



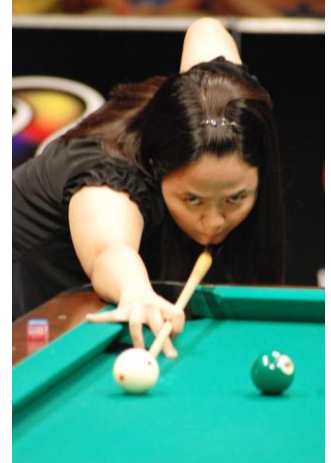
THE 2008 WPBA US OPEN 9 BALL CHAMPIONSHIPS



QUARTERFINALS #1

SARAH ELLERBY VERSUS IRIS RANOLA

By Anne Craig - WPBA



August 2, 2008: Riverwind Casino, Norman Oklahoma

As WPBA Top 10 Pro Sarah Ellerby was warming up, Philippine newcomer Iris Ranola looked on. Iris, in only her 2nd WPBA Pro Event, is making her mark as the new "Giant Killer", defeating both Allison Fisher and Ga Young Kim on her way to her first ever televised match.

Iris won the lag and broke, making a ball, but was forced to push out. Sarah attempted a safety, but left Iris a bank shot which she made. Looking very calm, she easily pocketed the subsequent 7 balls to take the first game of the match. Game two saw Sarah answer back just as calmly, running out after pocketing a ball on her break, despite an errant flash from the audience (who had been warned about such things!), tying the score up at one all.

For the second time this tournament, Iris snapped the 9 ball in taking the 1 game advantage, 2-1 as Sarah wryly looked on. After Sarah broke in game 4, she attempted a 1/9 combination, missing but leaving Iris a kick shot. Iris tried for the 1 rail kick but failed to hit the ball giving Sarah ball in hand. Sarah proceeded to knock down each ball until missing the 5, leaving it in the pocket for Iris. The 6,8 & 9 were no problem, and Iris jumped out 3-1. It was Iris's break advantage in game 5 as the crowd wondered if she could snap another 9 in. Instead, she came up dry but didn't leave Sarah an open shot on the 1 ball. Sarah's safety, while not leaving Iris an open pocket, allowed Iris to see the 1 ball, sending it up-table. A safety battle ensued between the two players on both the 1 and the 3 balls until Sarah gained the advantage with an open shot on the 3. Unfortunately in trying to gain shape off the 3 onto the 4, she scratched and Iris stepped up ready to run out yet another rack and widens her lead to 4-1.

Sarah stepped up to the table and broke but despite a plea from herself and the audience to the 1 ball which was left hanging, failed to pocket a ball. Iris played a beautiful position shot off the 1 up-table to the 2. Finally showing the nerves that she must be feeling, she rattled the 4 ball out of the corner pocket, leaving Sarah to play a safety. Iris played the two-way bank shot, sending the cue ball up-table and although missing the 4, leaving it down-table. Sarah successfully thinned the 4, and the cue ball drifted back behind the 6 forcing Iris to kick the short rail, which she missed. Sarah received ball in hand and ran out to get back within 2 games.

Game 7 saw Iris make 2 balls on the break and nearly making the 9 again! Starting with an open shot on the 2 ball, she regained her composure and ran out regaining the 3 game lead, 5-2. Sarah, trying to figure out what she needed to do to get back in the match, broke and made a ball but was forced to push out as she had no shot. Attempting a very tough long cut shot, Iris missed. This rack proved to be a difficult one as many of the balls were in awkward positions.

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Sarah had a straight in 3-ball and rattled it out. Iris still faced a very tough rack and a long draw shot off the 3 to the 4. She gracefully executed the shot and got into line to continue running out. Her stroke growing even more confident, she ran the 5, 6, 7, 8 & 9 to reach the hill in her first ever TV round match. On top of everything, Iris went into game 9 with the break advantage and pocketed a ball. She was forced to play a safe, and Sarah reached for her jump cue. She had a jump shot over the 2 for the 1 ball. Lining up the shot, she struck the 1, with the cue ball coming to rest just in front of the 4. Iris, jacked up over that 4 ball, missed the 1, but left a very long cut for Sarah, which she in turn missed and allowed Iris an open shot. Unfortunately, Iris pocketed the 6 and 8 balls at the same time and had a long shot on the 7 which she missed. Unbelievably, Sarah, in attempting to draw the cue ball back off of the 7, dug underneath the cue ball and popped it off the table, leaving Iris a 2 ball out with ball in hand. Iris pocketed both and now has a berth in the Semi Finals match tomorrow!