

2008 Youth Scratch Invitational Tournament Notebook

By Bob Cosgrove

For the fourth consecutive year—and for the fifth time in seven years—the Youth Invitational final round was held in Virginia. This time, it was at AMF Dale City, which last hosted Round 4 in 2005. ... Centers hosting earlier rounds this year included Bowl America Gaithersburg (Round 1), AMF Alexandria (Round 2), AMF Marlow Heights (Round 3), and Bowl America Burke (Round 4).

Chris Garvey of Vienna, Va., who scored a tournament-high 985 series in Round 1, was the only bowler to lead a qualifying round yet not make the finals. He ultimately finished 14th in the A Division. ... An 876 in Round 2 by eventual champion **Rodney Eckles** of Fairfax, Va., was the high four-game series in the B Division, while an 868—that included a 137 game—in Round 4 by **Antwain Hill** of Brandywine, Md., led all C Division bowlers.

Division Averages by Round

| ROUND | CENTER | A DIVISION | B DIVISION | C DIVISION |
|--------|---------------------------|------------|------------|------------|
| 1 | Bowl America Gaithersburg | 196.55 | 175.57 | 165.35 |
| 2 | AMF Alexandria | 191.16 | 178.24 | 163.45 |
| 3 | AMF Marlow Heights | 190.33 | 164.39 | 161.53 |
| 4 | Bowl America Burke | 206.75 | 189.83 | 180.36 |
| FINALS | AMF Dale City | 207.42 | 182.19 | 180.22 |

Who would have guessed that no member of last year's strong A Division field would *not* return to this year's finals? **Keisheena Waldon** of Seat Pleasant, Md., who finished eighth last year, did best among the 2007 finalists, managing a 15th-place finish after being first alternate following Round 2. ... Certainly more shocking was the fact that neither 2007 champion (and recent NCAUSBCA Youth Star Award recipient) **Eric Helmrich** of St. Leonard, Md., nor runner-up **Alonso Kinney Jr.** of Clinton, Md.—who has bowled particularly well over the past year—were able to escape Round 2. You read that right, folks, *Round 2*. ... And **Allen Windsor** of Woodbridge, Va., another NCAUSBCA Youth Star Award recipient who was a 2007 finalist and the 2006 champion, performed his last official tournament toss in Round 3. ... The

other 2007 champions also departed after Round 2: **Nicholas Hardy** of Springdale, Md. (B Division), who this year competed in the A Division, and **Allen Chambers** of Fredericksburg, Va. (C Division).

AMF Dale City youth coaches praised the continuing efforts by center manager **Kim Potter** for making the center a great environment in which to coach.

Division Entries by Year

| YEAR | A DIVISION | B DIVISION | C DIVISION |
|------|------------|------------|------------|
| 2008 | 98 | 56 | 83 |
| 2007 | 100 | 80 | 85 |
| 2006 | 92 | 70 | 76 |
| 2005 | 71 | 70 | 78 |

In each of the four years since the tournament expanded to three divisions and scholarship funds became available, the B Division (165-179 average) has drawn the fewest entries.

While divisional field size equality was not necessarily important prior to 2005, the scholarship funds introduce many ramifications, including the far greater importance of having similar-sized fields. However, by expanding the highest average in that division to 185 or better yet perhaps 189, it likely will not only generate more entries in “B,” it will create an A Division wherein the lowest-average bowler will have a better chance of, if not winning, at least being more competitive. Note that the entering averages in “A” ranged from 190 to 228, and six of the eight finalists this year averaged over 212. ... The ideal situation would be an A Division with a flexible entry base that consists only of 200-average bowlers, but again, the presence of scholarship funds currently makes that scenario unlikely. ... For sure, a thorough examination of *all* the numbers will have to take place before the 2009 divisions are announced.



While the total scholarship funds in 2008 grew to \$7,200—thanks largely to a 25 percent increase in the entry fee—an adjustment in the top portion of the scholarship fund distribution should be considered if donations or sponsors aren’t obtained, for it could be said the bottom three

J.R. Palmer secures victory in the A Division.

finalists in each division didn't even "break even" financially. Nevertheless, this event receives far more publicity than most in this area, and various levels of sponsorships possibly could be created, with even title and/or presenting sponsorships established for the right price.

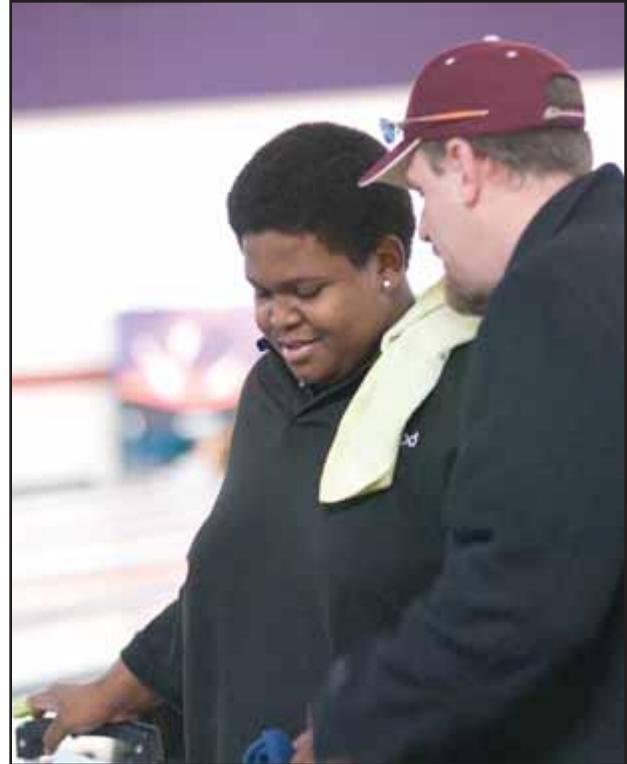
On a somewhat related note, "NCAUSBCA" was not instantly recognizable on the back of the finalists' shirts because four of those letters—USBC—appeared in a different color. While surely

not intended, the result was a visual "dissing" of the *local* organization that has supported this tournament for 39 years. In any case, this clearly was an example of USBC "branding" at its worst. Let's offer the United States Bowling Congress a *separate* appearance

on finalists' shirts in future years—a stick-on logo or patch, perhaps—but only after it first forks over a few dollars of scholarship support.

Some may recall the prediction in last year's Tournament Notebook that Waldorf, Maryland's **Dougie Tonucci**, who placed fifth in the 2007 B Division, would appear in more Youth Invitational finals. Well, he didn't quite make it this year, but

Dougie didn't disappoint, placing 10th in the *A Division* while averaging a strong 207.31. And to think he'll enter the 2009 event at the grand old age of 14! ... Among this year's finalists, Woodbridge's **Sean Crookston**, whose "square-shouldered" game stands out these days, especially for a junior bowler, appears as if he'll be a force with whom to deal in the years ahead.



B Division champion Rodney Eckles (left) moments after his victory.



C Division winner Thomas Brady was the only returning finalist from 2007.