

Scoring sensation inspires libation

West Van pub serves up 4,000 free drinks thanks to Alex Burrows' goal-scoring awakening

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It may be free, but it is not easy. You can not buy it or make it yourself because the recipe is a secret. The only way to get the Alex Burrows Shot is to earn it. And the only way to do that is to be at the Village Taphouse pub in West Vancouver when the Vancouver Canucks scores. When that happens, the Burrows Shot flows like Shannon Falls in springtime, fast and blue and beautiful and with the sweet taste of victory.

And it is free!
"When you're in the back, you hear the explosion," bartender Jeff Saunders says of a Burrows goal. "It doesn't stop; it gets louder and louder. Then you hear the pounding on the tables. You know it's time. Put a smile on and start pouring some drinks."

The pub in Park Royal Village has poured a free drink for everyone in the house each time Burrows has scored this season.

It was general manager Trevor St. James's idea. He loves Burrows, all grit and underdog determination. St. James figured it would be a good way for Taphouse regulars to share his joy by buying them a round when his favourite Canuck scored.

Burrows had 12 goals last season, three the year before. How could St. James go wrong?

"They probably didn't expect me to score 28," Burrows says. "I think people probably wish that I score now. With my streak here, they're probably getting a few free beers."

They were.

About 10 goals ago, St. James and Saunders held a crisis meeting. It was taking nearly an hour some nights for the barman to pull 150 pints. Burrows has a habit of scoring on Friday and Saturday nights, when the Taphouse is overflowing with fans watching the Canucks on big screens. And if he doesn't score then, he often does on a Wednesday, when the karaoke crowd melds with Canuck nation and everyone breaks into song after the game ends.

"We sing our favourite Canuck songs," St. James says, later explaining he likes to personally close karaoke night with *Unchained Melody*.

Anyway, an executive decision was made that it would be easier to pour shots of pre-mixed alcohol than risk carpal tunnel syndrome for Saunders, so the blue-drink recipe was created.

It looks — and even tastes — a little like blue Gatorade. As shots go, it's not exactly an Al MacInnis howitzer.

"Taphouse secret," St. James said. "We just tried to get a shot that looked like the Canucks' colours."

The drink's not on the menu and not for sale if you ask. All



Village Taphouse bartender Jeff Saunders (left) and general manager Trevor St. James serve up this blue concoction to their customers — free of charge — every time Canuck winger Alex Burrows scores. The pub staff probably didn't count on the spunky Canuck to post a career-high 28 goals when they started this promotion.

the advertising for the pub's promotion has been word of mouth, except for the handwritten line at the very bottom of the chalkboard outside the front door. Free drink when Alex Burrows scores.

And at about 150 free drinks per round, multiplied by 28 goals, the pub has given away more than 4,000 drinks this season. The world is a happier place.

"[Burrows] immediately became the most popular Canuck," patron George Butterworth says. "It's a fun thing."

People like Butterworth are the bedrock of pub culture. He's a Taphouse regular, a customer who knows every server by

name and causes them alarm if he goes a couple of days without stopping by. They care.

Butterworth would watch Canuck games at the pub even without a free drink from Burrows, but the shtick makes it more enjoyable.

"If it wasn't Burrows [who scored], people will still yell: 'It was Burrows!'" Butterworth says. "Everybody is happy."

Another customer, Ivan Bebek, says: "I think it's a cool thing. We can all cheer for a round bought for us by the Canucks. I don't need a free drink, but I'll take it. It's blue and very soothing."

Bebek says friends don't believe him when he tells them

they can get a free drink at his pub if Burrows scores.

"Nobody gives away free drinks, especially in West Vancouver," Bebek says.

The Taphouse could use an alarm, like the dive-dive-dive warnings on submarines, when Burrows scores. The entire staff mobilizes when they hear the Burrows roar.

"There's a routine; everyone has their place," St. James explains. "Servers know, get yourself organized in your section because you're going to have to run some shots. Managers instantly drop what we're doing and get behind the bar and start helping out. We just start lining the shot glasses, make our huge

shot and just run it all the way down the line.

"People will come running in and say: 'Did I miss it? Did I miss it?' We haven't had any cheaters, but I wouldn't mind if we did. It's great for us. People love getting something for free."

And the decision to switch to blue alcohol from beer?

"We had two choices: either switch to [goal-less] Shane O'Brien or we keep Alex and do something quicker," St. James says. "It wasn't a money-saving thing, it was just the time."

Burrows is aware of his popularity in the little corner of West Van. Christy Wilson, who oversees Taphouse promotions as the director of marketing for

parent company Cafe, is the life partner of broadcaster Dan Murphy, who anchors telecasts, informed about the winger's status on the North Shore.

"I'm hoping to go on to TV soon here," Burrows says. "It's a great idea for customers and the fans they'll still do it next year."

Told that Burrows come by, St. James says he got a pretty hefty tip gets here."

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