

Tuesday September 17, 2024

Spare Change

By Johnny Campos

PRC Association names Bowlers of the Year in six divisions along with All-Star teams; It's another family affair for one group of honorees

This year's Peoria River City Association Bowler of the Year and All-Star team announcements turned out to be a family affair celebration for one group of honorees – again.

For the fifth year in a row, Dawn Guerrero was named the PRC Women's Senior Bowler of the Year. Her daughter-in-law, Bobbie Sweet, was the PRC Women's Bowler of the Year, and her son, Donnie Sweet, was on the men's All-Star team for the third straight year, while Guerrero was also on the non-senior women's All-Star team for the second time in four years.

Two years ago, Guerrero and Donnie Sweet were honorees along with Alivia Sweet (Sweet's daughter and Guerrero's granddaughter), who was a member of the Girls' All-Star team that season.

Jasmine Kaufmann continued to dominate the youth division and was the Girls' Bowler of the Year for the third straight year.

New winners this year were Mike Boogren as the Men's Senior Bowler of the Year, Landon Grayer the Boys' Bowler of the Year, and Kevin "Refty" Tockes the Men's Bowler of the Year.

Guerrero had the high average among the senior women with a 198 and posted the most points in high series and was second in both women's senior singles and women's senior all events.

In the Women's Open Championships, Bobbie Sweet won all-events (scratch 2,147 and handicap 2,282) and placed third in singles.

Guerrero tied for first in the Women's Open singles at 733 with Jennifer Mauerman, last year's Women's Bowler of the Year, and finished second, behind Sweet in all-events (2,113 handicap).

"It's always a surprise to be Women's Senior Bowler of the Year," Guerrero said. "You never know what's going to happen. But I guess I was really taken aback when I found out that I made both teams again. I did it a few years ago as well."

And it doesn't appear that she's slowing down.

"I'm still feeling good, but I haven't picked up a ball yet for a while," she said. "I'm going to keep doing it as long as I can. I just got another ball and bowled about a month ago. It felt great!"

Joining Guerrero on the Women's Senior All-Star team were Lisa Feger, Sandy Smith, Val Haynes and Wendy Haste.

Bobbie Sweet said she was a little surprised when she saw that she was the Women's Bowler of the Year.

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"I wasn't sure, at least for myself," she said. "But I knew I had a chance, because I won all-events in women's city and finished third in singles."

She also was drafted to bowl in the Bill Mastronardi Masters League and was on the team that won the first third of the league last season.

"The Masters last year was a learning curve for me," Sweet said. "It was a lot of practice and a lot of hard work."

She was drafted again this season (by her husband) and is coming off a big week at Linn Lanes in Canton. Sweet rolled games of 245, 245 and 279 for a 769 series, upping her average to 222 through four weeks.

Besides her individual accomplishments last season, Sweet also teamed with her husband to post the nation's fourth highest three-game series by a mixed couple at 1,543. Donnie Sweet led the team with an 826 and Bobbie added a 717.

Yet they finished third in the PRC's Mixed Couples tournament behind national leaders Tommy Barnwell and Hailey Jepson (1,562) and Jennifer Mauerman and Pro Shop Tony Schnack (1,550), who were third high in the nation.

Bobbie and Donnie Sweet also went 1-2-3 in the Mixed Trios at Plaza Lanes. They teamed up with Gary Strait to win the tournament title, finished second with Andre Campos and third with Bob Baker.

But only individual events counted towards all of the winning Bowler of the Year point totals.

A total of seven women made the All-Star team this year. The other members were Mauerman, Jepson, Nicole Hartseil (now Polhemus), Guerrero, Kayla Johnson and Lauren Sellers.

Kaufmann, who graduated from Washington Community High School this year, led the girls with a 181 average and had a high series of 640 and high game of 244.

She finished with 385 points, just 25 more than runner-up Lillianna Middleton.

"I was surprised that I had won it three years in a row, which is a lot," Kaufmann said. "I saw some girls that I thought would have gotten it over me, so I was most definitely surprised."

Joining her and Middleton on the Girls' All-Star team were Kacy Snowden, Brittney Willis and Tighler Meichtry.

Boogren said he was totally surprised that he was the Mem's Senior Bowler of the Year because he didn't even get to bowl in the PRC's 50+ tournament last year.

It was actually his performance in the PRC Open Championships that put him over the top. He won the singles title with a 782 and placed fourth in all-events with 2,114.

Against just the seniors, Boogren tied Eric Zueck for high average (223), had a 290 high game and a 781 high series.

"I had no idea I had won it until Jenn (Mauerman) told me," Boogren said. "I got a lot of points in the Open, because I won singles, was third in doubles and fourth in all events. So, basically, I was the bowler of the weekend!"

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"I was out of town on the weekend of the senior tournament, so didn't bowl a single senior event this year. I just bowled the Open and had a nice weekend."

He also placed fifth in the Singles Shootout

Zueck was on the Men's Senior All-Star squad along with Kenny Combs, Chad Barnes and Sammy Taylor.

Grayer had a high average of 193 last season, which was actually well down the list among the other boys in the youth division. Rylan Gray had high average with a 207.

But Grayer rolled a 300 game and a 776 high series. He also finished first in the junior city tournament all events with 2,165 and second in singles with 751.

"I was doing pretty well last year, so I figured that I would be up there in the rankings," Grayer said. "But I didn't think I was going to be the best.

But the 17-year-old Richwoods student said that winning this honor might help him on the lanes.

"I should probably take bowling a little bit more seriously, as far as how I go about executing the game," he said. "In a lot of those games, I had a lot of strikes, for sure. But there were also some missed spares. There were some things I really should have been focused on."

The rest of the Boy's All-Star team were Salvatore Giarnella, Michael Robinson, Wes Peterson and Will Hudson.

Tockes said he was definitely surprised when he found out he had been named Men's Bowler of the Year.

"I didn't know that I was even in the hunt for Bowler of the Year," he said. "I found out because Danielle (Johnson-vanderMeer) texted me 'Congrats!' I hadn't seen the post on Facebook yet.

"But I did have a really good year. I won some doubles tournaments, won the Championship Sweeper at Landmark and won a tournament down in St. Louis."

He also tied Travis Anderson for high average in the area at 237, had a high game of 300 and a high set of 821. He earned additional points with second place finishes in the PRC Open Championships singles and in the Singles Showdown.

The other members of the Men's All-Star team were Anderson, Schnack, Donnie Sweet and city all-events champion Kevin Audi.

"I was very excited when I finally saw the post," Tockes said. "All this hard work is paying off! This is my first Player of the Year! My goal is to repeat next year."

That's not bad for a bowler who has received some very negative comments in social media.

And it's because of the way he delivers his powerful strike ball – with a back-up ball.

"When Storm shared my video of my shooting 816, there were so many negative comments," Tockes said. "So many people are hating the way I bowl.

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“They were telling me to throw it the right way. To me, this is the right way! When I was bowling TNBA Juniors at Town & Country (now closed), I was throwing a straight ball, but I couldn’t hook it. So I started throwing a back-up ball.

“I was in about the fifth or sixth grade, and all my coaches told me I had to switch. But instead I started practicing all the time. On Wednesdays they had \$1 a game bowling, and I’d go and practice eight games just throwing a back-up ball. I started getting the hang of it, and I’ve been doing it for a long time now.”

And he’s been tearing up the lanes, winning tournaments, posting high scores and high averages. And with no apparent side effects.

“Some weeks I have pain in my shoulder, but for the most part I have no pain at all,” he said. “It just comes natural to me. I’m not intending to stop any time soon.”

Despite what his detractors might say.

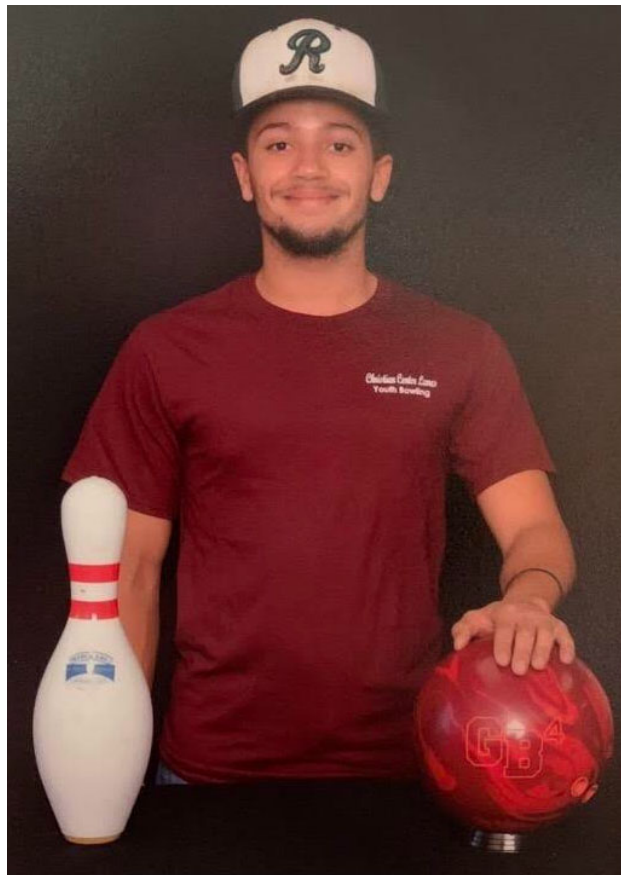


Bowler of the Year honorees (left to right) Dawn Guerrero, Mike Boogren, Kevin Tockes and Bobbie Sweet

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Three-time Girls' Bowler of the Year Jasmine Kaufmann



Boys' Bowler of the Year Landon Grayer

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