate, simultaneous events, and they were both extremely well-executed."

The members of the Stokers were Ann Brandt, Roger Anderson, Andy Guthrie, Danny Turner, Catherine Tran and John Toy, Portland Lambda Pool League vice president. League president Eric Nelson did not compete in the event but traveled with the team to help with organizational efforts during the tournament.

The members of the Portland team earned the right to compete by qualifying at a Lambda-sanctioned tournament held earlier in the Rose City, according to Rasmussen. Those tournaments were double-elimination, best-of-three games, and all league members were invited to participate in the event.

"They had to win the right to play," Rasmussen said. Team members then put in a number of hours of their own time preparing for the big event; however, the league covered accommodations and airfare for the all-stars.

Once they arrived at the Barbary Coast Invitational, the Stokers displayed talents that would make all of the players proud. The team "unexpectedly trounced" a squad from New

York City, according to Rasmussen. And from then on, they were on a roll.

All matches were played to a score of nine. The Stokers beat the San Francisco Renegades and a Long Beach team and was undefeated until losing a heartbreaking match to the Renegades 9-8, 9-7 the next day.

This was the first time a Portland team has competed in a national gay billiards event, at least that Rasmussen, Nelson and Toy know about. But it certainly will not be the last, especially after the huge success the Stokers had.

Members of the league have been invited to participate in a New York City tournament this October. In addition, some of those attending the San Francisco tournament attended a board of governors meeting for the West Coast Challenge in hopes of being able to join that event at some point in the near future.

Until then, the members of the Stokers just will keep working on their game with competitions in the Portland area as well as league play.

A total of 11 teams play in Portland gay bars from autumn through spring. About 90 active players take part in league competition.

A number of the players in the league also compete in other Portland-area leagues. The league's board of governors also is planning a number of fund-raising events this summer, according to officials.

Each year, the league donates 100 percent of its profits (about half of its annual revenue) to a Portland charity selected by members. Last year, the league presented a check for \$900 to Esther's Pantry, which serves people with HIV/AIDS.

The league will hold its season finale banquet April 23, at which time this year's proceeds will be donated to another deserving charity. **J**

Anyone interested in joining the PORTLAND LAMBDA POOL LEAGUE should call Eric Nelson at 503-317-9511, send e-mail to woofdoggie2000@yahoo.com or check out the Internet site pdxjim.homestead.com/lambdapool.html.

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