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University of Waterloo brings 1st elliptical pool table to math department

Students visiting the 'comfy lounge' can now play a game called Loop

Peggy Lam · CBC News · Posted: Jul 11, 2018 4:00 AM PDT | Last Updated: July 11, 2018

UW's math department unveiled the Loop Table on Tuesday afternoon in the student 'Comfy Lounge.' (Peggy Lam/CBC)

The University of Waterloo unveiled their first ever elliptical pool table in the mathematics department on Tuesday afternoon and hosted a tournament for students to play a unique pool game called Loop.

As the balls bounce off the curved table they travel in an elliptical direction rather than the straight angles produced on a conventional pool table.

- **New University of Waterloo student Diki Suryaatmadja is 12 years old**

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Stephen Watt, dean of the mathematics faculty, said the table was developed by Alex Bellos, a popular math writer from the United Kingdom.

Nicholas Richardson, a third year student in mathematical physics, tries to sink his red ball into the table's sole center pocket. (Peggy Lam/CBC)

The starting setup for the game Loop. (Peggy Lam/CBC)

The game Loop has only two coloured balls, along with the black 8-ball and white cue ball. The remaining rules of the game run like pool, with each player taking turns until one person sinks their coloured ball into the single hole located in the middle of the table at "one of the centres of the ellipse," said Watt.

"It's a lot harder than it looks because you have to bring all of your mathematical geometry into play," he said. "It's the perfect game to install at the faculty of mathematics."

Stephen Watt is the dean at UW's faculty of mathematics. (Peggy Lam/CBC)

Jason P'ng is the president of the math society and is a third year student in computing science. (Peggy Lam/CBC)

Watt said he hopes students will have fun with the table during their study breaks.

"It's more about how they can apply what they've learned to the game. Instead of the banks being straight lines, the banks are curved," Watt explained.

"If you understand the mathematics of the ellipse, then you'd be able to understand how to make your bank shots way better."

Jason P'ng, a third year computing science student at the University of Waterloo and the president of the math society, said he found the game "very fun," as he watched players line up.

"I'm always thinking about the focal point in the table because that is really at the centre of how you play — how we have to find the strategy around," he said.

"I think having this table will make it easier for people to have a place to chat, to hang out and to build community," said P'ng.

Midhun K Sukumaran, Ph.D. student at the University of Waterloo, gets to the final stage of the game. (Peggy Lam/CBC)
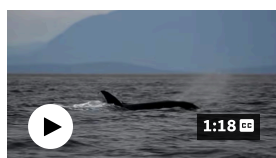
Corrections

- An earlier version of this story said the pool table is "circular," because the University of Waterloo described it as such. In fact, the table is elliptical.
  Jul 11, 2018 11:08 AM PDT

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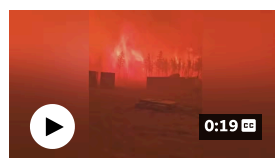

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