



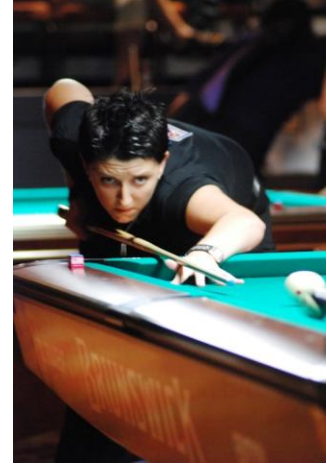
THE 2008 WPBA US OPEN 9 BALL CHAMPIONSHIPS



QUARTERFINALS #4

VIVIAN VILLARREAL VS. KELLY FISHER

By Anne Craig - WPBA



August 2, 2008: Riverwind Casino, Norman Oklahoma.

Quarterfinals #4 saw a wily veteran versus a player who, if she wins, could overtake the #1 ranking year to date. Vivian Villarreal, who has won numerous Championships and is one of the most popular players on tour, matched up versus the equally popular and seasoned player, Kelly Fisher. It's the only match so far of this television day that features two well know players and promises to be one of the fastest matches in the tournament. If Kelly Fisher either wins or finishes 2nd in the tournament: she would move into the #1 position for the year.

The players lagged and Kelly had the first break of the match. Looking determined she made 1 ball and surveyed the table for the best runout options. Instead, she was forced to push out and Vivian jumped up out of her chair whistling. Vivian showed the crowd her usual congenial attitude at the table, talking with Steve Tipton as she jumped the cue ball but left Kelly with an open shot. Kelly displayed her typical 2 stroke and out style, although she over-stroked the 4 to the 6 and left herself with a very long. Confidently she made it and continued to run out to take the 1st game of this match.

Vivian had the break and did make a ball but had a cluster near the foot-spot to contend with. She missed the 2 and Kelly snookered her up-table, forcing Vivian to jump yet another cue ball. The 2 ball was struck, went up-table and came back and deposited itself into the corner pocket, to which Vivian replied "I didn't want that!" Vivian played a nice safety shot and it was Kelly's turn to bring out the jump stick. Kelly made a nice jump shot but gave it too much gas and the cue ball jumped off the table, giving Vivian ball in hand. Vivian showed a bit of her nervousness when she over hit the 4 ball slightly and the cue ball drifted down farther than she wanted for position on the 5, where she left herself a 3 rail position shot to the 7. She missed the thin cut, slamming the chalk on the table in disgust. Kelly kept her cool and proceeded to run out the remaining 4 balls. To add insult to injury, Kelly had the break advantage and made a ball although had a no-gimme shot on the 1. She hid the cue ball and out came Vivian's jump cue again! She followed Kelly's suit, bouncing the cue ball off the table after making legal contact with the one giving Kelly ball in hand. Kelly wasn't happy with where she left herself for the 3 to the 4 but she made it work and continued on. The crowd gasped in unison as Kelly missed a long cut up the rail, and Vivian held tight to grab one of those lost games back.

Vivian knew she needed to take advantage of her break and stepped up to the table hitting the rack solidly. The 9 ball almost went into the corner pocket but to Vivian's frustration nothing went in and Kelly began pocketing balls. She left herself with a straightforward 3/9 combination and just like that, it was 3-1. Kelly had the break though and sank 2 balls.

(Cont'd)

She was uncomfortable in her stance and fearing she would move a ball with her body, missed the 2 allowing Vivian back to the table. Vivian, known for her shot-making ability, would need to feature that ability after getting out of line on the 4 ball, leaving herself short and a thin cut. Instead she attempted a safety and unintentionally made the 4 into the side pocket. She most definitely didn't want to do that. Not that it mattered since she made the 5, 6, 7, 8 and the 9 to get back to within one and had the break advantage. After pocketing the 1 ball, Vivian's cue ball died in front of the 8, blocking herself off from the 3. She stomped her foot, eyeing the 1 rail kick shot and nearly pocketed the 3. Instead, Kelly stepped up and began the now relatively easy run out and Kelly extended her lead back to 2 games.

After pocketing a ball off the break, Kelly missed the 1 ball but didn't leave an appetizing shot for Vivian. The players then ducked the 1 ball back and forth until Vivian made a very poor safety attempt leaving Kelly a wide open shot. Kelly's try at breaking the 5 ball away from the 9 at the spot failed, leaving her to send the 5 up the table where it ran into the 7 allowing Vivian a clear view. Vivian pocketed the 5 & 6, coming around 3 rails perfectly for the 7. The 7 disappeared along with the 8 and 9 to close back once again within one game.

To Vivian's frustration, she made nothing on her break and Kelly began the task of picking her way through 9 balls on the table. Unfortunately for her, she missed the 1, leaving Vivian to exclaim "Ooh my favorite shot", Jacked up long straight in shot which she easily made. This was no easy layout though but Vivian handled it well, finessing her way from one ball to the next. The 5 proved more difficult than she thought though, as it nicked the 6 on the way to the corner pocket. Kelly overdrew the cue ball back to the 6 and had the choice between a delicate back-cut shot and a safety. She chose the safety, sending the 6 up-table. Vivian's return safety attempt failed and Kelly once again had an open shot to retry a run-out. She lost focus completely, looking too far ahead it would seem and simply missed the 7 ball. Although she snookered Vivian behind the 8, Vivian managed to slide the cue ball 1 rail and kick the 7 in but left herself an awkward side rail bank. Her attempt yielded a scratch and Kelly ended up winning the game, going up 5-3.

After Vivian won game 9, Vivian found herself with ball in hand in game 10 shooting the 4, 5 and 6 balls. She continued to pocket balls, and ran out to tie up the match 5 all. It was Kelly's break and after pocketing a ball, she ran out to the 4 but missed. Vivian started running out but missed the 6 and gave Kelly the opportunity to reach the hill first. Incredibly, she missed the 9 and gave Vivian the hill first!

Vivian failed to make anything on the break but Kelly, still rattled from missing the 9 ball (shades of the Great Lakes Classic perhaps?) missed the 1 and gave Vivian a tough but makeable shot. Vivian made the ball but left herself very close to the 3, which wasn't good since she needed to go all the way back up table to the 4 ball. She accepted the longer position play and steadied herself to make a thin cut shot which she missed by a fraction. Kelly walked back up with an opportunity to make up for her grievous error and sank the 4 getting shape to the 5, and then the 7 (into the side) followed by the 8 and 9. This match was now at hill-hill!

Kelly had the break advantage but didn't make a ball. Vivian began the task of running out a full table, but started off on the wrong foot by coming up just short of the mark for the 2. Out of line already and surveying the damage, she took her first extension to make a shot selection. Yelling out "C'mon baby one TIME!" she hid the cue ball behind the 8 up table and forced Kelly to kick one long rail at the 2. Kelly did hit the ball but failed to hit a rail afterwards, giving Vivian ball in hand. Vivian was chagrined to miss the 4 ball, showing her nerves and perhaps lack of concentration. She had a little luck on her side, as Kelly couldn't see a full ball and took an extension deciding on what she wanted to do. She kicked one rail and finessed it beautifully, leaving the 4 ball on the end rail and the cue ball on the side rail, safe.

(Cont'd)

Thus began another safety battle between these two warriors. Vivian took her second extension of the game (2 are given in the final game of the match) in order to play just the right safety. Kelly hit the 4 but left an enticing 4/9 carom for Vivian to ponder. Making up her mind, Vivian double checked her angle, and..... went for the slice combination instead! She did leave Kelly a long but makeable shot, but Kelly slow rolled the cue ball and overcut the 4. The two competitors's found themselves playing safety chess again, waiting to see who would flinch first. It ended up being Kelly, as she kicked one rail after being snookered, missing the 4 entirely and giving Vivian ball in hand yet again. 6 balls stood between Vivian and the Semifinal's of the 2008 US Open. She left herself a bit squirrely on the 7 ball, but cut it into the side to get perfect position on the 8 ball in the corner. To the crowd's amazement, Vivian missed the 8 straight in! Was it nerves? Lack of Focus? She stated "I moved my hand at the last minute..." Kelly had a spot shot cut, made it, but came up nearly perpendicular to the 9 ball and near the rail. She got down over the shot and with authority, cut the 9 in to advance into the finals and give herself a shot at that #1 ranking!