

# Three Pros Take Top Honors in Bench Pressure Challenge

Competition Again a Success at The SMART Jewelry Show



Info Chicago, IL | Published on: April 29, 2015

**Summary** **After four battles between jewelry-design masters, INSTORE's Bench Pressure Challenge crowned three artists winners at this year's SMART Jewelry Show in Chicago. On Saturday, April 18, Craig Farley and Kelsey Kudriavtseff each won one CAD Challenge event. The competition was too close to call, and both were given the top award. The following day, Kelly Williams won both of her Bench Challenge battles and took to overall crown.**

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Taking place in the new Bench Challenge Pavilion on the floor of The SMART Show, this competition highlighted the expertise and craftsmanship required to turn basic ideas into brilliant finished pieces, with overhead monitors giving the audience an up-close view of the action at each bench workstation.

"The Bench Challenge area of the show had the best show to-date, with lots of bench jewelers coming to Chicago to see what it's all about," says Darrell Warren, VP of merchandising for Stuller Inc.. which is a long-time supporter of the Bench Challenge and provides the benches, tools and supplies used during the competition. "It has really become a destination for bench professionals, and has made it on the annual to-do list of many show attendees. We really enjoy being part of this, and giving "rock star" bench jewelers some well-deserved recognition."

Contestants had two hours to complete specific tasks, and were judged on creativity, presentation, sales skills and how well the final designs met the given requirements.

"It's a thrill to watch some of the best and brightest jewelers in our American jewelry industry create live "on the fly" in front of a crowd of their peers," said Mark Loren, the event's emcee, as well as an award-winning designer and owner of Mark Loren Designs in Fort Meyers and Naples, FL. "The pressure is immense and the camaraderie amongst the competitors was heartwarming. I

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thoroughly enjoy getting to meet the competitors, the vendors and the retail store owners and employees who stop by to gaze in wonder at the unfolding challenges.”

Though the designers were all so skilled that picking the best was difficult, that didn't prevent the judges from enjoying the experience.

“I was amazed most by the range of the creative process,” says Bench Challenge judge Kate Peterson, president of Performance Concepts. “In both the CAD and bench competitions, four brilliant people were given the same instructions and the same materials, and at the end of each challenge, we were presented with four wildly different interpretations -- each well suited to the task at hand, and each crafted to perfection.”

And for the artists themselves, competing at The SMART Show proved to be a great way to invigorate their artistic side.

“I had a blast! It was a great experience, and I've meet some great people,” said CAD contestant Luke Johnson. “I've been behind the jewelry bench and computer for so long that I started to feel a little disconnected from the rest of the jewelry world. So I was so happy just to get out and mix things up.”

#### CAD PRESSURE CHALLENGE CONTESTANTS

- **CAD 1, Overall Co-Winner:** Craig Farley (FCF Jewelry Design, Roanoke, VA)
- **CAD 2, Overall Co-Winner:** Kelsey Kudriavtseff (Green Lake Jewelry Works, Seattle, WA)
- Luke Johnson (Arthur's Jewelers, Roseville, MN)
- Brandon Justice (Stall & Kessler's Diamond Center, Lafayette, IN)

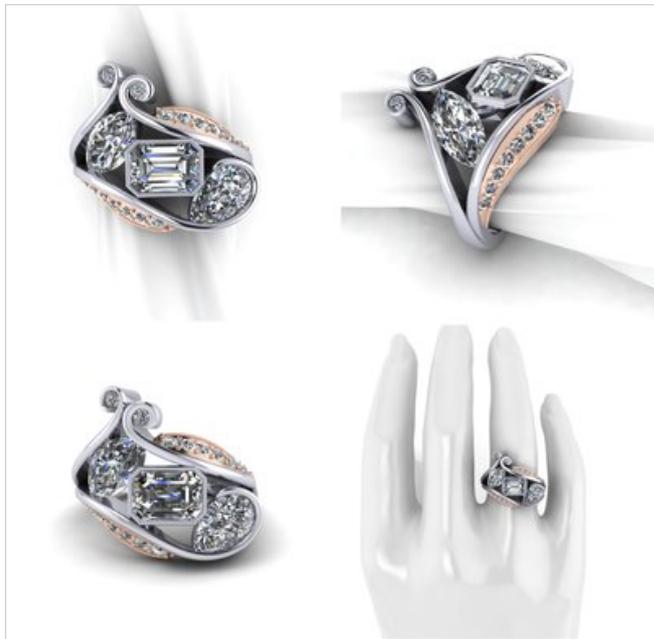
#### BENCH PRESSURE CHALLENGE CONTESTANTS

- **Overall Winner:** Kelly Williams (K.W. Goldsmith, Minneapolis, MN)
- Jacob Bauer (Bauer Jewelry Designs, Middleton, WI)
- Kent Hufendick (Vierk's Fine Jewelry, Lafayette, IN)
- Colin Skelly (Green Lake Jewelry Works, Seattle, WA)

Relevant links  [Bench Pressure Challenge details](#)

Images











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