

The ROCKWOOD Miller

Winning pool tournaments 'takes a lot of getting your butt whooped'

Locals ready for international pool tourney in Las Vegas

Although Rockwood's Derek Hodge knows his losses have taught him more than his wins when it comes to playing amateur competitive pool, he hopes to hit a winning streak when he plays at the American Poolplayers Association (APA) championships in Las Vegas next week.

Asked what it takes to play pool with the best in the world, Hodge, 32 said it "takes a lot of getting your butt whooped." He has a seven handicap, the highest amateur rating achievable, and said through his years of playing has learned to pay close attention to why he gets beat.

"When you lose, you have to be able to take something away from that, so it takes a lot of time and focus on why your opponents are beating you. It's not the lucky rolls that make me win – it's the self-awareness of your game, and a lot of help from coaches, men-

tors and tutorials," Hodge said, adding once you get the physical skills, it is a matter of realizing what you need to do and control the cue ball.

Hodge, in his fourth appearance at the APA, will play in a Scotch Doubles tournament with his sister-in-law Jenn Canning, with whom he beat out 20 other teams in Guelph in April for the spot. Also playing in Vegas will be Hodge's brother, Drew, 31 – in a Masters and a nine-ball tournament – and their pool-playing parents will be there to cheer the family on.

When he plays, Hodge said he gets in his "own little zone" and relies on muscle memory. He knows there will be nerves. "You're going to have some nerves – if you don't have nerves then you're not a competitor. You don't know what it is to lose and you don't know how it feels to win," Hodge said, adding he uses that nervous energy as a focus to calm down and remind him that it is a competition.

Like many players, Hodge has some game rituals, but said he is not superstitious. If things

are going well when he's shooting, Hodge said he might sit a certain way on the chair or hold his cue a certain way as he waits for his turn. "I'm a very observant person so I notice stuff like that, so I'll make sure that I do it until it quits working – maybe that's another way to calm my nerves by focusing on something else when you're not at the table."

Although some players have a slew of cues to play with – some costing as much as \$20,000 – Hodge plays with a \$700 Falcon cue, purchased five years ago – one which gives him confidence and feels comfortable.

Hodge's brother and father are also seven handicaps – possibly the only family to have that many high ranking players. His mother, Mary Ann Hodge is a member of *Hodge Podge*, the highest ranked Ontario team which placed ninth of 226 teams in 2000.

Mary Ann Hodge said the tournament is played in a building the size of two football fields with 196 pool tables in three rooms. The team events – there were over 700 teams

Washroom where local teen was killed will be demolished by Guelph

The Guelph public washroom where Rockwood's Isabel Warren was killed three years ago will be torn down by the City of Guelph following talks with the then 14-year-old's family and Warren's Grade nine classmates at Bishop Macdonell Catholic high school.

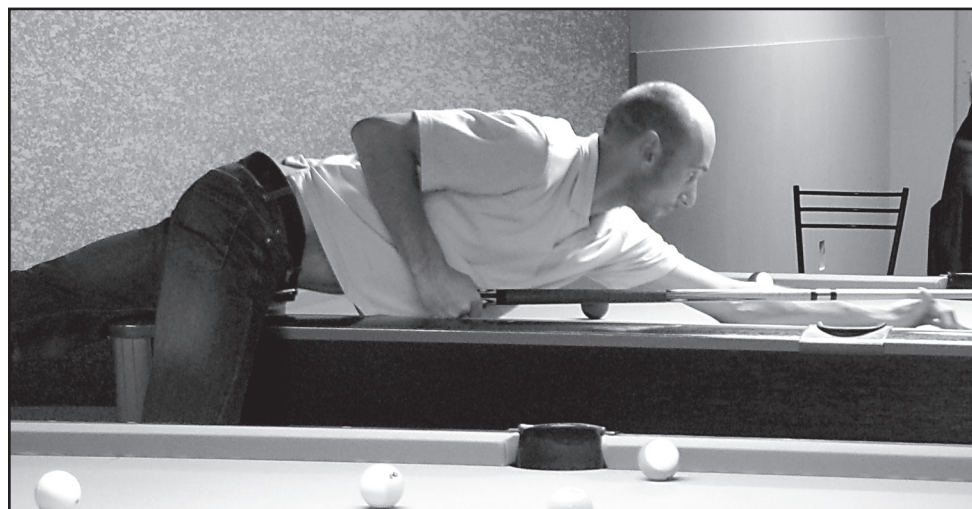
The washroom building in Southend Community Park has been closed since a partial cinder block wall fell on Warren.

Warren's graduating class and the school council voted unanimously to tear the building down, a move

school officials hope will bring closure.

A makeshift memorial wall on the side of the washroom building will be photographed and make those available to the public.

No word when the building will be demolished.



POOL SHARK: Drew Hodge practices in preparation for an upcoming trip to Las Vegas where he will compete in the American Poolplayers Association championships in a Masters and nine-ball tournament. – Submitted photo



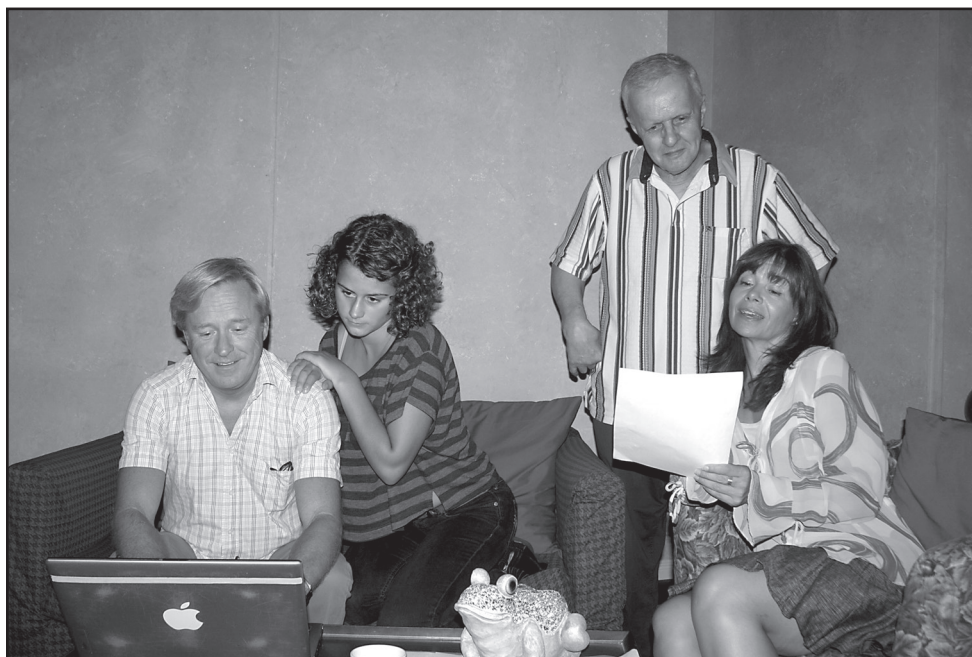
BALANCE POINT LINED UP: Rockwood resident Derek Hodge gets ready to take a shot at the cue ball. Hodge will play, along with his sister-in-law Jenn Canning, in the American Poolplayers Association championships next week in Las Vegas as a Scotch Doubles team. – Submitted photo

last year – draw crowds of 50,000 spectators, and there are also mini-mania tournaments, which run 22 hours each day.

Hodge said the family

plays pool year round, and although it has become a way of life, it is still a hobby. "It keeps your game sharp to play four times a week. Derek

and Drew started playing when they were teens and now a grandson is starting to play. I'm excited for my family and can't wait to cheer them on."



NOBODYS PERFECT: In Neil Simon's *Nobody's Perfect* at the Summer Festival at Century Church Theatre in Hillsburgh, it is not all plain sailing for Leonard (Trevor Smith Diggins) when his novel wins a competition. The publisher, Harriet, (Linda Spence) thinks he's a woman, and it leads to a mammoth deception when he falls hopelessly in love with her. His rascally father (Wayne Moore) and devious teenage daughter (Logan Barbosa) make life even more complicated, as the story escalates to a comedy masterpiece. The show runs August 15 through 26. – Submitted photo