

Longtime Vernon Hills bowler still a fierce competitor at 66

BY BRENT ZELL

Even in a decades-long career filled with no shortage of honors, Bill Spigner still gets a charge out of a high finish.

At the Bowlers Journal Championships earlier this month in Reno, Nevada, Spigner, 66, of Vernon Hills and his teammate Don Scudder finished second in the Senior Doubles division at the event.

Spigner, in an email interview with the Lake County Gazette, said the high finish in that division, along with a couple of other top-10 finishes, was rewarding.

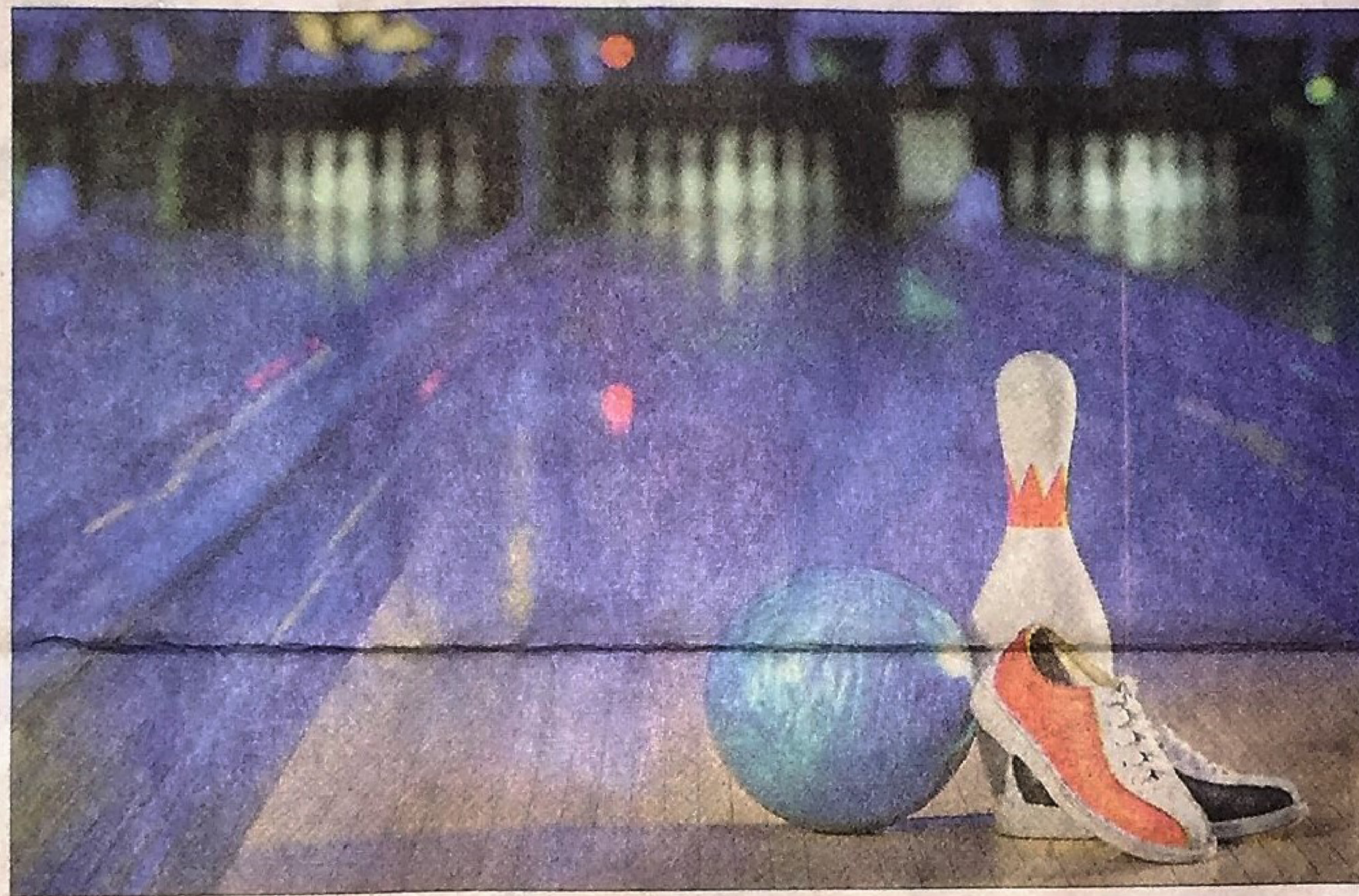


Bill Spigner

“That’s the great thing about bowling – if you stay in shape, you can play for a long

period of time, and there are lots of events for the over-50 and over-60 crowd to play in and enjoy the competition and friendships,” Spigner said.

Spigner and honors are no strangers to each other. According to his eponymous website, Spigner – a Professional Bowlers Association member since 1973 – has won three national and nine regional PBA titles, notched 38 300 games and has been a Bowlers Journal



Top 100 coach since 2006. Spigner has been inducted into six bowling halls of fame. While his ability to reel in honors hasn’t changed with time, Spigner said his game has been affected by back issues he has battled for the past few decades. Spigner has had two back surgeries, and these back issues have caused atrophy in his right calf and nerve damage in his left foot.

“I was putting Band-Aids on my game throughout my 50s to try and compete,” Spigner said. “But they took its toll on my physical game and also on my confidence to com-

pete on the senior professional level. I have no thoughts about competing with the kids, but I still want to hold my own in my age bracket.”

Also, there is a natural degradation of physical skills that comes with aging.

“You get smarter as you get older, but you lose speed and the ability to play the shots that you could when you were younger,” Spigner said. “I video myself a lot when I practice and look good, but the results aren’t there on tough conditions like they were when in my prime.”

Spigner also said bowling has

become much more complex, with its variety of lane conditions for tournaments and leagues, and the different kinds of bowling balls used to play different conditions.

“Bowling is a very misunderstood sport because you can’t see the playing conditions like you can in golf,” Spigner said. “You only start understanding the difficulty of the sport as you get better and start seeing the lane conditions and how different they are from place to place and how they change because the oil on them is changing with every roll of the ball.”

But with that increase in technology and difficulty have come players with the skills and talent to adapt.

“I’m a fan of the young talent in the sport and really like the power and how the game has sped up like every other sport,” Spigner said. “The best bowlers today are better educated, better trained and more physically fit than ever before.”

Spigner’s coaching style has kept up with all of the sport’s changes, however, and it stems from what he believed about coaching long ago.

“I always believed it’s my job to learn how to teach my students the way they need to be taught to get the most out of their games,” Spigner said. “I’m always studying all styles, and the sport is evolving, and I work on evolving with the technology and advancements in the sport.”