



## Windsor-Essex Chatham-Kent Bowling Association



The local association would like to congratulate **Gary Hooper Jr** for winning the Molson Masters OPEN Division and **Norm Wilson** for winning the Molson Masters SENIOR Division. This year's tournament was the 62nd and was completed on Sat. Feb. 11, 2017.

As per this year's news release, provided by **Nick Stein**, Gary Hooper Jr led the Open Finalists. Hooper Jr, the 2012 champ, was seeking his 2nd title and needed to win only one match as the number one seed. Joining Hooper Jr in the finals were three newcomers to the TV finals and another trying for his 1st title in his 3rd attempt. **Mark Decman** from London was the number two seed. **Chris Lemmon** was seeded third, with **Brad Clarke**, a lefty, seeded fourth and **Steve Walls Jr**, needing to run the table as the fifth seed to win four matches to claim the Open title.

The four Senior finalists featured three former champs and a newcomer to TV as the number one seed. Norm Wilson was making his first TV appearance and slipped into the top spot by edging a former champ, **Tom Scott** (2015) who was seeded second. Wilson was just one game away from being a Molson Masters Senior champion. Rounding out the top four were third seed **Rick Vittone**, a former champ (1990) and fourth seed **Marc Pouget**, another former champ (2014).

This Molson Masters is a tournament with a very long rich history. It has been hosted at Palace Recreation, Crescent Lanes, Revs Bowlero, and now at Revs Rose Bowl. This year's tournament was dedicated to **Scotty Laughland** who passed away recently. Scotty was a long time fierce competitor of this tournament as he won the Open division three times - 1983, 1984 and 2000 and was runner up six times - 1986, 1990, 1993, 1995, 1998, and 2002. His wife Sandy indicated that Scotty loved the competitiveness, the match-play, and the close friendships developed over the years among the competitors in this tournament.

Each of the TV finalists was asked what this tournament meant personally and why each thought it was so prestigious.

Gary Hooper Jr. suggested that the tournament is a tournament everyone in the association wants to win. Mark Decman described the tournament as very well organized, professionally run, and very impressive. Chris Lemmon said he watched the tournament growing up and looked up to bowlers in the top 40 and the TV finals.

Brad Clarke believes it was simply a challenge after bowling ten years in the Molson's so it was awesome to make the finals.

Steve Walls Jr indicated that this is the most prestigious tournament in Windsor and it means a lot to Windsor bowlers. He reflected that he has been bowling in this tournament ever since he joined a men's league.

Norm Wilson described the tournament as lots of fun but nerve-racking and it was just his third time trying to qualify.

Tom Scott said he gauges himself against the best that come to compete to see if he can compete with them.

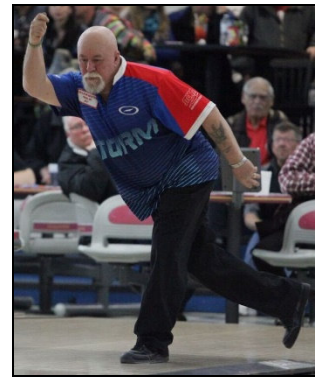
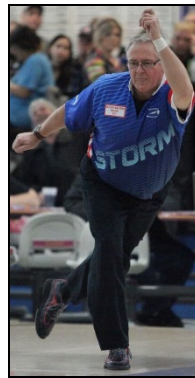
Marc Pouget feels that this is the most prestigious tournament for miles around.

Rick Vittone said this tournament means everything and that he bowls all year to compete with the best bowlers. The longevity of the tournament has seen generations of different types of bowlers.



The Molson Masters runs over 4 weekends. There is a Senior Division (55+) and an Open Division. The tournament starts with 2 weeks of qualifying, followed by one week of Match Play, the fourth week is the TV Step Ladder Finals. To qualify in the Senior Division bowlers bowl 4 games over 4 pairs of lanes, the Open Division bowlers bowl 5 games over 5 pairs of lanes.

**SENIOR DIVISION** - For Match Play - the top 15 Senior bowlers, plus last year's Senior Champion, are divided into 4 groups of 4 bowlers each. They bowl each bowler once in their division. Then they bowl a final position round within their own group. Each time a bowler wins their match he earns a 30 pin bonus added to their score. The top Senior bowler from each of the 4 Senior Division groups advance to the TV step ladder finals.



**Rick Vittone**

**Mark Pouget**

**Tom Scott**

**Norm Wilson**

In the Senior step ladder finals, the results were as follows:

Rick Vittone 238

Marc Pouget 226

Rick Vittone 256

Tom Scott 212

Rick Vittone 213

Norm Wilson 224 (2017 Senior Molson Masters Champion)

Rick Vittone said his goal in match play was ball preparation and having friends give him great advice. He indicated he found the step-ladder final very nerve-racking. He said he would like to see more pairs being used in qualifying. He said there are too many right-handers and a lefty when all alone has fresh oil longer and that didn't seem fair. Rick wanted to thank Randy Hillier, and Cory Cookson for some great tips. He also wanted to thank Dan and Wendy Aqwa. This is Rick Vittone's first break through advancing to the Senior Division TV finals since his previous 1990 win in the Open division. Rick will definitely be back to compete in future tournament competition.

Marc Pouget has been in the TV finals four years in a row so he has enjoyed the competition. Marc said his mindset in match-play was one shot at a time. This step-ladder final was another learning experience. Next time around he would try to finish first instead of fourth. Pouget wanted to thank Cogeco, Revs, Molson's and Nick Stein for all the work done to organize and run this tournament. Marc won this Senior division in 2014 so he will be back.



Tom Scott revealed that Marc Pouget told him that he could compete at this level. Tom was a self-doubter but Marc gave him the confidence in match play to make him believe that he could succeed in this tournament. In the step-ladder final Tom said he was on a high. He beat Mike Snow in match-play, got a gold medal for Canada last summer and earned his first 800 ring (had 803 actual after first 3 games in match play). When he threw all those strikes against Mike Snow he really knew that Marc Pouget was right and that he could compete. Tom relished all the support from family, from the bowlers in his league league, and all the encouragement from other tournament competitors. This was Tom's first time back in the TV finals since he won back in 2015.

Norm Wilson indicated his goal in match-play was just to relax and have fun. Since this was his first time making it to match-play he doubted that he would make it through to the TV finals. The step-ladder final was rough and nerve-racking because there were many good bowlers. He said he did not look at how the others were bowling; he just worked on his own game. Norm took advice from other competitors and it turned out to be very helpful advice. It was very gratifying to see Norm win the Senior Division Molson Masters Championship. He was considered the underdog because he had never been to the finals before. Norm said it was a fun tournament and he will continue to compete in the tournament as long as he still bowls. Norm said he will definitely be back to bowl in future tournaments.

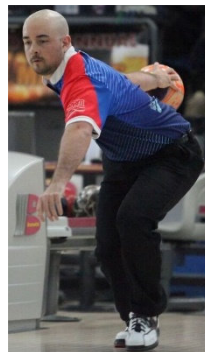
**OPEN DIVISION - For Match Play** - the top 39 Open bowlers, plus last year's Open Champion, are divided into five groups of eight bowlers each. They bowl each bowler once in their division. Then they bowl a final position round within their own group. Each time a bowler wins their match they get a 30 pin bonus added to their score. You move over to a new pair of lanes for each new game bowled. The top Open bowler from each of the 5 Open Division groups advance to the TV step ladder finals.



**Steve Walls Jr**



**Brad Clarke**



**Chris  
Lemmon**



**Mark Decman**



**Gary Hooper Jr**

In the Open step ladder finals, the results were as follows:

Steve Walls Jr 234

Brad Clarke 236

Brad Clarke 194

Chris Lemmon 201

Chris Lemmon 225

Mark Decman 182

Chris Lemmon 216

Gary Hooper Jr 236 (2017 Open Molson Masters Champion)



Steve Walls Jr indicated that his goal in match-play was to stay calm, relaxed, make good decisions, make great shots and make all his spares. He found the step-ladder final tough and very stressful because a bowler must constantly make great shots. He said he would not change anything next time he bowls in the tournament. He would like to see more bowlers participate in the tournament, and a bigger audience. He said if anything you always need to stay humble. Steve said this is a great tournament. He hopes it encourages more young people and their parents to stay involved in bowling and spend less time playing video games. Steve is an exceptional bowler who has been to the TV finals numerous times so he will be back for many years to come.

Brad Clarke conceded that in match play competition he just stayed focused. In the step-ladder finals he said he just had fun, it was a great experience. He would like to see continued support from all involved in the tournament such as Nick Stein, Wendy Aqwa, Revs, Storm, and Molson's. Brad Clarke is also a young bowler with great talent so he will be back to bowl in future.

Chris Lemmon submitted that his match play goal was to hit the pocket on every shot, not to give up the pocket – throw strikes. The step-ladder final was the most fun he ever had bowling. When Gary Hooper missed a spare in a previous frame then left the 6-7-10 split he thought he had the tournament won. When Hooper converted the 6-7-10 split Chris surmised that it was going to be a one pin game right to the finish. He said it would be really cool if there was seating down the lanes while they were bowling, to more closely emulate the pro-bowling tour. Chris Lemmon is a strong young bowler so he will be back for many years to come.

Mark Decman stated that in match play his game plan was to make one good shot at a time, making ten pins fall down each frame with strikes as a bonus. In the step-ladder final he was all lined up but after leaving the 7-10 split in the third frame he lost his feel. At that point he felt it was the start of his demise. Chris bowled well, but his execution he said lacked so Chris advanced. Mark wanted to thank all the sponsors involved in the tournament along with his spouse who supported him. Mark wanted to also thank C300 and EBI for their support. They provided him with the best equipment. Lastly, he wanted to give a huge thanks and recognition to Bowlerama Royal in London for all the free practice time and the support provided to him. This was Mark Decman's first time to the TV finals. Mark had an impressive eight game match play scratch total of 1976 so he will definitely be back to bowl in this tournament.

Gary Hooper Jr wanted to win and his facial expression did not hide his passion and desire. Gary indicated in match play he just wanted to stay calm and not worry about losing the match. In the step-ladder finals he missed a 7-pin spare then came back in the next frame and left the 6-7-10 split. When he made that split conversion, he felt that was the turning point in the match. It made for a very close one pin match and a very exciting 10th frame finish. Hooper wanted to thank Revs Rose Bowl staff and Nick Stein for all their hard work. He also wanted to thank both Molson's and Storm for hosting the tournament. Gary has been in the Open division TV finals on numerous occasions with a previous win back in 2012. Hooper also had a very impressive eight game match play scratch total of 1990 so he will definitely be back to bowl in this tournament for years to come.

I would like to thank **Jeff Kovack** for giving us permission to make use of his Molson Masters tournament photos.

Catherine Wilbur

\*\*\*\*\*