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Sanborn sets highest women's average ever at Ayr Lanes Bowling

By JESSICA CRAWFORD • Daily Leader For Crystal Sanborn, some of the most treasured memories of her childhood were probably made knocking down bowling pins with her father, Jess Ellis. Sanborn's love of bowling followed her well into adulthood, and it recently earned her quite an honor at Ayr Lanes, Highest Women's Average – ever.

Sanborn attributes her talent and love of bowling to the time her father spent with her in the bowling alley. "My dad got me started in a junior league," Sanborn said. "I think I started bowling when I was around 6 or 7. My dad and some of the guys that bowled on the league just gave me what they thought I needed to do it. I just ended up being really good at it.

"So," she said with a laugh, "I do not bowl like a girl."

As Sanborn grew up, she continued to bowl. Winning several tournaments over the years, she truly began to realize that bowling was her sport.

"Me, my sister and a couple friends won a tournament in the Junior Major League," she said. "Then after that, we just started bowling on a women's league and continued doing that. A lot of times we would get first place, sometimes we wouldn't place at all."

This year, Sanborn's years of practice finally paid off with an honor she is very proud of.

"I was bowling in a Tournament of Champions with a Monday night team, and we actually ended up winning the tournament," she said. "Then they had a banquet and they announced Bowler of the Year and told me I had the highest average."

Ayr Lanes owner Robert Burkey said Sanborn does not win by luck – she definitely has talent.

"Crystal had an exceptional year," Burkey said. "She averaged 198 for the year. That is the highest average ever recorded by a woman in Liberal. She has won Bowler of the Year two of the last three years and has the ability to win it every year. She is a solid bowler – very accurate.

"Her team, The Jokers, from the PEPL Monday Night Mixed League won the Tournament of Champions this year," he explained. "That is where all the winning teams from the leagues bowled head to head until we had one winner."

Sanborn doesn't enjoy bowling just for the sake of winning, she truly loves the sport and enjoys her time in the alley.

"I do it for fun," she said. "I don't do it for competition.

"Most of the time it is relaxing, but not all the time," she said with a chuckle. "Sometimes it is a little stressful, but most of the time it is relaxing."

With three children of her own and three stepchildren, will Crystal Sanborn pass down her love of bowling to her own children as her father did many years ago? Her children are rather young right now, but Sanborn has high hopes that at least one will take to the sport. Time, she said, will tell.

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