

Wednesday February 28, 2024

Spare Change

By Johnny Campos

From young Masters draftee to USN signee, Xavier Davis gets a fond sendoff from family and friends

When Xavier Davis was drafted into the Bill Mastronardi/Perfect Angle Pro Shop Masters League last summer, he had every intention of fulfilling his commitment to his teammates until the end of the season.

After all, he was just 18 at the time, barely out of high school, and happy to be one of the youngest draftees in the history of the league.

But life got in the way.

Davis, now 19, will not finish the league this season for the noblest of reasons: To serve his country.

In January, Davis made another commitment – to the United States Navy. He will start boot camp next week in Chicago on his way to become a Logistics Specialist Submarines (LSS).

“I was kind of looking at my career options, and this one really stood out for me,” Davis said. “I wanted to pursue it, I chose it, and I was accepted.”

And he did it with a little push from his older brother, Andrew, who is a recruiter for the USN and has been in that branch of the military for more than a dozen years.

“My brother wouldn’t let me join anywhere else,” Xavier said. “He wanted me to go with him, and with him putting me in, that’s kind of something special because he’s, my brother.”

Before signing to be an LSS, Davis had different plans for his future in the Navy.

“College was never in the plans for me,” he said. “It was either a trade school or the military.

“So, I was going into a welding program and was going to pursue it in the military. But then I saw another job that looked like something I could do long term if I wanted to get out. I found a better job and decided to go for it.”

Davis doesn’t know what his duties will be as an LSS, but believes he has the general background for it.

“All I knew was that it involved inventory and math,” he said. “And I’m pretty good at math, so I hope I’m OK with logistics.”

After 10 weeks in boot camp, Davis will go down to Mississippi for additional training, and then will travel to Connecticut for submarine training.

“Then I hope to be in Seattle for four years,” Davis said. “But I will be back here in October. Illinois and this town are always going to be part of me. They will always be in my heart.”

Davis does plan to continue bowling after leaving the Peoria area and will try to bowl for the Navy as well.

That was good news for his father, Brian, who is proud of the decision made by his son.

“I’m really happy for him,” he said. “He made the decision for himself and sometimes as a young adult you’ve just got to do what you think is best.

“It’ll either be the greatest thing he ever did, or a learning experience no matter what.”

Wednesday February 28, 2024

But the fact that Xavier will continue his career on the lanes is a big plus for his dad.

"From a bowling standpoint, I think we're losing one of our young guns coming up," Brian said. "He's going to continue to bowl and that's important. He'll carry on the legacy. I'll be shocked if in a couple of years he's not averaging 230.

"His progression has come a long way in a year."

Xavier, who uses a two-handed release, bowled his last session in the Masters League on Monday at Sunset Lanes in Pekin, rolling a 659 series and winning all of his points for team captain Paul Lippens and the Johnson Accounting team.

He finished with a solid 207 average for 69 games. He ranked 18th in the league in winning percentage, going 102-82 (a 55.43 winning percentage) for the 23 weeks that he competed in the league.

"Getting drafted to the Masters was a big deal," Xavier said. "It made me feel comfortable that people actually had the confidence in me to be able to bowl in the league.

"I would say I've lived up to being drafted. There have been some weeks when I've been pretty not there, but I've carried myself pretty well."

His father, one of the top bowlers in the area for the past few years, would agree. But Brian Davis is not looking forward to watching another son leave the area.

"From a dad standpoint, for me personally, it hasn't really sunk in totally yet," said the elder Davis. "This is my second son leaving now. Andrew left, but this one is a little bit harder because this is my baby. It's a little different for me because he's my youngest."

Brian and Danielle Davis, Xavier's mom, held a going-away gathering for him at the VFW Post in Peoria Heights. A large group of friends, family members and fellow bowlers showed up to wish him well in his upcoming adventure.

And I'm sure all of them, as well as all the members of the Masters League, thank him, in advance, for his service.

Pekin honorees

The Greater Pekin USBC Association will hold its annual meeting and Hall of Fame banquet on March 9 at 2 p.m. at the Pekin Moose Lodge.

The association will induct Vilachai (Vee) Tunyuck for superior performance, Mark Happach for meritorious service and Ilene Reichter and Lily Gotten.

Tunyuck has a high career average of 226, has rolled nine perfect games and three 800 series.

Happach, who will be honored posthumously, was a member of the Pekin Association for more than 35 years. He was a board member/officer of the association and was in charge of lane inspections for oil patterns.

He was the person who was often called to certify honor scores the night they were bowled, when the American Bowling Congress (now USBC) required it.

Reichter and Gotten also will be honored posthumously.

Mt. Hawley Trios Tournament

Peoria Bowling Tournaments will hold a Trios Tournament at Mt. Hawley Bowl on Sunday, March 24, starting at 10 a.m.

The format will be five qualifying games and then a cut to the top four teams for the stepladder finals. Five teams will cash.

Handicap will be 90 percent of 660, with bowlers using their highest 2022/23 USBC average.

Wednesday February 28, 2024

Entry fee is \$180 per team, with \$1,300 going to the winning team. The event is limited to the first 22 teams that enter, and a sellout is expected.

Check out the Peoria Bowling Tournaments page on Facebook to reserve a spot.



Brian and Xavier Davis at going-away gathering.



Danielle and Xavier Davis.

Wednesday February 28, 2024



Greater Pekin USBC Association
HOF Inductee, Vilachai (Vee) Tunyuck.



Greater Pekin USBC Association
HOF Inductee, Mark Happach.