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Amateurs, pros let blades fly at knife-throwing contest in Las Vegas

By Blake Apgar

April 9, 2017 – Dr. Ted Eisenberg usually holds a scalpel steady at his day job as a plastic surgeon in Philadelphia, but he wielded a different kind of blade over the weekend.



The 64-year-old surgeon was busy slinging knives at targets Sunday, the final day of the U.S. Nationals Pro/Am Knife & Tomahawk Championships in Las Vegas. The three-day event catered to amateur and professional throwers.

“He’s a surgeon, but then he comes here and he’s just a dude,” said world champion knife thrower Todd “Jack Dagger” Abrams, who served as master of ceremonies for the International Knife Throwers Hall of Fame event.

Eisenberg said he and his wife, Joyce, who are the authors of *The Scoop On Breasts: A Plastic Surgeon Busts the Myths*, have traveled internationally to hurl knives and tomahawks. He

estimated he’s been to 25 competitions world-wide. “In our household, when we say, ‘Let’s bury the hatchet,’ it has a whole different meaning,” Eisenberg said.

The Eisenbergs were among 38 knife-throwers competing over the weekend at the Superhero Foundry, a warehouse in southwest Las Vegas dedicated to teaching knife throwing, parkour and martial arts.

Foundry owners TJ and Melody Cuenca organized the competition, now in its third year. It raised about \$1,000 for the Semper Fi Fund, a charity that assists injured military members and their families, TJ Cuenca said.

The competition attracted a small but diverse group of throwing enthusiasts. “They’re competitive, but they’re more likely to help out each other,” Cuenca said. “There’s absolutely very, very little ego, which is what I love the most about it.”

One of Cuenca’s students, Nick Velasquez, 15, went toe-to-toe with renowned knife throwers from across the country on Sunday. “It’s pretty cool, especially when I beat them,” he said.

Velasquez said he started off throwing knives in Cuenca’s backyard four years ago, but moved his training to the warehouse when it opened in 2014 at the 3155 W. Post Road location.

Some walked away from the weekend with awards in hand, but Sunday was all about hanging out and trying new games.

Competitors heaved knives at boards that swung freely from a rope attached to the warehouse’s rafters. With every thunk of a point sticking to a board, the crowd cheered. With every clank of the metal blade hitting the concrete floor, they let out gasps of disappointment and laughed it off.

Lee Fugatt, 62, traveled from Redding, California, to compete over the weekend.

He has been throwing knives since he was 8, and that wasn’t going to change when he lost his eyesight from a hemorrhagic stroke in 2008. After two years of feeling sorry for himself, Fugatt said, he was ready get back to flinging blades.

Regulation distances and heights of targets contributed to his muscle memory, which is all Fugatt said he needs to stay on top of his game.

“I train, I practice, and I got good at it long before it became a sport.”