

Girls Bowling: Eagles' Baginsky captures crown

BY CHARLES GUTHRIE • STAFF WRITER • JANUARY 21, 2009



NORTH BRUNSWICK —In bowling's stepladder playoff format, the route to the championship could be really difficult, or fairly easy where you play one game to win it all.

Cardinal McCarrick High School junior Nicole Baginsky took the latter of the two. Entering the second day of the qualifying round of the 2009 Greater Middlesex Conference individual girls tournament in fifth place, she bowled a 663 series — second highest series of the day, third overall — to claim the top seed of the five-player stepladder format.

From there, Baginsky went on to beat third-seeded sophomore Morgan Brown of East Brunswick, 191-158, in the final round at the Brunswick Zone Carolier Lanes in North Brunswick.

"We're very proud of her because she's the first player from our school to win an individual title," Cardinal McCarrick girls coach Maureen Jones said. "She was able to stay focused despite having such a large gap in between the first and final round. She was able to come back and finish with a strong game."

Baginsky's run was jumpstarted by her two qualifying rounds as she was motivated by being assigned to lanes next to some of the best bowlers in the GMC, and then competing with them.

"In the first round of qualifiers, I was bowling with people that were better than me, so I was trying to keep up with them and pace myself with them," she said. "In the second round I was around better people again because we were grouped by how we did in the first round, so I just tried to pace myself with them."

Baginsky got off a solid start in the championship when she connected on strikes in her first three frames.

"What I told her was, 'you notice that none of these girls are stringing together strikes,' " Eagles boys coach Steve Jones said. "I felt if she could string together a few strikes in the beginning, they would have to chase her."

The junior entered the tournament with some doubt in her mind, but left as a champion and said this win is a big confidence boost. After taking on some of the best in the league, she said she now feels that her name belongs with the rest of the leaders.

"The win proves to me that I can be good, I am good, and that I shouldn't put myself down as much as I do," Baginsky said. "I think it could also help the team a little bit because one of their own did the best. It could help their morale."

On the other side, Brown had to do some heavy lifting to make it to the championship. She beat No. 4 freshman Justine Bleacher of South Brunswick — who was third in the GMC with a 187 average after last

week's matches — 231-178, in the quarterfinals, and then edged second-seeded Amanda Pearce of North Brunswick in the semifinals, 164-158.

"I felt I did good, I'm happy with how I did," Brown, who's second in the GMC with a 188 average. "I finished in second last year, but I've been practicing and my average has gone up."

Bleacher, who led the field with a 670 series after the first qualifying round, made it to the quarterfinals when she won her opening round matchup with South Brunswick's Carly Kohutanycz — who was 27th overall after day one of the qualifying — 175-142.