

Bowling Highlights from the Last 5 Years

Compiled by Jon Kelley

This is the last in a series of articles summarizing Kokomo's bowling history from its humble beginnings in the mid-to-late 1800's up to the end of the 1999-2000 season. The article prior to this covered the high scoring that dominated the last five years. This article highlights the other bowling happenings from that time period.

Bowling Column Authors Change

As with most things, change is inevitable. This has been the case with the weekly bowling column authorship. Lynne Kasey took over the column from Don Spall in September 1995 and wrote the column for two seasons before giving way to Doug Arnold. Now, three seasons later, Arnold has passed the baton back to prior author Mike Butler.

Bob Colburn Active in National Bowling Scene

Bob Colburn, owner and operator of Don Lowry Lanes, has been very involved with bowling on a national level. In October 1995, he was the head of the Young American Bowling Alliance (YABA). Then in August 1999, he was elected CEO of Bowling Incorporated.

Bowling Center Upgrades

The local bowling centers continued to be enhanced for the benefit of local bowlers.

In the summer of 1994, Don Lowry Lanes installed automatic scorers. Cedar Crest followed suit in August 1995. In the summer of 1998, Don Lowry Lanes lengthened the plastic "Guardian" to 30 feet to protect the front portion of the lanes and provide a more consistent surface. No doubt that this played a part in the higher scoring at Don Lowry Lanes. In February 1999, following completion of the men's city tournament, Cedar Crest Lanes installed Brunswick synthetic lanes. These formica-like surfaces, have taken Cedar Crest to even higher scores. Then in February 2000, Cedar Crest Lanes installed the new synthetic Twister pin that contains absolutely no wood.

Local Bowlers Shine at the Hoinke Tournament

Several local bowlers had great performances in the Hoinke Tournament in 1996. This Cincinnati event draws many Kokomo squads each year.

Tipton's Terry Ploughe won the major event, Singles Handicap. Ploughe shot a five-game actual score of 1282. With his handicap, his total was 1390 making him \$57,000 richer. He also earned \$20,000 for his all-events score, \$5,000 for the ten-game handicap title and another \$5,000 for being the high squad organizer.

Also taking a good chunk of the prize fund that year were Mike Butler and Jim Heard. Butler took away \$5,000 for third place in the all-events. Jim Heard teamed with Ploughe for 11th place in doubles and took away another \$3,400 between them.

Local Team Places High in Louisville

The DL & T Pro Sort team placed 2nd in the 1997 Louisville Derby Tournament. The team members splitting the \$3600 prize were: Dave Turner, John Vote, Don Spall, Jon Kelley and Mike Butler.

Local Bowlers Inducted into State Bowling Hall of Fames

Several local bowlers were inducted into their respective State Hall of Fames.

Peg Hawkins was inducted into the Women's Indiana State Bowling Association (WISBA) Hall of Fame in March 1997. In April 2000, Jeniece Kasey joined Hawkins as local members of the WISBA Hall of Fame.

In March 2000, Jack Bender was inducted into the Indiana Bowling Association Hall of Fame. Bender joined other local bowling legends Don Johnson, Don Lowry, Bud Fridlin, Carl Babb and Loren Guge.

Gary Exmeyer Certified

Gary Exmeyer earned a Technical Certificate from the International Bowling Pro Shop and Instructors Association in September 1997. Exmeyer was one of the first 13 pro shop operators in the world to achieve this certification.

KBA/KWBA Hosts First Monte Carlo Night

The Bowling Associations of Kokomo hosted their first Monte Carlo Night in October 1996. Held every year since, this event typically raises about \$10,000. Income is used to fund joint KBA/KWBA activities such as the now joint KBA/KWBA Hall of Fame induction event, joint yearbook, newsletters, etc.

Kokomo Just Misses Out on 2000 State Tournament

In November 1997, Kokomo just missed out in the voting for the privilege to host the 2000 men's Indiana Bowling Association state tournament. Mishawaka won the right to host the prestigious event.

Kokomo's Christopher Hall was probably glad the tournament was conducted in Mishawaka. Hall rolled an all-events handicap total of 2380 for a second place finish.

Tex Thornton Finally Does It

In January 1998, at the age of 68, Tex Thornton reached a lifelong dream when he fired a perfect 300 game. This has to be one of the most popular events in the sport to occur locally. Thornton picked a good time to accomplish the feat as he was bowling with wife Sue in the City Mixed Tournament. The local bowling legend is still going strong, averaging well over 200.

Dark Times for Local Bowling

Early 1998 was a dark time for Kokomo Bowling. Local bowling hero Don Lowry died in January 1998. Only one month later, it was announced that Don Lowry Lanes East was going to close at the end of the season. Many local bowlers were upset with the way the closing and subsequent rescheduling of leagues were handled. Fortunately, that is all behind us now and things are moving forward again.

Local Duo Captures State Championship

Robert Reel and Jeff Phillips captured a men's state championship title in the 1999 event conducted in Indianapolis. Not only did they capture the title, they also posted a record score in the process. Rolling in the doubles event, they set a Doubles Handicap record with a score of 1583! Reel fired a career best 762 actual. Coupled with Phillips' 630 and 191 pins handicap, they claimed a new record and state championship for Kokomo.

First Joint Hall of Fame

Kokomo held it's first joint KBA/KWBA Hall of Fame induction ceremonies in May 1998. This is a great event for the bowlers in Kokomo and usually attracts between 150 and 200 people.

Herman (Bob) Frank

Probably one of the best kept secrets for Kokomo bowlers is that, as of the end of 1998, our own Bob Frank ranked 1st in the state and 6th in the nation in the number of bowling coaches he has trained. As of that time, Frank had trained 139 instructors in the YABA Junior Olympics program.

Top Youth Bowlers

Kristen Graham rolled a 300 in a youth league in Elwood in June of 1999. Kristen was also Coca-Cola youth champion in 1998.

Nick Siefers rolled 3 perfect games and an 800 series. He was Indiana Male Youth Bowler of the Year in 1999.

There are quite a few other youth bowlers shooting some big scores. Watch for some of these bowlers to make a mark in local adult leagues in the future.

Wooley's Shine in Tournaments

Ted and Robby Wooley won the state qualifying and finished 2nd in the finals in the National Family Twosome tournament. The senior Wooley also won the inaugural Indiana Bowling Centers Association State Singles tournament and the \$5,000 top prize.

WIBC Queens in Indianapolis

The WIBC Queens tournament was conducted in Indianapolis in 1999 in association with the WIBC tournament. Local bowlers Beth Stanley, Kim Akers and Deb Stewart represented Kokomo well. Stanley finished 161 out of 434 bowlers averaging over 191 for the 10 qualifying games.

Troy Stanley Ties Local Triplicate Mark

In January 2000, Troy Stanley tied Jerry Rosselot's 20 year-old record with a 246 triplicate.

Don Sparks Names Local Field Rep

Kokomo's Don Sparks was named ABC/WIBC field representative covering Indiana and several other mid-western states.

Butler and Marner Stroke at ABC

In March 2000, Mike Butler and Trent Marner paired up for a 1438 total in doubles at the ABC Tournament in Albuquerque. They eventually finished in 9th place for a prestigious top ten finish. It was the best ABC finish for amateur bowlers residing in Kokomo.

Rolling with the same squad, Lee Reeves stroked a 290 game and 764 series in doubles with Troy Stanley for a terrific 1353 total.

Masters/Queens Tournament

The first annual Masters/Queens tournament was conducted in April 2000. Beth Stanley captured the women's crown while Jon Kelley claimed the men's prize.

Men's High Averages

Here are the men's high averages for each of the centers during this time span. These averages are based on a minimum of 60 games in a league.

1995-96 Season

Don Lowry Lanes East - Tom Beale - 207
Don Lowry Lanes West - Dan Preston - 212
Cedar Crest - Brian Graham - 221
Eagles - Ed Martin - 196

1996-97 Season

Don Lowry Lanes East - Jon Kelley - 207
Don Lowry Lanes West - Clint Spencer - 216
Cedar Crest - Doug Workman - 209
Eagles - Ed Martin - 192

1997-98 Season

Don Lowry Lanes East - Jon Kelley - 221
Don Lowry Lanes West - Clint Spencer - 222
Cedar Crest - Mark Snodgrass - 215
Eagles - Dave Wolfe - 195

1998-99 Season

Don Lowry Lanes West - Jon Kelley - 227
Cedar Crest - Jon Kelley/Doug Workman - 215
Eagles - Tom Arnett - 198

1999-2000 Season

Don Lowry Lanes West - Jon Kelley - 228
Cedar Crest - Jon Kelley - 225
Eagles - Tom Arnett - 191

Women's High Averages

Here are the women's high averages for each season during this time span.

1995-96 - Kathy Exmeyer - 192

1996-97 - Lisa Graham - 193

1997-98 - Beth Stanley - 204

1998-99 - Lisa Graham - 201

1999-2000 - Beth Stanley - 206

Summary

Hope you enjoyed this series on Kokomo's bowling history. This concludes the regular monthly articles. Keep your eyes open for less frequent special articles. If there is a topic that would interest you, please let me know. Thanks for all the positive comments over the last five years. I would also like to thank the Tribune staff and Sports Editor Dave Kitchell for all their support over the years.