



Redbirds' Sam Ottwell Qualifies For State Bowling Tourney With Six-Game 1,255, Is An Auto Butler Male Athlete Of Month

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
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COLLINSVILLE - Alton High sophomore bowler Sam Ottwell qualified as an individual for the IHSA state bowling tournament on Jan. 27-28 by throwing a six-game series of 1,255, which tied him with Collinsville's Ben Sloan for the last two individual berths at the sectional tournament at Camelot Bowl in Collinsville Jan. 21.



Ottwell had a high game of 257 in the morning session, and in the afternoon half, had three games of 195, 191, and 199 to help him go through to state as the only Redbird bowler to qualify.

At the time of a post-tournament interview, the final team and individual standings had yet to be announced, but Ottwell felt that he bowled well enough to qualify.

"I did pretty well the first block," Ottwell said. "I think I shot a 670 (series) and then, the last block, I was just kind of trying to hold on. I never really shot a 200, but a lot of high 190s. So I was really happy with my first sectional."

At the time, Ottwell was very hopeful that he and the Redbirds would advance to the state meet.

"Yeah, that's all we can hope for," Ottwell said. "We gave it our best today and we'll see what happens."

Ottwell has emerged from a slow start to become one of Alton's top bowlers this season and has seen improvement in his overall game, particularly when the postseason rolled around.

"Well, I was kind off to a slow start at the beginning of the season," Ottwell said, "but lately, whenever regionals really started, I kind of picked it up and just kind of found it and I'm glad I did. It was a good time too."

Ottwell is just happy to be going to the state tournament and is hoping to do well there.

"Going to the state tourney means the world to me," Ottwell said.

The state tournament will be held once again at St. Clair Bowl in O'Fallon and is the only state tournament held in both southern Illinois and the St. Louis area. There are some advantages to being able to bowl in a home environment, but Ottwell feels that there will be other factors involved as well.

"Yeah, well it is a bit of a big advantage," Ottwell said. "I don't think it'll matter too much. I think the pressure and the nerves are going to matter the most. But I don't think the home advantage is even going to matter that much."

Still, Ottwell is hopeful of accomplishing big things at the state tournament and he's also looking ahead to big things in his junior season next year.

"Next season, I just want to have a good time," Ottwell said, "and hopefully, I'll get to state again and honestly, just improve as a better bowler and that's about it."

Ottwell also thanked his family and teammates for their help and for the season.

"I just want to thank my mom and dad," Ottwell said, "and thank Ben (Mitchell) and Eric (Spond), the two seniors, as well as David Carter and Jake Brey, David Thomas-Baldwin, all of them. Had a blast this year as a bowling team."