

Wednesday April 17, 2024

## Spare Change

By Johnny Campos

# Springfield-area bowlers Diamond, Howe make their marks in USBC Open Championships

**LAS VEGAS** — Dale Diamond and Collin Howe, two bowlers from the Springfield area, both grabbed the spotlight at the USBC Open Championships last weekend for very different reasons.

And both were well deserving of the attention on a weekend that featured a large contingent of bowlers from Central Illinois on the South Point Arena lanes.

On Saturday, Diamond became only the 33rd bowler in the history of the event to bowl in 60 Open Championships. A group of family members and friends wore red shirts with “Dale Diamond’s 60<sup>th</sup> National Tournament” on the back to commemorate the occasion.

He received a plaque, chevron, and engraved money clip for his achievement.

Then on Sunday, all eyes were on Howe, who had a shot at the all-events lead. He had rolled sets of 677 in team and 736 in doubles and opened singles with games of 220 and 257.

Howe needed a 290 or better his final game of singles to take over the lead.

The 33-year-old opened with 10 straight strikes before a solid 10-pin ended his run. He made the spare and finished with a 289 game for a 2,179 all-events total. That tied him with PBA champion Kevin McCune for the all-events lead.

What loomed large at that point was the final ball that Howe threw in the team event. He opened that game with nine straight strikes before coming up light and leaving a 2-8 in the 10<sup>th</sup>.

After the spare, the unexpected happened: Howe’s last shot ended up in the right gutter!

“I think I got into the shot early and then I topped it, which pushed the ball left and it hit my ankle and went into the gutter,” Howe said. “Not a chance did I think the gutter would cost me the lead in all events. I thought I had a look for maybe 690 on the doubles and singles pattern, certainly not 730, 760. It would have been nice to have the lead, though.”

“I was joking about the seventh or eighth frame of the last game that if I’m out of the lead by less than 10, I’m going to go and vomit or something,” he joked. “But being tied, I can’t really do that. It probably doesn’t make the biggest of deals in the grand view of things.”

Howe’s previous best at the Open Championships was a 2,036 a couple of years ago.

He said he has been bowling well coming into this year’s event but had no idea he would be able to tie for the all-events lead.

“This year, as hard as team was, I didn’t see myself doing the front nine there,” Howe said. “But this shot (on Sunday) really played to my strong suits. So I believed I could shoot a few 250s maybe, but not front 10.”

Howe grew up in Southern Illinois, but moved to Springfield where he now works for the State of Illinois as a Revenue Tax Specialist.

“So nobody likes me,” he joked. “But I knew Tyler (Vocks) from high school and college, and he asked me to bowl everything from leagues to this.”

Wednesday April 17, 2024

The other members of the TBF Purple team were Shawn Reed, Tim Frey, and Christopher Ray.

Vocks, who organized the group, also had a good weekend, finishing with a 2,020 all-events total, including a 702 in doubles.

Vocks and Howe are currently in third place in doubles with 1,438, Howe is in fourth in singles with his 766, and the TBF Purple team is 15<sup>th</sup> with 3,088.

Diamond's scores were not nearly as high, but his career totals are adding up.

Going into this year's event, he had a career pinfall total of 97,048, which ranked 35<sup>th</sup> on the career pinfall total list.

That means that the 82-year-old probably will join an even more exclusive group, the 100,000-pin club next year.

"I've been bowling bad for 10 years out here," he said. "My average used to be real close to 190. If you look at my scores for the last 10 years, I'm averaging from 160 to 170.

"But we did finish third in the standard team event three years ago. And I shot 588, which was my highest series in this in about 10 years. We each got about \$3,600, which paid for the last 30 or 40 years!"

Other tournament highlights for Diamond over the years include a 298 game in doubles in 1989, a high series of 738 and an all-events total of 1,906, both in 1993.

Diamond's first then-ABC Tournament appearance was in Des Moines, Iowa in 1962.

"The first 30 or 40 years were awesome," he said. "We went to a different city every year, and they built these fantastic bowling alleys in the convention centers. I feel sorry for the guys who don't get to do that every year now."

One of his favorite memories of bowling in the Open Championships was his 40<sup>th</sup>, when he got to bowl with his four children. The same group bowled again this year. Joining him on the Dale Diamond I team were Brett Diamond, Anne McTague, Amy Adams, and Jill Diamond.

They were joined in the group by other friends and family members, who all wore the commemorative red shirts.

"They're only going to wear it once," Diamond joked. "But I really thank all of them for that."

Diamond started by paying for the shirts for his family members, but the final tally ended up being 25 shirts.

"I paid for about 12 of them, but a couple of them wouldn't take the money," he said. "Then Chris Walcher and Gary Robinson found out what was going on, and they were going to get shirts anyway, so they said they would just get the same ones.

"I told them they could put 'ex teammates' because I dumped them! They said they would get the shirts but wouldn't put their names on them."

Diamond has missed making the trip to nationals three times. The first was in 1963 and the second was the following year.

"In '63, the tournament was on the West Coast, and I was on the East Coast and couldn't afford it," he said. "Then in '64, Brett was born."

The last time he missed was 2020, when the tournament was canceled because of COVID. That delayed Diamond's entry into the 60-year club until this year.

Diamond bowled series of 509 in team, 498 in doubles and 530 in singles for a 1,537 total. That upped his career pinfall total to 98,585.

Wednesday April 17, 2024

So, next year, he should become the 32<sup>nd</sup> member of the 100,000 club in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

"I've got a shot at it," Diamond said. "But I don't shoot much more than 500 anymore."

That should be more than enough to get the necessary 1,415 pins to break the barrier.

## Area highlights

A few Peoria-area bowlers had some noteworthy scores at the Open Championships.

Luke Morris closed out a 710 set in singles (good enough for 49<sup>th</sup> place currently) with a 278 game and finished with an all-events total of 1,833.

Adam Johnson posted an all-events total of 1,931, including a 717 in singles (currently 35<sup>th</sup>).

Also breaking the 1,800 barrier for all events were Dan Lee (1,870), Dustin Hopkins (1,806) and Jon Richardson (1,838).



Collin Howe overcame a gutter ball to tie for all-events lead at USBC Open Championships.

Wednesday April 17, 2024



Dale Diamond became only the 33rd bowler to compete in 60 USCB Open Championships.



Friends and family members wore special shirts to commemorate Diamond's achievement.

Wednesday April 17, 2024



Dale Diamond received this engraved money clip to commemorate his achievement.