

snooker tables.

Then, in January of 1974, the 21-year-old Christopher left for the United States to make a name for himself in the world of pool.

"I was determined to beat the best players and make this an acceptable sport event," he said.

He found the transition quite easy from snooker to pocket billiards because of the smaller pool table and larger pockets and balls. He spent several months trying to promote the sport in Manhattan before his luck changed forever that September day when he sank 5,688 consecutive balls in a 24-hour span to get his name in the Guinness record book.

"The doors started opening for me with movie parts, videos and sponsorships, and big money shootouts with the best players for such shows as ABC network's Wide World of Sports."

Christopher still proudly wears his ABC Wide World of Sports lapel pin presented to him by Roone Arledge, who ran ABC sports from 1968-86 and ABC news from 1977 to 1998.

"Only two others have such a pin, Muhammad Ali and runner Carl Lewis. I think I am in some pretty select company."

Besides playing pool all over the world, he also made a living endorsing products and services.

"I played every champion in every major country in those 22 years. I have lost games but not the match," boasted Christopher, who still considers Minnesota Fats as the greatest pool player in the world.

When asked about his winnings in the sport, Christopher thought for a moment before answering, "It has compensated me well and rewarded me with a wonderful lifestyle, to be with the rich and famous and with families that play this games. Do you know there are 100 million pool enthusiasts in North America alone?"

After the deaths of Mosconi in 1993 and Minnesota Fats in 1996, Christopher's career stalled.

"We lost two household names in pool and I couldn't sell any more pool packages to major American television networks," he said.

Christopher has been using pool to endorse products over the past eight years "because pool can sell anything. When you do a trick shot, people stop and look."

Christopher returned to Belleville in early March and is staying with his mom on Sidney Street while he looks to buy a house.

"I will live here full-time but I will always travel and promote this wonderful sport until the day I die because this is the most wonderful sport for the entire family. It's a wonderful way to relax. It's good mentally and physically."

Christopher practises every day at Mr. Zed's on Front Street "to keep my game good" in anticipation of his final televised shootout next year.

He hopes a younger generation of pool players will continue to promote the sport the way he has.

"Then I can rest and know that the career that I chose was not in vain."

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