

Montana bowler shines at USBC Open Championships

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RENO, Nev. - Family and work obligations kept Keith Meagor of Butte, Mont., from bowling as much as he would've liked to in recent years, but he always made sure he had time for the USBC Open Championships.



This season, the 35-year-old right-hander bowled in a league full-time, and his extra effort on the lanes was rewarded with a 290 and 300 along the way. The additional games have made him more comfortable and more consistent, and he proved that again as he rolled the 14th perfect game of this year's Open Championships on Thursday.

of 192, 300 and 206 for a 698 series and teamed up with Harry Shaffer Jr., his friend since childhood, for a 1,324 doubles total at the National Bowling Stadium. Steve Bohn of Norwood, Minn., and John Kreyer Jr. of Fridley, Minn., lead Regular Doubles with 1,514.

"Two years ago, I had a 280 game here, and I thought that would be pretty tough to top," said Meagor, who bowls league at Star Lanes and made his 11th Open Championships appearance. "Even in a league setting, shooting 300 is pretty intense, so to do it at the Stadium, in an event of this magnitude, is incredible. It gets eerily silent, but to let go of the ball and hear everyone screaming was exciting."

As he made his run at perfection, Meagor had his own cheering section. His group includes four teams, 20 total bowlers, and two of the teams have been together for a decade.

"For everyone to be here and be a part of it was really special," Meagor said. "When the screen turns black (after seven consecutive strikes), the pressure starts to build, but my teammates were there with high fives and jokes to make me laugh, which helped relieve some of the tension."

Before traveling to the tournament each year, the teams get together to practice on a variation of the event's Sport Bowling-compliant lane condition and formulate a game plan. On the lanes, they know each other's games well enough to offer support or advice, and Meagor knows that their cohesiveness played a significant role in his performance Thursday.

"We have a solid group of people, and we definitely put in the work beforehand to get ready and come up with a game plan," Meagor said. "I credit the guys I come with for my success today because we work together throughout the nine games, and they're always there when you throw a bad shot and need a little help. They also helped keep me calm, and that was key."

In his 11 tournament appearances, Meagor has averaged 208.7 in doubles compared to 204.1 in singles and 188.5 in team. He struggled in his four previous trips to the Stadium, averaging just 190.9, compared to 203 everywhere else, but reversed the trend with a solid performance this year.

Meagor added 695 in singles and 620 in team for a career-best 2,013 all-events total. His previous-high was 1,852 at the 2003 event in Knoxville, Tenn.