

# *A Study on the Educational Level and Career Development of Professional Chinese Billiards Players*

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**Abstract:** Currently, Chinese billiards is developing particularly well in China, plus the billiards industry itself has a low threshold, so the billiards industry can be used as an employment direction for people with low education. This paper investigates and researches the educational backgrounds of the top 8 active international and nine world-class players in China, the abilities and incomes of active international players, and the analysis of the commercial marketization of the sport of billiards. It first discusses the commercial ecology of Chinese billiards and the advantages of its current development and promotion in China, and then discusses the educational backgrounds and incomes of professional billiards players. Finally, it analyzes the comparison of the status of international and domestic snooker and Chinese billiards. As well as the volume of non-higher education groups aged 15-22 years old at this stage and the necessity of the introduction of Chinese billiards, this paper draws the conclusion that the education level of billiards professional players is completely irrelevant to their career development. Combined with the current situation of junior and senior high school education in China, this paper finally concludes that billiards can be used as a useful supplement to the vocational education of young people.

**Keywords:** Billiards, Snooker, Entry threshold, Low-income group, Direction of Employment

## 1. Introduction

Billiards originated in Europe, and the world billiards sport has a history of nearly 600 years. As an ancient and elegant noble gentleman's sport, billiards has only been played in China for more than 20 years. In the mid to late 80s, a billiards craze was started in China, and now it has developed into a sport with a wide range of audiences. Britain, in 1885 the amateur and professional players formed a billiards association and developed the first set of official rules of the game. 1908 and the opposing side of the formation of the billiards management club; in 1986, China established the China Billiards Association, and the provinces and cities have set up local billiards associations. By the 1930s, billiard tournaments were held annually in Shanghai, and other places, and a relatively large number of billiard players emerged [1].

Billiards are categorized as French billiards, English billiards, American billiards, Chinese billiards, snooker billiards, and rotational billiards. From the invention of this sport till now continues to have a loyal audience. Among the various classifications of billiards, the most televised tournaments are snooker tournaments because they are the most formalized, while others, such as Chinese black eights and American nine-ball, tend to be more spectator-oriented. Therefore, snooker's

data are all derived from official statistics, which have the highest authenticity. According to BBC statistics, it was reported that the 1985 World Championship final match between Davis and Taylor was watched by 18.5 million Britons. During the 2022 World Championships, as many as 4.5 million people watched the World Championship final on the BBC alone, the highest figure since 2014 and a 17% boost from last year. The average number of viewers of the final was 3.1 million. The total number of people watching the 2023 World Snooker Championship on the BBC (TV plus online media) was 23.3 million, a 30% uplift in audience share compared to last year. This is a staggering figure, surpassing the total number of viewers who followed the World Championships on the BBC last year (22.5 million). And the number of Chinese fans watching snooker on TV has now reached 50 million, surpassing the 45 million who watch the NBA and the 35 million who watch Premier League matches. When Ding Junhui beat Hendry at the China Open, around 110 million people watched the match on TV. This was the most watched TV sports broadcast in the world of sports in 2005, even surpassing the number of TV viewers when Liu Xiang won the 110-meter hurdles gold medal at the Athens Olympics.

China's billiards industry is growing rapidly, with the market size increasing from approximately RMB 240 billion in 2018 to approximately RMB 340 billion in 2020, an increase of approximately 42%. Coupled with the popularization of billiards in recent years, more national tournaments have been held one after another, and local tournaments are even more numerous. With the emergence of a number of high-level players such as Ding Junhui, as well as the organization of international high-level tournaments, the public's love and pursuit of this sport has reached an unprecedented height, billiards sports competitions held in our country to provide a higher platform for the development of China's billiards. The prize money is huge, and the income is not low. What's more worth mentioning is that the entry threshold for billiards is very low, and almost all professional players are educated below high school. This creates a very good new direction of employment for the current low-education people in our country: they can engage in all kinds of work in the billiards industry.

## 2. Overview and Promotion Advantages of Billiards

Billiards is a sport and leisure activity in which the player hits the main ball on a billiard table with a cue over 91.4 centimeters in length by hitting the main ball according to certain rules to make it hit the target ball. It is an individual sport that combines power and angle and requires a high level of mental fitness from the player. Billiards is divided into snooker, American nine-ball and Chinese billiards, and the playing method is different. Snooker is the phonetic translation of snooker, which means obstacle. Besides offense, snooker is famous for doing obstacle ball, i.e. defense. Because the English are conservative and egotistical, they refer to themselves as gentlemen, so the billiards dress code calls for vests, shirts, pants and leather shoes. On the contrary, the American nine ball is more popular in the United States because of its spontaneous style of play and relatively fewer constraints. Chinese billiards, also known as "black eight", is between snooker and American nine-ball. The size of the balls and tables are the same as American nine-ball, but the clay is the same as snooker.

The catalyst for the rising status of billiards in China was the 20-year-old Ding Junhui. The so-called "Ding Junhui effect" refers to the development of snooker in China, relying on the personal power of the world's top player Ding Junhui, in a short period of time to bring China into the ranks of the powerhouse of the sport of snooker, and thus further set off a snooker craze in China [2]. Ding's claim to fame was the 2005 Snooker Championship. Starting from the qualifying round, Ding Junhui finally beat Davis and became the first Chinese snooker player to win the Championship. How amazing is this championship? First of all, before Ding Junhui, there has never been a player from the qualifying tournament all the way to win the final championship. Ding Junhui has created history. Secondly, the long-set tie-break system determines that the Championship is the least cold event in snooker, and the title of this tournament is extremely high. Thirdly, the English Championship, in the

eyes of the British in the snooker world, belongs to their own home territory. Basically, all the British won the championship; occasionally, other countries in Europe players won the championship, and now there was an Asian boy. The Europeans were defeated, which caused a sensation in the snooker world. Ding Junhui, as a representative of snooker, has not only gained a lot of benefits from the sport himself but has also brought a lot of investment into snooker. With more money, snooker was able to develop better, and the players' income and popularity were very low, which is the reason why snooker has not developed for a long time. But Ding Junhui's fame brought the sport of snooker into China, where it sparked a huge response. Back then, the name of the prodigy was still very popular and always occupied the headlines of newspapers. Many Chinese people were attracted to the sport because of Ding's influence and snooker spread in China. The success of Ding Junhui has not only increased the number of people who like billiards, but according to the information of China Billiards Association, there are 50 million billiards fans in China, of which 20 million people play billiards every day, and 100,000 people play billiards every day in Beijing alone [3]. Meanwhile, it has also brought a deep impact on the development of billiards in China. Before Ding Junhui became famous, the development of billiards in China was very slow, fewer people were exposed to the sport, and there were even fewer famous athletes, but that is to say, after Ding Junhui won the Snooker China Open and the Snooker UK Championship, respectively in 2005, the sport swept across the country within a short time, and billiards gradually became one of the most important ways of people's leisure and entertainment [4]. The sport of billiards has become one of the most important forms of recreation. What's more, before Ding Junhui, billiards gave people a bad impression. Curb, unkempt, smoking and tattooing are all labels of people who play billiards. After Ding Junhui, because the number of people who liked billiards became more, the age group expanded with it, and both the young and the old would watch snooker. It is also because Ding Junhui is a very gentlemanly image anytime he appears on the screen. So domestic billiard enthusiasts will imitate Ding Junhui's image and will no longer appear in a casual and unkempt image, the general quality of everyone has improved, and the level has been raised [5].

According to the collected data of domestic snooker fan groups can be seen, in terms of monthly income, in addition to the number of people with less than 5000 yuan, no income, 5000-8000 yuan, more than 8000 yuan of income crowd is more average, the proportion of 36.08%, 25.77%, 23.71%, respectively.

### **3. Chinese Billiard Business Ecological Display**

With the operation of various large-scale tournaments, Chinese billiards is receiving more and more international attention. In fact, more and more foreign players choose to come to China to participate in Chinese billiards tournaments. Currently, the entire Chinese billiards tournament market is divided among three companies, namely Star, Qiao, and Kangxi ShengShi. Among them, Star and Qiao mainly utilize tournaments to promote product sales, while KangXi ShengShi focuses more on promoting the development of the domestic billiards market and improving players' personal influence. Although their respective market positions are different, they have all contributed to the healthy development of Chinese billiards [6]. "Over the past three years, Chinese billiards has grown faster than at any other stage in history." Qiao Yuanxu, founder and chairman of Qiao's Billiards Group, introduced. He gave this set of figures: the capacity and sales of Qiao's Billiard Group's pool tables have grown from more than 8,000 units in 2019 to more than 24,000 in 2022 and are expected to reach more than 32,000 this year. The hot market conditions have even attracted many furniture production enterprises to transform. "Billiard table is not just a slate on top and legs underneath. The table edges and cues of the table are all wood. We can certainly do this well." A furniture production company was responsible for the introduction. Qiao Yuanxu said that he intends to go to do billiard table furniture production enterprises alone; he counted up to forty or fifty.

There are many advantages of Chinese billiards. First of all, Chinese billiards is easy to play and understand, making it able to attract more enthusiasts. Its rules are not complicated, and beginners can master the basic skills in a short time. At the same time, Chinese billiards has a variety of game forms, which increases its fun and challenge. Secondly, the increasingly competitive nature of Chinese billiards makes it a popular choice for many athletes and spectators. Fans not only improve and enrich their self-competence but also get a kind of pleasure and satisfaction from learning new things, which can even be used in real interaction behaviors, so as to experience the charm of billiards more wholeheartedly [7]. With the continuous development of Chinese billiards tournaments, the athletes' competitive level has been improving, and the intensity of the matches has been increasing. This not only increases the audience's interest in Chinese billiards but also provides a better platform for athletes to display. Finally, the increasing popularity of Chinese billiards has made it a popular choice for many businesses and media. As the influence of Chinese billiards continues to expand, many businesses and media begin to realize its great commercial and media value. They begin to invest more resources to promote Chinese billiards and increase their popularity and influence. Therefore, Chinese billiards will have a bright future, and more businessmen and media will participate in it.

#### 4. Development Status of Chinese Billiards in China

However, the development of Chinese billiards has also gone through a long period of time. During the late 1970s, billiards in China suffered unprecedented difficulties. At that time, the State General Administration of Sports classified billiards as an unofficial competition, resulting in the sport being unable to obtain sufficient policy and economic support. In addition, the popularization and development of billiards was limited by traditional concepts and culture. Many people believe that billiards is a vulgar recreational activity that should not be taken seriously. These factors have led to the downturn and shrinkage of billiards in China. Together with the fact that snooker is a non-Olympic sport, the attention and exposure is low. Competitions such as the Championships and Masters are only broadcast live in the evening session. And for other levels of foreign tournaments is rarely live. All these make the development of billiards in China difficult [8].

Since Ding became famous, China hosted the World Snooker Championship for the first time in 2004, which was an important milestone for billiards in China. Chinese billiard players performed well in the tournament and attracted the attention of many spectators and the media. Since then, China has hosted a number of international billiards tournaments and championships, attracting many world-class players. Chinese players have also performed well in these tournaments, winning many championships and medals. At present, Chinese billiards has become one of the most important forces in the world billiards sport, with great influence and development potential. China has many excellent billiard players, among whom Ding Junhui, Zheng Kevin, Li Xing and others have become the representative figures of Chinese billiards. They have won a lot of good results in world competitions and have become the pride and representative of Chinese sports.

In China, there is also a scientific and systematic billiards teaching program for college students. At present, many universities have already opened billiards elective courses, but there is no system for teaching and teaching the methodology of snooker. Various universities can carry out online or offline teaching exchanges and unify to design a set of billiards teaching programs suitable for the development of China's colleges and universities. This will be more helpful for the promotion as well as the development of billiards in China.

In summary, Chinese billiards will have a broader development prospect in the future. Its easy-to-learn, competitive, increasing popularity and low investment cost make it a popular choice for many people and organizations. In the near future, Chinese billiards will be even more popular.

As the mass base of billiards continues to expand, a number of Chinese billiards tournaments have emerged. Thanks to the expansion of the billiards market, the total prize money of the tournaments has also risen, often amounting to millions or even tens of millions of dollars. Many billiards professionals believe that Chinese billiards has the soil for professional development. In April this year, the "Qiao's Cup" Chinese Billiards International Masters Tournament Finals in Hebei Qinhuangdao Olympic Sports Center Gymnasium. Chinese players Zheng Yubo and Tang Chunxiao staged a master-disciple duel in the final. According to Qiao Yuanxu, this tournament will really start the professionalization of Chinese billiards. "Whether the tournament prize money, venue hardware conditions or the degree of dissemination, have reached the world's top level." Qiao Yuanxu said. In addition, the professionalization of events such as the Chinese Billiards World Championships and the CBSA Chinese Billiards International Professional League has also been increasing. The Yushan Chinese Billiards World Championship has been held since 2015, and star snooker players such as Ding Junhui and Trump have participated in the event. The International Elite Tournament, which has just been held as one of the CBSA Chinese Billiards International Professional League Stage Tournaments, has a champion's prize money of 600,000 yuan, equivalent to the number of prizes awarded to the men's champion of the most recent Chinese Billiards World Championships, and continues the prize money universality system, with the top 128 finishers in the main tournament receiving a guaranteed 5,000 yuan in prize money.

The most important thing is that the threshold for becoming a professional billiard player is not high relative to other sports, will not be too much emphasis on talent, and it is not too late to start in your teens. The billiards industry has no educational requirements. The major recruitment websites for billiards referees, billiards coaches, or other billiards industry-related practitioners, in the educational requirements of the column, are clearly written: no limitations on academic qualifications. There are specialized training courses for billiard referees in China, and ordinary national second-class and first-class referees can be tested easily and easily, and then tested for higher-level referees after the training and on boarding value referees have some experience. The academic qualifications and incomes of world-famous players are shown in the table below.

Table 1: Snooker player education and income table.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Education Background</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Years of Employment</b>	<b>Annual Revenue Per Season (Pound)</b>	<b>World Ranking</b>
Mark Allen	Below high school	Britain	32	693250	01
Bretscher	Below high school	Britain	18	658750	02
Mark Selby	Below high school	Britain	31	591450	03
Trump	Below high school	Britain	31	517600	04
Murphy	Below high school	Britain	24	455000	05
O'Sullivan	Below high school	Australia	25	407200	06
Si Jiahui	Below high school	China	04	43000	36
Ding Junhui	Undergraduate	China	20	301150	17

Table 1: (continued).

Fu Jiajun	Below high school	China	25	201000	121
Liang Wenbo	Below high school	China	18	70564	45
Zhao Xintong	Below high school	China	07	197878	09
Yan Bingtao	Below high school	China	08	131101	16
Xiao Guodong	Below high school	China	16	84008	34
Fan Zhengyi	Below high school	China	05	83008	31
Zhou Yuelong	Below high school	China	10	82729	21

Compared to the average education in the billiards industry, education in other sports is generally much higher, as shown in the chart below, using archery, cycling and skiing as examples:

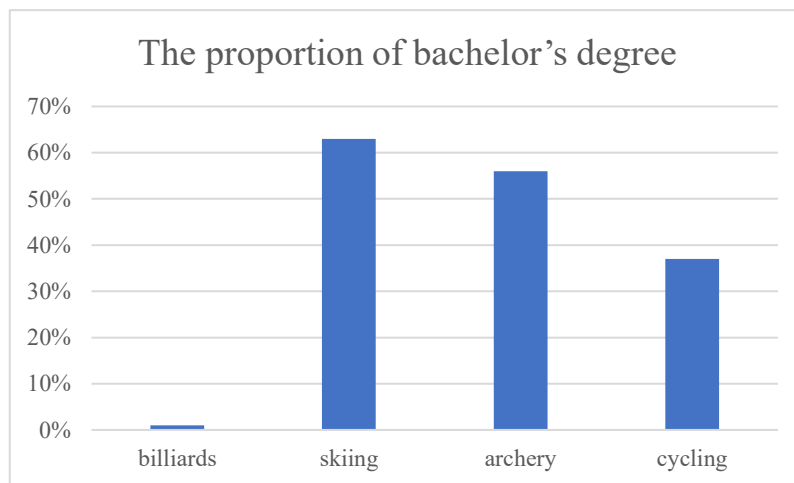


Figure 1: Percentage of players with bachelor's degrees in four sports: Billiards, skiing, archery and cycling.

## 5. Conclusion

To sum up, since the direction of employment and income in billiards has nothing to do with academic qualifications, young people can engage in billiards-related jobs in the future, and the prospects for both professional and non-professional jobs are very good. The commercial operation of billiards in China is very successful and professional and non-professional billiards players can earn a lot of income: professional players can earn a lot of income through tournament bonuses, tournament promotions, commercial endorsements, sponsorships, and playing exhibition matches. Non-professional players can work in the following directions: First, they can be coaches. China has a snooker training center in the United Kingdom, and the head coach is Nadgil Bond, who is very suitable for coaching because he himself is not a gifted player, but through the acquired efforts, he can teach. Billiards fans have to learn not to pick up the pole that can be over 100, but how to step by step from the grip, force, and finally to a full score of 147. Because of the rapid development of



Chinese billiards in the country, so billiards coaching will be the follow-up of a large market. Second, you can organize fan training. Because every game ball is different, rich changes can be high school and low stick any hit, so the training content is rich and varied. Third, it can be a chaperone.

As consumers in China, everyone tends to check the data in Meituan and DazhongDianping. The data show that the billiards industry escort salary of about 40 dollars an hour, while the basketball/table tennis/badminton coach is only about 20 an hour. Fourth, you can start your own business. According to the survey, now the business of billiard halls around the world is booming; from March 1, 2021, to July 1, 2023, 70% of the billiard halls are full of tables almost every weekend. In addition to this, you can also engage in amateur refereeing, equipment sales, offline organization of fan activities and association planning. The direction of practice is diverse. However, for Chinese parents, there are still some limitations in their knowledge of billiards. Influenced by the previous concepts, they do not understand this new profession and still think that billiards is "not a proper profession". In addition, people may think that Ding Junhui's cultivation mode is special and accidental, and Ding Junhui's success can only show that snooker is a sport that does not require a high level of education [9]. So it is less willing for children to engage in related work. In addition, billiards industry-related jobs are required to master billiards skills and knowledge, which requires a certain amount of time and experience to become a qualified player or even a coach.

However, after the research and analysis in this paper, it is believed that in the future, with more outstanding Chinese players playing in world-class competitions and with more and more tournaments being broadcasted, China's billiards industry will develop more and more. The market size will continue to maintain the trend of rapid growth and is expected to reach about 540 billion yuan in 2025, with a growth rate of about 50%. The maintenance of this trend will help improve the competitiveness of China's billiards industry, thus developing the industry to a new level. On the other hand, fans take the initiative to search for similar groups through online media platforms and establish connections to complete social interactions and fulfil their emotional needs [10].

Most importantly, people will gradually see the value of Chinese billiards and realize that it is a very good employment opportunity, especially for the current low-education people in China, which is definitely a new direction of employment different from other industries.

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