

## TIES FOR FIFTH AT USBC SENIOR QUEENS

### *“CJ” learns to appreciate match play on national stage*

By Bob Cosgrove

After competing in this year’s USBC Women’s Championship Tournament in Syracuse, N.Y., where she averaged just over 200 for nine games at the Oncenter Convention Center, Cynthia Johnson of Bowie, Md., known by her friends simply as “CJ,” listened to the encouragement of her fellow bowlers and decided to bowl in the USBC Women’s Senior Queens Tournament, which was about to start in the same setting. It was a decision that has given her a new outlook on her game.

“They told me, ‘You’ve got a good shot, just bowl,’” she said.

And bowl she did, using her Columbia 300 World Beater drilled by Pooh Taylor of World Class Pro Shop to lead all Senior Queens participants after the opening round with a 1,128 total on games of

260-216-235-202-215. This suddenly led to a new experience for the right-hander—a trip to the USBC media room.

“When the guy [Matt Cannizzaro of USBC Communications] comes up to me and tells me I’m leading, I’m like, ‘Okay,’” said CJ. “I really didn’t know what to think because it was no big deal to me because I had never been anything like that before.

“He says, ‘I have to interview you.’ I said, ‘I don’t want to be interviewed.’ He said, ‘You *have* to be interviewed if you’re the leader. I’ll take it easy on you.’”

CJ actually hoped that the one remaining bowler who could top her score would do so, but it didn’t happen, so she had to endure a few questions that resulted in a [story](#) on *bowl.com*, a site that suddenly was being tracked by many area bowlers to follow CJ’s progress.

“Dena Kearney and Mary Brooks

stayed around and watched,” said CJ of her fellow NCAUSBCA members. “They were there the whole time. A lot of people were going online just checking on me. They were watching the brackets on their [computers] at work. Everybody was talking about me on *facebook*; they were giving updates after every match. People were calling me who didn’t have my phone number! So it really made me feel good to know I had that many people who were cheering for me.”

After strong second and third qualifying rounds of 1,031 and 1,059, respectively, CJ was in third place as she advanced into match play—another new experience.

First, however, she had to deal with some women who questioned her tournament eligibility.

“One lady said, ‘You’re not even supposed to be bowling in this; you’re under 50 years old!’” said CJ, who confidently explained to that woman and others who inquired if she was supposed to bowl with the seniors that she indeed met the age requirement.

With that done, it was back to focusing on match play.

“I didn’t know what to expect because I had never done [match play],” she said. “I just thought that I was going to go out there and do the best that I could to try to win. Once I got to that point where I had qualified, I wanted to try and go as high as I can, like the top five or six. That was my goal.”

CJ began with a 645-586 victory over Christina Green, Westerly, R.I., to earn the right to face a veteran left-hander whose name meant nothing to her.

“I don’t think I would have bowled any differently,” said CJ, who handily defeated Pam Buckner—*USBC Hall of Famer Pam Buckner*—Reno, Nev., 675-541, “but I’m glad to know now that I did beat somebody like that.”

After a 651-541 loss to LuAnn Carbonetto, Blauvelt, N.Y., in Round 3, CJ’s match play adventure took a different course as she now entered the contend-

‘CJ’ ... aka Cynthia Johnson



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er's bracket in this double-elimination competition. After wins against Pam Lawrence, Pflugerville, Tex. (631-554) and Marci Williams, Wichita, Kan. (597-523), CJ's competition in Syracuse concluded with a 619-582 defeat to Stephanie Beck, Dubuque, Ia.

"Once I got into the loser's bracket, I just said I've gotta fight back, and I was going to fight as hard as I could," CJ said. "It didn't make any difference who was in front of me, I was just going to try to do the best I could to beat them."

CJ's tie for fifth place in the Senior Queens netted her \$900. Her reminiscence of the event indicated an appreciation of the competition and her overall accomplishment on the national stage.

"It was very exciting and a whole lot of fun because I had never done any match play before," she said. "It makes you want to buckle down and try to beat this person and see who you are going to bowl next. That's what I really liked about the whole tournament; I liked the match play part of it."

She believed her ability to make adjustments to the changing shot each day—something at which she is "normally not all that great at"—was the key for her ability to advance during the tournament.

"I just happened to find it every day," she said. "I thought it was just a tiny bit of change, just a little movement to the right or whatever."

Inspired by her performance, CJ definitely plans to bowl in the 2012 USBC Senior Queens Tournament and notes that NCAUSBCA Hall of Famers Linda Elmore and A. Jane Hassell will be among those joining her.

Although CJ has not bowled in a large number of tournaments, such events are likely to be a big part of her future, especially since she now has plenty of time to bowl following her July 2010 retirement from Verizon as a central office technician.

"I'm getting out there more now, trying to see different shots and trying to play more different places," she said. "I loved my job, but life is *great* now that I'm retired!"