

Wednesday February 7, 2024

Spare Change

By Johnny Campos

Linn Lanes claims second-third Masters title by the narrowest of margins

The second-third title of the Bill Mastronardi/Perfect Angle Pro Shop came down to the last frame of the last game in Monday night's position round at Potter's Alley in Morton. It was that close.

In one of the tightest races in recent memory, the Linn Lanes team edged out three other teams that all finished within six points of the second-third champions.

The Linn team (Sammy Taylor, Terry Chase, Jason Jones of Bloomington, and Andy Stone) entered the night with a magic number of 22 points (out of 50) to clinch the title. They finished the night with exactly 22 points.

The Potter's Alley team of Gary Robinson, Eric Lilienthal, Donnie Sweet and Bob Baker won the match, 28-22, and even blanked Linn, 12-0 in the first game of the night.

But the Linn Lanes team made a big comeback, winning the next two games, 10-2.

Stone struck on his final five shots in Game 3 to beat Baker, 222-205. That also gave the Linn the 919-902 team win in Game 3 to earn the final points that left them ahead of Baker's team by one point for the title.

"We knew it was going to be super close after getting swept in Game 1," Stone said. "After catching up in Game 2, we kind of figured if we won the third game, we'd take series.

"In the ninth frame I did the math and saw how close the third game was going to be. Winning series wasn't guaranteed. Luckily, doubling the tenth to beat Bob was enough."

Linn didn't take series, but they did finish with enough points to qualify for the post-season roll-off. Potter's won the six points for team total pins, 2,687-2,682, but still fell a point short for the second-third title.

Linn Lanes finished with 313 points, Potter's Alley with 312, iAM Bowling 309 and Striketown 307.

The iAM Bowling team went into position round tied for third place, 16 points behind Linn, and Striketown was in fifth, 22 points back.

The iAM Bowling team beat T&D Windshield, 34-16, while Striketown beat the Landmark Lanes team, 38-12, getting a 790 from Dan Shinall, a 765 from Tommy Barnwell and 761 from Benny Barnwell.

The top scorer for Linn was Taylor, who closed out the night with games of 256 and 269 for a 750 series, beating Robinson's 663. It was the only individual series the Linn won in the match.

Chase added a little drama to the match when he missed a 9-pin in the ninth frame of the third game against Lilienthal.

Chase, who rolled a 300 game in league on Friday night, won the last game anyway, 210-191, but lost series to Lilienthal, 632-622.

"I knew I missed it right away," he said of the 9-pin. "I had troubles with my feel all night, so I was blowing in the thumb hole – just a little too much on both shots in the ninth.

"I actually thought that not doubling in the 10th cost us, because a double would have given me series."

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Sweet beat Jones, 716-657, and Baker beat Stone, 676-653.

Stone lost to Baker, 256-246, in Game 1 and then struggled with a 185 in Game 2. But he found something late for the closing five-bagger.

"The second pair was tighter than the first," Stone said. "I made a ball change when I probably should have just bumped right.

"In the third game I ball changed again, incorrectly, then went back to the ball I started with in the seventh frame. Thankfully, I adjusted to strike out from there. I'm so proud of everyone grinding out a tough night against some great bowlers."

Potter's has finished second in both thirds (behind Wingstop in the first), but still maintained the overall lead in points with 629, 27 ahead of Sunset Lanes.

The Sunset team had the biggest night in the position round, setting a new season high for team series in the process.

Sunset beat Gutters by Tunyuck, 46-4, getting a 762 from Andre Campos, 738 from David McVey, 736 from Gary Strait and 709 from Luke Morris. They rolled a 2,945, beating the former leaders (T&D Windshield) by eight pins.

The final third begins next Monday at Landmark Lanes.



Linn Lanes team (left to right) Terry Chase, Sammy Taylor, Andy Stone, Jason Jones