

Friday December 16, 2022

Spare Change

By Johnny Campos

Peoria area well represented at Hammer Holiday Doubles Tournament

Another Hammer Holiday Doubles Tournament is in the books, and as usual, the Peoria area was well represented among the teams who cashed in the three-day event.

A total of 232 teams bowled in this year's tournament, once again held at St. Clair Bowl in Fairview Heights, in the St. Louis area.

Andrew Anderson, the 2018 PBA Player of the Year, and Andre Gonzales, who was bowling in the event for the first time, claimed the \$10,000 top prize. In the position round match, they rolled a monster 526 game to beat a 492 by third-place finishers Tom Partl and John Bogacki to vault from third to first.

Qualifying leaders Michael Martell and Nate Garcia, who went into the final game of the tournament with the lead, finished second. They finished on a tough pair, winning low-scoring match, 424-351, over Jordan Hornes and George Gohagen, who dropped from second to fourth.

The high area finisher was Steve Taylor, who placed eighth with first-time partner Jorell Morris, to earn \$1,400. Taylor won the tournament six years ago with Eddie Flanigan, who did not bowl this year.



Steve Taylor

In qualifying, Taylor started with a 783 his first three games and followed with an 803 his next three. He averaged better than 250 for his first eight games.

Taylor and Morris won "about" five games (the final standings did not track the wins and losses for the finalists), but probably will not bowl again together next year.

"I'm sure Eddie will bowl with me again next year, because he's already talking about going to practice for the Central Illinois tournament," Taylor said. "And we've got nationals in April, so I can probably talk Eddie into coming back in next year."

Just missing the finals was the team of Andre Campos and Pete Burdette, who finished in 15th place, 33 pins shy of advancing to the finals. They were in 20th place after qualifying and jumped five places in the semifinals. It was their second straight cash in the tournament, after a 33rd-place finish last year.

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Burdette averaged 230 for his first eight games, but had high games of 278, 267 and 258 in the semifinals to finish with a 237.4 average for the tournament.

Campos led the way the first eight games, averaging 233.3, and finished averaging right at 230 for the event.

Other area cashers were Gary Straight and Bill Maher in 40th, Travis Anderson and Tommy Barnwell 41st, Bob Baker and Don Sweet 44th, and Andy Stone and Adam Johnson 45th.

Jason Jones and his son Jacob Jones also earned their first cash in the event, finishing in 55th place. The tournament paid 58 spots, but only the top 46 teams advanced to the semifinals.

Because the field was increased this year by adding another squad of bowlers, the tournament paid 12 places more than the usual 46. The team that got last cash doubled their money with \$800.

The husband-wife team of EJ and Natalie Tackett got the last spot in the finals after qualifying and ended up finishing in 12th place. Their payday was \$1,000, or just \$200 more than the last cashers, who only bowled eight games each instead of the 25 bowled by the top 12 teams.

In my opinion, the prize list was way too bottom heavy this year. The lower finishers were paid at least double their money (entry fee was \$400 per team), so it diluted the amounts paid to the top finishers.

It seemed like the teams that bowled well enough just to make a check were being rewarded better than the teams who qualified for match play (even though, technically, the top 12 teams all had a shot at \$10,000 – for at least a couple of games).

When I was working out prize funds for the Professional Bowlers Association, I always tried to make sure the bowlers who advanced to the top 24 got rewarded for it on the cash list.

Just for fun I broke down the total prize fund of this year's Holiday Doubles, leaving \$10,000 on top and paying 58 places. I came up with a prize fund that paid \$1,600 for 12th place and \$620 for 58th – almost a \$1,000 difference between making the finals and getting last cash.

I don't know if the prize fund will look any different for next year's Holiday Doubles, but I'm sure a few Peoria-area teams will be earning a few of the checks again.