

For Immediate Release

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**BEAT THE CHAMPS TO RETURN BIGGER AND BETTER IN  
2022-23 WITH STORM PRODUCTS ADDED AS TITLE SPONSOR**

MELROSE PARK, Ill. — One of bowling's longest-running events, the Beat the Champs tournament of the Chicagoland Bowling Proprietors Association, will return in 2022 with a new sponsor and new youth divisions.

Beat the Champs debuted in the 1961-62 season when Don Carter (681) and Marge Merrick (647) set target scores for area league bowlers to try to beat with their handicap during a designated league week in December (for a modest entry fee) to win commemorative prizes. Through the years, these prizes have included emblems, bag tags, pens and other items.

A companion event for the top scorers at each participating center gave bowlers an opportunity to win automobiles and other prizes via sectional and final-round competition.

But the most important aspect of Beat the Champs has been its charitable component, which generated funds for local charities designated by the participating bowling centers as well as charities selected by the event's long-running sponsor, the Chicago Sun-Times.

Through the 2019-20 season, Beat the Champs had seen 5,831,880 entries and produced \$2,907,604.36 for area charities, including the Bowlers to Veterans Link, St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital, the Greater Chicago Food Depository, the Chicago Police Memorial Foundation, parent-teacher organizations, churches and hundreds more.

Last November, Illinois State BPA and Chicagoland BPA Executive Director Bill Duff announced that the tournament had been put "on pause" for the 2020-21 season due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the lack of a sponsorship commitment after the Sun-Times had ended its 58-year partnership.

But now, Storm Products has stepped up to the plate and is assuming title sponsorship of Beat the Champs, effective with the 2022-23 season. The company has entered into an agreement in principle with the Chicagoland BPA that will be formalized soon.

"Some have asked why we couldn't run the tournament this season, but it's an event that has a lot of moving parts and we want to make sure it maintains its place among America's great bowling tournaments," Duff said. "With Storm's involvement and a little breathing room, we have an opportunity to bring back Beat the Champs bigger and better. We'll be shooting for first-place prizes of \$10,000 in both the men's and women's divisions."

Also planned in each division are second- through fifth-place prizes of big-screen TVs, along with a wide array of Storm products for the other finalists.

Even more exciting, from the perspective of Duff and the tournament's new sponsor, is the planned addition of youth divisions for boys and girls.

"There are lots of tournaments that give kids the opportunity to win scholarship funds," Duff noted, "but we're looking forward to also making the young people aware of the charity aspect, with the hope that more of them will get involved in their communities."

By pausing the event this season, the Chicagoland BPA will have time to develop the framework for the new youth divisions that will be available to young bowlers at member centers in Chicagoland, Fox Valley and Will County. Duff added that there's a possibility of expanding the event to other parts of Illinois and even beyond the state's borders in the future.

"In a way, losing the Chicago Sun-Times as a sponsor could be a positive for Beat the Champs," Duff said. "We no longer have to think in terms of geographic boundaries."

That fits in perfectly with plans to have the tournament's target score program live-streamed "to the world" as opposed to shown on television just in the Chicago area. Storm Products, as part of its sponsorship agreement, will utilize its streaming team in addition to making its staff players available for setting the target scores.

"At Storm we are committed to continually raising the bar of innovation and service, and to always go above and beyond expectations," said Gary Hulsenberg, Vice President of Community Relations. "We love to partner with organizations that create events to build experiences for the local community and all those fans in attendance. We are excited to partner with the Beat the Champions contest, which celebrates many great aspects of the sport of bowling — highlighting professional athletes and amateur bowlers alike, as well as local bowling centers, which we feel are the pillars of the community. They do all this while raising money for local charities, which is at the foundation of our belief system at Storm Products."

In the past, funds raised via the tournament were split between proprietor charities and Chicago Sun-Times charities. Moving forward, they will be split between proprietor charities and Storm charities.

At present, the schedule for the 2022-23 Beat the Champs includes in-league qualifying during the week of Dec. 4-10, 2022, sectional rollofs in late January and early February 2023, and the finals in March 2023. A \$5 entry fee is anticipated.

"We've had a great relationship with Storm over the years with our Storm-Roto Grip ISBPA Youth State Singles Handicap Tournament," Duff added. "We couldn't have a better partner for the next chapter of Beat the Champs."

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