

Cook wins PBA senior regional tournament

Contributed by By BILL RYAN Sentinel Bowling Writer
Saturday, 25 April 2009

Steve Cook during the Senior PBA regional. (Photo: Andrew Weber/Sentinel-Tribune)

Steve Cook, recently voted 25th in the Professional Bowlers Association's "50 greatest bowlers of all time" has not visited the winner's circle in more than 20 years.

That changed Friday when he captured the \$4,000 first prize in the PBA Modern Woodmen of America Senior Regional at Al-Mar Lanes.

In the title match, Cook, of Granite City, Calif., defeated Tom Baker, King, N.C., 263-217.

While both bowled great throughout the three-day event, it was Cook who caught the breaks when he needed them, escaping with the first seven strikes in the title match, despite the quality of the final three.

After leaving no doubt about the first four strikes of the game, the lanky left-hander avoided trouble in the fifth frame when the 3-6-7 combination was late to fall, including the 6-pin tipping over the 3-pin at the last possible second. Cook followed that sloppy strike with a crossover strike in the sixth frame. His seventh was a little better, but also tripped out the 4-pin late.

After the crossover, Baker waved his white towel in a symbolic surrender to the delight of those in attendance.

In contrast, Baker had difficulty finding the proper line on the championship pair of lanes. In the previous game on the adjacent pair of lanes, Baker was nearly perfect as he topped Bob Kelly of Dayton, 277-247.

"I caught a couple of breaks in that championship match," Cook freely admitted, but was pleased with his conversion of the 1-3-7-10 washout in the ninth frame to slam the door on Baker's hopes.

Cook stopped competitive bowling in 1992. After turning 50 two years ago, he started bowling on the senior tour. However, after only a handful of tournaments, his knee blew out, putting him back on the bench.

Starting rehabilitation in January, he was happy to get back on the senior circuit this year and only had some minor swelling in his leg. He said he was icing the leg during the final day of competition.

"I actually got a little nervous out there," the champion said. "This was my first chance to bowl for a title in 20 to 25 years."

Both Baker and Cook noted the championship lanes were different. Baker played the right lane eight boards different from the left lane. He never got a good reaction, leaving several 10 pins.

"I tried to go around it, and it just hit flat," Baker said of his target area. "The bowling gods are not with me right now. It just makes you work harder."

Baker earned \$2,000 for second. Kelly settled for third place and \$1,500.

The opening match of the stepladder finals saw Sam Zurich beat Dale Csuhta, 247-199. Zurich then lost to Kelly, 258-247.

Zurich, Grant, Fla., earned \$1,100, while Csuhta of Wadsworth earned \$900.

Interestingly, both Cook and Kelly used older urethane balls to cut down the hook. Cook used a black Hammer, while Kelly used a red Hammer.

Zurich was attempting to set a PBA record for his fourth consecutive regional title, after winning the last three times he bowled a regional.

Kelly threw a good game against Baker, but had some carry problems.

"Sometimes they fall, sometimes they don't. I don't get upset with the outcomes," Kelly said. "I learned long ago that doesn't help."

Earlier in the day the field of 12 finalists bowled a round-robin match play of 12 more games before the final cut to the top five.

Dale Traber, Cedarburg, Wis., was battling to stay in the top five. However, he had a bad game before the position round and couldn't advance. He finished sixth.

Former Bowling Green resident Mickey Higham finished 12th and earned \$625.