

By Randy Whalen

When a bowling team wins the title of an invite, it's easy to look at the top bowlers on the team as the ones that led them.

But bowling is a team sport and when Lockport Township won the Plainfield South Invite on Saturday, Nov. 26 at Town & Country Lanes in Joliet, Porter veteran coach Ron Davis knew who won the tournament for the team.

"It was all about something that I preach," Davis said the night the Porters won the tourney. "That's the guys that aren't scoring being able to fill frames. The guys knowing their role."

Davis pointed to senior Ryan Muhr as a prime example.

"Ryan had a bad first game with some opens and I had to pull him," Davis said. "But I put him back in the lineup for the afternoon session and in the last game, he bowled a clean 189. I don't know if people realize how difficult it is to bowl a clean 189 (picking up many multi-pin spares) but we won by 13 pins so we needed that to happen.

"Again, that's the guys knowing their roles."

Lockport (6,281 pins) held off a late charge from Lincoln-Way Central (6,268), which rolled a 1,085 in the last game, to win. Minooka (6,137) was third in the 22-team tourney. The Porters had a 1,013 final game but were the only team to bowl over 1,000 in every game and with team highs of 1,086 in the fourth game and 1,102 in the fifth game. That helped the Porters rally from being in fourth place, 84 pins down to Lincoln-Way Central (3,164), at the break.

Nate Arient won the individual title for Lockport with a 1,384 series. The senior had a high of 259 in the first game but it was his afternoon scores of 248, 255, and 221 (724 3-game total) that did it. South Elgin senior Andrew Rossini (1,349, high of 269 in Game 3) was second and Porter senior Jason Laba (1,348, high of 243 in game 5) was a pin behind in third.

"I'm super happy for Nate," Davis said. "And Jason bowled great too. A nice thing is that the (Plainfield North) Sectional is at Town & Country and those guys seem to have those lanes figured out."

They did the week before. That was Saturday, Nov. 19 when the Porters placed third at the Plainfield North Invite. They were only nine pins out of second as Muhr (1,359) also placed third individually. Mascoutah (6,166) won it, Joliet West (6,027) placed second, Lockport (6,018) was third and Lyons Township (5,981) took fourth in the prestigious 43-team tournament.

"We've had a good core of three seniors," Davis said following the Plainfield North Invite of Arient, Laba, and Muhr. "But Nate (Arient) wasn't able to be at the Plainfield North Invite and we brought up freshman, Aaron Chrusciel, from the JV team and he started 230, 230 (642-morning series) for us.

"Plus the JV team still won their tournament (at Lake Park) without him."

The last two tournament results were a nice improvement for the Porters. They opened the season on Saturday, Nov. 5 with a seventh-place finish at the Naperville Central Baker Kickoff Challenge at Lisle Lanes. The next Saturday, Nov. 12, they placed 11th at the Lake Park Lancer Invite at Stardust Lanes in Addison.

Through Nov. 26, Lockport was 5-1 overall in dual meets, including 3-0 in SouthWest Suburban Conference matchups. The Porter's only loss was by a score of 2,950-2,739 to host Naperville Central in a three-game matchup on Monday, Nov. 14 at Lisle Lanes.

After being edged by Joliet West for second place at the Plainfield South Invite, Lockport hosted the Tigers in a dual meet on Tuesday, Nov. 22, and came away with a big victory at Strike & Spare II in Lockport. That was a three-game match with a score of 3,264-2,950.

Laba led the team with a 698 series that included a 299 game in game two. He threw a great twelfth shot but got an unlucky break and left a seven-pin. Also coming in with great series was junior Ross Karraker with 673, Muhr with 638, and junior Steven Taleski with 632. The Porters put together a great third game with 1,179 to cement the win.

While there was no drama Thursday, Nov. 17 when the Porters defeated SWSC opponent Bolingbrook 2,086-1,276 at Strike & Spare II, there was a personal one for Lockport's Neil Mamparo. The junior was in the varsity lineup and bowled an even 400, with a high game of 224. That edged out his cousin, junior Jaden Francia, who had a 391 (with a high of 220) total for the two games.

"It feels good to be on the varsity and we are always looking to improve," Mamparo said. "We've got off to a strong start this season and the more momentum we have the more we can keep that going at the end of the season."

Against Bolingbrook, Laba led the way with 480 (237, 243) and Arient had a 457 (224, 233) series.

Laba, who is a four-year varsity veteran, has been the anchor bowler for the Porters for the last two seasons.

"It's fun," Laba said after the Bolingbrook match of being in the last position. "Ever since freshman year I wanted to be the anchor. Winning the usual meets is mostly just for fun. We want to do well in the tournaments and get ready for January."

While he's a varsity veteran, Laba is always looking to improve his game.

"Coach and I fixed some things in practice," he said of working with Davis. "He said I was throwing the ball too hard. So we've made sure my hand comes back more and I'm rolling it instead of spinning it."

Since the Porters won the state championship in 2013, they have made it to state each season except in 2017-18. There were no state finals in 2020-21 because of COVID. Laba plans for them to be back at St. Clair Bowl in O'Fallon during the last weekend of January this season too.

"We lost some good guys from last year," Laba said of the Porter team that placed fifth in the state in 2021-22. "But we have been competitive with teams. We want to have fun and as seniors, we want to make sure the juniors are feeling comfortable."

"We can bowl with anyone."