

FALCONCAST: "Clubmunity" through Billiards Club

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[sounds of a pool break punctuate the music]

Dominic Iannaco (producer, intro): Hello everyone. Welcome to Perseverantia the Fitchburg State Podcast. This week our host, Gabriel Rivera, sits down and talks the chalk with Billiards Club president Jonathan Rajotte.

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[sounds of a pool break punctuates the transition]

Gabriel Rivera (host): Hi everyone. How's it going? Uh, we have Jonathan here from the Billiards Club and he's with us here, uh, this evening. So why don't you go ahead and introduce yourself, Jonathan.

Jonathan Rajotte: Alright. Um, as you said, I'm president of the Billiards Club. Most people just call me Johnny, so feel free to do that. But yeah, I'm a sophomore film major. I first joined the Billiards Club last year. I actually hadn't played pool at all before then, but I got really into it. I was treasurer spring of last semester, and then now I'm president for this year and it's been a pretty good experience. Met a lot of cool people.

Gabriel: Cool, cool. So how does it feel like being the president of the billiards club? Like what kind of responsibilities do you have to exercise in the club?

Jonathan: Since I'm president, I pretty much do like a lot of the things. I send out the weekly emails as like reminders. I reserve the rooms for whenever we do events. Um, I'm part of the event planning process and my overall, like favorite part of, like, my role is like I make the little matchups for the day who faces each other, and I just feel like I feel a lot more connected to everybody now. Mainly 'cause like I have to, but like I also enjoy it just 'cause I like talking to people a lot and just meeting new people. So that's definitely been my favorite part.

Gabriel: Alright. So what would you say is like the vibe of the billiards club? How does it feel, you know, going to maybe a certain event and, uh, what, what's the overall feeling of meeting together and stuff?

Jonathan: Um, the vibe that I've always wanted to like kind of nurture in our environment is mainly just like, I want to be like very chill, very relaxing for everyone there. Because like I know that everyone's not super like competitive when it comes to pool, so I mainly just want people to feel like comfortable and just like meet people and socialize mainly. And I dunno, I mainly do that by just being really friendly with people. As for the vibes I get, I do get those like kinda like relaxing vibes. But I dunno. It's also just like a lot of fun for me 'cause a lot of my friends are in the club. I love seeing them. I love playing with 'em. That's why I feel like the vibes are for me at least.

Gabriel: So I guess lifewise, like do you think the club is more laid back or are there moments where it gets like super competitive?

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Jonathan: Um, we're usually pretty laid back. Some people can get more competitive than others, but like that's plenty of welcome. I love to see it. I love when people are passionate. It can definitely get competitive towards like the ends of some of our tournaments because like. Usually our tournaments, the beginning is kinda like a little relaxed 'cause that's just the people who are there mainly for fun, but once you get to the end, you get to like the real serious players. I dunno, I just love seeing like their passion in it.

Gabriel: So I guess I can ask you this question, uh, from, from my side. So. I've played like a bit of like pool myself, but I don't think I'm any good at all. What advice would you give to like someone who's just like getting into Billards, getting into pool?

Jonathan: Um, my advice would probably be like, playing a lot is a big part of it. Like, um, I had never played before, before I came to Fitchburg last year. So then I started playing like almost every day. You, you don't have to do that, but like, just playing more, you get more used to it.

Honestly. A big recommendation I would have. Get one of your friends to also be into it. 'cause then you guys can just play together more and more and have fun because that's what happened to me last year. Uh, me and my friend got super into it. We were playing like every night super late. Not that you should play that late, but like, but yeah, if you do that, then it's just like a good way to like, enjoy yourself while you do it.

When I tried to get more serious into it, I also did like in the more technical side, after you learn like basic aim, it's good to learn like Cue Ball positioning so you can set up for your next shot. So look up videos on like how um, Cue Ball spin works or if you know anyone who does know how that works, you can ask them about it. And then it's just mainly just like practice, practice, those techniques.

Gabriel: Alright. Do you have like any kind of like. Preferred move? Like when you're playing, like do you have like a, like a certain style when you play?

Jonathan: Yeah. Something that I've noticed in my own pool journey, if you wanna put it like that. It's been, um, I have definitely like, had different play styles over my time. As I learned, I learned like I. What works and what doesn't.

When I first started playing, I would like always hit the balls like super hard, but like then I realize like, oh man, my accuracy is like terrible whenever I do that. So I learned that like just being gentle and like learning when you need for, rather than doing it all the time. But yeah, my style is like trying to know how much force, how much power you need.

[sounds of a pool break]

I've also been trying to get into the habit of like planning out shots ahead. Whenever it's my turn, I think like, oh. Not which ball is easiest to guess which one can lead me to another, and then another, and then another, and then another. I dunno, i've been trying different things out.

Whenever I break, *[pool break sound effect]* I hold really far end on the cue stick because I heard they can get more power in it that way. As from my own experience with it, it works all right. I haven't seen, noticed a difference with it. And then other than that, I don't really know what else to say about my style.

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Jonathan (cont'd): Actually when I first tried to play, um, I dunno how much you know about pool, but um, the little way you hold it with like your left hand that's called the bridge or your hand bridge, there are a couple ways to do it. You can, um, have the stick like in under your finger to kinda like be a closed bridge. So it's more like precise.

But that's how I used to it. But now I'm more used to having kinda like an open palm. You rest it like, kinda like right there in between your thumb and your knuckle. And I kinda just like that style. More now because like it's easier to adjust like where I want to hit on the Cue ball. 'Cause like if I'm hitting a shot where like I need to hit low so the Cue ball stays in place, I can just like put my hand lower easily. Or if I need high on the Cue ball so it moves more across the table, then I can put my hand higher. But yeah, those are the real technical sides of it.

Gabriel: And this actually really cool, 'cause like I didn't know about like any like. Precise, like techniques that were like hand positions. So this is like all new to me. So yeah, thanks for explaining that.

Jonathan: Oh yeah, of course.

Gabriel: So, uh, I guess getting into like the modes of play, do you, do you host like any tournament tournaments with the club and, uh, if so, like how do the tournaments go?

Jonathan: Yeah, we usually do tournaments. We try and do them. Once per month. We've been all right with keeping up with that. But yeah, we usually get a pretty good turnout each time. We get, uh, usually like 14 or 16 at each tournament. But yeah, I don't know.

Tournaments are always just like pretty fun. I always enjoy them. We get some free food for everybody so everyone can enjoy, um, and make the little brackets for everyone. And we usually get prizes for each one. Usually like, however our budget can really handle, I guess. This year our budget has been kind of small.

[sounds of a pool break]

I've kind of just been trying to work with what we have. The game room. They've actually been super helpful 'cause they do a bunch of collabs with us on tournaments. They agree to pay for some of it and that's made it a lot easier.

Yeah, I guess that's more so like the specifics of how it works. If it's like once a month, usually on a Thursday at like 3:45. The reason for that is just because, um, 3:45, I assume people are done with classes, and Thursday is because I assume it's like end of the week, so people will like, have less to do. But on Fridays I would be worried that like commuters wouldn't be on campus, since we have a big commuter base here at Fitchburg.

Gabriel: Yeah, well, um, as a commuter myself, and plus I actually work at the Falcon Bazaar, like on Fridays, I can say that things get really empty. So that's honestly like a really smart move. 'Cause yeah, I don't really think any commuters come like to campus. So I would say, yeah, Thursday's a, like the perfect day.

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Jonathan: Thanks. Appreciate it.

Gabriel: Is there anything that like you want to improve about, uh, the Billiards club or things that you want to add as the president?

Jonathan: I don't think there's really too much that I would want to improve at this point, although there were things where, like coming into this year that I definitely improved in the club because if, I'm gonna be honest with you, our club was kind of dying last year.

So when I became president I was like, oh, I, I gotta like try and shift things around. Granted, it was also helpful that like this incoming year of students have been like super participatory in clubs and whatnot, and I've loved to see that. Yeah, we had a bunch of people join. Uh, I've done a lot more advertising. We

Jonathan (cont'd): also changed how our meeting styles usually go. 'cause last year it was kind of just like people show up in the game room and play pool, but then people wouldn't usually show up to that. And my thinking behind it was like, why would you show up at this specific time to play pool with your friends when you just go there whenever it's open?

So that's why this year we have this little system where it's basically, um, people show up, they write their names on a little sign in sheet. Then from that list of names, I'll make a little matchup list and I'll match certain people up against each other to play at best two, outta three. And whoever wins that, I, uh, give them a little tally on a score sheet, and whoever gets the most wins by like the end of the semester, gets a Amazon gift card just as a little more incentive to keep people coming. As for like future improvements, it's just like. Uh, I dunno, honestly, I just have to be more organized next year is my main goal. 'Cause like, there's definitely been some events where like we've been kind of rushing through them, but I wanna kind of plan more ahead next year is the only thing. But aside from that, that's the only like improvements I can think of off the top of my head.

Gabriel: Cool. And, uh, since you've been getting a lot of new members, uh, this, this, uh, year, is there is like any kind of, any kind of advice that you've been giving new members, like to feel more comfortable with the club and how to get started?

Jonathan: Well, what I usually do is, like, this obviously didn't happen at like the beginning of this magic 'cause we had a bunch of new people. But like at this point, if like there's a new person you just wanna like. One or two or a couple. So what I'll do is usually I'll put them in a matchup like where I'm there, so I can kinda like make them feel more comfortable with the whole environment.

And then from there I usually just try and make the matchups pretty diverse, so like everyone gets a chance to know and talk to each other. It's been working pretty well. I've noticed people just like hang out, joking around a lot, just like really some good interaction, which is my main goal. Um, as for like any like straight up advice, I talk to them about. I don't usually do that just 'cause like, I dunno, I feel like most people from the method that I usually use, they usually get into it pretty easily. They usually, because at least from this current year I've noticed they're pretty good at socializing. So I really haven't had much to do.

Gabriel: So do you feel like it's more of like, uh, like test the waters, like feel the vibes and just kind of get into it on your own kind of thing?

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Jonathan: Yeah, pretty much. 'cause um, I dunno if anyone new come then like, usually they know themselves to like kind of feel out the whole environment. Usually they'll like it, like I said, it's pretty relaxing so. They usually get calmed down pretty quick, and then we just end up going to the games and then naturally people start talking and just having a good time.

Gabriel: This is already like, kind of making me wanna join if I, if I wasn't a senior already. Sounds pretty cool actually, I guess, uh, to conclude, uh, this, to this, this evening, why should people join billiards? What would you say?

Jonathan: I know it's kind of just stuff I already mentioned, but like, if I were to convince people, I would assume it's people who haven't played much before.

Because even if like people haven't played, it's still like I would recommend going and trying it out, 'cause I had never played before I joined and I loved it, like pool is such a big part of my life in. a really weird way just 'cause like, I dunno if I'm ever like in a bad mood or something, I can just play and as I focus on the game, it's just like, I dunno, it gets me not thinking about other things which I love.

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And then people can try and find that not everyone's gonna necessarily have like that same like love of the game like I have, but like even if not, so just a great place to go. We have a bunch of great people in the club that I just like. Love to see every Tuesday. It's been great. But yeah, main reason to join, meet people, make some friends, and maybe play a game you haven't played before.

Gabriel: Cool. And I can hear from, I can hear very clearly from you that, uh, you have a lot of passion behind it, and that really does matter for all the new members joining. So yeah, keep it up. Thank you Johnny for joining us tonight, Dominic and I appreciate it a lot. And yeah. Uh, thank you everyone for watching and tuning in.

Dominica (producer): Thanks so much for tuning into this episode of Perservantia. Interested in joining the Billiards Club? They meet every Tuesday around 3:00 PM Stop by and check it out.

[FalconCast theme ends with a swelling crescendo]

[pool break sound punctuates the end]

[Perseverantia Theme fades in]

Gabriel Rivera: You're listening to Perseverantia, the Fitchburg State University Podcast Network. .

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