

OPINIONS

Exotic for President

BY ANNA FRITZE

In this trying quarantine time, many people have resorted to their televisions to pass the time. Tiger King, the new Netflix docuseries, has been one of the binges that many people have been watching and talking about on social media. A reveal that is made in the show is that the notorious owner of over 700 exotic animals, Joseph Allen Maldonado-Passage, or, as he calls himself, Joe Exotic, decided to run for the presidency during the 2016 election. He did not end up winning, of course, but after watching this riveting TV show, watchers must ask themselves, what would it have been like if the big cat breeder would have been elected?

Let's think about this Exotic for president thing. Joe had 16 acres of land that housed up to 1,200 animals at one point, the majority of them being big cats. Think about what he would do with America. I'm sure that there are plenty of people in this country that would love to own big cats as well. As president, Joe would make this as easy as possible. There would be a collection of big cats on every block. Now, Joe and most of his crew were "experienced" with big cats. Even so, injuries still occurred--an employee lost most of her arm at one point. Many people who would purchase and breed big cats would not be experienced; in fact, they probably would start with a cub and then have no idea what to do once that cat got bigger. Owners might neglect the cats, their diets, and their enclosures. Cats would eventually get hungry, find the weakness in the enclosure with ease, break out, and easily kill their owner(s). Soon, America would be overrun by big cats and other exotic animals. Humans would start to take notice and flee to other countries not connected to America by land in order to preserve their lives. Eventually, all buildings would erode and break down, and nature would take over again. North America would be a new haven for exotic animals.

Now, let's take the whole big cat thing out of the picture, and just look at Joe Exotic as a person. That guy is heckin' honest. A noted quote from a campaign video of his goes, "I'm gay and broke as sh*t." Not sure I've ever heard anyone be more honest than that. Meanwhile, we're still waiting for Hillary's emails and Donald's tax returns. Joe was running as a Libertarian, even though he had no clue what a Libertarian was. Really, how many of us know what a Libertarian is? On average, people barely know anything past the basics of Democratic and Republican beliefs. He's just like us! Joe is a very charismatic person--he can be relatable; there are plenty of people out there who have made bad business deals, we're all selfish in one way or another, and we've all had enemies who sued us for a million dollars after we tried to have them killed. No? Just me? Awkward...

In any case, it's a tough call when trying to decide whether Joe Exotic would have been a better pick than Trump or not. Maybe Joe would have listened to scientists who said we needed to prepare for COVID back in January, so that defibrillators and face masks could have been made throughout the months of January and February, instead of ignoring them because it would have been a financial burden back then, but hey, who knows. In any case, right now all we can do is shake our heads at the travesties in Tiger King, move on, and do our best to be our best.

Foosers

BY AIDAN FARLEY

Walking out of a brisk, autumn afternoon into Jimmy's Pro Billiards, I half expected to be greeted with a cloud of cigarette smoke and a cluster of men in suits avidly, but silently, watching a game of pool in a dimly lit room. Instead, the pool hall was well lit and rather empty. Around twenty pool tables sat in rows under a ceiling with exposed beams and ductwork. A small bar situated in the back left corner opposed a row of pinball machines next to the door. The cloud of cigarette smoke seen in films about pool halls was replaced with a "no smoking" sign on the front door and an adjoining e-cigarette shop. The cluster of suited men was replaced with four or five everyday people in everyday clothes playing casual games of pool throughout the room. However, I did not go to Jimmy's Pro Billiards on a Saturday evening to play pool. I was there to play foosball.

In the back right corner of the room were four T3000 Tornado foosball tables. Those tables are the top-of-the-line tables made by the Tornado foosball company, and they will set a foosball enthusiast back \$2,200 for a non-coin operated version. They are the most popular tables in the US and what most tournaments use. Jimmy's had recently become a location for foosball players to frequent with the addition of the T3000 tables. Most of the tournaments around the Twin-Cities happen at a Minneapolis bar called Mortimer's. Jimmy's is a great addition to the scene because, as far as I know, minors are allowed in. The foosball scene in the US isn't as large as it once was, so a place for younger people to be introduced to the game is excellent.

Saturday's tournament start time came and went with only a handful of people besides the organizer showing up. I was there that night with my father, who used to be a regular at tournaments in Minneapolis. We settled in to wait for more people with some casual games.

Since the tables are coin-operated, the way to get into a game is to set a stack of four quarters on the table. When the ongoing game is finished, whoever placed the stack of quarters gets to face the victor. I'm fairly decent at foosball, enough so that my friends refuse to play with me because of how unlikely

it is for them to win. However, when my father and I put up our quarters, we lost in under a minute. Most of the participants that evening turned out to be highly skilled veterans. Apparently, former world champion and Minnesota native Dave Gummesson stops by now and then as well. The larger and more skill-diverse tournaments usually happen at Mortimer's. Their monthly tournament brings an average of 25 players, with the largest recently being the Thanksgiving tournament that had 54 players.

Now, these players do not play foosball in the way one might imagine. Foosball is often found in the same thought as beer pong and similar drinking games that college students in fraternities play. They wildly jump about and brag about their special technique for spinning the rods as fast as possible. Spinning the rods is considered an unviable tactic against players who know what they are doing and is outlawed because of potential damage to the table and dangers from flying foosballs. Without spinning, the game becomes much more strategic, emphasizing outthinking the opponent and beating them with controlled speed and power.

The players themselves were much more gracious than your typical fraternity foosball player as well. Not all foosball players are, of course (there is one world champion, Johnny Horton, who is famous for trash-talking), but the ones at the tournament that night were friendly and welcoming. A significant portion of the players knew each other from other events over the years. That did not keep them from being approachable to newcomers, however. They gladly played with me even though I was significantly less skilled than many of the players there. The style of the tournament that night was to draw your partner doubles. That meant that all the players' names were randomly drawn to determine teams of two. It's a system that helps prevent the best players from teaming up and winning every tournament. My partner for the evening was somebody from out of town who only came to the cities every once in a while. We played three sets of best two out of three games. We won the first set, but then lost two in a row and ended up somewhere around fifth place. He was helpful throughout the night and gave me some pointers during the games. One of the largest factors to being successful in a tournament is being able to read the opponent's habits. My partner frequently pulled me aside to tell me specific tendencies that our opponents had and how I could exploit them. If I had a bit more tournament experience, I might have been able to capitalize on his observations.

While it was a bit of a nerve-wracking experience attending my first big foosball tournament, it was a fun time. I had worried that I would not understand proper tournament etiquette or would be viewed as an outsider, but the veterans were very welcoming to a newer player. Mortimer's hosts amateur nights on some weekdays and there is a monthly tournament at either Jimmy's or Mortimer's. The Minneapolis foosball scene appears to be in decent shape. Now we just need to wait for the virus to go away so Mortimer's can reopen