

Thursday August 1, 2024

Spare Change

By Johnny Campos

Nobody surprised when Tony Recsnik taken No. 1 in Masters draft

About the only mystery surrounding the Bill Mastronardi Masters League draft on Sunday was who would be the No. 2 pick?

As soon as Tony Recsnik put his name in the draft a few weeks ago, it was a foregone conclusion that Andre Campos would make him the top pick.

Campos, last season's No. 2 pick, had the 12th high average last season to earn a captain's spot and the first selection in the draft.

But Recsnik, who recently moved from the St. Louis area to Springfield, had to be convinced to enter the draft.

"We briefly talked about it at a tournament in St. Louis before he put his name in," Campos said. "And I think everyone knew I would take him first."

It actually ended up being kind of a package deal that worked out well for both Recsnik and close friend Jennifer Longmeyer.

"I was talking to Andre about it, and he told me that if I was in there, he was probably going to pick me," said Recsnik, a 24-year-old right-hander. "And Jenn was right there, so we decided to put our names in together at the same time."

As it turned out, Campos claimed Longmeyer as the last pick in the draft, which could end up being quite a steal.

Longmeyer won the Scratch Eliminator at Striketown Bowl recently and was the only female entry in a field of 27.

Earlier in the year, she made national news when she won the Absolute Power Trip Sweepstakes, earning a Storm VIP Trip to the 2024 PBA Tournament of Champions and PBA Hall of Fame dinner in Akron, Ohio.

At that event, she rolled a 300 game during the pro-am with a new ball she had been given by Storm.

Longmeyer entered the draft with a solid 218 average

Campos confirmed the pick with a text to Recsnik. He was not present at the draft because he was on the road, returning from a trip to Nashville. He had been at the bachelor party for Brad Moore, along with a few other Peoria-area friends.

And Campos was able to tell Moore in person that he had taken him as the top pick of Round 2.

"I didn't think Brad would make it to the second round," Campos said. "I was going to take either him or Sammy Taylor, but Donie Sweet (last year's No. 1 pick) took Sammy as the last pick of the first round. I'm glad I didn't have to make that choice."

Campos has bowled several events with both Taylor and Moore, who led the Masters in average in the 2017-18 season.

"I think we have a really good team chemistry, and I believe that is the most important thing when it comes to working together," said Recsnik, who finished last season with a 237 average.

He holds the USBC record for nine games, which he set at the Missouri state tournament three years ago while still a student at Lindenwood University.

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Recsnik rolled an 825 in team event, 822 in doubles and 836 in singles for a 2,483 (275.88 average). That beat the old mark of 2,468 that had been set by PBA champion Eugene McCune in 2010.

With his job as a commercial accounts associate, working with Homeowner Associations and Property Management Companies, Recsnik can work remotely. That's why he was able to put his name into the draft.

Most drives to bowl in the Masters will be around an hour one way. But he will have some company on the weekly road trips.

Longmeyer lives in Jacksonville, even farther away than Recsnik. So, they will carpool to the Masters.

"That was the plan from the beginning," Longmeyer said. "It just happened to work out even better, being on the same team!"

And while Recsnik was the obvious top choice, Gary Strait had a big decision to make for the No. 2 pick, which he had for the second straight year.

"Of all the first rounders, besides Tony, nobody really stood out," he said. "As of last night, I would have taken either Brian Davis or Tony DeVita."

But Strait got a call from longtime friend and sometimes-doubles partner Rob Johnson on Saturday night that changed his mind.

"Rob and I talked last night for the first time since Ray Bart's passing (last August), and he said he really wanted to bowl with me," Strait said. "If we hadn't talked last night, I wouldn't have taken him."

"We hadn't talked in so long, so I wasn't going to pick him and have that baggage to start the year."

Then Strait took Luke Morris in the second round and David McVey in the third – both for the second straight season. So he ended up with almost the same team he had last year, but with Johnson as his first pick instead of Campos.

"I'm pretty content with my team," Strait said. "You never know."

Other first-round picks were Paul Lippens to Chad Barnes, Dave Colburn to Kevin Audi, Mike Boogren to Andy Stone, Mark Stenger to Tommy Barnwell, Tony Schnack to Kevin Tockes, Brian Davis to Bob Baker, Kayla Johnson to Mike McBride, Jason Jones of Bloomington to Steve Taylor, Tony DeVita to Travis Anderson and Sammy Taylor to Donnie Sweet.

There were three females taken in the draft for the second straight year. Bobbie Sweet was selected by her husband Donnie as the first pick of Round 3.

There was so much depth in this year's draft pool that several players who bowled last season did not get selected.

Some rule changes

There will be a couple of changes to the rules in the upcoming season for the Masters, which begins its 33-week season on Monday, August 19 at Plaza Lanes in Washington.

The biggest one will be that the teams will roll all three games on the same pair of lanes every week. Last year, they changed pairs after each game.

"A lot of that had to do with timing," said league president Kayla Johnson. "There were some teams last year that were a little bit slower, and we have some third shifters who wanted to make sure they were getting out on time."

"A couple of times last year they were a little slower than they'd like to be."

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There also was a sub rule added that if a player is drafted by one team and then has to bow out because of an injury or other reasons, that player can only return to the league and bowl with the team that originally drafted him/her.

It should be another interesting season.



Tony Recsnik, No. 1 draft pick



Rob Johnson, taken second overall

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Jennifer Longmeyer, final pick in the draft
could be a steal