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Spare Change

By Johnny Campos

Illinois has its share of award winners at this year's USBC Annual Meeting and Convention

LAS VEGAS – The state of Illinois was well represented among all the award winners at the USBC Annual Meeting and Convention last week.

USBC Hall of Famer Bill Spigner of Vernon Hills received the Luby Hall of Fame award from the International Bowling Media Association, putting him into the Bowling Writers Hall of Fame.

Darlene Baker of Mahomet and Sean Rash of Montgomery were inducted into the USBC Hall of Fame, Baker for Meritorious Service and Rash, a 17-time champion on the Professional Bowlers Association Tour, for Superior Performance.

And Patti Mauerman of Tremont received the USBC Youth Volunteer of the Year award from the International Bowling Campus Youth Committee.

It was a well-deserved honor for Mauerman, who has been a volunteer for more than 25 years, most of them helping youth bowlers and their events and organizations.

She has been on the board of the Peoria River City USBC Association for several years and has been a director and vice president of the Illinois State USBC Youth as well as an Illinois State Youth Leader Advisor.

“Everything for me has been about the kids,” Mauerman said after receiving her award at the USBC Convention. “And I think Illinois has a strong youth bowling community. That brings out the people that help volunteer, because of the kids.

“Without the great group of kids that we have, even when we go to Junior Gold and different places, the mentality of the kids, the way they handle themselves, everything is just awesome about the kids from Illinois. I think that comes from some of the volunteers that have shown them the way. And they've learned how to accept defeat and how to accept a win. And I think it just sets them up for great things in their future.”

Mauerman founded the Illinois State Scholarship Tour (ISST) in 2005 and has developed it into one of the largest youth bowling tours in the country. Along with producing many members of collegiate all-Americans, members of Junior Team USA and Team USA, high school and college coaches, and a few stars on the PBA Tour, the tour has awarded more than \$750,000 in scholarships.

She also has created and coordinated qualifiers for Junior Gold and has been a volunteer at Junior Gold for the past few years.

“I feel like I have found the true purpose of what I was put on this earth to do,” Mauerman said. “I feel like I have overwhelmingly fulfilled that purpose. And, as I told somebody else earlier – and I hate to say it this way – but if I was to pass away tomorrow, I knew that I had done everything I needed to do in life and fulfilled all of my needs.

“In about 16 months I hope to retire from my job at the post office. But retirement from bowling, no. I've already started thinking about adding more events once I retire from my fulltime job.”

Seeing some former ISST bowlers at Junior Gold or other events, as coaches, mentors or bowling parents, also is helping Mauerman continue as a volunteer.

“My daughter-in-law Jenn came up through my youth leadership program, and now she's running her own events,” she said. “I think I've accomplished my giving and teaching, and they've learned, and now they're carrying on.

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“And it’s just really cool to see somebody like Ashley Vickery at Pepsi. She used to bowl my tour all the time. She’s around my son Kyle’s age, and now she’s started bringing her kids. It’s like the circle of life has come back around. The next generation is starting to bowl and I can’t stop now. I have to see what happens there.”

Baker also has been a long-time volunteer in the bowling industry and was the first female to hold the office of president of the USBC.

After serving a year as president-elect, Baker became president of the organization on Aug. 1, 2010, serving a one-year term.

Her more than 30 years of volunteer service have been at the local, state, national and international levels, helping make big impacts on youth and adult bowling.

She was a key member of the board that created the USBC in 2005, and through the merger of the ABC, WIBC, YABA and USA Bowling.

Baker has been a volunteer at Junior Gold for the past few years. She also has helped with the World Bowling Women’s Championships, the World Bowling Youth Championships as well as with local and state events.

So, her induction was probably long overdue.

Her application was filed several years ago, and Baker said she was honored to be added to the select group of people who preceded her induction over the years.

“Everything has its time, and all the people who have been inducted since my application first went in were all very deserving,” Baker said. “So I wouldn’t take anything away from anybody. It was my time and I just feel honored with that.

“When I think of all the people that I know here in the Hall of Fame, with all of their abilities and everything, that I’m now in that same group with them it’s just amazing.”

Baker said that her mother and grandmother instilled in her the values and importance of volunteering and giving back to the community.

“I was raised by my mom and my grandma, very strongly believing that you give to your community, and you do what you can to help,” she said. “And when you commit to something, you commit to it. And you do it until there’s not a need.

“I’ve always bowled, and I’ve always loved bowling. I’m not a great bowler, just an OK bowler. So my talent is to be able to give back. And that’s what I’ve always done. So getting into the USBC Hall of Fame is a great honor, but also very humbling.”

Spigner, a three-time winner on the PBA Tour, made a name for himself first on the lanes and then as a Gold Level Coach.

But he had no plans on becoming a hall-of-fame bowling writer.

“It’s kind of amazing, because you never do anything to get into the Hall of Fame,” he said. “I never thought it would happen.”

Spigner first started writing in 1980 when he accompanied his wife, Barb, to a meeting with Mike Herbert, the editor of “Bowling Digest” magazine at Century Publishing.

“She was going to take pictures for the magazine on Tour, and I told Mike that I’d like to write an article for the magazine,” Spigner said. “He said they were going to use different pros every month, but I said I wanted to write an article in every issue, like Mike McGrath did for ‘Bowlers Journal,’ answering questions for readers. He said OK. That’s the genesis of my getting started.

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"I had never written anything in my life, but I thought I could answer questions. I had a drawer full of questions and kept getting more and more. It was one of the most popular columns they ever had in the magazine."

Now, 43 years later, Spigner writes for "Bowlers Journal," and has had stories published in several other publications. And after about 400 articles, he has shown some improvement over the years.

"I never thought I was good, but it's just like my bowling or coaching or anything else," he said. "I always felt I had to get better at what I did, and it pushed me to learn more and try to get better.

"But I would have never thought I would be in the Bowling Writers Hall of Fame with guys like John Archibald, Chuck Pezzano, Dick Evans and all the greats. It's amazing to me."

Because of a scheduling conflict, Rash was unable to attend the induction ceremony. He was busy competing in the PBA Tournament of Champions at historic AMF Riviera Lanes in Fairlawn, Ohio.

And he certainly is a worthy addition to the USBC Hall.

Among his 17 PBA titles are two major championships, and Rash was the 2011-2012 PBA Player of the Year.

He also was a long-time member of Team USA and Junior Team USA, winning 19 medals, including 14 gold.

In 2003, Rash teamed with Derek Sapp (a member of the Western Illinois bowling team that won national collegiate titles in 2001 and 2002) to claim the USBC Open Championship doubles title.

In college, Rash was a member of the Wichita State team that won the 2003 Intercollegiate Team Championship and was a two-time first team all-American.

The USBC showed a video interview with Rash (and fellow inductee Tommy Jones, who also was at the T of C) on the memorable evening.

It was a very memorable week for all the award winners, including the four from Illinois.



Bill Spigner (on the right) shows his Luby Hall of Fame award from International Bowling Media Association President Mark Miller (center). Jackie Wycoff (left) displays her Hennessy Award of Merit.

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Patti Mauerman receives the USBC Volunteer of the Year Award at the USBC Annual Meeting. She received the award from USBC President Melissa McDaniel (left), USBC incoming President Dennis Hacker and Chrissie Beamish Kent (right) of the Youth Committee.

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Darlene Baker stands next to her oversized picture/display at USBC Convention.

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While Sean Rash could not attend the USBC Hall of Fame dinner, his image was on display during the induction ceremony.