

Monday July 31, 2023

Spare Change

By Johnny Campos

Donnie Sweet, Andre Campos go 1-2 in 2023 Perfect Angle Pro Shop/Bill Mastronardi Masters draft; three ladies also get picked, giving the league a new look in addition to a few rule changes

There was no question that Donnie Sweet was going to be the first pick in the 2023 draft of the Perfect Angle Pro Shop/Bill Mastronardi Masters League on Sunday.

The only question was which captain would be getting the first pick.

Up until a few days ago, that was going to be Gary Strait.

But when Ryan Driskill gave up his spot as a captain, Bob Baker wound up as the 12th captain and knew he was getting the No. 1 pick.

Sweet was an easy pick. Baker and Sweet have bowled the Holiday Doubles together a few times and have bowled in many other team events the past few years.

“It was a no-brainer,” Baker said. “The only person who was really upset was Gary because he was going to pick me or Donnie first. It just kind of wiped both of his first picks out.”

So Strait took Andre Campos, who finished just behind Baker on last year’s high average list, as the No. 2 pick.

“I was obviously going with Rob Johnson, but when he backed out, I had three bowlers in mind,” Strait said. “But Andre was the obvious choice. I love his consistency, he plays straight for the most part, and he picks up his spares.

“And he has the personality to bowl with anyone. So I’m very happy to have him on my team.”

The other first-round picks were, in order: Mark Stenger by Mike Boogren; new league president Kayla Johnson by Paul Lippens; Sammy Taylor by Andy Stone; Chad Barnes by Tony DeVita; Timmy Blanch to Kevin “Refty” Tockes; Kevin Audi to Mike McBride; Bill Maher by Steve Taylor; Pro Shop Tony Schnack by Brian Davis; Adam Burnette by Travis Anderson; and Benny Barnwell by Tommy Barnwell.

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There were some surprises in the draft, including the fact that Gary Robinson, the local association's newest Hall of Fame member, lasting until the second round.

Baker quickly scooped him up.

"Taking Gary Robinson in the second round was a steal," he said. "I was shocked he was still there."

Strait then took former Masters captain Luke Morris in the second round.

It turns out that his draft strategy was developed during a golf outing earlier in the day. Strait was in the same foursome as Campos and Morris.

That's when Campos discovered he was going to be the second pick in the draft.

"I wasn't expecting that and was surprised until after talking with Gary," he said. "He asked me if I wanted to bowl with him. I said it would be great and it will be a fun time.

"Luke also was in our foursome, so it's funny how that worked out."

Baker completed the draft by making left-hander Eric Lillenthal the final pick of the day. He also was considering David McVey as the last pick, but Strait took him as the next-to-last pick.

"I wanted to give Eric a chance because I always want to give new bowlers in the league a chance," Baker said.

Sweet, who was camping in Kentucky, was not present at the draft. And while he was not surprised that he was the first pick, he was surprised when Travis Anderson drafted Donnie's wife Bobbie in the third round.

"I was shocked that Travis took her," he said. "I was surprised but super proud. That's awesome!"

Another female bowler, Jennifer Mauerman, went to Kevin Tockes in the third round, making this possibly the first year that there will be three ladies in the league.

Other new bowlers in the league this year include (I might miss a few) Mark Reed by Boogren, Xavier Davis by Lippens, Jeff McBride by his dad Mike, and Matt Leining by Steve Taylor.

There will be a few changes in the league this year, which begins on Monday August 21.

For starts, there will be no pre-season tournament as there has been in previous years. The first night counts.

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The league also will go back to moving pairs after each game, the way it was for many years.

“There also will be no gambling on machines during competition,” Johnson said. “We have to watch the pace of play. Gambling tends to be the No. 1 thing.”

The league also will have position rounds each third.

“There will be 11 weeks, so there will be one team you won’t bowl,” Johnson said. “But it won’t repeat. If I didn’t bowl your team the first third, I’ll be sure to bowl your team the next two rounds.”

There also will not be an official roll-off to determine the league champion. So the winner of each third will qualify for the Tournament of Champions at the end of the season.

However, there will be a post-season tournament, which will be by invitation only. That will include the winners of each third and possibly the team that wins the most overall points if it isn’t one of the winners.

“So there will be a tournament champion but not a league champion to ensure we get three entries into the Tournament of Champions,” Johnson said.

There was money left in the Masters account from last year’s knockout pot. Part of the money went for some software updates the league needed.

What was left will be donated to the family of longtime Masters bowler Ray Bart, a Peoria Association Hall of Famer who has been battling cancer for the past 10 years and was recently put in Hospice care.

There also will be a Ray Bart Cancer Benefit 9-pin no tap tournament starting at 6 p.m. on August 26 at Striketown Bowl to further help the Bart family with their mounting medical expenses.

Entry fee is \$40, and there will be 50/50 raffle, door prizes and raffle items.

So here’s hoping the event is a huge success, which will be a great kickoff for the new season.

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Bobbie and Donnie Sweet both get drafted in Perfect Angle Pro Shop/Bill Mastronardi League



Andre Campos is second overall pick in the draft.