

Wrong turn, right result for Bolden; Wheeler in a romp in Vir-Mar District YABA Invitational Scratch Tourney

By Bob Cosgrove

We've all heard of youngsters who've taken the wrong turn in life. One finalist in the 28th annual Vir-Mar District YABA Invitational Scratch Tournament literally took the wrong turn at the most inopportune moment, and it nearly cost him area junior bowling's most prestigious title.

Nathan Bolden of Mitchellville pulled off a 229-209 victory over tournament leader and defending champion Barry Tyler of Greenbelt in the eighth and deciding match to walk away with a 24-pin victory in the A Division (165 average and above) in one of most exciting and tightly-bunched finishes in recent years.

Meanwhile, there was less drama in the B Division (164 average and below), where Anthony Wheeler of Suitland cruised to the championship by a whopping 293-pin margin.

Bolden, 16, who had a 21-pin lead over Ronald Davis Jr. of Lanham entering the fifth and final round, had checked in and picked up his finalist's bowling shirt at AMF Clinton. Then, without notice, he disappeared.

"We looked everywhere in the center," said Tournament Director George Yarborough, "but there was no Nate. And then we looked outside in the parking lot, and someone said his car was gone."

Had Bolden been kidnapped by the parent of a rival finalist? Or could it be that

the DeMatha junior simply could not bear to finish second in the tournament for the third time in four years?

No on both counts.

"I went to McDonald's," said Bolden, "and then I took a wrong exit to get back to the bowling alley. It took me longer than I expected."

Upon his return to the center, three zeros in the first three frames reminded Bolden of his tardiness. Panic set in, he later admitted, but nevertheless, the right-handed future computer programmer hung tough.

"I kept telling myself that I've just got to get it together, and I can't worry about it," Bolden said. "I've still got a chance to win. I wasn't that far behind; I just had to bowl."

He did, finishing out the remaining seven frames with 103, and suddenly finding himself in fifth place, 117 pins behind Davis. Bolden, however, made good use of the 50 bonus pins awarded for each match won: Victorious scores of 194 and 231 in Matches 2 and 3 put him back on top, two pins ahead of second-round leader Omar Farlow of Hyattsville, who was aiming for his first Invitational title in his final attempt.

Farlow advanced to the top spot after the fourth game despite a losing score of 179, primarily because Bolden tossed only 151 in a losing effort. Barry Tyler jumped ahead of Bolden after a winning score of 227.

Tyler took command in the fifth game with a 198, remained the leader with a 175 win in Match 6, and he hung on to the No. 1 spot even after losing the penultimate

contest to Farlow, 206-175. Bolden recorded scores of 188 (Loss/4th place), 211 (W/2), and 186 (L/2) in Matches 5-7 to trail Tyler by 46 pins, lead Michael Price of Herndon by one stick, and turn the final game into a winner-take-all proposition which this year, at long last, would end in his favor.

"In past years, Barry Tyler bowled me in matches like today and beat me out of it," Bolden said. "There was a lot of pressure, but it feels good beating him this time."

Wheeler, 16, a junior at Suitland High, entered the final day of competition 27 pins behind Joseph Pennington of Arlington and 18 pins behind Paul Penrose Jr. of Waldorf. Wheeler took the lead after scoring 233 in his opening match, but a 155 in his only losing effort in Match 2 helped keep him behind Pennington through the fourth game, despite scores of 212 and 201. Three more victories, including a 223 game in Match 7, gave Wheeler an insurmountable 205-pin lead entering his position-round contest with Pennington, who then lost 195-121 to Wheeler to hand the left-hander his first Invitational title.

"I would have had to break my legs and throw straight gutter balls to lose," said Wheeler, who admittedly lives and sleeps bowling and ultimately intends to become a lawyer. "Last year, when I finished 11th, I felt that my equipment wasn't up to par. This year, I came in with the right equipment and the right attitude, so I knew I was going to win."

A DIVISION	Scratch	W-L-T	Total	Average	Position-By-Round				
Nathan Bolden, Mitchellville	4,774	4-4-0	4,974	198.92	3	4	4	1	1
Barry Tyler, Greenbelt	4,700	5-3-0	4,950	195.83	23	9	8	7	2
Michael Price, Herndon	4,707	4-3-1	4,932	196.13	1	3	2	3	3
Ronald Davis Jr., Lanham	4,734	3-4-1	4,909	197.25	11	5	1	2	4
Omar Farlow, Hyattsville	4,700	4-4-0	4,900	195.83	4	1	5	4	5
Maurice Brown, D.C.	4,662	3-5-0	4,812	194.25	6	11	10	6	6
Bubba Kennedy, D.C.	4,595	4-4-0	4,795	191.46	15	24	11	5	7
Frankie Weaver, Stafford, Va.	4,545	4-4-0	4,745	189.38	7	15	12	8	8
B DIVISION									
Anthony Wheeler, Suitland	4,613	7-1-0	4,963	192.21	13	12	3	3	1
Keenan Yarborough, Oxon Hill	4,422	5-3-0	4,672	184.25	9	1	1	4	3
Joseph Pennington, Arlington	4,434	4-4-0	4,634	184.75	4	4	4	1	3
Scott Simons, Fort Washington	4,350	5-3-0	4,600	181.25	6	10	9	7	4
Ronald Thompson, D.C.	4,348	5-3-0	4,598	181.17	18	20	13	6	8
Kevin Howell Jr., Waldorf	4,322	3-5-0	4,472	180.08	1	9	5	5	8
Renee Parker, Hyattsville	4,346	2-6-0	4,446	181.08	7	11	6	8	8
Paul Penrose Jr. Waldorf	4,202	1-7-0	4,252	175.08	3	5	2	2	8