



## Jim Bilderback – 2024 WHPA Hall of Fame Inductee

Jim Bilderback was born in 1945 in Durand, WI, in Pepin County. He was the 5<sup>th</sup> of 11 children. These 10 boys and 1 girl were raised on a small farm near Durand. Jim always loved competing and played every sport possible during his childhood. He graduated high school from Sacred Heart High School near Durand, in 1963. Jim had a girlfriend in high school, Teresa Sabelko, who was also in the class of '63. Jim and Teresa were married in 1965 and they still consider themselves sweethearts after 59 years of marriage. The couple raised two wonderful daughters, Barb and Lisa. Jim attended college at UW-Stout and received his B.S. in 1967 and M.S. in 1968. He went on to teach high school Industrial Technology for 32 years in Oshkosh, specializing in woodworking and building construction. Jim retired in 2000 and he and

Teresa moved to Red Cedar Lake near Birchwood to enjoy the country life and be closer to family members that still live on the west side of the state. Unfortunately, Teresa is suffering from Alzheimer's and has been in a facility since 2021, where Jim and Teresa are able to spend time together.

Jim was introduced to horseshoe pitching by Roger Beffa in 2003. Roger was a fellow bowler from Rice Lake and told Jim, "If you can bowl like that, you can pitch horseshoes. We need a guy on our team." He gave Jim a pair of shoes and just said, "go practice." He had never been exposed to horseshoes and didn't know the first thing about pitching. He never heard of a "turn shoe" and didn't even know there was such a thing. Jim kept playing in that bar league and eventually learned about sanctioned play. He became an NHPA member in 2006, at the young age of 61 years old.

Jim pitched in his first State tournament in 2011, in Mosinee. He won Men's Class A and moved up to pitch in the Championship Class. He finished in 2<sup>nd</sup> place with a 5-2 record and pitched 55.21%. The highlight was taking Randy Rein on for a 74-shoe marathon, the longest game of day for the Men. Ken Heinritz and Lonny Trangrud tied for 3<sup>rd</sup> place behind Randy and Jim. Jim finished his 40-foot State Tournament career in 2012 and had a combined 13 wins and 9 losses with a 49.41% ringer percentage for those two years. Jim turned 70 in 2015 and returned to play in a State Tournament as an Elder. He has had a prolific run in the Elder's Division over the past 9 years. He has a 57-7 win-loss record and has averaged 67.91% over that entire stretch. Jim is currently a 6-time WHPA Elders State Champion, winning 5-in-a-row and 6 of the last 7 years. He has the second most all-time WHPA Elders titles. Only Clayton Gage has more with 12 Elders titles, which were won all in a row.

Jim has pitched in 5 World Tournaments from 2013-2024. He pitched once in the Seniors Division and 4 times in the Elders division. His best performance at a World Tournament was in 2024, in Kennewick, WA. He qualified to pitch in the Elders Championship class and finished in a 3-way tie for 7<sup>th</sup> place with a 8-7 win-loss record and pitched 69.29%.

Jim has also pitched in 10 Team World Tournaments from 2011-2024. He has averaged 61.81% across those 10 events and is a 3-time Team World Champion. His best Team World was in 2023, averaging 68.57%. Jim has pitched in the last 3 Hall of Fame Invitational Tournaments in Wentzville, Missouri, where he has enjoyed watching and pitching against some of the best pitchers in the country while he considers, "If only some of that skill would run off on me."

Jim finds that each year going to tournaments get to be more and more of a social event, as he meets and greets so many of his fellow competitors and friends. Jim continues to keep things going with his two non-sanctioned teams by recruiting pitchers and being captain of his "Up North" team for 10 years and his "Down South" team at his Arizona winter resort for the last 12 years. Jim feels that he has had a short horseshoe pitching career so he was very surprised, grateful, and honored to join all the other great people who are members of the WHPA Hall of Fame. He thanks everyone that had anything to do with his induction.

The WHPA Hall of Fame Committee is honored to award Jim Bilderback as a 2024 inductee into the WHPA Hall of Fame. Congratulations!