

Monday March 13, 2023

Spare Change

By Johnny Campos

Winning team of Kevin Tockes and Timmy Blanch get two big thumbs up in March Doubles Tournament

As a rule of thumb, the doubles team of Kevin Tockes and Timmy Blanch use a combined zero thumbs when making their deliveries on the lanes.

Tockes doesn't use his thumb when he rolls a back-up ball down the left side of the lane – hence his nickname of “Refty.”

Blanch, a right-hander, uses a two-handed delivery, also without the use of his thumb.

But they got two big thumbs up when they teamed up to claim the March Doubles title recently at Landmark Lanes, qualifying first against a tough field and going undefeated in the bracket finals.

Tockes led the way, averaging 243 and closing qualifying with a 759 series on games of 234, 279 and 246. Blanch averaged a steady 223.67.

They totaled 2,837 to lead qualifying, 25 pins ahead of the duo of Brad Moore and Andre Campos.

Moore averaged 239.67 and Campos 229 to qualify second and earn two byes in the bracket finals.

“We were just there for a good time,” Blanch said. “We stayed focused on every shot, and when one of us would throw a bad shot, the other one would be there to pick him up.

“We weren't worried about what the other teams were doing. We just focused on throwing the best game that we could.”

In the semifinals, Tockes and Blanch eliminated the team of Robert Hammonds and Ryan Stubblefield, who were getting 12 pins of handicap in the match.

Mike McWethy and Camden Rokita fell behind early, but then defeated Moore and Campos in the other match.

Monday March 13, 2023

In the title match, Tockes and Blanch jumped out to an early 237-201 lead after Game 1 of the two-game match. They put it away with a closing 289 for the win.

“Honestly, the communication was the key,” Tockes said. “We talked about what we needed to accomplish each game. We had a goal of shooting 230 a man a game. We stuck with the game plan, and it ended up in our favor.”

Both bowlers on the winning team have been bowling well as of late, especially in The Perfect Angle Pro Shop/Bill Mastronardi Masters traveling league.

Going into the final third of the league, Blanch was in 26th place on the average list at 220 and Tockes was in 16th place at 224.48.

Six weeks into the final third, Blanch has moved up to 16th place at 224.24 and Tockes is in 10th with 227.86 and in good position to make a run at being a captain for next season’s draft.

“Part of it is a new ball I have,” Tockes said. “But mainly, I feel my absolute best throwing the ball ever in my career. The Masters has really helped me in ways I can’t explain.

“Taking pointers from my teammates and using them in my other leagues/tournaments has really helped me.”

Blanch credits some of his improvement to drilling up a Radical Innovator ball, which he used in the doubles win.

“But I’ve also been working on my release and making sure I’m coming through the ball every shot,” he said. “It seems to be improving my game!”

It was the first time Tockes and Blanch bowled doubles together in a tournament.

“We’ve both been bowling our best lately,” Tockes said. “We both stayed calm and trusted each other in our shot making. So I had to ask Timmy to bowl with me. I’m glad we did! We’re definitely bowling more together in the future.”

High individual in the tournament was Eddie Flanigan, who posted 1,499, just under a 250 average, for his six games. McWethy was next at 1,479 and Eric Wurmnest Jr. third with 1,467, including a 300 game.

Flanigan and Andy Stone advanced to the bracket finals, along with Wurmnest and his partner Justin Karnats. Both teams were eliminated in the second round, just before the semifinals.

Monday March 13, 2023

Long weekend

The day prior to the March Doubles tournament, Andre Campos was at St. Clair Bowl in Collinsville bowling in the Mega Baker Marathon along with teammates Donnie Sweet, Bob Baker, Tony DeVita, and Jon Richardson.

The team ended up bowling 38 Baker games over the 10 hours. They qualified 11th in a field of 44 teams, made the cut to bracket play and finished in a tie for 5th place.

All five bowlers came through with some clutch strikes in some of the close matches, and even won back-to-back high games midway through the tournament.

They went 19-12-1 in qualifying and averaged 219 for the 32 games.

In the first round of bracket play, they defeated a strong 80% Straight team that included Tony Recsnik, who holds the USBC nine-game scoring record at 2,468, and former Team USA bowler Lauren Pate.

In the quarterfinals, they dropped a tough match against a team that was getting 19 pins of handicap.

Josh Barwell also was on a team that reached match play, but lost in the opening round.

At one point in qualifying, Barnwell rolled 25 straight strikes. But his team inexplicably never put him in the anchor position.

Moving on

Linn Lanes in Canton hosted the Illinois Pepsi USBC Youth Championships Zone 7 competition recently, and quite a few youth bowlers from area bowling centers qualified for the state finals.

In the U15 boys' division, Zayne Shockency of the host center finished first with a four-game total of 919 – 165 pins ahead of runner-up Caston Dhuse of Illinois Valley Super Bowl.

Also advancing in that division from Linn Lanes were Brody Ketcham, Dre Kennedy, Braden Shockency and Zander Ewalt.

Plaza Lanes bowlers Wes Peterson and Will Hudson also qualified, along with Maxwell Carter and Henry Jones of Potter's Alley, Paxton Bauer of IVSB and Mavick Sunken of Abbe Lanes.

In the U15 girls' division, Madisyn Fowler of Linn qualified first with an 808-scratch total, 109 pins ahead of Morgan Robinson of Potter's.

Other area qualifiers in that division were Isabella Foster of Digger's College City Bowl and IVSB bowlers Lindy Dhuse, Kaitlyn Miller and Maddy Fabish.

Monday March 13, 2023

In the U18 boys' division, Preston Jones of Potter's finished second to advance along with Potter's Alley bowlers Michael and Matthew Robinson.

Tommy Liening and Ben Allen of Plaza Lanes also advanced, along with Nicholas Parkins of Digger's and DeMaurion Thomas of Christian Center Lanes.

Mary Ella Tucker of Abbe Lanes won the girls' U18 division ahead of second-place finisher Sarah Beier of IVSB and third-place bowler Jasmine Kaufmann of Plaza Lanes.



Timmy Blanch and Kevin Tockes