

Trophy thief deflates dart league

League history vanishes from local tavern over summer

By Scott Williams

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The traveling trophy for reigning champions of the Lakes and Rivers Dart League has traveled a little more than it should.

Thieves have swiped the gold- and wood-toned trophy from the spot where it was being proudly displayed inside the Sunset Grill overlooking Shawano Lake.

A team from Sunset Grill, W5884 Cedar Court, Shawano, won the championship last April by out-dueling about 24 other dart teams from taverns throughout the Shawano area.

When the trophy disappeared this summer, everyone assumed it was just a prank. The trophy is still missing, and nobody is amused any longer.

"It meant something," Sunset Grill owner Sparky Steichen said. "We had bragging rights for a year."

To make matters worse, the trophy's engraved listing of championship teams reflected about 30 years of the dart league's greatest moments. It is a history that is preserved nowhere else, and is likely to be forgotten unless the trophy is recovered.

Carrie Clark, secretary of the league and owner of Oak Avenue Pub & Grill, said she was devastated when she learned that the trophy had been absconded.

"I was mad," she said. "I can't believe somebody would steal it."

Since about 1980, the Lakes and Rivers Dart League has given Shawano-area dart throwers the chance to compete in four-person teams once a week at taverns that also include The Launching Pad, The Shack, Hensel's Shawano Inn and many others. Some establishments attract enough competitors to field multiple teams each season.

Competition starts in September, and the top teams advance to league-wide playoffs starting around March.

Since the league's inception, the traveling trophy has been displayed each year inside the tavern with the defending championship team.

Launching Pad owner Jon Gueths said that, although his tavern has made the playoffs many

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Pausing during last year's playoffs alongside the dart league's coveted trophy are competitors Boyd Verhel, left, and Sparky Steichen. The trophy was stolen earlier this summer from the Sunset Grill and includes about 30 years of dart league history on it.

"It's like having a Super Bowl ring. Where'd you get that? You didn't play in a Super Bowl."

JON GUETHS, Launching Pad owner