

BITTERSWEET: IAA ENTRY NARROWLY MISSES BERTH INTO ABC TEAM CHALLENGE NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS



From left to right John Zuklin, Mike Kozy, Dave Bohlin, John Riffle..not pictured Mike Kraushaar, Eugene McCune

The Olympia IAA bowling team, winners of the January 2003 IAA World Team Challenge Qualifier at Hebron Lanes, recorded the best finish by any IAA entry in 8 years by rolling to a impressive fourth place standing in the B-Line ABC World Team Challenge regional event in Columbus, Ohio on September 27th and 28th. The team fell 71 pins shy of the eventual champions "KR Strikeforce" for the third and final position in the stepladder finals of the event. The top three teams are extended invitations to the national finals in Las Vegas where \$50,000 in prize money is up for grabs.

Olympia IAA rolled qualifying games of 910, 1014, 977, 934, 1003, and 1062 to finish at 5900, good enough for a fifth place qualifying finish in the field of 39 teams. PBA National Tour veteran and champion Eugene McCune was the backbone of the team and quite honestly the most dominant player in the field during Saturday's qualifying round. McCune's 687 series topped all competitors during the morning session, while his 703 set as the standard for the afternoon session. "McCune's performance blended power and precision like I've never seen before at these events," noted team captain Mike Kraushaar, "he was definitely a man amongst boys, and considering the field was packed with PBA Tour stars and top US amateurs, his performance was that much more impressive." Olympia, however, was not just a one-man show. Supporting McCune was Greater Calumet Bowling Association Hall of Famer Mike Kozy who posted sets of 584 and 607, including an electrifying final game 267 which propelled the team into the fifth position from 11th place. Dave Bohlin proved to be an integral part of the historic run by rebounding from a slow start to finish with games of 212, 214, 220, and 190, while John Riffle added sets of 563 and 585, highlighted by a closing 212 on the difficult team challenge sport conditions. John Zuklin and Kraushaar both struggled during qualifying but timely substitutions allowed the two to contribute in big ways by salvaging potentially disastouras games. "It was definitely a team effort," emphasized Kozy, "Gene was dominant but the way Krash and Zuk picked each other up was as equally important."

Sunday's Baker Match Play featured 10 teams from eight states. Teams bowl 2-game baker matches against each other where each player bowls two frames each baker game. Bonus pins were awarded for each game and two game series. The final match was a position round match with the top three teams advancing to a sudden-death stepladder finals.

Olympia IAA, the fourth IAA team to qualify for the match-play in eight years, opened slowly, losing heartbreaking matches to TJ's Painting of West Allis Wisconsin 390-383 and KR Strikeforce from Naperville Illinois 394 - 378. The team then defeated Columbia 300 out of Lansing Michigan before falling to Dunn Financial from Louisville Kentucky, and defending national champions the Orleans Hotel and Casino, Las Vegas Nevada, leaving them in 9th place at the midway point.

Round 6 matched Olympia against two time national champions Team Storm, from Cincinnati Ohio, anchored by Brian Kretzer, one of the PBA's up and coming stars. Olympia rebounded with an impressive 454 - 348 win which was then followed by wins over tournament leader Cincinnati's Team Hammer, Maximum Potential ProShop from Warren Michigan, and Vic Telemarketing, Westfield Massachusetts setting up a rematch with KR Strikeforce. In fourth place, trailing by 113 pins, Olympia needed to be near perfect to make the finals, however, a 158 opening game sealed the team's fate. The team, with their never give up attitude, finished brilliantly with a 224 to win the match, but fell 71 pins short of the magical third position.

The team bowled strong during match play, winning 12 of 20 games and 6 of 10 matches, averaging slightly over 200 but a few critical mistakes throughout the day proved to costly in the end. The team collected \$1,425 for their fourth place finish.

The IAA's second place finisher in the December 2002 Qualifier at Hebron Lanes also competed in Columbus, finishing in 23rd place with a total of 5462. Tim Green's squad finished strong with a 1013 sixth game, one of only four teams to break the 1000 barrier during the final game. The IAA's December champion, Ray's Lanes, competes in Mechanicsburg, PA October 18, 2003.