

Ron Sparks Jr. - Superior Performance

Around the age of 10, Ronnie Sparks, Jr. went on an open bowling outing with his dad at Wonderland Lanes in Livonia. From that first day, he loved the way bowling's competition flowed, and he felt like he was on par with his dad. As time went on, Ronnie and his dad would sneak in some bowling every chance they could at different centers. The pair once got into trouble with Ronnie's mom for breaking curfew. Ronnie felt bowling was the sport for him. He soon gave up his other sports endeavors, basketball, football, and even karate, in which he had excelled, to concentrate on bowling. He joined a youth league at Wonderland Lanes and was taken under the wing of coach John Curtis. Curtis encouraged young Ronnie to hone his craft and keep up his practice in the Saturday morning league. This was hard at the beginning as Ronnie was not a morning person. The owner of Wonderland Lanes, Ken Bashara, saw the determination and promise of young Ronnie



and offered him free open bowling in exchange for cleaning tables and working with the younger bowlers. The turning point in Ronnie's junior career was meeting former Detroit All-Star Dave Silverman. Silverman, a fellow parent in the youth league, watched the young bowler and told him that he needed a spare ball. Silverman provided him with a Blue Dot to rectify the situation. It was the introductions Silverman provided after that which sent Ronnie's game into the next sphere. Soon, Ronnie was bowling in Ed Wright's Summer Scratch League and the Michigan Junior Master Association (MJMA) Tournaments. Ronnie became acquainted with Dan Ottman, the MJMA Director, and would soon bowl in his East Side Detroit youth leagues as well. So that Ronnie could bowl and follow his dream, his mom took a second job at Wonderland in the snack bar. He bowled in everything he could as a youth.

In July of 2004, Ronnie tried out for Junior Team USA. He made the team and spent 2005 with Junior Team USA. In 2006, he made Team USA as a youth bowling member. During this timeframe, Ronnie started college at Pikeville University in Kentucky. As a Pikeville Bear, Ronnie made First Team All-American and was named Rookie of the Year. 2007 would see Ronnie rejoin Junior Team USA. Ronnie's picture graced the cover of the YABA youth magazine that same year.

As not all lives are without bumps in the road, Ronnie served a one-and-a-half-year suspension from the sport he so dearly loved. Ronnie believes this period gave him time to reflect on the future and cherish the present. During this timeframe, he spent a lot of quality time with his parents. After this period, Ronnie headed to Wichita State and the Shockers Men's Bowling Team with more determination than ever.

Ronnie bowled for the Shockers program from 2009 to 2011. A dominant force in the intercollegiate bowling world, Ronnie would be part of two men's teams that captured national titles in 2009 and 2010.

With his youth and collegiate careers behind him, Ronnie took to the lanes as an adult. He added back-to-back Michigan State Masters titles to his resume in 2014 and 2015. In the Michigan State Open Championships, his team won a team title in 2017. At the national level, Ronnie has earned two Eagles. In 2015, he won singles and added another in 2022 for Team All-Events. He has bowled 61 – 300 games and 35 – 800 series and has recorded a yearbook average of 240 + for several years.

Currently, Ronnie tends to stick closer to home with his bowling. He and his wife, Sara (a wonderful bowler) have two youth bowlers of their own. He can still be seen in many local tournaments and leagues around Detroit and Michigan. The busy heating and cooling professional keeps his bowling circle tighter these days so, he can be available for his favorite job as dad.

Ronnie Sparks, Jr. welcome to the Michigan State USBC Hall of Fame.