

Wednesday September 20, 2023

Spare Change

By Johnny Campos

Bowling community loses a gentle giant in Rick Kidd; team No. claims Ebonite Team Shootout title

A weekend that started off on a high note for some Peoria and Bloomington bowlers ended on a very sad one for the entire bowling community.

On Friday night, the team called No., composed of two bowlers from Team Bloomington (Adam Johnson and Dustin Hopkins) and two from Team Peoria (Donnie Sweet and Andre Campos) claimed the title in the Ebonite Team Shootout at Twin City Lanes.

They beat the Brought the Wrong Tom team made up of bowlers from Team Decatur (Corey Kistner, Larry Larsen and Darrell Bean) and one from Team Peoria (Tommy Barnwell), 2-1 in the Baker-format stepladder finals that lasted until almost midnight.

Just a few hours later, early Sunday morning, the word started spreading that Rick Kidd had passed away at the age of 56.

Kidd was very recognizable whenever he was at a bowling center, with his underdeveloped right arm, a larger-than-life body with a good-natured personality to match. He was a gentle giant.

He was so beloved that soon after the word of his death got out, posts started appearing on Facebook from many of the people he bowled with, kidded around with and encouraged on and off the lanes.

Kidd also was one of the most prolific bowlers in the area and was a member of the Greater Bloomington USBC Hall of Fame (inducted in 2017). And rightfully so.

In one of his posts from 2020, Kidd said that he had bowled 90 perfect games and 59 series of 800 or better. He also was a PBA regional champion (the 2009 Greater Terre Haute Open) and won several city titles in the Peoria association.

Probably his most impressive and memorable honor scores were rolled at King Pin Lanes in Springfield on January 28, 2017. Kidd put together a near-perfect 879 series on games of 300, 300 and 279 in the Central Illinois Tournament.

"I thought for sure it was going to be a 900," said Tommy Barnwell, who bowled many tournaments with Kidd over the years. "I have memories from Springfield, memories from work and traveling all over with him. We worked at Caterpillar together, and his machine was next to mine. So it was like hanging out all night."

Kidd had been having medical issues recently and underwent a surgical procedure a few weeks ago to remove a mass of cancer, according to his post.

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"He had pre-cancer cells, but I'm not sure what he died of," said Sue Ann Buck, Kidd's significant other for the past 25 years. "But he loved fishing, St. Louis baseball, the Dallas Cowboys, and Illini football.

"He just enjoyed life and bowling, being by my side, spending time together and making memories together."

Kidd also was a member of the Bill Mastronardi/Perfect Angle Pro Shop Masters league for many years. So, as a tribute to him, the league had a moment of silence on Monday night at Linn Lanes in Canton, raised a bottle of Bud Light and ate some deviled eggs (two of Kidd's favorites) in his honor.

The Bud Lights were provided by Donnie and Bobbie Sweet, and Bob Baker, and Dawn Guerrero provided the deviled eggs.

"Don and Rick were pretty tight and knew each other for a really long time – well before I ever came into the picture," said Bobbie Sweet. "He was always so great to me every time I saw him and was very encouraging and supportive of my bowling.

"We had just heard from him while we were bowling in Havana last weekend and then got a call on Sunday that he was gone. It was just a huge blow."

Donnie Sweet said that he often talked with Kidd, and they messaged each other on Facebook regularly.

"He's always just been a great guy to me, and it always hurts to lose someone like that," he said. "He would do anything for anyone. I've known him a very long time and have never had a bad moment with him. He was a very respectful person."

Many of Kidd's friends posted some memories on Facebook, including how he could clear a bowling center very quickly after feasting on Bud Lights and deviled eggs (if you get my "drift")! Or his memorable karaoke version of "Sounds of Silence." He knew how to have a good time. Those memories will be cherished.

After the visitation on Thursday (4 to 7 p.m.) and the funeral on Friday (11 a.m.), both hosted by the Reustman-Harris Funeral Home in Kidd's hometown of El Paso, there will be a celebration of his life on Sunday, October 8, at 2 p.m. at The Bowling Alley (formerly known as Derer Lanes) in Eureka.

Buck and Kidd's son Keith are very appreciative of all the stories and photos that have been posted in Rick's honor.

"Thank you to everyone for sharing pictures and memories of him," Keith said. "It all means so much to us."

Ebonite Team Shootout

While Donnie Sweet and company didn't have much time to celebrate their win at Twin City Lanes, they were pretty impressive on their way to the title.

During qualifying, Sweet led team No. with a four-game set of 958 – second high in the tournament. Andre Campos added 912, Adam Johnson 877 and Dustin Hopkins, who was bowling under protest, 854.

"I told Adam I hadn't been bowling very well, and he'd be taking a chance with me," Hopkins said.

But he was still Johnson's pick to fill the team.

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"Donnie told me he wanted to bowl, so I told him to pick a bowler and I'd pick a bowler," Johnson said. "He picked Andre and I picked Dustin."

Campos, Johnson and Hopkins had bowled well together before. They teamed with Pete Burdette to claim a Peoria association team title a few years ago, so were familiar bowling with each other.

They got their team name because when tournament director Joe Ward asked Johnson for a team name, Johnson said, "No." Brought the Wrong Tom was just a fun name because the Decatur bowlers were bowling with Barnwell instead of PBA50 standout Tom Adcock, who bowled in a regional over the weekend.

No. qualified second for the stepladder finals with a scratch total of 3,597 (224.9 average per bowler). Brought the Wrong Tom led the way with 3,604 (225.25 average) and also got 40 pins of handicap for a 3,644 total.

Wurmnest Trucking grabbed the final spot in the stepladder, with team members Eric Wurmnest (917 total), Justin Karnats (828), Tyler Adams (890) and Blake Wurmnest (921 with 36 pins of handicap).

No. swept Wurmnest Trucking in the best-of-three Baker format, 247-225 and 238-216.

The title match went the distance.

Brought the Wrong Tom picked to bowl on the right lane first and won the opening game, 249-212. The teams then switched, and No. won Game 2, 223-166. So it appeared that the team that figured out the left lane could win the title.

Game 3 was not even close. After Campos opened with a strike and Sweet got a 9-spares in the second, team No. put together an eight-bagger, with each bowler striking twice, to post a 268-194 decision.

"We actually had the left lane figured out in the first game, but Dustin had a couple of bad breaks (both open frames)," Sweet said.

"We knew the left lane was hooking more, so we just had to be on the same part of the lane we were before," added Hopkins, who carried a late 10-pin to keep the string alive midway through the title game.

The winners collected \$720, second got \$420 and third \$360.

"Adam, Dustin and I won a team title in the city tournament, so now we're undefeated in four-man team tournaments," said Campos, who struck on 13 of his 15 shots in the stepladder finals. "And I guess I like tournaments that start at 7 o'clock."

Campos also was on the winning Refty's Ringers team in this year's Firecracker team tournament on July 3 in Springfield. He bowled with Kevin Tockes, AJ Fair and Brad Moore in another tournament that lasted well into the night.

Noteworthy performance

During the Bill Mastronardi/Perfect Angle Pro Shop Masters session on Monday at Linn Lanes, the Bowler of the Week honors went to Kayla Johnson, who had games of 236, 286 and 278 for an even 800 series for the Johnson Accounting team.

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That might be only the second time in the history of the league that a female bowler had high series for the night.

The only other time that comes to mind is when Natalie Heppard led the league at Chilli Bowl in Chillicothe with a much lower score, around 675 or so, around 2007.



Rick Kidd



Team No. (left to right) Andre Campos, Dustin Hopkins, Donnie Sweet and Adam Johnson