

Sports scene loses another legend with death of Joe Norris



TEN-PIN ALLEY
Last week took its toll with the passing of Dale Ehardt, Eddie Matthews and Herbert Cleaves.

Now, I write about a legend who was Joe Norris, for he passed away Feb. 19 in San Diego following a two week bout with pneumonia. He turned 93 on Feb. 10.

Norris was scheduled to compete in a record 72nd American Bowling Congress Championship Tournament on March 12.

There have been millions of bowlers over the past century, but only one Joe Norris.

He spent the early days of his illustrious career in Detroit and captained some of the greatest bowling teams ever to hit the lanes.

Norris, a member of eight different bowling halls of fame was certainly one of the greatest bowlers of all time and he was honored as such at last year's ABC convention in Albuquerque, N.M.

Among the many records he holds — he was the youngest ever (at that time) to bowl a 300 at the age of 18 and conversely also the oldest at the time when he did it again at age 66.

Joe would hop on a plane to Detroit for almost any occasion, and certainly for the annual Old Timers Tournament at Thunderbowl Lanes in Allen Park, which he called "the best event of all."

Norris earned his fame as a bowler, but was also a renowned practical joker and could relate those stories in detail as if they were done yesterday.

And, yes. He could tell stories about bowling events which he took part in, he could remember exact scores like they happened last week as well as names of people and places from a totally different era.

* Norris, who was born in Springfield, Ill., and raised in Detroit, became the first bowler inducted into the San Diego Hall of Champions when he was honored in absentia on Feb. 7.

It was the eighth hall to recognize his illustrious career.

Regarded as one of the best team bowlers in history, Norris organized the first of the famed "beef teams" when he secured Stroh's sponsorship of his ABC Tournament team in 1933.

Under Norris' leadership, Detroit Stroh's captured the 1934 Tournament team title, five national match game championships between 1934 and 1945, while adding another pair of ABC titles with the Tri-Pac Radio team in 1954.

Those teams helped establish the Detroit area as the world capital of bowling.

* "One time," Boy Wonder of "Bowling" won a number of individual titles as well as team championships. He bowled with a team of other great bowlers in an exhibition match against a team of German bowlers prior to the 1936 Olympic games in Berlin.

His legend grew in the ABC,

an annual event except during World War II when it was suspended. Norris bowled in his first ABC Tournament in 1926 at age 18 and missed only once (1942) when he was recovering from appendix surgery.

* In 1986 Norris became only the third bowler ever to knock down over 100,000 pins in ABC Tournament competition. In 1992, he surpassed the total lifetime pins record and by 2000 in Albuquerque he established a new all-time high with 123,770 pins for 642 games, an average of 192.78 spanning seven decades.

* Joe Norris was a true treasure to our sport," ABC Executive Director Roger Dalkin said. "We are going to miss him, but rather than mourn him during our national convention at Reno in March, we're going to celebrate his life and all he did for our sport."

Last year, after tying the record in number of ABC tournaments at 71, Norris said: "Old age doesn't bother me. I figure that's part of life. I've been pretty lucky health-wise. I've been pretty lucky bowling, too. It has taken me to 45 different cities in every continent."

* "I came from a poor family and we didn't have any money for education. I'd probably have been selling shoes lace on a corner if it hadn't been for bowling."

* "But it was more the friendships and traveling and being with the right people, that meant the most to me."

* Each year at the Greater Detroit Hall of Fame banquet,

the Tom McKay Award is given out to an individual who has been dedicated to the advancement of the sport of bowling.

Last year's recipient was Norris, who was elected to the Detroit Bowling Hall of Fame in 1959.

Any one who would like to visit the Detroit Hall of Fame may do so by visiting Thunderbowl Lanes in Allen Park where it is all on display in the main conference room.

Plenty of Norris photos and memorabilia are there. And if the venerable George Pyrblys is around, he can tell all kinds of Joe Norris stories.

* Norris will be remembered by those who knew him as a great

competitor, a gentleman and also an ambassador of the sport of bowling. We call him a legend, but he was more than that, a giant among men and a large slice of bowling history.

BOWLING HONOR ROLL
Country Lanes (Farmington)
Ever-7: Matt McNease, 801. Country High School: Keith Herman (age 15), 290.

Cloverlawn (Livonia)
Renaissance Mixed: Hashone Green, 299. Sunday Night Mixed: Byron Goldston, 300. Poco Inter-Plant Mixed: Ron Rich, 300. Elks Tournament: Dave Fisher, 299. Monday Morning Foursome: Shondron Jordan, 605 series.

Men-Bowl (Livonia)
Big Ten Mixed: Ron Seese, 299.



Joe Norris: A legend in the sport of bowling.

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Shamrocks rally to win regional

BY PAUL BEAUDRY
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Twice during Wednesday's Division 1 team wrestling regional, Catholic Central was close to being down for the count.

And twice, the Shamrocks picked themselves off the mat for the win.

CC fought back from a 22-8 deficit in its semifinal match against Dearborn Edsel Ford, winning seven of the last nine matches for a 34-28 win over the Thunderbirds.

Then the Shamrocks did the same thing in the final against host Northville, again winning seven of the last nine matches to turn a 19-3 deficit into a 37-28 win over the Mustangs and earn a spot in the state quarterfinals.

"The guys were awesome. We've been waiting a year for this... a chance to rectify a mental mistake from last year," said CC coach Mike Rodriguez, referring to the Shamrocks' disqualification from last year's regional because of a weigh-in violation on his part. "Everybody did what they were supposed to do and came through."

The win sends the Shamrocks (17-8) into the Division 1 quarterfinals on March 2 in Battle Creek's Kellogg Arena against Temperance-Bedford — a 70-3 winner in its regional final against Pinckney. Northville (24-3) advanced to the finals with a 47-30 win over Livonia Stevenson.

In both cases, Tim Mulroy started the Shamrocks on their way as he posted a pin in the opener and a 6-4 win in the final at 125, then Nate Rodriguez won his next two matches at 135 to close out the gap.

Trailing 19-9 going into 140 pounds, CC mixed up the line-up

Rodriguez earned a pin and a major decision. Then Werner got a pin, Abshire, Cracchiolo and Jason Hilliker won by decision to tie Edsel Ford at 25-all. Rogowski got a major decision and Markowicz won with a technical fall and CC moved to the finals.

Stevenson (16-8) started in the same hole against the Mustangs, but couldn't catch up. Northville started out by winning the first five matches for a 28-0 lead, but the Spartans streaked back with a pin at 135 by Doug Novack (3:13), Matt Radley at 140 (3:55), Chris Coopridge at 145 (0:44) and Imad Kharbush at 160 (1:19) to cut the lead to 32-24.

But the win was clear as the Spartans could get as Northville earned pins in the next two matches to go ahead 44-24. "We're hurting and it showed," said Stevenson assistant Dave Falson. "We had five starters who couldn't wrestle because they were hurt. Northville's got talent and they are very good. But the kids came back and fought hard. You have to give them credit."

"Nowick, Radley, Kharbush and Coopridge did what they were supposed to do and stick their opponent. We had a good season. We weren't supposed to get this far and we did."

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