

Monday February 19, 2024

Spare Change

By Johnny Campos

Peoria-area bowlers dominate USBC national leaderboard after Mixed Doubles Tournament at Potter's Alley

This year's annual Mixed Doubles Tournament turned out to be a signature event at the national level for the Peoria River City Bowling Association.

After Sunday's final squad at Potter's Alley in Morton, the names of Peoria-area bowlers were all over the United States Bowling Congress national leaderboard, including the top three mixed couples series spots so far this season.

Tommy Barnwell and Hailey Jepson won the tournament with a 1,562 total, currently the top score in the nation by a male/female duo.

Tony Schnack and Jennifer Mauerman finished second with 1,550 (second in the nation), and, in the tournament's opening squad, Donnie and Bobbie Sweet posted the eventual third-place total of 1,543 (ranked third nationally).

Jepson led the winners with a 788 series, which included a 299-middle game, while Barnwell added a 774 in Sunday's early squad. Their 567 middle game also ranks second nationally for a male/female duo.

"When I saw what Donnie and Bobbie shot yesterday, I wasn't sure Hailey and I even needed to bowl," Barnwell said. "But I knew that if I had a partner that I could do it with, it was Hailey. We were going to give it our best shot."

Jepson had games of 221 (with a split in the 10th), 299 (leaving a 4-pin on her fill ball) and 268, while Barnwell added 278, 268 and 228.

"We got off to a good start, even though Hailey had that rough break in the 10th frame," Barnwell said. "I looked at her before we started the second game and said, 'It's your turn to shoot 279 this game.' And she went above and beyond."

In Game 3, Jepson's score could have been even higher, but she left back-to-back 8-pins midway through the game.

Ironically, after those bad breaks, she got a good one in the 10th frame. She tugged the ball, and it went all the way into the 1-2 pocket for a crossover strike to keep their title hopes alive. She took advantage of the break by rolling two more strikes.

"I tugged it a lot all weekend," Jepson said. "When I missed it was usually because I tugged the ball."

At the time, their score put them ahead of the Sweets in the standings. Donnie opened the tournament with an 826 series, including a closing 300, and Bobbie added 717 set.

On the final squad of the event, however, Schnack and Mauerman had a shot at the leaders going into the final frames.

Mauerman struck on her final five shots for a 234 game to cap off a 698 series. She had steady games of 230, 234 and 234.

Schnack opened with 21 straight strikes (a career best string of strikes) and games of 300 and 267 and had the front nine strikes in all three games.

Both Mauerman and Schnack, however, missed single pins in the Game 2. Mauerman missed a 4-pin in the ninth frame and Schnack left a 10-pin in the 10th frame, which ended his string of strikes, and missed the spare.

He still could have struck out in the 10th of Game 3 for a second 300 in the set and the tournament title.

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Schnack got the first strike but came up high on his next shot to leave the 3-6-10. He got one pin on his fill ball and finished with a 285 game for a career-best 852 series.

"When I missed the 10-pin, it was all tempo," he said. "I just grabbed my spare ball, ran up there and shot it. I didn't slow myself down. I didn't do my full pre-shot routine. I do that every time I miss it."

By missing the 3-6-10 on his final ball of the day, Schnack reached his new career high with zero spares.

"To be fair, I used my strike ball at the 3-6-10," he joked. "I only missed one spare with my spare ball. I threw the ball well all weekend. I shot 791 on Saturday and bowled a 760 at Landmark on Friday night."

Steve Taylor and Libby Uthoff placed fourth in the scratch division with a 1,511 total. That currently ranks fifth in the nation.

Taylor had games of 268, 246 and 299 for an 813 set, while Uthoff added 232, 243 and 223 for a 698.

In the handicap division, two teams with big handicaps came up with big scratch scores to place 1-2.

Hunter Flores and Makenzie Eyer received 483 pins of handicap in three games (161 a game). They started out with games of 313 and 349 before breaking through with a 453 in Game 3 (a 614-team game with handicap). That gave them a winning total of 1,598, 60 pins better than the runner-up team.

Ashley Yockey and Jeffrey Webster were just as impressive. They received 348 total pins of handicap and had scratch team games of 399, 391 and 400 (1,190 scratch) and placed second with 1,538.

Eric Zueck rolled a scratch series of 810 on games of 275, 279 and 256 and teamed with Sara Bryant for third place with 1,526.

Other honor scores rolled in the tournament included an 825 by Barnwell (closing with 289 and 290), a 300 by Jared Remelius and a trey by Taylor in a 792 set.



Mixed Doubles champs Hailey Jepson and Tommy Barnwell.

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Second-place finishers Tony Schnack and Jennifer Mauerman.



Third-place finishers Donnie Sweet and Bobbie Sweet.