

# ITBA National Championships-An Interesting History

With it being the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ITBA National Championships in 2015, we thought it would be interesting to have a look back at the last 50 years and see how things have changed in half a century of National Championship bowling.

- Ray Jenkins and Rosemary Gibbs were the first National Champions, winning the inaugural event, then called the Annual Championships, in Stillorgan Bowl in 1966. Neither player would win the title again.
- Charlotte Whelan became the first player, male or female, to win multiple National titles when she won her second consecutive title in 1969. She would add a third consecutive title in 1970.
- Joe McNally was the first multiple Men's National Champion, winning the second of his two titles in 1972.
- Miriam Dempsey and Kerena Turner (formerly Dykes) have won the most Ladies National titles, with five wins each, while Philip Dunne is by far and away the most successful Men's National Champion with eleven titles, including six-in-a-row from 1978-83.
- The late, great Paul Magee is the second most successful Men's player in National Championship history, winning four title in six years between 1990 and 1996.
- Other multiple champions include: **Female**-Hannah Cullen (4), Eileen Cunningham (3), Pauline Cafolla (3), Karen Vard (3), Mary Mulcahy (3), Anita Watts (3), Aimee Kellegher (2). **Men**-Alan Gibbons (3), Paul Stott Jnr (3), Graham Turner (3), Des Murphy (2), Fergus Thornberry (2), Barry Foley (2), Alan Bride (2).
- The National Championships were held in Stillorgan Bowl for 26 consecutive years from its inception in 1966 until 1992, when it was held in Bray for the first and only time. Since then the event has alternated between venues regularly, although this year's 50<sup>th</sup> National Championships in Leisureplex Tallaght is the first year outside of Stillorgan since 2010.
- When the tournament first began in 1966, there was no All Events-the champion was the winner of the Singles event. The first All Events was not held until 1969.
- The National Championships did not run over two weekends, like it does these days, until 1996. Before this it was run for one full week, with one event played on each day. This was changed to accommodate players from outside of Dublin.
- The 1992 National Championships was the first year that the tournament was played on a purely scratch basis-before this there had always been separate scratch and handicap sections.
- The first All Events trophies were presented to the winners of the 1972 National Championships, Joe McNally and Miriam Dempsey. The trophies were sponsored by Joe Dolan.
- The first sponsored National Championships was the 1974 tournament, held in Stillorgan, which was sponsored by 'The Goulding Building'.

- The first full length programme/brochure for the National Championships was produced in 1973 and programmes became a staple of the tournament for many years, with content including lists such as past champions and scores, a Presidential Address from the President of the ITBA, rules and regulations of the tournament, various advertisements, tournament schedule and lane assignments.
- In 1979, a new All Events trophy, in honour of the late Jack Murphy, who had died during the 1978 championships, was presented to the Men's champion Philip Dunne.
- 1983 saw the Ladies get a new All Events trophy, which was presented to Miriam Dempsey, champion of that year.
- The 1980's saw the National Championships become a massive event, with its popularity reaching a high in 1986, when 156 men and 71 women took part in both the scratch and handicap sections combined.
- 1987 was the first year the tournament was officially called the ITBA National Championships, changed from the Annual Championships. This year also saw the introduction of seeded squads for the scratch events, and the Trios event was included in the All Events for the Men's tournament for the first time.
- 1989 saw the Trios and Team of Four events introduced in the Ladies Tournament. This was also the first year that all competitors in the All Events finals received a medal.
- 1993 was the first year that the National Championships was played on synthetic lanes, with the event held in the Tallaght Sportsbowl, as Irish bowling moved with the times and wooden lanes began to become a thing of the past.
- The oldest Men's National Championship record still standing today is the Doubles record, a score of 1504 set by Paddy Gibbons and Alan Gibbons in Palmerstown in 1997. That year also has the All Events qualifying record, 3582 by eventual National Champion Philip Dunne.
- The oldest standing Ladies record goes back even further to 1995, with the high game record of 299 by Anita Watts in Tallaght, a game only matched by Kerena Dykes in 2009, also in Tallaght.