

Monday May 27, 2024

# Spare Change

By Johnny Campos

## Winning teams take early leads and hold on for titles in Tournament of Champions

There were no big comebacks to be had at this year's Tournament of Champions at Landmark Lanes.

Three out-of-town teams all grabbed some early momentum and held off any late surges by their opponents to claim titles in the T of C.

The closest match was in the women's division, where STAATS Service from Sunset Lanes in Pekin held off Alley Cats from Landmark Lanes, 1,713-1,636.

In the mixed division, Mario Brothers from Striketown Bowl in Pekin held a precarious 58-pin advantage over Team #2 from Landmark going into Game 3. But Mario Brothers pulled away at the end to win handily, 2,559-2,390.

Steve's Appliance from Abbe Lanes in Abingdon had the biggest lead after the opening game against Pride Mfg. from Sunset Lanes, jumping ahead by 112 pins.

A big last game, however, gave Steve's a comfortable 3,197-2,963 decision for the win.

### Men's Division

Leadoff bowler Doug Henson put together games of 246, 225 and 239 for a 710 series to lead Steve's Appliance to the men's title.

His father, Ed Henson, added 660, Austin Powell 638, Steve Franklin 615, and Brian Frye 574.

"The last two weeks I haven't had more than a four-bagger," Doug said. "I've had a couple of 670s and a 616 last night. But I had a five-bagger the third game finally. They were hooking a little bit more and it gave me a little more carry. I only left two 10-pins all night."

In the opening game, Steve's Appliance, which was giving up 31 pins of handicap a game, rolled a 1,081 game while Pride Mfg. managed just a 969.

The second game was a lot closer, just eight pins. But Steve's still took a 120-pin lead into the final game.

It was another 100-plus win in Game 3 for the Abbe bowlers, who took home the plaques.

Lester Wernowsky led Pride with a 658, Andrew Moss added 611 and Tim Blanch 602.

It was the second T of C win for Ed Henson and Franklin. They were part of the mixed division champions a few years ago.

### Women's Division

Every game in the match was close, but the STAATS team always managed to stay just a few pins ahead to record the win.

The team from Sunset won Game 1, 608-579, Game 2 587-547 and Game 3 518-510 for the 77-pin victory.

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Anchor bowler Dawn Lunini led the winning team with a 491 series, rolling games of 185, 159 and 147 off her 147 average.

Lynda Whitley added 471, Jessica Powell 441 and Beth Hay 310.

"I think we bowled pretty consistently throughout the tournament," Hay said. "And it was fun just to be a part of this tournament. You get to meet people that you don't really know very well or that you've just seen at other tournaments. We're all kind of friends, so it's nice to hang out together when we're not just in our home league."

Sherrie Woodcock led Alley Cats, who were getting 40 pins of handicap a game, with a 429, one pin better than teammate Sue Whitson.

"We were pretty well matched against the team we bowled against tonight," Powell said. "And we actually bowled very well against them."

## **Mixed Division**

Probably the most deceptive score in the finals was in the Mixed Division.

The Mario Brothers team of Amber Johnson, Emilee Watters, Tanner Davis, and Irvin Johnson III ended up winning by 169 pins. But they pulled away late, winning the last game 849-738.

Mario Brothers won the first game by 14 and the second by 44.

"Everybody bowled over their average throughout the entire tournament," said Irvin Johnson, who had games of 233, 243 and 247 for a 723 series to lead the winners. "So when you have 137 pins of handicap coming in, it kind of gives you a little breathing room."

Davis, who opened a game in the semifinals with nine straight strikes, was above his 158 average with a 502 series. Amber Johnson (129 average) added a 440, including closing games of 160 and 158, and Watters totaled 483.

Tyler Hickman was high man for Team #2 with a 688 set off his 219 entering average. But the team uncharacteristically missed a few makeable spares, making it tougher to make up the 411 pins of handicap they were spotting their opponents. Cass Hermacinski (222 average) bowled a 607, Lauren Sellers (205 average) added 582 and Kathleen Hermacinski (208 average) 513.

"Even though we were getting 137 pins, you've still got to bowl," Irvin said. "Especially if these guys started getting on strings, they could come back really, really quickly."

"But it was a nice, enjoyable win."

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Men's Division winners Steve's Appliance, with team members (left to right) Ed Henson, Doug Henson, Brian Frye, Steve Franklin, and Austin Powell.



Women's Division winners STATTs Service, with team members (left to right) Dawn Lunini, Lynda Whitley, Jessica Powell, and Beth Hay.

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Mixed Division winners Mario Brothers, with team members (left to right) Amber Johnson, Emilee Watters, Irvin Johnson, and Tanner Davis.