

Thunander wins state bowling title

Daniel Kerwin - New Ulm Journal Sports Writer Posted July 6, 2012

NEW ULM - When Mike Thunander competed at the 2012 Minnesota State United State Bowling Congress (USBC) Open Championship back in March, he had no idea that almost three months later he would be informed that he had won a title.

Unlike most sporting contests, the annual competition doesn't crown an immediate champion. For this year's installment, bowlers from all around the state were given from Feb. 11 to April 29 to record their scores at the Open's designated bowling alley, which this year was the AMF Southtown alley in Bloomington.

Thunander made the trip to Bloomington in March with a group of other bowlers from New Ulm. He competed at the Division 1 level in singles, doubles and as a member of a five-person team.

At the time he knew that he had bowled a pretty good singles series, but it wasn't until June that he was informed that he had claimed the Division 1 singles championship.

"The tournament goes on for, like, three months," Thunander said. "There are over 2,000 bowlers, and I won."

Thunander bowled above his 191 average in each of his three games in his singles series.

"My first game was 221, my second game I bowled a 254 and my third game I bowled a 213," Thunander said. "The total was 688 and I had a handicap of 68, so the total was 756."

Thunander's final score of 756 gave him the championship by a full five points over second-place finisher Jeff Kes of Pine Island, who recorded a final score of 751. Rounding out the top five were Kevin Branch of Montgomery (749), Matthew McNiel of Brooklyn Park (747) and Tim Wangen of Winona (743).

Thunander's championship is potentially the first ever recorded by a New Ulm bowler in a Minnesota State USBC Open Championship. "I don't know when the last time someone from New Ulm won the state bowling," Thunander said.

Since the year 2000, only four other New Ulm bowlers have even placed in the top 40 at the Open. Galen Bode placed 11th in 2001 with a score of 727, Terry Anderson was 25th in 2006 (743), Paul Holm was 30th in 2009 (765) and Nick Seidl was 36th in 2004 (775).

Thunander said that he was surprised that his total of 756 ended up as the winning score, especially since last year's event - which was bowled at Stadium Lanes in Duluth - was won by Willmar's Jarrett Kopacek with a score of 851.

However, the winning total at the 2010 event at Kandi Bowl in Willmar was almost identical to Thunander's score this year, with Willmar's Mike Pilatzki winning with a score of 757.

Despite his singles championship, Thunander wasn't able to replicate his success in his other events. He ended up placing 153rd in doubles with a 1,072 and placed 160th out of 1,675 competitors in the All Events category, with his singles, doubles and team series combining for a total of 1,910.

"My partner was Chris Williams, but we didn't do very good in doubles," Thunander said. "We didn't do very good in team, either."

New Ulm's top finisher in the All Events category was Scott Harder, who placed 93rd with a 1,947. Harder and Jayme Goebner had the highest finish of all New Ulm bowlers in the doubles, placing 54th with a score of 1,315.

Thunander's title came after competing at the tournament every year for approximately the past 15 years.

He will attend an awards banquet in August, where he will receive formal recognition of his championship and will be presented with either a jacket or a plaque to commemorate his title. He also earned a purse of \$600 for his first-place finish.



Champ Mike Thunander
Journal photo by Daniel Kerwin