

FROM THE EYES OF ONE STEP BEYOND A REVIEW OF THE BUTCOMBE BRITISH CHAMPIONSHIP SHOOTOUT WEEKEND

By The 2014 Press Officer Winner and 1st ever Butcombe Press Officer of the Year Greg Black of One Step Beyond

Wow what a weekend! A week removed and I'm still reliving it in my mind. Coming back to the reality of work has been a real hard come down. I'm already counting down the days to next year's championships.

So what happened last weekend? Well I have been asked to share my Butcombe British Skittles Championships experience with you all. "Why you?" I can hear YOU the reader say, well my friend I only fought off very strong competition to become 2014 Press Officer of the Year so as well as the nice cheque, prizes and adulation from the skittling world and the respect of my peers part of the deal to this role is a report as the official Winner, sharing my views of the weekend through My eyes with all the things I experienced to then have it put on the Shootout website. Not a bad little gig huh? Anyway I will tell you more of my triumphant weekend later.

Friday 19th September, I woke up very excited, I dreamt of this weekend and now it was a reality, this day was the day we were going to Torquay, we had qualified for The Butcombe British Championships after a very successful qualification campaign and the weekend we had all been waiting for was on the horizon, it was time to chase the grand prize that Me and My team One Step Beyond so deeply craved and we were full of belief that we could win this thing. It had been 2 years since we were last there as a team as last year's qualification was a disaster and most of us stayed away out of sheer disappointment, so it has been a long time coming and I missed the temple of intense competition better known as the Rivera Centre Torquay.

Most my comrades had arrived early whilst I arrived later in the day with my wife Claire and Auntie Lin. It was a first time for Claire and an experience she enjoyed greatly (and that was without throwing a ball) we decided to bring Her along as extra support and hope She could also buy us some luck, She also come in handy as an extra pair of hands when we needed to move our lucky Mascot Suggs the Bear from alley to alley .First thing we did was to go and watch the singles and pairs competition. Walking into the room it seemed huge, there was a sea of people wearing all different colour shirts and an absolutely great atmosphere, I got talking to a Skittle stalwart who I can't remember where he came from but seemed ok, although when I mentioned I was from Weymouth he started knocking the sacred style of throwing, The Dorset Flop, so I guess he wasn't from Weymouth or Dorchester? I then respectively said "Hey Man each to their own but I'm not changing My style" we then shifted from that conversation and wished each other well this weekend whilst parting ways, I then continued to watch the action but just watching others playing was getting me all fired up for the next day of intense

competition but before Saturday come around we had to soak up some more atmosphere which always goes well with a side order of Cider or 2 or 3 or 4 or 5 or 12. The evening was fantastic we were cutting some shapes on the dance floor and won a Teddy Bear in the raffle (a possible new mascot for 2015, watch this space) which ended up also cutting shapes with Myself, "Captain" Chris Saddington and "Dancing" Darren Saddington of One Step Beyond.

Saturday 20th September I rose from my bed feeling a little worse for wear and out of the one eye I choose to use for vision, couldn't help but notice a very disgruntled Missus, what did I do last night? Maybe my smooth moves weren't as great as I thought? Was it the Teddy Bear abuse on the dance floor? What was she miffed about? Who knows? I need to get my mind on Skittles, time to open the other eye, shift this headache and get a substantial breakfast down me. As we all devoured the tasty Derwent Hotel nosh and laughed at the alcohol fumed suffering of others we turned our intentions to the day's competition, we had butterflies in our stomachs (or just felt sick due to the previous night's escapades) but believed we had a good chance and proceeded to head to the competition and get those photos taken. After the photos we eagerly awaited our first game, we were drawn against The team Satellite Scorching Hoppers, we had our lucky mascot Suggs, My missus and a lucky 20p we found at the bar which sat nicely in Claire's bra so confidence was high and we started the game how we have played through qualification.....dominate and we played very well for most the game feeling we had this one in the bag, we heard SSH were a good team but we were flying against them but come the 4th hand the tide had turned and SSH started pulling the pin's back whilst we pressed our panic button and totally bottled it, our final score was 341 and 348 to the Hoppers, we lost by a mere 7 but it was a fantastic come back from our opponents but it left us reeling, our first lost in 2014 the wheels had fallen of our bus and what was a happy feeling in the camp turned sour, had Sugg's our lucky mascots lucky powers gone? Was the Missus being there supporting us a jinx? We dwelled on it for a while over a sausage roll but had to pick up our spirits as we were now competing for the mixed plate, sure we came for the big prize but the plate is pretty good to win too especially for Me, to have a medal would be fantastic in all my skittling years I have yet to receive a shiny accolade so I would be well chuffed with that, so next thing now is to find out who the unlucky team we had to face? I am medal starved and not ready to lie down for any team so bring it on. Our Captain Chris came back from the Mixed Plate draw and informed us that our opponents were our local rivals the Motley Crew, My initial thought was "great!" as those lot have frequently got the better of us in previous years and I had still not forgotten last year when they destroyed us twice in qualification on our own patch the Wyke Regis Social Club and which pretty much dented any chance of qualification last year plus this is last year's plate winners. So with this in mind it was about time to extract a little revenge (in a friendly manner obviously) this changed my stance for a while, instead of wanting to win the plate I would be happy just to beat the Motley Crew anything after that would be a bonus. So game under way and we played like a machine, we had a point to prove and didn't give our opponents a sniff of a chance and sealed victory winning by 35 pins I myself hitting a 17 on the first hand. We finally did it, beat the legendary Motley Crew, last year's winners, sorry guys not this year. I was buzzing, it felt like I just won the lottery and it was also good to know we have finally got past the first round, that monkey was off our back. So now we were in the semi- finals against Wool Misfits and we started to believe we could go all the way, Suggs was back weaving his powers of luck and our unity was back and it was good news for my wife as she could now stay and watch and was no longer considered a jinx, give that 20p another rub love, with luck and a pure skittling master class we secured another win beating our opponents by 22 and finally realizing our destiny we had made the final we were ONE STEP away from claiming the prize. Our opponents were Saints and Sinners, a nice bunch

but our biggest game in our 3 year history was upon us, so game faces on and let's do this. I was pacing the ground like a caged lion but felt this was our time, the game was a very close affair but we always managed to keep our noses in front but it was the last throw of the game that was going to make us Champs or chumps. We had played our last hand and now our destiny was literally in the laps of the Skittles God's our opponents threw well and it got to their last Man, that geezer needed 16 to win so the first ball was going to be make or break, a good first ball left him with a stick up chance and this fella was licking his chops and looked confident and yes he did it, a stick up, he lapped it up like a thirsty dog. As the ball person stuck up the pins we waited anxiously for the outcome, the guy needed 7 to win and you would probably put your house on him to do it. So up he stepped cocked back his arm and pulled the trigger the ball rolled down the alley and whilst that ball gathered momentum I took time out to look to the sky and pray and then I looked back at the action the ball hit the pins but thankfully for us only managed to dislodge 3 pins, we did it! We won, we came to the game and conquered, I felt for the poor guy but they battled bravely and should be chuffed with themselves on how far they got but if I was him I would have wanted the alley to swallow me up but thanked god it wasn't me and I'm glad I didn't put my house on him getting 7.

So we did it winners! all that was left to do was to spruce ourselves up and pick up our medals. As I sat waiting patiently to get up on stage I remembered I was in the running for Press Officer of the year and waited nervously for the result, I sat there quiet (which is a rarity) watching the video of past winners on the screen whilst looking around the Riverea Centre looking at some of the hilarious outfits on show thinking why didn't our team do that? All of a sudden I heard Rachel on the microphone ready to announce the winners of the Press Officer award. I was getting real nervous now, I feel I put a good portfolio in but I was up against Press Officer Legends, so in third place.....Hayley Guille and Nik Baker (Nic being a winner in 2011, see I did My homework), from this point I thought wow I could be 2nd or 1st here or actually maybe 4th, then 2nd place was announced the legendary Press Officer, the 2012 Press Officer Winner, Bilburys very own Catherine Poole, blimey could it be me? Then I heard my name as Winner, I was ecstatic, it seemed the Fanini Sticker Album and Stories of Suggs the Mascot was a good addition to my portfolio and sealed the deal. I bettered My last year's 2nd place and even beat past Press Officer Winners in Catherine Poole and Nic Baker which is a great feeling, it was also the second time that day that I got one over the Motley Crew (Sorry guys, just a bit of banter) but apart from winning it which is very special to me, I can also brag that I was the first ever Butcombe Sponsored Press Officer, Happy days! It was great to walk up to the stage to collect my award, the feeling of people congratulating you and giving you high fives whilst heading to the stage was incredible, the last time I got to stand on a stage I was probably 6 wearing a tea towel on my head whilst watching imaginary flocks by night, this time on stage was better than that, as I stepped off I walked on back to more congratulations from other people and a hand shake from another Press Officer legend, 2009's and 2010's winner Dave Rowe. That was nice to get respect from a writing legend. So as I took my seat I had to then stand back up again and collect The Mixed Plate with My team One Step Beyond. We dragged up our mascot Suggs and collected our prize, we finally did it, secured the Holy Grail, it was a great feeling to be up there with the Guys and we really did go ONE STEP AND BEYOND! The night was coming to an end, Sugg's needed his beauty sleep and so did I, so off to bed it was, It was a great day, yeah winning is pretty good but the day itself was cracking, atmosphere was brilliant with loads of good people around you and that's a winning combination.

Sunday 21st September I woke up in a much better state than the night before and My Missus wasn't annoyed with me (Result!) I also woke up with my medal still on me (a very proud owner) I went down for my last brekkie in the Derwent proudly wearing my Press Officer Winner shirt but despite the happiness there was a little sadness it was all over but next year will soon come around and whilst we wait we can reminisce on what was a great weekend.

I would like to thank Butcombe for sponsoring this event, Rachel, Brain, Karen and all of the Shootout team involved with the Competition and congratulate them on a well-organized event and keep up the great work. Also a big thanks to the Derwent Hotel staff for making our stay a pleasant one and finally I'd like to thank my Team One Step Beyond..... Thanks for taking a ride with me on the Rollercoaster that is the Butcombe British Championships and look forward to 2015 which I will predict will be the year we see more mascots. Suggs is just the start of the stuff toy movement.

So if you're reading this and have never entered the competition I suggest you give it a go. I'll see you there for 2015!

All the Best

Greg Black X