

Thursday March 21, 2024

# Spare Change

By Johnny Campos

## Area bowlers show the true power of three in recent trios tournaments

The power of three has been on display by area bowlers in several recent tournaments, none more so than by the husband-wife team of Donnie and Bobbie Sweet.

For them, good things came in threes. They swept the podium spots in the scratch division of the Peoria River City Bowling Association Team Trios event held at Plaza Lanes in Washington, taking the top three spots.

They teamed with Gary Strait to win the event with a 2,244 total, finished second with Andre Campos with 2,207 and third with Bob Baker with 2,164.

After a slow start on the team that finished second on the tournament's opening day, Donnie got on a roll in Day 2, bowling back-to-back 800 sets to complete the trifecta.

Ironically, the only team that was originally scheduled to bowl was the last one, with Strait.

"It was supposed to be Kevin Tockes, Andre and I bowling the first squad," Don Sweet said. "Kevin forgot to put us in. So I threw a team together for the second squad with Bobbie and Andre."

That team, which bowled in the second squad, took the early lead, getting 769 from Campos, 749 from Bobbi and 689 from Donnie.

"At the end of the third game I changed balls to something a little bit longer and shinier, just to give me a little more pop," Donnie said. "I was leaving 10-pin after 10-pin and 7-pins. And I missed two in a row before I switched balls to the (IQ Tour) Ruby."

The next day, the Sweets put a team together with Baker, Donnie's usual doubles partner.

"Bobbie was going to bowl all four squads, and I didn't just want to sit around the whole time," Donnie said. "I wanted to bowl. And I'm glad I did!"

Donnie tried the Ruby in practice but decided to start with a different ball. That didn't last very long.

"I started with the Absolute again," he said. "I go 10-pin, 10-pin, 10-pin, so I switched and struck out with the Ruby. I never put the Ruby down the next five games."

The result was an 803 series on the team with Baker on games of 249, 279 and 277, and then an 801 set with Strait on games of 276, 236 and 289.

"It was crazy," Donnie said. "Definitely I wish I would have changed balls sooner. I think I would have carried better and shot better than 689. I had a good look all weekend."

Strait added a 725 for the winning team and Bobbie Sweet 718.

She has been on a roll this year, winning the women's city tournament all-events title with a 2,147 total, and paced the winning team with a 788 series.

In the handicap division of the tournament, Pete Burkhart and Holly Soltow didn't quite match the performance by the Sweets, but they came close.

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They teamed with Matt Liening to win the division with a 2,256 total and then bowled with Brian McDaniel to finish second with 2,246.

Liening paced the winning team with a 741-scratch series on games of 269, 224 and 248. Soltow added 677 and Burkhart 646. The team was getting 64 pins of handicap a game.

"Pete put the team together," Liening said. "We bowl together in the summer, and my kids bowl with Holly's kids on Saturday mornings."

He has bowled on the traveling Bill Mastronardi/Perfect Angle Pro Shop Masters League this season and has averaged 214.4 so far this season. He did much better than that in the tournament.

"It was a better-than-usual day," he said.

For the runner-up team, McDaniel led the way with a 707, Burkhart added 680 and Soltow 670.

## **Three Amigos**

At Linn Lanes in Canton, another husband-wife team, Maggie and Kevin Audi, teamed with Chad Barnes to claim the Three Amigos trios tournament last Saturday evening.

They defeated the team of Austin Powell, Chad Powell, and Doug Henson in the title match to claim the \$900 top prize.

Barnes averaged 255.4 during the five games of qualifying, bowling games of 257, 300, 235, 206 and 279 (1,277 total).

"Kevin asked me to bowl," said Barnes, who now has 56 career treys. "We normally bowl here, and they always seem to ask me for some reason. I don't know why. This is the first time we've ever done anything together."

The winners qualified second for the Baker-style stepladder finals. They got past the team of Shawn DeWeese, Andrew Sullivan (who also bowled a 300 in qualifying) and Jeff Johnson in the semifinals.

"All the matches were pretty close," Barnes said. "It was the best-of-three, and we never got pushed to the third game."

For the Baker matches, Barnes was placed to bowl the 10<sup>th</sup> frame in all of the games.

"I knew why Kevin wanted to keep me there, but the carry couldn't last forever," Barnes said. "But it was Maggie that held us together that last game."

"She hardly missed the pocket at all. In the championship match, Kevin and I lost our carry, and she struck every time except maybe for one. Kevin and I just made our spares, and the other team left a couple of splits."

Barnes converted a 10-pin in the final frame to secure the win.

The team of Arnold Miller, Jeremy Grove and Cory Andes placed fourth, and Tony DeVita, Irvin Johnson III and Mike Shockency fifth.

## **Lucky Trios Championship**

On St. Patrick's Day, Andre Campos traveled to Champaign to bowl with St. Louis-area bowlers Darren Dunning and AJ Fair in the Lucky Trios Championship at Arrowhead Lanes.

They won the tournament in convincing fashion, opening the title match with nine straight strikes in the Baker-style finals.

Fair led the way in qualifying with a four-game total of 1,001 that included a 300 game. Dunning added 926 and Campos 914.

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The trio took the early lead with a 781 opening game, getting 279 from Campos, 252 from Dunning and 250 from Fair.

They fell to third after a 653 in Game 2 and held on to that spot with a 696 in Game 3.

In the final qualifying game, Campos shot 257, Fair 240 and Dunning 214 for a 711, hoping they had held on to the third and final spot for the stepladder finals.

They ended up leading the tournament by 26 pins over the Bloomington-area team of Justin Karnats, Adam Johnson and Eric Wurmnest Jr., who made it close with a closing game of 752. Karnats rolled a closing 259, Johnson 258 and Wurmnest 234.

Wurmnest rolled a 1,039 total in qualifying, including a 300 game and a string of 25 strikes at one point. Johnson added 894 and Karnats 882.

In the stepladder, however, Team Johnson lost the one-game match to the runner-up team of Kiel King, Matt Fitch and Jacob Cribbet, who were getting 15 pins of handicap.

That didn't matter in the title match.

"We dropped the hammer on them with the front nine in the championship match to take home the dub," Dunning said.

The final score was 279-214.

The team kept its lineup intact for the title match, with Fair going first followed by Campos and Dunning.

In the 10<sup>th</sup>, Fair was going for his second trey of the day but left a swishing 7-pin to end the string.

"I would have struck out in the 10<sup>th</sup>," Dunning joked.

"So would I," added Campos.

But Fair was more than happy with his performance on the day.

"The best part of the day was finally being able to shoot 300 in front of my parents (Jerry and Ginger Fair)," he said.

Fair was a replacement for Kevin Tockes, who had originally put the team together with Campos and Dunning. But Tockes ended up not making the trip.

So Dunning asked Fair to take his place. And he's glad he did.

"AJ has a damn good day – probably the best I've seen him bowl," Dunning said. "And that's no shot at him. He's been working hard, and today, everything clicked.

"Me and Andre were just chilling most of the day!"

It was another successful outing with Campos for Fair.

"I'm now undefeated bowling with Andre as a last-minute sub," said Fair, who teamed with Campos, Tockes and Brad Moore to win last year's Firecracker team event at King Pin Lanes in Springfield.

Campos said he was glad when he heard he was going to be bowling with Dunning and Fair.

"I love bowling with these guys," he said. "I have done a lot of good bowling with them! I'm glad we stayed hot for the final match, going front nine in the Baker format for the win."

And there was nothing lucky about it.

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Peoria River City Bowling Association Team Trios scratch Champions  
(left to right) Bobbie Sweet, Gary Strait and Donnie Sweet



Three Amigos Champs  
(left to right) Maggie Audi, Chad Barnes, and Kevin Audi

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Lucky Trios winners  
(left to right) Andre Campos, AJ Fair and Darren Dunning