

2025 WHPA Hall of Fame Inductee – Jeff Secord

Jeff Secord has been around organized horseshoe pitching since the age of 3 years old. His dad, John, joined the Fond du Lac Horseshoe Club in 1972. John played in a singles league in Fond du Lac and quickly learned about tournaments that other clubs host around the state. The whole family would go to the tournaments that John entered. Most of these tournaments had juniors pitching, which created interest for Jeff and his older brother and sister, J.D. and Kim. Jeff played in his first tournament in the Eagle Open in 1976, when the 7-year-old was finally strong enough to get his shoes to fly 26½ feet. The sand court allowed the shoe to slide forward to get up into scoring range. He took 2nd place in Jr Boys Class C with a 3.3% average and took home a trophy. Jeff started to make his mark in horseshoes in 1977.

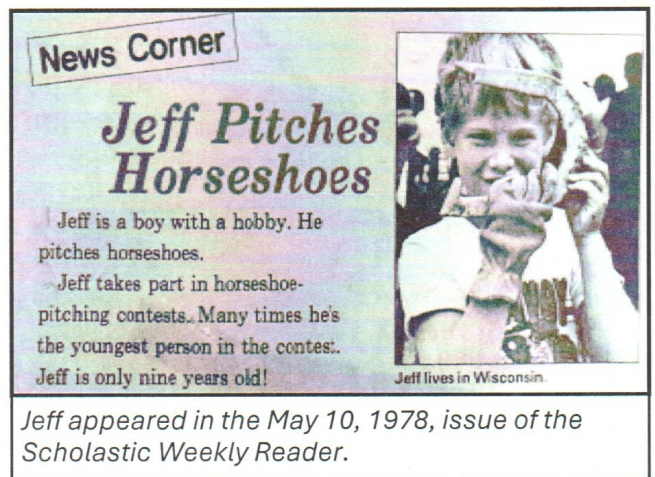
Jeff played in his first World Tournament in Greenville, Ohio, and was the youngest entry of the tournament. He took 5th place with a 14% average in Junior Boys Class K. He also landed on the front page of the local paper. Jeff carried that fame to the Wisconsin State Tournament in Mountain where a reporter from the Milwaukee Journal decided to interview Jeff for an article about the tournament, even though he took 4th place in Class C with an 11% average. That article was picked up by the nationally syndicated, Scholastic Weekly Reader. Jeff appeared on page 2 of the May 10, 1978, issue of the Weekly Reader.



Jeff and J.D. pitched in an invitational junior tournament in 1980 between the top junior pitchers from Minnesota and Wisconsin inside the Crossroads Center Shopping Mall in St. Cloud, Minnesota, to promote junior pitching. The tournament sponsor even paid for our hotel stay to pitch there. Jeff's junior career was somewhat overshadowed after these exciting early events by the outstanding boys that played in Wisconsin during those years. Bret Pritzlaff, Kirk Bartnik, and Hank (Zak) Schwartz were not only the best junior boy pitchers that the state ever produced, but all three also finished high in World Tournament competition as well.

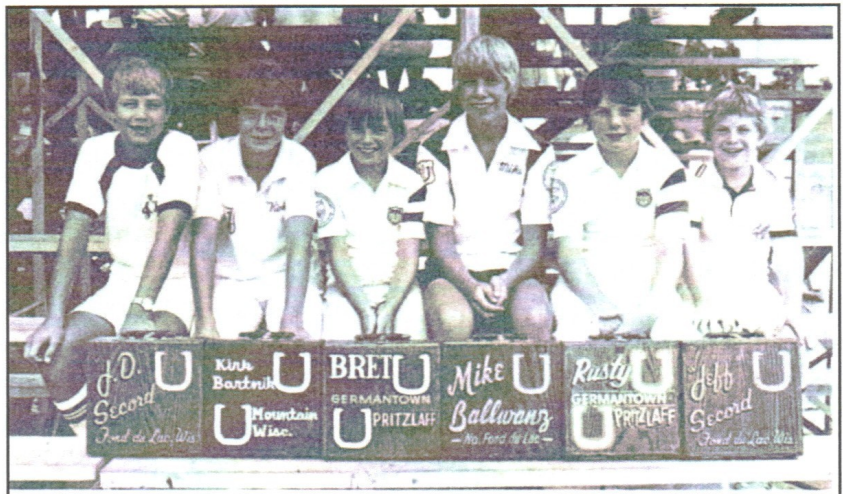
Jeff's nine consecutive years of junior boys competition at World Tournaments have always been special to him. Jeff's best year was in 1983 when he finally broke into the Championship Boys class by qualifying with a 70.4% average in an 8-player preliminary round. Jeff finished tied for 10th out of 12 but gave almost every boy in the finals a

fight to the finish. On the first day of championship play, Jeff lost all 6 of his games but reached at least 34 points in 5 of those 40-point matches and averaged 73% for the day. This included his game against Alan Francis. Jeff pushed Alan to the end but lost 37-40 at the end of that 96-shoe game. Jeff's 76 ringers for 79.2% was just short of beating Alan who threw 77 ringers for 80.2%. Jeff finished in Statesville with a 69.1% average with the 1,074 shoes pitched in that tournament, the best single tournament average of his career. Jeff never won a tournament in Wisconsin, but he did win 2 tournaments in his career as a junior. The first was in 1984 in Bloomington, MN, where he defeated MN State champion, Chris White. The second was in 1985 in Lafayette, IN, where he defeated Hank Schwartz with



79% in a 40-point game to take first place.

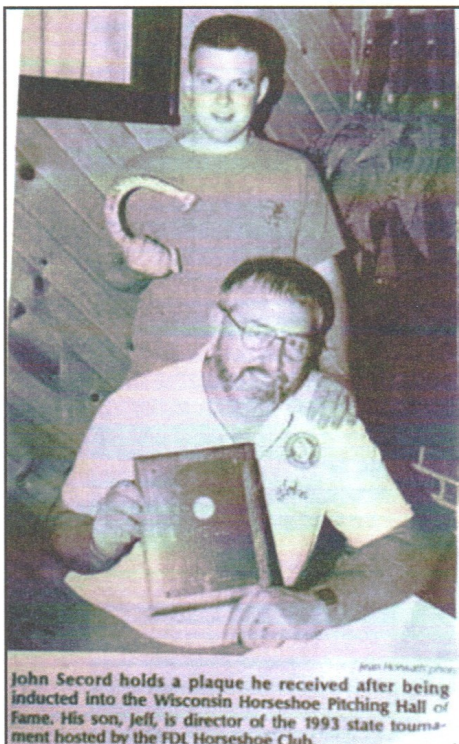
Like many former junior pitchers, Jeff's horseshoe activity slowed down as life took off after leaving high school. He attended college, worked "all the time," and somehow found time to meet a girl (that wasn't that difficult as he met her at work). Jeff and Ann have now been married for 31 years. They have three boys: Alex (29), Tony (25), and Zach (18). Jeff always made at least some time for horseshoe pitching but Jeff was rarely seen at tournaments while he worked full and part time, attended more school, and supported the children's activities. Jeff started competing in the Men's division in 1986. Jeff's best pitching year in the Men's division was in 1995. He had a 57.49% average, ranking him #13 in Men's division in Wisconsin, and played in the Championship Class at the State Tournament in Beloit.



Wisconsin Jr Boys at 1978 World – Picture from News Digest

Jeff has since stepped away from pitching, but he is proud of his accomplishments on the courts, especially those junior years. However, there has never been a pitcher that has been inducted into the WHPA Hall of Fame for their junior division pitching accomplishments. Jeff is certainly not an exception as he has made multiple contributions to the sport after he stopped pitching in tournaments. His presence at tournaments has also been on an upswing since Zach took a liking to pitching horseshoes. Zach even pitched in the World Tournament in Wichita Falls, Texas in 2019.

Jeff has been a regular attendee and active participant in WHPA meetings for over 30 years. He has been a traveling partner with John, who has been the WHPA Secretary/Treasurer since 1979. Jeff played a role in influencing championship class sizes and rules for move-ups into the championship classes, often provides commentary to proposals to constitution and by-law changes, and ensures proper meeting protocol is used. He has also stepped in to take minutes of meetings when John was not able to attend.



John Secord holds a plaque he received after being inducted into the Wisconsin Horseshoe Pitching Hall of Fame. His son, Jeff, is director of the 1993 state tournament hosted by the FDL Horseshoe Club.

Jeff became tournament director for the FDL Open tournament in 1990. He was also the 1993 State Tournament director when it was last hosted by the Fond du Lac Horseshoe Club prior to 2025. He has been tournament director for the FDL Team Tournament each year since 2021. 3-Player teams compete for a 1-day version of Team World with prelim rounds and a finals bracket.

Jeff became a member of the Hall of Fame committee along with Edie McKinney when Susie Pritzlaff took over chairperson duties from Ann Opsteen in 1993. Jeff supported Edie as a co-chair after Susie resigned from the committee in 1996. Jeff introduced a method for selecting Hall of Fame inductees from the nomination list in 2006 to utilize a consistent process to limit multiple inductions each year. This method continues to be how inductees are selected. Jeff has been the chairperson of the Hall of Fame since 2012. Jeff received the President's Award from Tom Steinke in 2006 for his continued participation in horseshoes.

The WHPA does not have an official position for Statistician like other charters, but Jeff would be a strong candidate if the position is ever



2023 Arch Stokes Memorial Award presented to Jeff Secord "For Continuous Outstanding Service In Promoting The Development And Growth Of The Sport Of Horseshoe Pitching."

added to the WHPA. Jeff compiled all pitcher statistics from every Wisconsin State Tournament since the WHPA became an NHPA charter in 1967 after we celebrated our 100th State Tournament. He 'borrowed' Mel Yockstick's format for World Tournaments to build the database. The database currently includes over 9,000 line-items and will grow with each new State Tournament that gets added. Jeff has also compiled stats for Team World. Jeff collected as many results as he could find and built a database of exclusive Team World team and individual pitching performances and records. He almost compiled records for each tournament but was unable to retrieve averages from the first 2½ years that it was played.

Jeff's interest in statistics is what originally drew him to Team World. Team World originated at the Pitchin' Palace in Sturtevant, WI in 1985, and was originally called the Canadian-American International Friendship Open. The name was changed in 1988 and the location moved to Beloit, WI in 1990. Jeff started helping at Team World in the 1990's after Ralph Dykes stopped leading the stats/results activity for the tournament. Jeff would help Susie Pritzlaff and his mom, Sandy, who were tasked with keeping up with the game-by-game results throughout the event. Jeff started producing the preliminary round schedules for Team World in 2001. Before the Horseshoe Master software was available, Jeff developed an excel file that took compiling this data from minutes to seconds and created links that

would produce up-to-the-minute results to post on boards. With less time required to enter results, Jeff stepped in to help as judge during much of the tournament. Jeff also worked with Jimmy Paulson with the introduction of Horseshoe Master and electronic scoring. Team World was the first tournament to use HS Master at a large-scale event. Jeff later took over as "Master of Ceremonies" for the event after Dick Hansen stepped down from the committee in 2013.

Earl Paulson handed the reigns of "Tournament Director" over to Jeff after the 2018 Team World. Earl had been the leader of the committee for 29 years when he stepped down. The tournament is always well run, and the games are played on time. Jeff introduced The Earl Paulson Team World Award that is given to a person that has a strong history with the event. This recognition was first awarded to Dale Lipovsky in 2022 for his astounding Team World career. Jeff was awarded the NHPA Arch Stokes Memorial Award for his contributions to the sport as the Team World tournament director. Team World is a fantastic tournament, but Jeff does not make that happen on his own. Dan and Tammy Newkirk have been instrumental in keeping all the Telfer Park tournaments going in Beloit, especially Team World. There is also an amazing group of people that are members of the Beloit Horseshoe Club and WHPA that put in many volunteer hours to make the event go so well. Jeff gets a lot of credit for the work that this entire group puts into Team World. There is truly no tournament like Team World anywhere in the world. Just ask any of the 700+ people that have participated in Team World at least once.

Looking back at 50 years of active horseshoe participation has brought back memories of so many stories, experiences, and people that have shaped Jeff's life through horseshoe pitching. Jeff thanks the members of the Hall of Fame Committee that chose him to be inducted into the WHPA Hall of Fame. This is very special recognition to have earned over the course of a lifetime of achievements and contributions to the sport of horseshoe pitching.