

A HISTORY OF THE DIXIE DEAF BOWLING ASSOCIATION

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In order to get an idea of how the Dixie Deaf Bowling Association began, it is necessary to go back to 1949. In that year the Southeastern States Bowling Association of the Deaf (SSBAD) started more or less as a fun tournament between a Miami team and a Jacksonville team as well as the Jacksonville team vs. an Atlanta team. There was no rules and regulations nor even an organization title. In 1950, the five deaf bowling teams from Florida and the other deaf teams from Georgia competed in the second SSAB tournament. Prior to the competition, a group of deaf bowling stalwarts gave birth to the idea of organizing an annual tournament with ABC sanction. Then the group proposed and adopted the following:

- 1.) have the name changed to Dixie Bowling Association of the Deaf, embracing the states of Alabama, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia,
- 2.) formulate its Constitution and By-Laws by which all future annual tournaments and meetings would be conducted,
- 3.) obtain American Bowling Congress sanction for every annual tournament and to abide by its rules, and
- 4.) run the annual bowling tournament on a handicap basis.

At this historic meeting, the Dixie Bowling Association of the Deaf was formally organized with Todd Hicks of Jacksonville, Florida was its first president, Henry B. Oaks of Atlanta, Georgia as its first vice president, and Charles McNeilly, Jr. of Miami, Florida as its first secretary-treasurer.

The first annual bowling tournament of the newly-organized Dixie Bowling Association of the Deaf was held in Atlanta, Georgia on October 27-28, 1951 with six entries, three from Atlanta and one each from Miami and Jacksonville, and a newcomer, Birmingham, Alabama. At the meeting prior to competition, it was decided to change the date of the next annual tournament from the month of October to the month of April. Due to inexperience and unfamiliarity with ABC rules and regulations, a sanction for this tournament was not obtained. Top prize for the first place winners, the Atlanta Club of the Deaf team which included Douglas Hitchcock, Don Turner, Lee Cofe, Henry Oaks, and Mack Padgett was \$16.00. Herbert Dannis of Birmingham, Alabama was the first singles event champion with the score of 670 pins, and he was also all-events champion with a total of 1772 pins. C. Pollock and Maurice Samples, the deaf Floridians were the first doubles event champion with 1246 pins total. Mack Padgett bowled a scratch high game of 222 pins.

The second DBAD annual bowling tournament was held in Birmingham on April 19-20, 1952, with sanction by ABC for the first time. Seven teams participated -- Memphis, Tennessee, being the newcomer. Birmingham Silents was the team event champion with 2811. The tournament was ably managed by Rush Letson, and it marked its milestone, printing its first DBAD souvenir and program book.

Jacksonville was the site of the 1953 DBAD tournament, and a number of entries increased by one over the previous tournament. Birmingham Silents was the team event winner for the second straight year.

In 1954, the tournament was held in Miami. Only eight entries were received, same as the previous tournament. The Hialeah Shoe Repair team of Miami walked away with the team event and the \$100.00 cash prize donated by Miami and Atlanta clubs, rolling a high of 2924 pins.

The tournament was held in Atlanta for the second time in 1955. Thirteen teams entered; Louisville, Kentucky being the newcomer. The Atlanta Deaf Keglers won the team event.

In 1956, the tournament was held in Birmingham for the second time and as was their previous tournament in 1952, it was highly successful. Birmingham Silents again won the team event.

For the first time in DBAD history, the tournament was held in Louisville, Kentucky in 1957 where a record cash prize of \$150.00 was donated by the sponsor. The Louisville Association of the Deaf drew 16 teams, the largest in the short history of the DBAD.

In 1958, Jacksonville for the second time sponsored the tournament, with 10 entries. The only

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newcomer was Tampa, Florida. Atlanta Deaf Keglers won the five-man team event.

Again, in the year of 1959, the tournament was sponsored by Miami, with the disappointing number of nine entries. Two newcomers were Winter Haven, Florida and Tallahassee, Florida. The team event went to South Florida Stars who edged out the Jacksonville Strikers 'n Sparer by four points.

In 1967, the states of Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, and the District of Columbia were dropped from the DDBA membership roll. No data as to why they were dropped from the roster is available due to loss of minutes from the fifties to early seventies. Arkansas was added to the roster in 1973.

In the year of 1968, the DDBA Hall of Fame was established to honor the individuals in the bowler and leader categories. First in the HoF in bowler category was Lee Cofe of Georgia, and first recipient in the leader category was Sam B. Rittenberg of Alabama. The following bowlers, who helped organize the DDBA in 1950, were inducted into the Hall of Fame: Todd Hicks as a bowler in 1977; Henry Oaks as leader in 1969 and as bowler in 1970; Douglas Hitchcock of Georgia as a bowler in 1972 and as a leader in 1978; Charles McNeilly, Jr. as a leader in 1974.

The annual tournaments continued until 1975 where the 25th annual DDBA tournament was suspended due to the National Bowling Association of the Deaf and its annual World Deaf Championship in Knoxville, Tennessee. The DDBA resumed with the 1976 tournament in Birmingham.

In 1977, Louisville, Kentucky hosted the DDBA tournament with 65 team entries, 126 entries for the doubles event, and 252 entries for the singles event. Again in 1982, Louisville club hosted the tournament with 49 team entries and 95 singles entries. Charles Lyons of Chicago, who participated at this tournament, brainstormed the idea of organizing the first Masters tournament and presented the rationale for his new idea to appeal to the fans as well as bowlers. The popularity of this competition has grown every year. At the board of directors meeting, he made a motion to have the Masters tournament conducted at each annual DDBA tournament. The motion passed without any opposition. Robert Kolb, tournament chairman, conducted the first ever Masters tournament. Leslie Massey of Indianapolis, Indiana was the first Masters champion. Then, the Masters tournaments would be managed by the host chairperson every year until 1979 when it was decided by the DDBA board of directors to take over the Masters tournament at each DDBA annual tournament. Unfortunately, there are no records available to indicate the names of the past Masters champions from 1978 until 1990. Daniel Krpata of Virginia became the only two-time Masters champion in 1991 and 1992.

In 1990, West Palm Beach Association of the Deaf hosted the 39th annual DDBA tournament with 40 team entries. Virginia applied for the membership in the DDBA and was accepted unanimously by the members of the Board of Directors.

The Dixie Deaf Bowling Association hosted the 40th Anniversary tournament in Louisville, Kentucky. The prize purse goal was first reported \$40,000.00 for men, but it was reduced to \$8,000.00 due to huge task of fundraising.

It was known that Casimer Podgorniak of Syracuse, New York, whose average was in the 200's during the fifties and sixties, was the singles event champion in both handicap and scratch categories and was the all-events champion also. Bill Hayse of Decatur, Alabama, who now maintains a 200-plus average in several bowling leagues, was the singles event champion at the 33rd Annual DDBA tournament in Tampa, Florida.

Under the guidance of dedicated DDBA officers, law committee members, and other bowling stalwarts, a well-planned program of organization and expansion was built up through the years.

This history of the DDBA was gathered from the program books and records of minutes that were available.