

James, Madeline

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□ HALL OF FAME

Queen of the lanes

*Bowling coach
Madeline James
to be honored*

By Paul Svoboda

The Intelligencer

Madeline James can't count the number of youngsters she coached during a 30-year career as a bowling mentor in Belleville.

But she knows she covered at least two generations.

"I coached kids and then I ended up coaching some of their kids too," says James, 83.

From 1963 to 1992, James could be found every Saturday morning at the bowling alley (the old Brunswick Bowl on Dundas Street, then Belleville Pro Bowl) showing youngsters how to knock 'em down. But on Saturday, Sept. 16 James won't be at the bowling alley. She'll be at Alhambra Hall to be honored for her longtime commitment to the local bowling scene with her induction into the Belleville Sports Hall of Fame.

James is one of four 1995 inductees. The other three will be announced prior to the Sept. 16 official ceremonies.

James is predictably modest about her upcoming induction.

"Oh, I don't know much about this," she shrugs, "or how I got in there."

How James got in there is common knowledge in the Belleville bowling community. And it all began over 65 years ago when James' softball coach took his girls team out for a night of bowling.



Madeline James with 1992 retirement award.

"It was at the old recreational lanes on Bridge Street," James recalls. "That's where it started. I was 13-years-old, maybe."

James was hooked. She proved adept at the sport almost immediately and it wasn't long before city bowling teams took notice of the teenaged hotshot.

"Somebody saw me bowl and asked me if wanted to bowl on their team," she says. "I bowled with three Jewish girls and I'm a Catholic so it was quite a combination."

It wasn't long before James was bowling in five leagues a

week.

She became a regular in the old Carling Tournament and qualified for the provincial finals in Toronto virtually every year.

While five-pin was her first love, she was also a mean 10-pin kegger. Her best-ever five-pin score was a 406 in 1975 that included nine straight strikes. In 10-pin, James once rolled a 269.

Coaching was a natural progression for James who found no difficulties in passing on her knowledge of the game to children. And she coached them all. From 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. every

Saturday from bantams to peewees to juniors and teens.

"I just get along with kids," she says. "Parents are harder to get along with than kids."

And what kept James coming back to the alley weekend after weekend?

"Seeing the kids turn out to be good bowlers," she says. "And we had some good ones. We had them that had no talent at all and some with a lot of talent."

The city honored James in 1987 when then mayor George Zegouras presented her with an award recognizing her 25 years of coaching. Two years later she received a certificate of merit from the federal and provincial governments and she was also ushered into the zone Youth Bowling Council's Hall of Fame.

A knee injury forced James to the sidelines in 1992. Now, she watches pro bowling on television "all the time" and still likes to read the local league scores when they appear in the newspaper.

She says improved lanes and state-of-the-art equipment have fine-tuned the sport, but she believes "basically, it's the same game."

James doesn't get down to the bowling alley much any more these days, although she still had her same locker at Belleville Pro Bowl. In fact, she was due to clean it out for the last time this week.

As for the contents, James expected to find "two 10-pin balls, a pair of shoes and God knows what else."

Not to mention a locker full of memories.

Intelligencer photo by Paul Svoboda