

Bowlers Journal Selects 68th All American Teams

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It is the best of times . . . it is the worst of times.

With apologies to Charles Dickens, those “novel” words are an apt description of the circumstances America’s best male and female bowlers are experiencing today.

The men’s Professional Bowlers Tour is exciting, dynamic and evolving toward greatness... the women’s Tour, where the best female bowlers in the world are supposed to display their talent, is M.I.A.

So, when the time came for the Bowlers Journal International editorial staff to choose its 2005-06 All-American Teams, the men’s choices were relatively easy. The women’s picks involved a few “X-factors” not normally considered in the process, but BJI is committed to keeping women in the spotlight, Tour or no Tour.

The men’s BJI squad is captained by a young man who had a dominant year. Tommy Jones, Mauldin, S.C., took home four PBA titles in the 2005-06 Tour season and topped the money list with \$301,700. The four players joining Jones on the first team were Norm Duke, Clermont, Fla.; Patrick Allen, Tarrytown, N.Y.; Mike Scroggins, Amarillo, Texas; and Walter Ray Williams Jr., Ocala, Fla.

Duke had eight television appearances last season, but it wasn’t until his seventh that he captured his lone title and the 23rd of his career. Allen, captain of the 2004-05 BJ All-American Team, slipped a little, but still had a terrific year with two titles. Scroggins won once and earned more than \$200,000 for the first time in his career, easily his best year on Tour. And Walter Ray? All he did was tie the immortal Earl Anthony’s 41 titles with his “normal” superlative performance, a record 15th appearance on the team. Anthony still has a leg up in that all of his 12 appearances were consecutive.

The men’s second team is led by Chris Barnes, Flower Mound, Texas, who missed five weeks with an injury but finished strong to win the Tournament of Champions. He then defended his \$200,000 payday in the Motel 6 Roll to Riches, but that event does not count toward PBA points or All-American consideration. Rounding out the second team are Jason Couch, Clermont, Fla.; Wes Malott, Austin, Texas; Ryan Shafer, Elmira, N.Y., and Pete Weber, St. Ann, Mo. All but Shafer won a title in 2005-06.

The women’s squad has no captain for 2005-06, and no second team. No disrespect intended, simply a reflection of the relatively few significant events available to them in the June 15, 2005-to-June 14, 2006 period. Even their biggest event, the USBC Queens, fell outside the time frame for the selection process. The 2005 Queens, won by Tennelle Milligan, was before June 15, ‘05, and the 2006 event was staged after June 14, 2006. Shannon Pluhowsky, this year’s winner, will be considered for next year’s team; Milligan made last year’s.

Nonetheless, there were several outstanding performances by American women, most notably Kelly Kulick’s history-making performance in the 2006 PBA Tour Trails. The Union, N.J.’s sixth-place finish made national news and became the PBA’s biggest story of the year, and for that incredible feat, and several more good regional performances, she is part of the women’s team this year. Her upcoming season as an exempt PBA player has the potential to be the biggest bowling story in decades.

Joining Kulick on the elite female fivesome are fellow pros Leanne Barrette, Elk Grove, Calif. and Liz Johnson, Cheektowaga, N.Y., and amateurs Lynda Barnes, Flower Mound, Texas, and Diandra Asbaty, Chicago. Barrette made the team by virtue of her outstanding performance in the 2005 WIBC

Tournament, in which she turned in a record-setting 774 to win singles and a huge 2231, another record, for the all-events crown.

Johnson, like Kulick, made her mark against the best male bowlers in the world — in PBA events. Riding the momentum from her second-place television finish in a national PBA Tour event a few weeks prior, she became the first woman ever to win a PBA regional crown.

On the amateur side, two American women turned in outstanding performances on the world stage. Team USA stars Diandra Asbaty and Lynda Barnes continued to roll over their international competition. Asbaty's performances for the year and years past were rewarded with the ultimate honor – a spot in the World Bowling Writers' Hall of Fame — not bad for a 25-year-old. She proved her prowess again by winning the 2006 U.S. Amateur title.

In 2005, Barnes won the U.S. Amateur to earn her eighth appearance on Team USA. She then won the QubicaAMF World Cup, and finished fourth in the 2006 U.S. Amateur, earning a spot on Team USA through 2007, which will give her an unmatched 10 years on the team.

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