

Friday May 26, 2023

## Spare Change

By Johnny Campos

# Teams score big comeback wins in Mixed and Men's Divisions of the 2023 Tournament of Champions; Bowling Barnwells claim women's title

For the winning teams in the Mixed Division and the Men's Division of the 2023 bowling Tournament of Champions, it wasn't how they started, but how they finished that got the job done on Thursday night at Landmark Lanes.

The WUP team lost the first two games of the Mixed title match but got a couple of big games from Megan West and anchor bowler Jake Jones in Game 3 to knock off Striketown, 2,403-2,344.

The strong Plaza Lanes team from the Perfect Angle Pro Shop/Bill Mastronardi Masters League rolled a tournament-high 1,295 opening team game and jumped out to a 176-pin lead over Mad Media.

But the Mad Media team finished strong and posted a 3,403-3,363 decision for the come-from-behind victory.

In the Women's Division, the Bowling Barnwells built an early lead and were never challenged to claim the title. They defeated Castle's Patio Inn, 2,998-2,839.

### Men's Division

In the opening game, Plaza Lanes anchor bowler Mike Boogren fired a 279, Kevin Tockes 278, Gary Alstott 268, Garrett Lawson 248 and Gary Robinson 222 for a 1,295-team game to take a big early lead over Mad Media.

Plaza Lanes came into the tournament with a team average of 1,118.

But the Mad Media team of Gayland Ford, Bobbie Sweet, Jennifer Mauerman, Tony Schnack and Don Sweet was not that far behind with a team average of 1,089.

They were getting 24 pins of handicap a game in the title match after giving handicap to their first five opponents – from 13 a game to almost 200 a game against all-male teams.

Don Sweet kept his team in the title match by Matching Boogren's 279 effort in Game 1.

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To spark the comeback effort, Sweet added another 279 in Game 2 and sealed the win with a closing 255 game for an 813 series.

Ford added closing games of 201 and 235 to finish with a 603 set. Bobbie Sweet was steady with games of 212, 237 and 212 for a 661 series. Mauerman opened strong with 225 and 226 and ended with a 650, while Schnack, rolled a clutch double in the final frame and finished with a 604.

They beat the Masters team scratch the final two games and finally pulled ahead midway through Game 3. Mad Media closed with a pair of 1,137 games, while Plaza Lanes dropped to 1,099 in Game 2 and 969 in Game 3.

"I was a little bit worried after the first game," admitted Don Sweet, who won this year's North Illinois State scratch singles title with an 833 set. "But I told everybody, hey, let's not back off. Let's get back all the pins that we can get and keep it as close as we can. This is not going to happen all night. We'll get our hits, we will carry, and we will come back."

Besides sparking the comeback win, Don Sweet also had a shot at rolling a 279-triplicate going into the 10<sup>th</sup> frame of the last game.

"I was thinking about it," he said. "After I left a stone 10-pin, I was going for it."

But he left a 4-pin on his first ball in the 10<sup>th</sup> and spared to all but wrap up the win. When Boogren left the 4-10 split on his first ball in the 10<sup>th</sup>, it gave Mad Media the win.

Tockes led Plaza with a 727 series, Robinson added 689, Lawson 666, Alstott 660 and Boogren 621.

Because Mad Media was a mixed team, they had the opportunity to enter either the Men's or Mixed Divisions.

"We thought about entering the Mixed Division for about a second, but there weren't a ton of women in our scratch league, so a male bowler would be easier to pick up if we needed a sub," said Bobbie Sweet.

They also had to pick up a couple of extra bowlers because Mad Media was from a trios league.

"We had to put a team together, because we were only a three-person team," said Bobbie Sweet.

One of the regular bowlers, Josh Barnwell, went out with an injury, and another regular on the team, Andre Campos, only bowled the first three rounds because of a planned fishing vacation up in Wisconsin.

The subs, however, came up big when they needed to.

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“Mike Gilbert shot a 715 the other night, Tony (Schnack) went 806 last night (in the semifinals), and Gayland shot a 740 and had another 700 for us,” Don Sweet said. “And these girls have been amazing. And everybody picked up everybody. We all had off nights.”

The winners also had a steady group of followers in the stands rooting them on, including Don’s mother Dawn Guerrero, his grandmother Pamela Haungs, and Jeanine Campos, Andre’s mom who wore her son’s team shirt to the last three rounds of the tournament to support the team in his absence.

She immediately texted Andre the good news as soon as the team finished its comeback win.

## **Mixed Division**

The Striketown team of Debbie Blanch, Lisa Feger, Doug Feger and Tim Blanch jumped out to a 96-pin lead after the first two games against WUP.

Tim Blanch opened with 238 and 224, Doug Feger started with a 224 game and Lisa Feger had a 213 in Game 2.

But in the final game, Jones had a big 279 game, Spencer Summer a 197. Sabrina Maloney a 105 off her 84 average and Megan West a 183 off her 109 average.

WUP was receiving 117 pins of handicap a game and ended up winning by just 59 pins. They won Game 3, 881-726 to overcome their early deficit.

And Jones gave much of the credit to Maloney and West for the comeback.

“Realistically we wouldn’t be here without these girls,” said Jones, who led the winning team with a 653 set. “Sabrina came in with an 84 average and shot a 370 (including an opening 155 game). And Megan’s last game of 183 was her best game ever.”

West finished with a 433 series and was over average all three games, while Summer had a 596, including a 237 in Game 2.

Tim Blanch led Striketown with a 670 series.

## **Women’s Division**

Andrea Eertmoed was “dressed to kill” in the title match for the winning team.

She sparked the championship effort by the Bowling Barnwells with a 701 series in the title match, including opening games of 256 and 267.

It was the second 700 set in the tournament for Eertmoed, who came in with a 180 average.

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“Sunday, I had a 700 exactly,” she said.

But Eertmoed might have given her outfit some credit for her good performance on the lanes.

“This is the second time I’m bowling in a kilt, and I like it,” she said. “For inspiration I do the Highland Games (which honor Scottish and Celtic culture) now. So, I thought I would take that inspiration to the lanes.”

Mary Breckenridge added a 481, Sherrie Woodcock 514, Brittany Barnwell 509 and Wendy Haste 525.

And all of them came through with big games to help the team’s winning effort.

Breckenridge, bowling off a 145 average, closed the tournament with a 190, Woodcock (148 average) rolled a 200 in Game 2, Barnwell (166 average) a 183 last game, and Haste (168 average) an opening 202.

Hailey Jepson, who entered the tournament with a 225 average, led Castle’s Patio Inn with a 704 set on games of 255, 214 and 235. Jade Frost added 621 and Kathy Ortega 595.

But the team was giving up 96 pins of handicap a game and was never able to make up the difference.

Bowling Barnwells took a 51-pin lead after an opening 999, increased their advantage to 116 pins after 1,024 in Game 2, and added to their lead with a 975-closing effort.



**Mad Media members (left to right): Tony Schnack, Jennifer Mauerman, Gayland Ford, Don Sweet, Bobbie Sweet, Josh Barnwell. (Not shown, Andre Campos)**

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**WUP members (left to right): Sabrina Maloney, Jake Jones, Megan West, Spencer Summer.**



**Bowling Barnwells members (left to right): Brittany Barnwell, Andrea Eertmoed, Sherrie Woodcock, Mary Breckenridge, Wendy Haste.**