

New Jersey duo grabs top spot at Open Championships

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Emil Dudas and Gary Budra

LAS VEGAS - Since becoming friends five years ago, Emil Dudas of Toms River, N.J., and Gary Budra of Howell, N.J., have teamed up on the lanes for a number of local doubles events.

This week, the two took their show on the road and found success on bowling's biggest stage as they moved into the top spot in Regular Doubles at the 2009 USBC Open Championships on Saturday.

This year's event at Cashman Center marked their second trip to the Open Championships together and their tournament debut as doubles partners. It was the fourth overall appearance for Dudas and third for Budra.

Dudas paced the pair with games of 224, 259 and 236 for a 719 series, while Budra contributed 224, 204 and 213 for 641 and a 1,360 total. Bowling on the same squad, Scott and Derek Hartnell of Kenosha, Wis., shot 1,353. Ed Ilano and USBC Hall of Famer Lisa Wagner of Auburn, Ga., previously held the lead with 1,336.

"Every time you come here, you set goals for yourself," said Dudas, who added 653 in team and 646 in singles and moved into second place in Regular All-Events with 2,018. "We came in here trying to win an eagle, and 1,400 was our target score. It's hard to shoot that well here, and especially hard to get two guys to bowl that well together. Even though we shot lower than we hoped, we're in first place and it feels great."

While Dudas and Budra met at their local bowling center, their friendship now extends beyond the lanes. If they are not bowling in league or in a tournament, their families spend time together whenever schedules allow.

Being such good friends is crucial for communication on the lanes, and knowing each other's games can help make faster and more effective decisions. And besides the obvious benefits of an extra set of eyes, it's always nice to have someone rooting for you.

"By now, we know what to look for, but the most important things are going out there and throwing good shots and keeping each other's spirits up," Dudas said. "We were relaxed today and had a good time, and we are definitely flying home happy."

Budra added 638 in singles and 609 in team for a 1,888 all-events total. He and Dudas also helped Brick 2 of Toms River, N.J., into second place in Team All-Events with 9,074. Nobody's Pro Shop of Yorktown, Va., leads with 9,226.

Also on Saturday, Jason Johnson of Macedonia, Ohio, put together games of 268, 236 and 268 for a 772 series and moved into second place in Regular Singles. He also landed in fourth place in Regular All-Events with 1,999. Orin Baugher of Spokane, Wash., leads with 773, while Scott Culp of Lima, N.Y., tops all-events with 2,066.

Presenting sponsors for the 2009 USBC Open Championships are the Coast Casinos in Las Vegas and the Eldorado Hotel Casino, Silver Legacy Resort Casino and Circus Circus in Reno, Nev. Other participating sponsors are Kegel, official lane maintenance provider; Brunswick, capital equipment supplier; Storm Products, Inc.; Binion's Gambling Hall and Hotel and Four Queens Hotel and Casino, the official brackets sponsors; Sapphire Gentleman's Club; Golden Nugget Hotel and Casino; MGM Mirage; Jerry's Nugget Casino and Fitzgerald's Casino and Hotel.