

TUCKER, Debbie

Top billiards player off to Las Vegas

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By CHRIS MALETTE
Staff Reporter

Don't look for Debbie Tucker hustling pool in Belleville bars.

In fact, if you want to catch Belleville's hottest new billiards phenom, try Las Vegas next week.

That's where the 20-something Newfoundlander will be representing her home province in the All American International Billiards Championships.

Tucker moved from Newfoundland to Belleville six months ago and says she hates to play in barrooms. There are the usually rolling eyes of the men who feel it's a sacrilege that she's invaded their game, but Tucker says the tables are second-rate.

"I'm used to playing on a table that's three-and-a-half by seven feet and the tables you find around here are just not the kind of thing I have to have to keep my game up," says the Newfoundland champ — that's men's and ladies champ, thank you very much.

"It's like playing golf on a pasture."

She gets her practice on a

friend's table and is worried if she did play in bars it "wouldn't be quite right. I'm a teacher and I have a profession to worry about."

Tucker is something of a true poolhall phenom, however. She's only been playing five years and is beating the best men and women in the world.



DEBBIE TUCKER

"I've played in Dallas and Kansas City and, the woman who won this tournament (in Las Vegas) last year was the same girl I took for \$1,800 in the gambling room the last time I played her."

But, Tucker says she eventually lost to the same player in the big match at the Kansas City tournament "because she was used to playing with the cameras, lights and pressure. I have to overcome choking in situations like that."

In her third year of university, Tucker said her best friend's mother won \$1 million in a lottery and opened an up-scale billiards hall in Newfoundland.

"That's where I started playing and I met one of the best male players in Canada who taught me the game in a serious way."

From there, she says her "gift" took over.

"I guess I've always had the gift to play pool, but never used it until about five years ago. I hope to eventually make a career of it."

But, she says her chosen career, now, is teaching and "I have to have my priorities."

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