

# Billings, Blaney, Martin, Song 2022 recipients of Ted Gruszkowski Jr. Youth Star Award

There were four recipients this year of the prestigious NCAUSBCA Ted Gruszkowski Jr. Youth Star Award, which is named in honor of the late association Hall of Fame member who was a strong supporter of area youth bowling. The announcement of the 2022 winners took place January 22 at Bowl America Gaithersburg prior to the opening round of the NCAUSBCA Youth 52nd Annual Invitational Scratch Singles Tournament.

The award winners, honored for bowling achievement and/or service to youth bowling, were each presented with a plaque and \$500 in scholarship funds, which will be administered through the USBC SMART program. In addition, the four names appear on a second plaque of honorees, which now total 31.

## **JA'SEAN BILLINGS • Hyattsville, Maryland**

Some of Ja'Sean's bowling achievements include a 300 game and 815 series on the same day at age



13. He is a three-time Maryland State All-Events champion, a two-time NCA-USBCA Youth Tournament of Champions winner, a Mid-Atlantic Junior Bowling Tour champion, a Danny Wiseman \$300 in League Tournament champion with a runner-up spot in the Danny Wiseman tournament,

Final Advancers round appearances at the Junior Gold Championships, a second-place finish at Virginia State, and many more. He also participates in adult tournaments, including PBA Regionals and the Money Bags Scratch, Last One Standing, Virginia-Maryland Scratch, and Sunday 9-Pin No Tap events.

Ja'Sean currently is a junior at Suitland High, where he holds a 3.0 GPA. He does community service for the Boys & Girls Club and for the past three seasons has served on the Board of Directors of the Nation's Capital Area USBC Association. In earlier years, he helped coach the younger kids in his leagues at AMF Marlow Heights and Potomac Lanes.

Off the lanes, he enjoys hanging out with

friends and play golf, baseball, tennis, and, of course, more bowling. He always shows his bowling spirit all over by wearing ball brands and league shirts. His journey in bowling began with his grandfather, Kevin Roy, who started him in bowling at age 3. For Ja'Sean, bowling "felt like second nature."

He currently participates in two leagues, the Monday Night Sport at The Lanes Fort Meade, where he holds a 185 average, which converts to a 214 average on house conditions, and the Friday MAJBT Sport Shot at Greenway Bowl, where his 170 average converts to 197.

Every year, he participates in Junior Gold, one of the largest youth bowling tournaments in the country, with several thousand youth bowlers. In this prestigious event, he has made it to the Final Advancers round three times, earning \$943 in scholarship money. He also made the Advancers round twice for an additional \$400.

All of the above qualities merit Ja'Sean Billings the NCAUSBCA Ted Gruszkowski Jr. Youth Star Award.

## **ANDRU BLANEY • Indian Head, Maryland**

Andru Blaney is a role model for his youth league, as represents himself, his family, and the league at the highest levels both on and off the lanes. It has been an honor to watch Andru grow into the person he is today.



Andru was raised in the bowling alley, and at a very young age, he would sit and watch all of the bowlers. He is a well-rounded person and athlete who takes pride in being a role model.

Andru is a student of the game and spends many hours each week practicing and bowling his leagues at AMF Waldorf and The Lanes Fort Meade.

Andru is currently one of the top bowlers in the Saturday Morning Youth league at Waldorf. Andru works hard to mentor some of the

younger kids in his youth league, as there are many who want to bowl two-handed. Often, he can be found guiding and encouraging some of the younger kids on how to adjust to lane conditions, providing insight on where they should be playing on the lanes. He works very hard to continuously improve himself both on and off the lanes.

When Andru is not bowling, he is working hard on his schoolwork to ensure that he stays near the top of his class. In addition to all of his bowling accomplishments, Andru continues to excel in school, where he maintains a 4.31 weighted grade point average and a 3.89 unweighted average, which puts him in the top 10 percent of his class of 458 students.

Andru's passion for the game of bowling has led him to compete in many tournaments, both locally and out of town. In the past five years, he has won 14 tournaments, including the 2019 Youth Invitational as well as multiple events in the Mid-Atlantic Youth Tour, the Elite Youth Tours in Chicago, the 12 Bagger Tournaments in

North Carolina, and local 600 Club tournaments.

In addition to his tournament championships, Andru has 12 second-place finishes, both locally and out of town, including the 2017 Youth Invitational and the 2021 PBA Jr. Williamsburg U18 Boys.

While Andru has achieved success bowling in tournaments, he was also recognized for some honor scores, including an 11 in a row (290 Game) award while bowling in a 12 Bagger Tournament, an 11 in a row (298 Game) award while bowling in his Saturday Morning league, an 11 in a row (297 Game) award bowling in the Friday Night Sport Shot league, and two 300 games while bowling in his Saturday Morning league.

Whether helping others or seeking ways to improve his own game, Andru Blaney has demonstrated a dedication to bowling that earns him the NCAUSBCA Ted Gruszkowski Jr. Youth Star Award.

## **BEN MARTIN • Falls Church, Virginia**

Ben's bowling achievements include:

- > High Season-Ending Average: 208 (2020-2021 season) | High Game: 300 | High Series: 753
- > Won Gold Medal at Virginia Commonwealth Games (2017)



- > First Place, 600 Club Tournament of Champions, 180 and Under Division (2018)
- > First Place, NCAUSBCA Youth 600 Club Winter Doubles Tournament (2017)
- > First Place in Doubles Divisions 1 and 3, NCAUSBCA 55th Annual Youth Championship

(2018)

- > Senior Youth Bowler of the Year, Bowl America Falls Church (2021)
- > Finished in Final 8 at NCAUSBCA Youth Invitational Tournament (2018, 2019, 2020)
- > Top 10 in Age Group at Virginia State Pepsi Tournament (2015, 2019)
- > Junior Gold Qualifier (2015, 2016, 2019) and made the cash cut (2019)
- > Triple Crown Winner at Bowl America Falls Church Youth league (2014)
- > Anchor Bowler of Sport Challenge Tour Bowling Team (2017-2019)

## **Past NCAUSBCA Ted Gruszkowski Jr. Youth Star Award recipients**

- 2008 — Eric Helmrich, Adam Mitchell,  
Allen Windsor
- 2009 — Alonso "A.J." Kinney Jr.
- 2010 — Malcolm James
- 2011 — Jason Eman, Brandon Lowe,  
Kayla Meadows
- 2012 — Zahir Holmes
- 2013 — Conner Kolessides
- 2014 — Gene Blair, Nicholas Dean,  
Michael Simpson
- 2015 — Samuel Anderson, Tabitha DeBat,  
Amara Speights
- 2016 — Cayla Davidson, Brandon Driver,  
David Zweiban
- 2017 — Jarrett DeFalco, Deborah Epps,  
Thomas Rush
- 2018 — Andre Andrews, Joey Hansen
- 2019 — Garrett Meadows
- 2020 — Anthony Daniels II, Logan Parmenter

➤ 3rd Place Team Finish at Mid-Atlantic Team Challenge (2018)

Among his academic achievements:

- GPA: 4.08 (on a 4.0 scale)
- Took 10 Advanced Placement classes throughout Grades 9-12.
- Received College Board AP Scholar with Distinction Award, for scoring a 3 or higher on 5 or more AP exams and having an average score of 3.5 or higher (Grade 11).
- Yorktown High School Principal's Award, for outstanding grades (Grade 10).
- Member of Yorktown High School National Honors Society (Grades 11-12).
- VHSL Scholar Athlete Award for maintaining a GPA of 3.5 or higher while playing a sport (Cross Country) (Grades 9-11).

On the lanes, Ben started guiding and helping younger/inexperienced players on his Sport Challenge Tour team, and continues to do so at his Saturday Youth league. He recruited many new bowlers to join the Falls Church Saturday Youth league, where he partners up with new, inexperienced bowlers to be teammates to help guide them in their first-year bowling.

In his community, he assists elderly neighbors with year-round yard work, including lawn mowing, leaf removal, snow shoveling, and weed removal. He was selected for a summer internship with the Arlington Parks Department, where he volunteered to clean up local parks and forests. He also volunteered for local Christmas tree sales to help raise money for the Arlington Kiwanis Association and the Arlington Optimist Society.

At school, he serves as a freshman mentor with the National Honors Society, partnering with seven freshmen to guide them on tours of the school and act as a mentor during their first year in high school. He was a speaker at the Yorktown High School transfer student orientation, leading tours for new students to introduce them to their new school and help them feel acclimated. He also helped create the Yorktown High School Equity Team in 2020, which meets every month to talk about ways to make his school a fair place for marginalized students, such as lower-income students.

On and off of the lanes, Ben Martin sets a standard for all youth bowlers to emulate.

## SPENCER SONG • Fairfax Station, Virginia

Spencer is an 18-year-old senior at South County High School located in Lorton, Va. Some



of the things that he loves most are his family, friends, pets, and, of course, bowling! He is an all-around phenomenal person who just happens to love bowling. Spencer is one of the kindest, polite, calm, and loyal people that I know. His gentle, quiet strength is felt by everyone around him.

In his life, Spencer has faced academic and social obstacles due to learning challenges. His hard work, determination, and drive to become successful in anything he does has helped him overcome every challenge.

These obstacles also gave him the ability to focus on things he loves, like bowling. Nothing comes easy to Spencer, and he has had to work hard for everything he has accomplished. He is the epitome of the saying that "hard work beats talent when talent doesn't work." Spencer has been bowling since he was four years old. He got invited to a bowling birthday party and, shall we say, "the rest is history."

Some of his bowling achievements include:

- 2017 Youth of the Year Tournament Champion / Junior Division
- 2018-2019 Won Several Local Sweeper Tournaments
- 2019 Junior Gold Qualifier/Advancers Round
- 2019 NCAUSBCA Invitational Tournament finalist
- 2020 Placed in NCAUSBCA City Tournament
- 2021 and 2022 Junior Gold Qualifier

While he loves to bowl, he also loves to assist anyone who needs help. I have seen him giving tips to people who look to him for guidance. Spencer is often seen at leagues or tournaments calming or giving a positive nudge to bowlers if they (or himself) are not having a good day on the lanes. This behavior exemplifies his willingness to put others first.

Spencer Song is a most worthy recipient for this most prestigious honor, not only for the things listed above but also because he is a kind, loving, and well-rounded individual with a great

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passion for the sport. Bowling has given him great confidence throughout quite a few of his struggles in life, and he will always look to give back to something he loves so much. His bowling accomplishments, tenacious attitude, and unwavering dedication to the sport exemplify the principles of the NCAUSBCA Ted Gruskowski Jr. Youth Star Award.