

Kristen Dehn wins Little's Ladies' Classic

The championship of the Classic 50's/Little's Lanes Ladies' Classic is back in the Electric City, and it took two of Great Falls' finest bowlers, the narrowest of margins — and a few lost fingernails — before it was all over.

In the end, righthander Kristen Dehn had climbed the TV-style ladder from her No. 3 qualifying slot to defeat fellow righty Barb Lankford 259-258 in the title match Sunday afternoon at the downtown kegling emporium.

Julie Redfern of Billings took third, Calgary southpaw Felicia Wong — the 2009 and 2011 champion — was fourth, and Brenda Shaffer of Butte came in fifth.

Dehn is the first Great Falls-based champion since an 18-year-old college freshman named Joleen Martinich captured the crown in 2008.

“Just barely,” Dehn said when this reporter commented that she had enough left in the tank to make it through a third stepladder challenge in addition to the 10 match play games she had already bowled.

She did, however, change her arsenal of balls for the stepladder. Lankford opted to use what got her through the match play with an 8-2 mark, 405 pins over the over/under mark of 200.

Both bowlers nailed ten strikes in the final match. Dehn had a pair of 9-spare frames, while Lankford had two 8-spare frames.

“Pin carry made all the difference,” Lankford said with Dehn in agreement.

“The scoring was good all weekend,” Dehn added. She went through the 10 match play games with a record of 6-3-1 and was 287 over.

Dehn took home a check for \$775 for the win, while Lankford got \$550 for second. Redfern, who lost the semifinal to Dehn 215-197, received third place cash of \$430. Wong got \$370 after her 222-205 loss to Dehn, and Shaffer earned \$310 when Wong got the 217-192 victory in match one.

Liz Wong of Calgary — Felicia's sister — had the tournament's high game of 288 during qualifying on Saturday.

Speaking of Felicia, the defending Ladies Classic champion spoke highly of the 'new' Little's, which reopened in late August after being closed for 51 weeks. Asked what the biggest difference was, she replied with nary a hint of hesitation: “The ball returns. You don't have to kick the ball returns anymore.”

Gee, Felicia. Even us righthanders agree with you there.