

# BowlersJournal

JANUARY 2025

INTERNATIONAL



**2025: Players to Watch**

## A YEARN TO LEARN

**Ambitious Teen Anna Antony Has Lofty Goals**

BETTER BALANCE,  
BETTER SHOTS  
**PG 28**

THE CHANGING FACE  
OF COLLEGE BOWLING  
**PG 42**

2025'S PACKED  
TOURNAMENT CALENDAR  
**PG 58**



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# The Sheet



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*For Antony, who counts the Future Business Leaders of America club among her other outside school activities, bowling is yet another challenge to conquer. And conquer she has.*

---

photography  
Ana Hudzen



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## Friends in High Places

When actress and stand-up comic Wanda Sykes promoted her new comedy tour, "Please and Thank You," with a Nov. 12 appearance on Jimmy Kimmel Live, she also ended up promoting something else: bowling.

Her tour, coincidentally enough, kicked off in the former headquarters of the United States Bowling Congress — Milwaukee, Wisconsin, long one of America's great bowling cities in a state that has yielded no shortage of USBC Hall of Famers.

Taking her plush seat alongside Kimmel in a sparkling, silvery blazer and an equally shimmering, silvery pair of sneakers, Sykes' eyes widened as the conversation turned to her recent trip to the National Bowling Stadium in Reno, Nevada. She said she visited that storied establishment in our sport the previous month, October.

"I loved it! It was amazing!" she gushed. But she wasn't done with the topic of bowling. It turns out, she had good reason for wanting to see the stadium.

"I love to bowl," she told Kimmel, who then asked her if she bowled when she was a kid.

"Yes," said Sykes, who explained that one of her dad's "side gigs" was as a lane man. That's right, one of the

country's premier comics grew up the daughter of a lane man. Who knew?

"He would take us on Saturday mornings while he was waxing the lanes and we got to bowl, and then, when he was in the Army, there's a bowling alley on base, so we would go and bowl all the time. I just got hooked."

Kimmel, of course, wanted to know how good a bowler she is. Forgive us for seeing a future episode of Kimmel's show during which Sykes shoes up and tosses some shots on a specially installed lane. Don't tempt her; the tough-nosed and gritty Sykes seems perfectly likely to prove her mettle in the face of such a challenge.

She reported that she has indeed bowled games exceeding 200, and vowed that she could do so again when her busy schedule permits her to "get my game back."

Kimmel responded with a disclosure of his own.

"I've never bowled over 200, and my parents met in a bowling alley! My dad's a real good bowler," he said.

It would appear, then, that Kimmel's show, from the host himself to the stars he summons, is a place where bowling has friends in high places.

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## Fathers and Sons

# A Rare First for Parker Bohn III: Winning a Pro Title with His Son

### Tag Team

Brandon played the role of anchor for his superstar dad as they chased down a PBA doubles title together.

photography  
Justin Bohn



**IT IS A RARE OCCASION** indeed when a guy who has won 35 times on the PBA Tour finds yet another new accolade to add to his immense collection of them. But Parker Bohn III is a rare individual.

It was not, however, himself Bohn was thinking about as he watched son Brandon, a fellow southpaw with three Junior Gold Championships titles to his credit, punch out in the 10th to capture the PBA/PBA50 Select Key Motors Bristol Baker Doubles title with his dad at Interstate Lanes in Bristol, Virginia, on Dec. 8.

He was watching his son show up in the clutch as he himself had done so many times before. But what he saw in his mind was something different. Something that reached deep into his most tender memories as a proud dad.

He remembered a much younger Brandon hanging around the bowling center, swirling balls around on the ball return, the dream of following his father's footsteps just starting to bloom within him.

"I can remember him being in the bowling center wanting to bowl on certain nights, late at night, when everything was all said and done. We could go down to the end lane and him and [Brandon's older brother] Justin would throw the ball down the lane for a couple of games."

This, however, was the real deal. It was not, as Parker puts it, "fun and games."

"Watching him perform throughout the weekend" — a weekend during which Brandon bowled anchor for his superstar dad, by the way — "was an experience like no other."

Watching Brandon crunch all three strikes in a 10th frame in which he at least needed a double and nine to hold off Nate Garcia and Jon Rakoski, 217-203, was one thing. But at least as impressive to Parker was the grit Brandon flaunted when he and dad hit the skids for a time that Sunday.

"Things didn't unfold the way we wanted them to in the beginning, but I just looked right at him and said, 'Look, we're a little fragmented right now. We're not clicking on all cylinders. Let's just keep plugging along and continue to talk about it.'"

Following that pep talk from a man who has faced down no shortage of adversity on the lanes, as any player must enroute to 35 national titles, he and Brandon did far more than merely talk about it.

"Well, wouldn't you know it? I think it was game 15. We clicked and shot 300 together."

Parker jokes that only he gets official credit for that PBA 300 game, "because Brandon's not a member," he chuckles. Come on, Brandon. You've got to at least allow dad that degree of street cred, okay?

Justin, ever the chronicler of all things Bohn, was behind the scenes capturing everything for his YouTube channel and is the person who snapped the photo you see on this page.

And, hey, you never know. As Parker spoke with us for this piece, he happened to be on his way to bowl the Holiday Doubles tournament with Justin. You just might be reading up on more father-son exploits from this talented clan in our next issue.

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## Rarefied Air

# EJ Tackett's POY Repeat Leads PBA Annual Awards Winners

**THE THIRD TIME LOOKS** to be the charm for EJ Tackett, who bagged back-to-back PBA Chris Schenkel Player of the Year honors last month when he officially was named as such for the 2024 PBA Tour.

Tackett had earned the honor for his stellar 2023 campaign as well, and previously enjoyed Player-of-the-Year billing in 2016. That pyramid of accomplishment is narrowing quickly for Tackett, who now can count only four players in PBA Tour history who have won more Player of the Year nods than him — every one of them a sport-changing legend.

Leading that star-studded pack are Jason Belmonte and Walter Ray Williams Jr. with seven each, followed by Earl Anthony's six and Mark Roth's four.

When his third career Player of the Year honor became official on Dec. 12, Tackett told the PBA that, "When you get to such a level where your name is put next to icons, people that created the sport and made it what it is, there are no words for that."

Just as it is hard to find the words for his run on the 2024 tour, which included the following highlights...

### Standard Titles: 1

2024 PBA Shark Championship

### Major Titles: 1

2024 PBA World Championship

### Other Top-Five Finishes: 6

Event	Finish	Date
U.S. Open	4th	Feb. 4, 2024
PBA Illinois Classic	5th	Feb. 10, 2024
PBA Pete Weber Missouri Classic	3rd	Feb. 18, 2024
Just Bare PBA Indiana Classic	2nd	Feb. 24, 2024
PBA Delaware Classic	5th	March 3, 2024
PBA Tournament of Champions	3rd	April 28, 2024

All of this plus a sixth-place finish in yet another major — the 2024 USBC Masters. Tackett's 2024 record was one that defines dominance, and this season presents a chance to tie a pioneer in Roth should he assemble a third-straight POY campaign here in the new year.

Here are all annual awards winners for the 2024 PBA Tour...



### Chris Schenkel PBA Player of the Year

EJ Tackett



### Harry Golden PBA Rookie of the Year

Nate Purches



### PBA Tony Reyes Community Service Award

Kyle Troup



### PBA Steve Nagy Sportsmanship Award

Richie Teece

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# Dylan Beck

PORT ST. LUCIE, FL

AGE 15

JUNIOR GOLD HIGH FINISHER

**ANYONE LOOKING TO GAUGE** this South Florida standout's potential in the years ahead might want to look no further than the double he flushed in the 10th frame as he anchored his Somerset Preparatory Academy High School bowling team to victory in the Baker-format title match of the district championships.

"He crushed it," says Steve Rubin, who helps coach the program.

Crushing it is becoming a penchant of Beck's, as the 15-year-old already has multiple perfect games to his credit along with a top-10 finish in the USBC Junior Gold Championships, where he finished seventh among U15 boys in the 2024 event. While Rubin reports that Beck "bowls locally in Florida at the Kegel Challenge tournaments, always finishing in the top three," and "is presently averaging around 230 in league," even bigger things may be in store as Beck made the switch to the two-handed style only within the past year-and-a-half and "has been improving ever since."

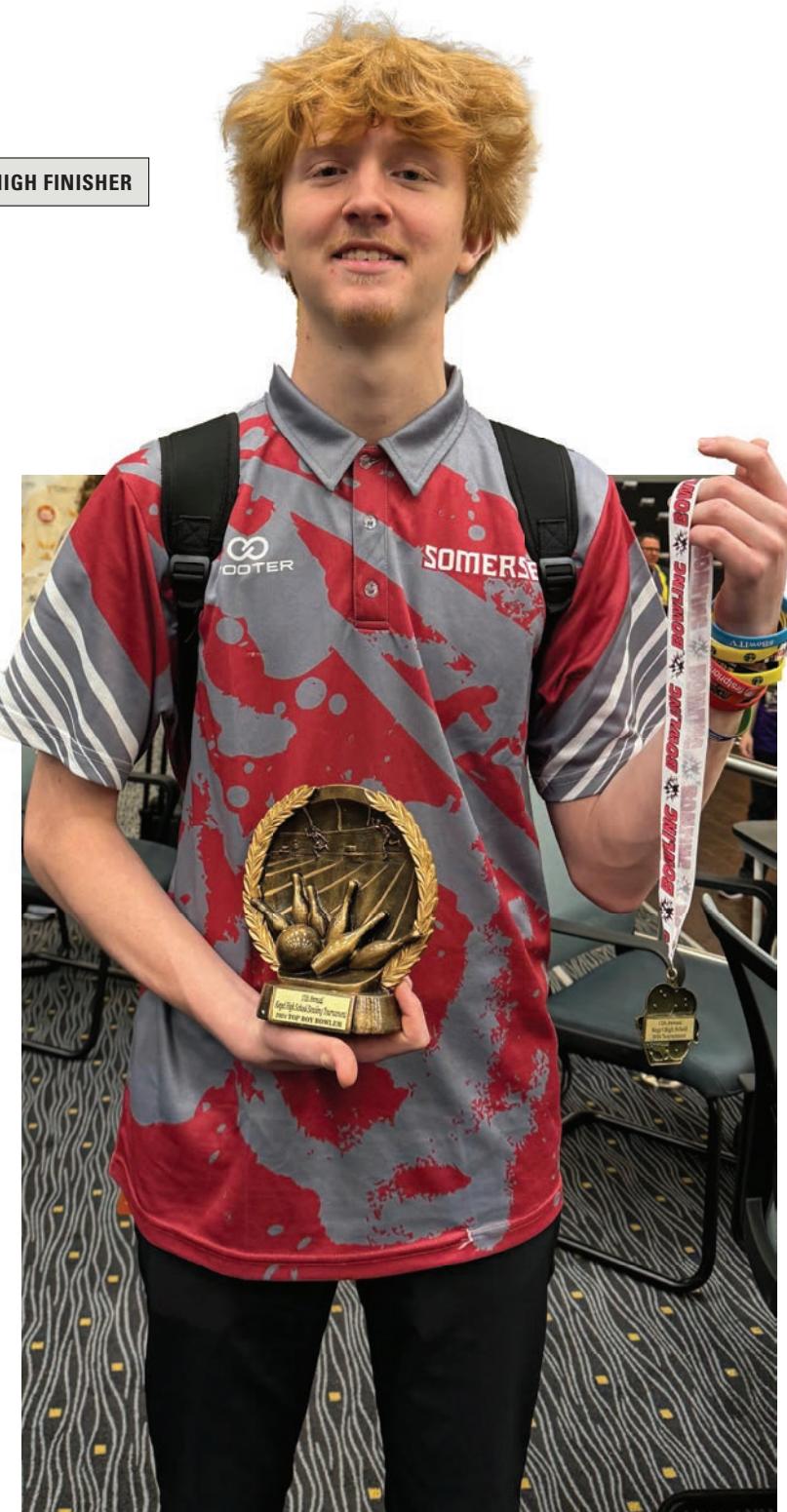
Rubin also notes that Beck brings character as well as talent to everything he does.

"He is another youth who enjoys the sport, loves helping others, and is an outstanding student in school."

Both on the lanes and away from them, it would seem, Beck is poised to be a valued contributor in every endeavor he embraces.

### Twice as Nice

A recent switch to the two-handed style has paid huge dividends for this already talented youth.



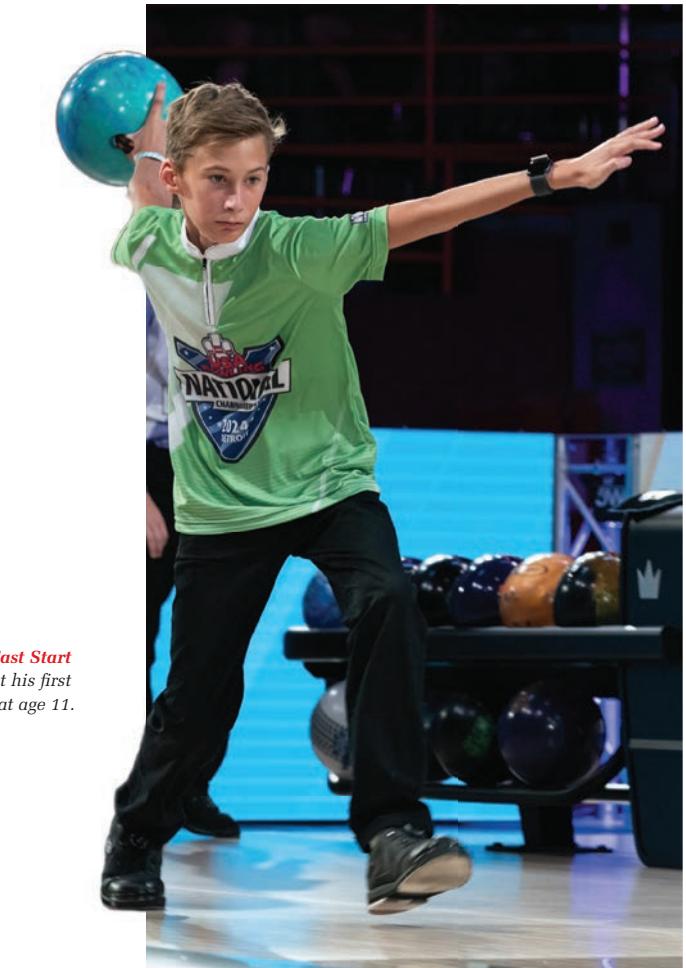
# Colton Takas

PORT ST. LUCIE, FL

AGE 12

300 AT AGE 11

In a part of South Florida known to be loaded with bowling talent — long serving as home to PBA and USBC Hall of Famer Bo Burton Jr., a league bowler there for years — this pre-teen already is putting in his bid to become one of the area's household names. Takas wasted no time notching his first 300 game, having done so at age 11, and last summer won the Coastal South 12-and-under title at the 2024 USA Bowling National Championships alongside Stars and Strikes teammates Nico Candelero, Vincent Cintron, Kristopher Koehler, and Presley Raine. Rubin describes Takas as “an outstanding student with a great disposition who loves the sport and wants to be a pro in the future.” That future certainly seems every bit as bright as Takas wants it to be.



## Fast Start

Takas shot his first 300 game at age 11.



2024



2019

## WHAT ARE THEY UP TO?

### JILLIAN MARTIN

20 | Stow, OH | **GENERATION NEXT DEBUT** December 2018

Perhaps no bowler featured in the pages of Generation Next has gone on to such a meteoric rise, and in such rapid fashion, as this Ohio phenom. Martin first appeared on the radar of Generation Next as a 14-year-old in 2018 who, in May that year, had won the girls' U15 title in a Storm Youth Championships event. She quickly parlayed that victory into a win a few months later in the U15 division of the USBC Youth Open Championships, then won a U15 title on the Elite Youth Tour. Even so, it still might have been hard to imagine the historic feats ahead for the rising star, which included her victory in the 2021 BowITV Classic to become the youngest champion in the history of the PWBA Tour. In typical fashion for this incorrigible competitor, Martin then made history yet again, this time in a major way both literally and figuratively, when she became the youngest player to win the USBC Queens tournament this past April at age 19. Currently bowling for the high-powered Nebraska Huskers program while representing Team USA both at the Junior and adult levels, Martin has flaunted a level of talent that has the bowling world waiting with bated breath to watch her fulfill her immense potential.

## Conversation

### BOB LEARN JR

Growing up in Erie, Pennsylvania, this five-time PBA Tour champion lived about 200 feet from a bowling center. His parents introduced him to the sport that would change his life and take him around the world, and he admits he never could have imagined the opportunities that would eventually come his way thanks to his hard work and dedication. In 2021, he won a bronze medal in mixed team for Senior Team USA at the International Bowling Federation Masters World Championship in Dubai. Which brings us to yet another surprise for the former Tennessee Southern coach: The 62-year-old is now living in Dubai as the new head coach of the United Arab Emirates National teams, which will compete under his leadership at the IBF World Cup Jan. 5-14, 2025, in Hong Kong. We spoke with him about this latest extraordinary opportunity that bowling has brought to the USBC and PBA Hall of Famer's life.



**Q** What have you learned since moving to Dubai in October?

**A** About 85 percent of the city is expatriates. Only 15 percent are Emirati. You have a lot of English-speaking people around you. What is kind of unique, and I knew this a few years ago, but in the mall they have Texas Roadhouse, Cheesecake Factory, and PF Chang's. They have a number of restaurants that we know and love in the U.S. So, you have that little bit of a feeling like you're able to enjoy something that you are used to, which is nice. They are very religious people. They stop for prayer and it's definitely part of their day. The way they treat others, I feel, is like what I would see in the '50s and '60s in the U.S., where everybody's kind to everybody; they don't swear. That's a breath of fresh air. The city is amazing. They have unbelievable architecture. Obviously, the Burj Khalifa being the tallest building in the world. The first thing I did with my wife when we got here was go to the top of the Burj Khalifa. And the beaches are really nice.

**Q** While in Cairo with the team, you also rode a camel, among other things. What was Cairo like for you?

**A** I have always been interested in history and museums. Of course, there's so

much that goes into that location. We had a flight out on our last day, and I said I have to see it [the pyramids] before we leave. We left the hotel at 7 a.m., hired a driver to take us there and hired somebody that would give us an expedited tour. Got enough time there to get some really cool pictures. Nice opportunity to see some of the locations. I've seen so much of the world but there is so much more to see.

**Q** How did this international coaching opportunity come to be?

**A** It came through a friend of mine that has done stuff with them in the past. I was there a few years ago bowling for Team USA on the senior side for the World Championships. I got to meet people here and really see the city. In talking with Mika [Koivuniemi, former UAE national teams coach], he wasn't sure how many more years he was going to do it, so it was in the back of my mind. Then that friend reached out and said, 'Hey, there's a position,' and I said, 'Oh really?' So, that started it.

**Q** Did you reach out to Mika Koivuniemi for advice?

**A** Yes. He already knew when I called that my name had been thrown around

because the players get some input into their interest in having the coach come and work with them. He straight-up said, 'Bob, honestly, they don't want you to do what I've been doing. They want you to put your own signature on it. Bring something new to them. Just come in with your own plan. You are going to do things differently than I did and that's OK.'

**Q** What excites you most about this role?

**A** It's a unique opportunity and, let's be honest, at 62 it's probably my last few years to take advantage of doing something like this. It was timing. Something I really wanted to do. I was certainly attracted to it. This is part of the world I haven't spent a lot of time in, so it has already given me a neat opportunity. Our first event was in Cairo, and I got to see the pyramids while I was there. Bowling has done so much for me. It has taken me to so many places, but it's now offered some new opportunities beyond coaching.

**Q** That first tournament in Cairo your team earned some medals. Tell us about the United Arab Emirates men's and women's national team?

**A** The men's team has been really under development for almost 20 years,



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## Conversation



actually, with a lineup of coaches that would be known by most people: Frank Buffa, Patrick Healey, Bill Hall, and Bill Rowe. They had Mika for eight years. So, really, some great players have shared what they know with the men's team. And the women's team started in the last two years. I only had a week-and-a-half with them. There is talent here and we can make some things happen and we did in the first event. We are getting ready now for the World Cup in Hong Kong. Another neat place to go and look for success with the team again.

**Q** How vital is it to the future of bowling to have yourself and the line of coaches you mentioned take these opportunities overseas and ultimately raise the bar for these programs?

**A** Until recent years, you didn't have many people outside of the U.S. that were able to do it on a full-time basis and make a living at it and have that kind of experience over a long period of time. Being able to share that level of experience helps teams that have not seen that kind of competition against the greatest players in the world. But now we see that there are some other areas of the world that have become really developed and are doing amazing things through their programs and you can see the effect of that on the men's tour and the women's tour.

**Q** How did the initial discussion about this new position go between you and your wife, Stacey?

**A** To be honest, she's always wanted me to look to do something internationally. So, it wasn't much of a discussion. She was like, 'You are going to do this, right?' Her first time coming over, she thought, 'Wow, this is really nice,' and she felt a lot more comfortable about me being where I am at. She has always been such a great supporter of everything I do. And she's willing to divide her time between here and in our hometown of Erie, Pennsylvania, where all of our relatives, my son, and our granddaughters live, to spend time with them. So that's something that, with all of our other moves, she's been kind of pulled away from all that consistent contact with relatives. She's able to get some of that back during this time and she's enjoying being able to reconnect.

**Q** Why is it so important for you to give back and continue to grow this sport?

**A** I just know what bowling did for my self-confidence being able to grow because of it. I had some coaching help, but not really formal coaching. I always felt like it took me a long time to get to where I needed to be on tour. And I thought it was really because I didn't have the type

### Distant Lands

*Learn's new gig has brought with it a rather dramatic change of scenery compared to his days coaching Tennessee Southern.*

of coaching I needed. When I got done, I knew I could help make this happen for other people. I know how much this has done for me and I really feel passionate about keeping the game going to create opportunities that I had. If it could happen for me, I feel like it can happen for anyone that is willing to work hard at it. Be able to create a learning curve that's much smaller than what I had and be the person who is able to share those experiences and understanding of the game.

**Q** How will this new job impact your time on the PBA50 Tour this year?

**A** I have 30 days that I'll be in the U.S. each year. I am planning on bowling the World Series. I can get like four or five events in there while I'm back. Depending on how the schedule works we'll see how much more I can get in. I definitely want to bowl when I get back and see everybody. The whole thing with the PBA50 is to be competitive. I still feel like I am. But for me, it's always been relationship driven as well.

**Q** Anything else you want to share?

**A** This has just opened up a new chapter and I'm looking forward to the future.

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## Action

# Party On

With the song 'Hot Wings' in her head and winning in her sights, teen Kaitlyn Stull cashes in with PWBA Regional Showdown title.

by JILL WINTERS

**THE PARTY STARTED** in her head and ended with something worthy of celebration as 17-year-old Kaitlyn Stull, with the song "Hot Wings (I Wanna Party)" very deliberately on her mind, defeated Karsyn Lukosius, 247-232, at Aloma Bowl in the Orlando suburb of Winter Park, Florida, to win the 2024 PWBA Regional Showdown.

In a testament to talent among the youth ranks, the stepladder finals featured two 17-year-olds —Stull and third-place finisher Avery Domaguin — each of whom displayed the poise of grizzled veterans as they chased down that SMART money. In Stull's case, the \$4,000 top prize came with an even greater treasure — the guarantee that all her entry fees will be paid for any singles event she bowls on the 2025 PWBA Tour.

The steel-composed Stull, whose flowing, chestnut-colored hair extends down

to the center of her back as she bowls, was surprised by her victory. She decided to bowl a few regional tournaments in 2024 for the experience and to have fun, only to end up winning early with her victory in the PWBA Mooresville Regional in February, and now the Showdown.

"It was very shocking. I didn't expect it to end like this, but it was a good ending," she humbly said, laughing. "I guess I really can compete against some of these girls and that I have what it takes if I really just trust myself."

The music fan typically has three songs rotating in her mind as she bowls to keep her calm. On this day, the winning tune was "Hot Wings (I Wanna Party)" from the animated movie, "Rio." Some of the lyrics she repeated to herself included, "I want to party and live my life. I want to party and fly."

She also got herself ready for the big moment by calling two role models who have supported her throughout her bowling journey. Her older sisters, Grace Stull, a senior on the women's bowling team at North Carolina A&T, and Emma Stull, assistant coach for the women's bowling team at Arkansas State University.

"I really look up to my sisters. They have taught me a lot and inspired me over the years," Stull said. "It just calmed my nerves. They told me to take it one shot at a time."

She did just that against No. 4 seed Lukosius, who had won three regional titles in 2024. Stull finished first with eight strikes and three single-pin spares for 247. Lukosius stepped up in the 10th frame working on a turkey, but left a solid 9 pin on her first shot to end her stepladder run with a 232.

### *Merry and Bright*

*Stull's Showdown victory on Dec. 7 provided a thrilling early Christmas present for the 17-year-old.*





## 2025 PBA TOUR SCHEDULE (ALL TIMES ARE IN ET)

DATE	TIME	TOURNAMENT	CHANNEL
1/25	5:00P	PBA DELAWARE CLASSIC	FS1
2/1	4:00P	U.S. OPEN PRESENTED BY GO BOWLING PRELIMS	FS1
2/2	4:00P	U.S. OPEN PRESENTED BY GO BOWLING	FOX
2/8	8:00P	PBA ILLINOIS CLASSIC	FS1
2/16	1:00P	PBA PETE WEBER MISSOURI CLASSIC	FS1
3/2	12:00P	PBA ROTH/HOLMAN DOUBLES CHAMPIONSHIP	FS1
3/15	6:00P	PBA NEVADA CLASSIC	FS1
PBA WORLD SERIES OF BOWLING XVI			
3/16	7:30P	PBA ANIMAL PATTERN 1 CHAMPIONSHIP	FS1
3/17	7:00P	PBA ANIMAL PATTERN 2 CHAMPIONSHIP	FS1
3/18	7:00P	PBA ANIMAL PATTERN 3 CHAMPIONSHIP	FS1
3/19	7:00P	PBA ANIMAL PATTERN 4 CHAMPIONSHIP	FS1
3/22	3:00P	PBA WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP	FOX
3/29	12:00P	USBC MASTERS PRELIMS	FS1
3/30	12:00P	USBC MASTERS	FOX

4/4	7:00P	PBA JR. NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS	FS1
4/5	12:00P	PBA ALL-STAR WEEKEND	FS1
4/6	12:00P	PBA ALL-STAR WEEKEND	FS1
4/12	7:00P	PBA PLAYERS CHAMPIONSHIP PRELIMS	FS1
4/13	12:00P	PBA PLAYERS CHAMPIONSHIP	FOX
4/19	5:00P	PBA TOURNAMENT OF CHAMPIONS PRELIMS	FS1
4/20	12:30P	PBA TOURNAMENT OF CHAMPIONS	FOX
4/26	3:00P	PBA ELITE LEAGUE: BATTLE OF THE BRANDS PRELIMS	FS1
4/27	12:00P	PBA ELITE LEAGUE: BATTLE OF THE BRANDS	FOX
5/3	7:00P	PBA PLAYOFFS ROUND 1	FS1
5/4	7:00P	PBA PLAYOFFS ROUND 1	FS1
5/10	2:00P	PBA PLAYOFFS QUARTER	FS1
5/11	6:30P	PBA PLAYOFFS QUARTER	FS1
5/18	12:00P	PBA ELITE LEAGUE SEMIFINALS	FS1
5/24	2:30P	PBA ELITE LEAGUE CHAMPIONSHIP	FOX

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Stull celebrated by getting a high-five from her mom, Tracy, then calling her sisters, who had gathered with other family and friends for a watch party. It was a great early Christmas present for Stull, especially after her 2024 got off to a rough start.

In January, she had to withdraw from Team USA Trials due to an infected finger. Things turned around swiftly from there, however. A month later, she won her first regional title in her home state of North Carolina at the 2024 PWBA Mooresville Regional, where she got the win against fellow Junior Team USA member and future Jacksonville State University teammate Annalise OBryant.

In July, during round two of qualifying at the Junior Gold Championships for U18 girls, Stull rolled her first career 800 series with games of 268, 257 and 279. She followed that up with 278 for a mind-boggling four-game series of 1,082 that left plenty of dropped jaws throughout the concourse.

She decided to take a break after her runner-up finish at Junior Gold to let her body rest. She wasn't fully confident in her game coming into the final event of the year, but now she plans to carry that momentum into the 2025 USBC Team USA Trials and U.S. National Amateur Bowling Championships Jan. 2-7 at the National Bowling Stadium in Reno.

Beyond competing against the best in the country to earn a spot on Team USA, she is looking forward to graduating from Crossroads FLEX High School in Cary, North Carolina, then bowling for Jacksonville State University, where she intends to major in forensic investigation.

"On my visit, it just felt like home. The campus is very small and out in the country, which I loved. They have the major that I want, and also the bowling part. Shannon and Bryan (O'Keefe) have been some of my favorite coaches over the years, so it just felt right," Stull said.

As for that choice of major, Stull explained, "I have always been into science;

it's my strong suit. I have taken a special interest in forensics."

She and her family will look at her schedule and decide how many PWBA stops she will be able to go to, seeking to elevate her game. Ultimately, this impressive right-hander has a lot to look forward to this year as she soars into a bright future. As the "Hot Wings" lyrics say, and Stull sang to herself, she is ready to "Fly just like a rocket."

"I am just excited to see what is next and what more I can do," she said. "I also am excited for college and the team environment."

The opening match of the PWBA Regional Showdown saw Lukosius defeat 2024 PWBA Rookie of the Year Crystal Elliott, 217-196. Lukosius moved on to the semifinal match against Domaguin, who is committed to attend Vanderbilt University this fall. The young San Diego resident stayed clean and was finally able to put together multiple strikes in the 10th frame for 209, but a late five-bagger helped Lukosius get the victory with a 218 game.

#### Teen Titans

Avery Domaguin was one of two teens to advance to the stepladder finals of the 2024 PWBA Regional Showdown.

#### Dominator

Lukosius's appearance in the PWBA Regional Showdown stepladder finals felt like a foregone conclusion following her three regional wins in 2024.



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## Angles

# Fixing Late Timing

How to develop the natural, effortless arm swing that will bring your game to the next level.

by MICHELLE MULLEN

**IN MY 36 YEARS OF COACHING**, one of the most common problems I have seen is late timing — especially in the start. So many of us struggle with this tendency; managing it is the key.

### THE PSYCHOLOGY OF LATE TIMING

Late timing, like a muscled swing, is so often a result of trying to have too much control. Psychologically, we humans want and like control. But this creates timing and swing issues that adversely affect your ability to repeat shots.

### THE ANATOMY OF LATE TIMING

Another reason I think it is so common is this: We simply are not wired to move the right arm with the right leg; or, for lefties, the left arm with the left leg. This is what we are trying to do when we move the ball with the proper step, or the key step.

That would be the first step of a four-step approach or the second step of a five-step approach. So, for the right-handed bowler, we strive to move the ball with the right leg, in either instance. It just doesn't resemble our natural gait.

After all, our right arm does not swing with our right foot when we walk. Rather, the left arm moves with the right foot, and vice versa. So, fixing this by thinking about moving our swing arm with our key step (moving the swing with the leg on the same side) is so very challenging.

### THE GENESIS OF LATE TIMING

The two typical ways we get late in the start are that we do not push the ball soon enough or that we push but do not let the ball fall soon enough into the swing on the next step. Understand that this tendency is very strong! You will slip into late timing without even realizing it.

I caution my students all the time that, of course you think you



are pushing the ball on time and/or letting it fall. But, the reality is that when you begin to struggle, it SO often goes back to the start.

### THE GAP BETWEEN WHAT YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING AND WHAT YOU'RE REALLY DOING

If late timing is your tendency, as it is for so many bowlers, you will delay getting the ball into the swing again and again. Though you intend to move the ball on time, consider that maybe you are actually late. Giving it some proactive attention will often fix your execution. Do not rely on feeling late; rather, deduce that you are, and fix it.

I coach an advanced youth bowler who works on her game faithfully and wins tournaments. We always have to check her timing during lessons. She continually tends to get late, like a lot of great bowlers do. We talk about how she needs to question her start during competition when she feels slightly off at the line. While she thinks she's moving the ball on time, making an effort to move it sooner suddenly helps her feel better again at delivery.

### HOW TO FIX LATE TIMING

To fix late timing, it is important to make sure your swing arm is loose to begin with in the stance. It is hard to move an arm that is tight. In private lessons, I often grab the bowler's arm to see if it is actually relaxed. I should be able to easily move it beyond their control and, when I let it go, it should just fall and come to rest by their side.

Some people can instantly relax when I point out how tight they are, while others have a hard time relaxing the muscles. And when they tell me they think they are relaxed, but we see they are not, I suggest doing the following, to feel the difference: Teach yourself what it feels like when you are tight and when you are loose by squeezing and relaxing the muscles in your stance by trying to identify tension at its source in the following ways:



#### Swing Pro

*The seeming effortlessness in the arm swings of top-flight pros like Bill O'Neill requires a lot of work and intentionality to establish and sustain.*

1. Squeezing your hand and tightening up the muscles of your arm and shoulder, then releasing the tension.
2. Notice the difference, and take particular note of the feeling when the muscles are relaxed.
3. Be attentive to your grip pressure during the swing from time to time to see if you detect any excessive grip pressure throughout the swing.

#### THE ROLE OF YOUR OPPOSITE HAND

As a right-hander, use your left hand to both support the weight of the ball and to push the ball out to start your swing. This will enable your right arm to relax as you move the ball, allowing it to remain relaxed as you initiate the swing.

When we walk, our opposite arm moves with opposite leg, maintaining perfect balance. That is, our left arm moves with our right leg, and vice versa. In bowling, when we try to use our right arm to coordinate with our right foot, it feels so unnatural, making it hard to do. Using your left hand to push the ball out with your right foot will feel more natural.

When you do learn to use your left hand to push the ball out with your right leg, make sure you keep the weight in your left hand without tightening up your swing, particularly at the end of the pushaway. I explain all the time in lessons that an object feels heavier when it is furthest from you. So, at the end of the pushaway, keep the weight in your left hand. This way, when your opposite hand withdraws support, the swing arm can just fall provided it was relaxed to begin with.

If you remove your opposite hand's support too quickly, you will likely tighten up the swing arm to either pull the ball back into the swing or tighten it up and delay the ball from dropping. Withdraw your opposite hand as you initiate the next step. Not before. This will allow you to get the ball out with your key step and let it drop with the next.

Note: When you do withdraw your opposite hand at the tip of the push away, your right elbow should not lock out in front of you. Rather, it will straighten out during the fall from the push. There is your perfect arc, timed with your footwork, to create your relaxed, natural swing.

#### MOVE SOONER, NOT FASTER

Fixing late start does not mean go faster. Rather, take your time to ensure coordination. This takes focus and work. When people hear "late," they try to go faster. This only exacerbates the problem and you become late, but faster.

Let's say you have a lesson at 1 p.m. and you live an hour away. You leave at 12:30. That's a problem. What do you need to do now? Rush. Drive faster. What would have been a better solution to this problem? Leave sooner.

Well, the same goes for your start when you bowl. Work on pushing sooner, not faster. Take your time to focus and coordinate your left hand with your right foot. Once you get them together, and do this with a relaxed swing arm, your timing and swing feels so much more effortless. That peak efficiency.

#### ADJUST YOUR MENTALITY

While you will have to work hard to fix this issue, this work is as psychological as it is physical. I mentioned earlier that late timing and a muscled swing are related to the mentality of wanting to control the ball. Whether conscious or subconscious, we need to break through this and trust the consistency found in allowing physics to let the ball swing the same each time.

#### LAST THOUGHTS

I encourage you to take your game to the next level by working on your ability to relax and let the ball swing. Develop more of a pendulum. Find your natural swing and learn to trust it. You will become more consistent and accurate. Then, learn to trust it in stressful, competitive situations to take your game to yet another level.

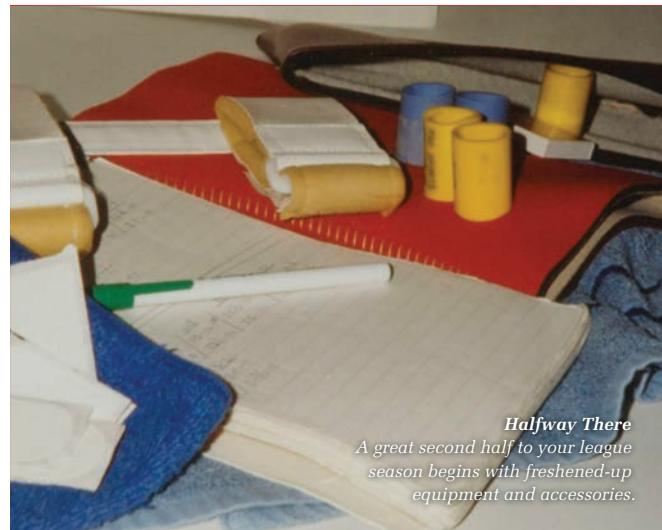
Nothing like a well-timed, relaxed armswing. It feels so effortless because of the efficiency of the motion. Part of the joy we get from bowling is how good it feels when things are synced up and we're relaxed in our motion.

Oh, and of course, posting better scores.

## Drill Bits

# Midseason Inventory

The new year invites the opportunity to take stock of your equipment and the accessories that go with it.



*Halfway There*

*A great second half to your league season begins with freshened-up equipment and accessories.*

**REACHING THE NEWYEAR** also means reaching the midpoint of the 2024-2025 league bowling season. Hopefully, things have gone well for you so far. If they have, keep it up! If they haven't, hang in there; you still have time to turn it around and get to where you want to be.

However, that won't happen by accident. In order to bowl well, you need to be sure you're putting yourself in position to be successful week in and week out. That means making sure your equipment is prepped for success.

With that in mind, here's a checklist that may help you get dialed in during the early stages of the second half:

### REPLACE TAPE: OUT WITH THE OLD!

Please tell me you didn't put a piece or two in prior at the start of Week 1, and it's still in your ball now. If it is, it's likely discolored, dirty and slimy due to sweat and skin oils, which means it really isn't doing you any good at this point. Yank that disgusting tape out and replace it with fresh pieces. Also, make a New Year's resolution to use new tape each week or at least every other week from this point forward.

### CHECK FINGER INSERTS: ARE THEY HOLDING UP?

It's possible to use the same finger inserts for 10 years or more, but that doesn't mean it's a good idea or what's best for your game. Check to see how your finger inserts are holding up. Do they still fit properly and feel comfortable? Are they still securely glued into your ball, or are they on the verge of flying out at any time? If they aren't locked in place and in good

shape, it's time to visit the pro shop and get a new pair installed.

### CLEAN YOUR BALL: ERASE THAT MILEAGE

Your bowling ball goes through a lot each time it's thrown down the lane, cycled through the machine, and sent back your way via the subway and ball return. During each trip, it picks up lane oil, belt marks, and more. Not only do these substances diminish your ball's beautiful appearance, but also they alter performance. A ball that's lane-shined isn't going to create the same footprint it did when it had its matte, out-of-box finish. A shiny pearl ball that was a skid-flip monster is going to start checking up early and reacting much differently once it's covered with belt marks in every direction. Don't let a dirty ball derail your scores. Give your ball a nice, deep cleaning to start the second half, and try to clean it on a regular basis from now on.

### DIAL-IN SURFACE: BE INTENTIONAL

The manufacturer of your bowling balls took time and was intentional when determining what out-of-box surfaces to use for each ball. Now, that doesn't mean that you have to stick to those surfaces. What you should do, however, is make sure you know what surface those balls are at before hitting the lanes each week. If you have a personal ball spinner, use it to intentionally set your surfaces prior to each league session. If you don't have a spinner, use your preferred sanding pads to freshen the surface on your equipment by hand before and after each set. Not the do-it-yourself type? Fine. Take your bowling balls to the pro shop and let

them handle it for you. The point is, be intentional with bowling ball surface. Again, your hook monster will start sliding like a hockey puck if you let the 1000-grit out-of-box finish shine up and smooth out to 4000+ because you've thrown it for 50 more games without cleaning it or freshening it up. If you want consistent ball reaction, then you need to know what surfaces you're using week in and week out.

### RESTOCK ACCESSORY BAG: HAVE EVERYTHING YOU NEED?

Last but not least, take a moment to look through your accessory bag to make sure you still have everything you need. Are you running low on tape? Stock up. Is your rosin ball and pouch of easy slide barely putting any powder out anymore? Get more. These items aren't luxuries; they're necessities. If you don't have what you need, you're not going to have a good feel in the ball, and it's almost impossible to score when your ball just doesn't feel quite right. Go through your accessories to ensure you have everything you need to make it through the second half of the season.

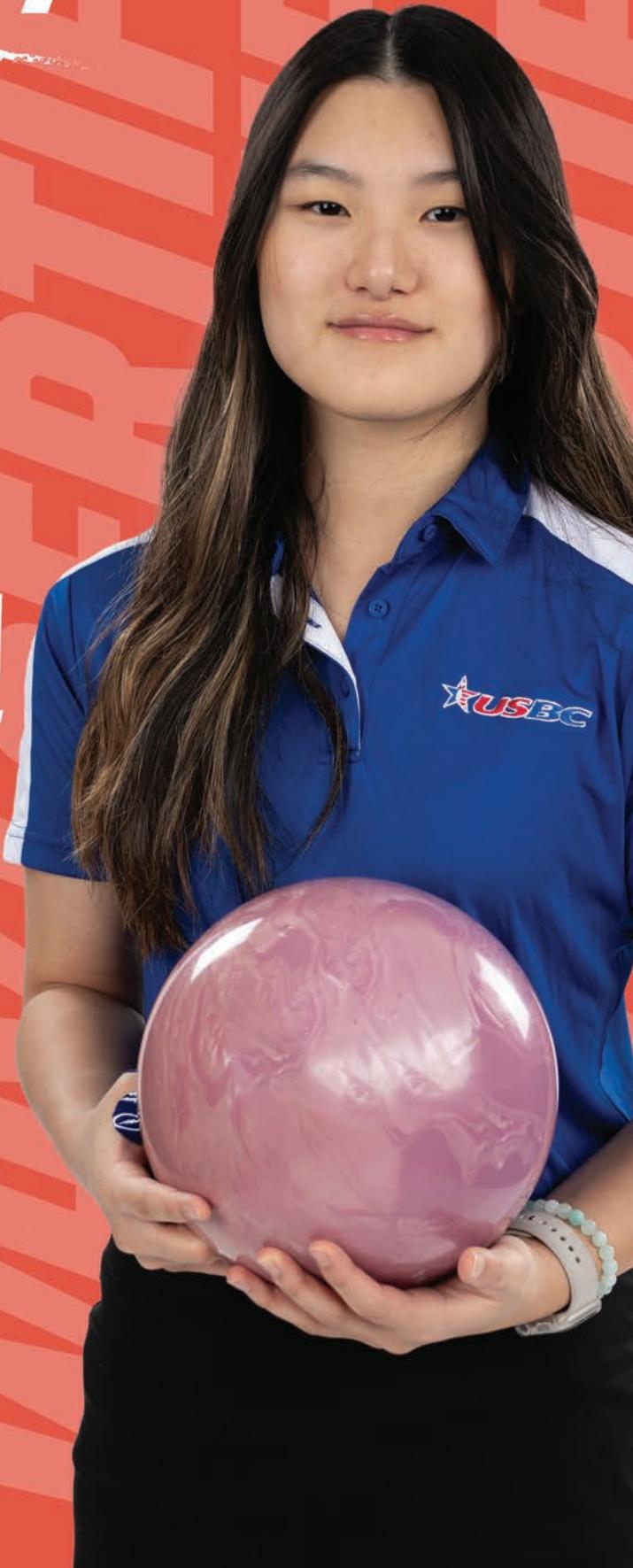
Remember, just as "chance favors the prepared mind," good pin carry and higher scores favor the prepared bowler. Don't just show up to league each week hoping that things will go your way. Do your part by making sure your equipment is clean, comfortable and surfaced properly to best attack the conditions you're facing week in and week out. Do so, and you're likely to continue the momentum you built up during the first half or to turn things around and end the 2024-2025 season with a bang!

— Gene J. Kanak

# WHY I CERTIFY

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IN MY LIFE.”**

**Madison Choi**  
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## Drill Bits

# Oh, the Places (Your Ball) Will Go!

**BALL MOTION.** It is the competitive bowling world's catchphrase of the month, the year, and perhaps this entire era. It encourages thumbless gripping, two-handed swinging, bent-elbow armswings and weight-block engineering so bowlers may throw shots that impress in both look and outcome.

While the term is relatively new, the effort to identify and understand the effectiveness of different release techniques was the catalyst to the development of the fingertip grip as long ago as the 1940s. It was simply an evaluation of ball roll with noted — and sometimes controversial — instructors Bill Taylor and Tom Kourous at the forefront of those science-based studies.

Prior to that, astute players going back to the founding of the sport recognized that

certain distinctive ways of releasing the ball produced a type of roll that inspired better pinfall mix. Those who possessed those seemingly idiosyncratic release skills were able to reap the benefits of improved ball impact that was resistant to deflection, even with minimal overall hook.

Unknown were the acute angles — even at relatively high speeds — that modern players can create in today's bowling environment. Playing a wide-arching and/or sharp-breaking ball path is made possible by a strategic application of lane-surface lubricant matched with bowling balls whose outer-shell construction can be ultra-responsive when encountering otherwise high-friction portions of lane.

So, replacing the term "ball roll," or "ball reaction," with "ball motion" cer-

tainly emphasizes a noticeable, appealing, and enticing visual. It even sounds more exciting to use the word "motion."

Most figure the inspiration for the updated term belongs to the marketing and sales gurus working for bowling-ball manufacturers touting the vast number of new product versions presented to the market each year. If the wordsmithing sounded a little hyperbolic at first, it's now fully embraced without hesitation.

### THE FORCES UNDERLYING 'BALL MOTION'

Before getting caught up in the properties of interior bowling-ball weight blocks, it helps to have a basic understanding of all the forces in play as a spherical object moves along the ground — in this case,



*The Explorer*

*Bill Taylor's sometimes-controversial ideas took him to some far-flung climes.*

across a practically flat lane surface 60 feet in length. The major factors are the direction and pace of the initial thrust, to be potentially influenced by rotational direction, axis tilt and the amount of rpms infused into the ball at the release.

For example, let's say a bowling ball comes onto the lane on the 20th board projected 1.5 degrees to the right. Unless or until other influences become involved, the ball will proceed to the 16th board at the arrows; the 12th board halfway down the lane; the eighth board at 45 feet., then finishing its trek on the 4 board, cleanly picking off the 10 pin before leaving the lane.

Recognizing that the effect of rotational factors is highly lane condition-based, if the ball also comes onto the lane with a counter-clockwise side rotation — say 45 degrees to the left of its launch angle — the process known as precession stands to change the path of the shot. Precession realigns the launch angle direction so, in this case, the ball never gets to the eighth board.

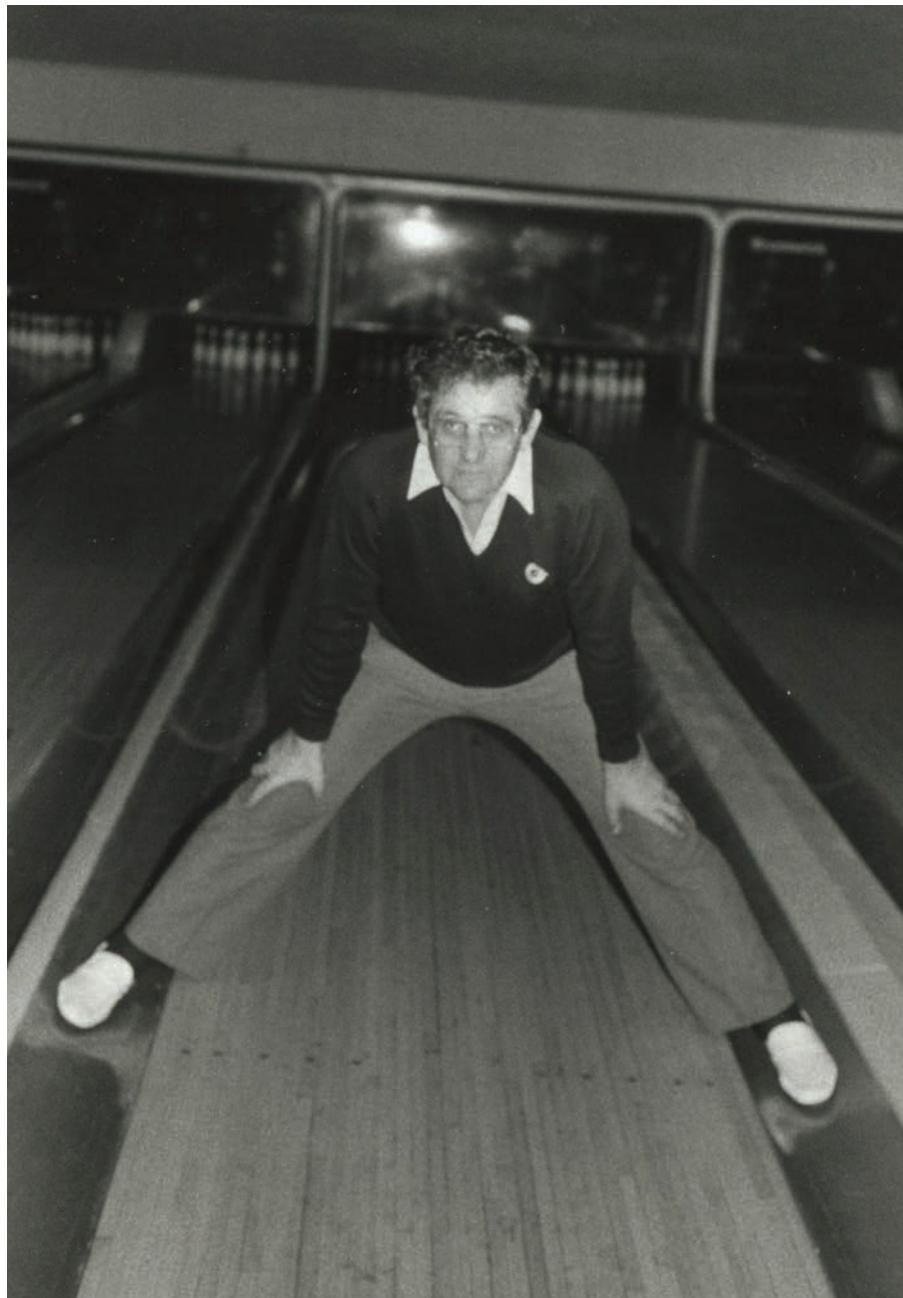
Instead, after reaching about the 10 board two-thirds of the way down the lane (40 feet.), the ball ideally picks up more friction (both from slowing down and likely reaching the end of the applied oil pattern), giving the counter-clockwise rotation a more pronounced influence on the ball's direction.

But there is another key to the precession process that very much determines whether this shot, seemingly on a path to hit the pocket, will strike, or not. About 7 to 10 feet. before its preferred headpin contact point, it's best that all of the ball's rotational direction inertia imparted by the player's release has been exhausted.

Granted, that may sound counter-intuitive. After all, don't you want side rotation preserved throughout the ball's impact with the pins?

No, what you really want is for the ball's two major forces — launch-angle thrust and counter-clockwise rotation — to stop competing for control of the ball's direction. In effect, such internal turmoil weakens its hitting power. In a sense, launch angle needs to win, but not before the ball's rotational energy has had a proportional influence on its ultimate destination.

Once launch angle and rotational direction achieve their kumbaya moment, the ball moves into a state of virtually pure roll, yet still moving right-to-left as a significant residual of rotational influence. For the next several feet the ball will be its most resistant to deflection at pin impact.



Granted, other factors also have a say regarding ball impact. Significant axis tilt is a separate peripheral issue but can help encourage pin-to-pin contact. RPM and pocket entry angle measures obviously play a role, too.

But whether we're talking about Jimmy Smith a century ago, Earl Anthony a half century ago or Jason Belmonte today, having the ball's launch angle and rotational direction go through its precession process in the most ideal manner remains the most crucial factor toward carrying pocket hit strikes.

#### Down to a Science

*Tom Kouros was among the early pioneers in the study of ball motion.*

— Lyle Zikes

## Training Camp

# BETTER BALANCE = BETTER SHOT-MAKING

5 keys toward building a better game from the ground up.

by GENE J. KANAK

**I'VE OFTEN SAID** that if you sent me to league night without my bowling balls, I could grab a house ball off the rack and still bowl okay. On the other hand, if you sent me with my full arsenal of balls but made me wear house shoes, I'd definitely be in for a long, mostly unsuccessful night.

The reason is this: If I'm not confident that I can control my lower body and how it gets to the line, then I have no chance of delivering good shots on a consistent basis

and/or paying attention to ball motion and lane play.

Simply put: Without balance, I'm doomed, and I know that I'm not alone. Good balance is essential to quality shot-making, and that's why it's no coincidence that most elite bowlers display terrific balance frame in and frame out.

So, with that in mind, let's examine some keys you can focus upon during your quest to attain and maintain good balance.

## Key 1: Practice It!

Honestly, this is as simple as it sounds. If you want better balance, you need to be intentional about it. Too often, we're so concerned with what the ball is doing and how many pins we're knocking down that we don't focus on the mechanical aspects of our approach and delivery that directly impact those outcomes, including balance. Even though that's understandable, it's something we need to avoid.

- Instead of getting wrapped up in results, dial in on getting your lower body firmly planted beneath you as opposed to quickly standing up and/or falling off your shots. Follow these steps to do so:
  - If possible, set a camera up behind you and just slightly off to your ball-arm side so that you can record your practice.
  - Throw a series of shots (I'd recommend 15-20).
  - During each delivery, remain in your finish position until the ball contacts the pins or as close to that point as your body allows.
  - On each shot, your singular focus is just on staying down, stable and balanced.
  - Ball motion, ball path and pins knocked down mean nothing here.
  - When you've finished the series, watch the video to see whether or not you were successful in staying down and balanced during each shot.
    - You may be surprised at how different things look vs. how they felt!
  - If your balance was solid throughout this series of shots, then you're in a good place physically, which means maybe you just need to make it a point to keep balance more at the top of your mind frame in and frame out so as not to get lax.
  - If your balance was less than stellar, then keep reading and see if the keys that follow offer a possible explanation.

## Key 2:

### Keep Your Trail Foot Down and Back

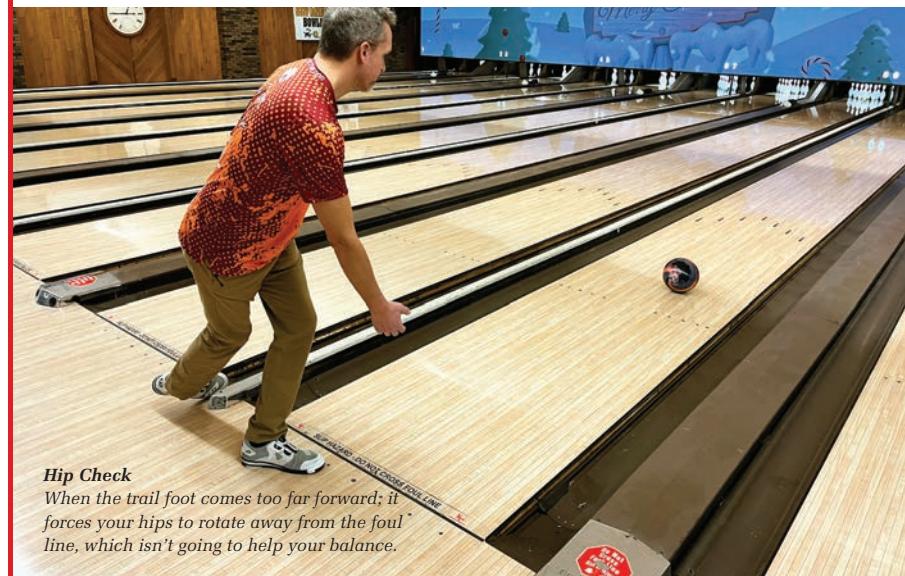
If you're having trouble staying down and stable at the foul line, there's a decent chance your trail foot is at least part of the problem. The first two images displayed here show less-than-ideal trail-foot positioning.

In the first image, the trail foot is off the ground. While it is certainly possible to throw good shots with such an approach, having the trail foot off the ground takes a contact point away and makes it much



Key 2

**Ground Game**  
*While it is certainly possible to throw good shots with your trail foot off the ground, having the trail foot off the ground takes a contact point away and makes it much easier to fall off the shot to the right.*



Hip Check

*When the trail foot comes too far forward, it forces your hips to rotate away from the foul line, which isn't going to help your balance.*

easier to fall off the shot to the right.

The second image shows the trail foot securely on the ground, which is a step in the right direction (pun intended), but the foot is way too far forward. Have you or someone you know ever fouled with their trail foot? That's one issue with having the trail foot come too far forward. The other, bigger issue is that, when the trail foot comes too far forward, it forces your hips to rotate away from the foul line, which, obviously, isn't going to help your balance.

Instead, we're looking for the position displayed in the third image. Here's how to get there:

- Set your camera up once again.
- Throw another series of 15-20 shots.
- During each delivery, you want to keep the pinky-toe side of your trail foot in

contact with the approach. Also, you want there to be roughly a 45-degree angle if a line is drawn from the big toe of your slide foot to the big toe of your trail foot. If the angle is much bigger than 45 degrees, it means you're leaving your trail foot too far behind your back. If the angle is much smaller than 45 degrees, it means that foot is creeping too far forward and toward the foul line.

- When you're finished, check the video to see how you did.
- If you weren't successful, repeat the series again, or consider trying for this position using a one-step drill as opposed to a full approach.
- If you're successfully getting into the positions mentioned above yet your balance is still off, take a look at the next key.

### Key 3:

#### Don't Let Your Trail Arm go Skyward

It may seem strange to focus on your non-bowling arm while discussing the keys to better balance, but if that arm points toward the ceiling, bad balance is likely to follow.

The first image shows a bowler with a trail arm angled upward. As you can see, when the trail arm points upward, the bowling shoulder often has to drop, which causes the entire body to want to lean to the bowling-arm side. Again, while some bowlers are capable of holding this position and staying on balance at the foul line, most are not. With that in mind, shooting for the positions displayed in the second two pics will work out better for most players.

- Get your camera in place to record.
- Throw 15-20 shots.
- Your focus on each shot in this series is keeping your trail arm somewhere between a 45 and 90-degree angle to your torso. The angle that works best for you will depend upon how much ball-side spine tilt you typically employ in your delivery. If you tend to stay more upright, then the 90-degree position will likely suit you best. If you are more comfortable with more tilt to the ball side, then something closer to 45 degrees will probably be in your wheelhouse.
- Examine the video.
- Where was your arm going? How balanced were you?
- As always, if things didn't look and feel as you wanted them to, rinse and repeat until you get it right.

### Key 4:

#### Stay Stacked

The goal of examining these various keys is to try to get to the point where your body is stable and secure at the foul line during each and every shot. If everything comes together properly, you will end up in the stacked, sturdy position displayed in the image shown here.

As you can see, the bowler shown here is in a very stable position with his head, slide-leg knee and slide-foot big toe all aligned. The alignment is so good that we could draw a line straight up and down connecting all three points from top to bottom. This is a strong, athletic posture that promotes terrific balance.

On the flipside, if the angle between

the head, knee and toe points forward or backward, it would likely cause the bowler to fall toward or back from the foul line. If the alignment was off to the right or left, the bowler would probably fall off the shot. Either way, the odds of throwing a good shot would go down significantly.

### Key 5:

#### Master the Push-away

If none of the first four keys have helped your balance issues, then it's likely your problems stem from things that are occurring much earlier in your approach. With that in mind, I recommend you go back to basics and begin looking at your push-away.

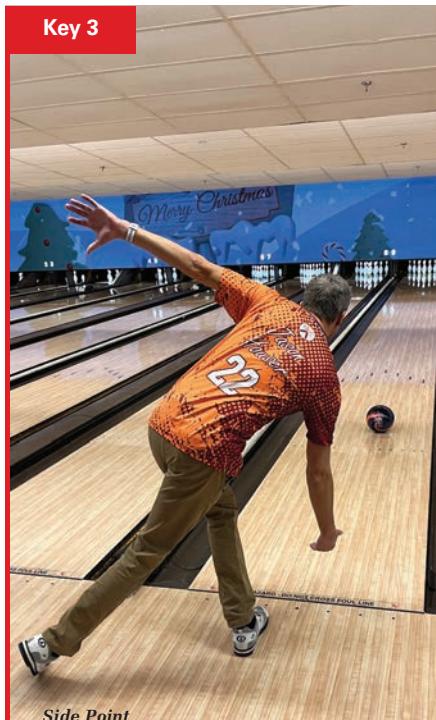
If the timing of your push-away is off, it's extremely difficult to get your upper and lower body in the right rhythm to hit the foul line in a stable position. With that in mind, here are a couple push-away reminders:

- If you're a four-step player, you should be pushing the ball away as you take your first step. If you're a five-step player, the push-away will occur during Step 2.
- Be mindful of the length of your push-away because if it's too long or too short, your feet are likely to get out of rhythm, which will cause your balance to suffer.
- As you begin your push-away, be careful not to allow your upper body to collapse with excessive forward spine tilt. If you do, you're going to have to straighten back up at some point as you get to the line, and that forward to backward motion also will make it tough to remain balanced.
- If all of this just seems to be a bit too much for you to tackle on your own, consider reaching out to a trusted local professional regarding lessons.

If you want to throw good shots on a consistent basis, balance is a must. For some of you, achieving good balance will simply be a matter of focus. For others, mechanical evaluation and/or adjustments will need to take place in order to build the stability you're looking for.

Either way, remember, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. If you want to bowl your best, you have to put in the work. Use these keys to work on achieving better balance today, and you're likely to see your scores, average and enjoyment of the game improve tomorrow!

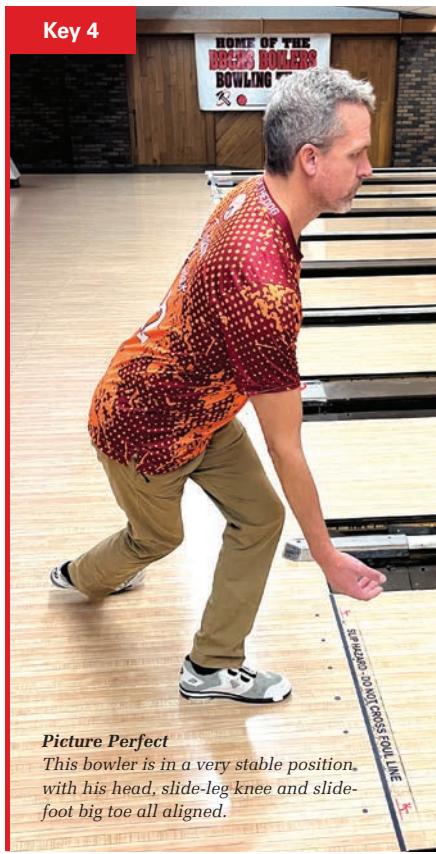
### Key 3



#### Side Point

*When the trail arm points upward, the bowling shoulder often has to drop, which causes the entire body to want to lean to the bowling-arm side.*

### Key 4



#### Picture Perfect

*This bowler is in a very stable position, with his head, slide-leg knee and slide-foot big toe all aligned.*



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**QUBICAVAMF**

## BALL MOTION POTENTIAL

Hook Potential	Breakpoint Shape	Lane Number													
		10	11	12	12.5	13	13.5	14	14.5	15	15.5	16	16.5	17	17.5
Very Dry to Lighter Volume Oil Patterns	40.5														
	41														
	41.5														
	42														
	42.5														
	43														
	43.5														
	44														
	44.5														
	45														
Light: Medium and Medium-Heavy Volume Oil Patterns	45.5														
	46														
	46.5														
	47														
	47.5														
	48														
	48.5														
	49														
	49.5														
	50														
Medium-Heavy to Heavier Oil Volume Oil Patterns	50.5														
	51														
	51.5														
	52														
	52.5														
	53														
	53.5														
	54														
	54.5														
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	58												2		
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	61												3		
	61.5														
	62														
	62.5														
	63														
	63.5														
	64														
	64.5												1		
	65														
	65.5														

Balls with higher breakpoint shape ratings have the potential to react more quickly & angularly when encountering friction areas on the lane. Balls with medium to lower breakpoint shape ratings tend to react more evenly & slowly when encountering friction areas on the lane.

## JANUARY 2025

1. Motiv Jackal Onyx
2. Motiv Primal Rage Evolution
3. Storm Phix Blackout

## RECENTLY REVIEWED

## DECEMBER 2024

900 Global Origin	60 / 15.5
DV8 Heckler	65.5 / 15
C300 Ricochet	58.5 / 16
Ebonite Real Time	59.5 / 15.5
Hammer Effect Tour	60 / 15
Hammer Anger	58.5 / 16.5
Roto Grip Attention Star S2	58.5 / 15.5
Storm Road Warrior the Road	58 / 16.5
Track Theorem Pearl	58.5 / 16

## NOVEMBER 2024

Brunswick Ethos Hybrid	62.5 / 14.5
Brunswick Ivory Rhino Pro	60 / 15.5
Radical No Doubt	61.5 / 15
Radical Zig Zag	64 / 15
Storm Phaze AI	61 / 16
Track Criterion	63 / 14

## OCTOBER 2024

900 Global Sublime Focus	62 / 15
Ebonite The One Reverb	57.5 / 16
Ebonite Crusher	62 / 15
C300 Super Cuda PowerCOR	64.5 / 14.5
Hammer Pure Envy	64 / 14.5
DV8 Mantra	59 / 15
Motiv Subzero Forge	61.5 / 14
Storm Ion Max	65 / 15
Motiv Raptor Rush	57.5 / 17

## THE BJI BALL CHART/BALL REVIEWS

### METHODOLOGY

The Bowlers Journal International Ball Motion Potential chart is designed to help bowlers understand which lane conditions are best suited for the most recently introduced bowling balls in the marketplace. Placement positions on the chart are based on the "out of box" surface from the manufacturer. Surface adjustments can impact a ball's performance and, thus, its position on the chart.

The chart's horizontal axis displays a ball's approximate total hook in the presence of oil. While some coverstocks may have similar maximum, dry lane, or coefficient-of-friction measurements, their ability to traction in oil can vary significantly.

Balls with minimal hook potential are placed on the far left side of the chart. Balls offering a moderate degree of hook are placed in the chart's middle section. Balls with the greatest hook potential in heavy oil are placed on the right side of the chart.

The chart's vertical axis displays a ball's breakpoint shape. Balls offering more skip/snap reaction are placed higher on the chart. Balls offering a smoother, more arcing motion are placed lower on the chart.

Chart placements are based on testing by BJI ball reviewer Vernon Peterson, selected bowlers with varying release styles, C.A.T.S. results, PBA player input, and discussions with ball company representatives.

### HOOK POTENTIAL

**35-45:** Balls with lower total hook ranges, best suited for lighter oil concentrations. Players with slower speeds or higher rev rates may also prefer balls in this range for medium oil applications.

**45-51:** Balls with medium hook ability, best suited for the vast majority of "typical house shots" and some lower-volume Sport patterns. This hook range should be represented by the "centerpiece" ball in most arsenals.

**51-60+:** Balls with greater total hook, designed for heavier oil volumes. Players with higher speeds or lower rev rates, who need added lane traction, may also prefer balls in this range.

### LENGTH RATINGS

**8-12:** Earlier rolling balls that read the lane sooner. These products generally come factory-sanded with lower grit surfaces, and match up well with speed-dominant styles and those bowling on longer patterns.

**12-15:** Medium-length balls that produce easier length through the midlane. Good for most house shots and medium-volume Sport patterns.

**15-19+:** Balls offering extra length for those bowling on lighter oil concentrations. Also beneficial for slower speed players, or those with higher rev rates needing added push downlane.

### BREAKPOINT SHAPE

**10-13:** Slower-response balls that read the friction areas more gradually. This range may include balls with a urethane or mild reactive cover, designed for a smooth arc to the pocket. Can also help those with higher rev rates control motion and match up well from outside angles of attack.

**13-15:** Balls rated for slightly stronger and quicker reactions when encountering friction areas (as when the ball leaves the oil pattern). This range offers a balance of control and back-end angularity.

**15-18+:** Balls that respond more quickly and aggressively to friction areas. This range can help those with less hand action create more angularity near the pocket. Also preferred when playing deeper inside angles, which generally require more entry angle for above-average pin carry.

# NO HOLES BARRED

# A Hat Trick for a Happy New Year

by **VERNON PETERSON**

**MID-WINTER FEELS LIKE** a good time for a little hockey jargon, right? This month, as we usher in a new year, we do so with a hat trick of new bowling balls. Motiv is sending out two options with famed names and storied brands in the form of the Primal Rage Evolution and the Jackal Onyx. Our third option this month is the new Storm Physix Blackout. We know all black balls have rolled well over the years, and this piece proved to be no exception. Happy New Year to all our readers! We hope 2025 is a very good one for you, both on and off the lanes.

Now, let's talk some shop...

**THE TESTING:** Stephen DeLong and I threw each ball more than 25 times on two patterns: Stone Street, which is similar to what most readers face when bowling in league, and BJ, a modified version of the 2019 USBC Open Championships team-event pattern with more volume, but still falling within the "sport" category. DeLong bowled with Webber International in college, helping that storied squad to two national-television appearances along the way. The two-hander works as a coach at Kegel Training Center. DeLong's PAP is 5 7/8 over and 3/8 up with an RPM of 450 and a launch speed of 18.5 mph. His testing layout is 50 x 5 x 35. I used the same strong layout I have used for all balls reviewed in this column, but it now has a dual angle of 50/4/35 (4 x 3 x 2.5 in the VLS system). My axis point has evolved to 3 3/4 over and 5/8 up.



### MOTIV JACKAL ONYX

64.75 Hook 12.5 Length  
14.5 Breakpoint Shape

**Manufacturer's Intent:** Motiv tells us that "The sanded Jackal Onyx is built for maximum hook and relentless power."

**Core:** Predator V2 Asymmetric. RG: 2.47. Differential: .055. Intermediate Diff: .015. Flare: 6+."

**Coverstock:** Reactive. Color: Solid black, Gray and Red. Finish: 1000 Grit LSS. Scan Numbers: Grit: 2020. RA: 10.20.

**Overview:** The Jackal Onyx brings a strong-hooking, solid bowling ball to the Jackal line to replace the Jackal Ambush. The Jackal Onyx created a lot of area on the Stone Street pattern with a strong, heavy and predictable motion through the pocket area as we crossed 17 to 18 at the arrows with a breakpoint between 5 and 10 at the 42-foot mark. In the same location as the Jackal Ambush, the Jackal Onyx read the pattern 1 foot sooner for a 4-pin ball reaction with a similar launch angle to the breakpoint. On the BJ test pattern, we had to move extremely deep to create a line and area to the pocket, crossing 26 to 27 at the arrows with a breakpoint between 8 and 13 at 41 feet. In the same location as the Jackal Ambush, the Jackal Onyx read the breakpoint 2 feet sooner. Here, we noticed a much stronger midlane motion but stronger continuation down lane, which yielded a Big Four ball reaction. The Jackal Onyx was lined up two to three boards left at the arrows and five boards left with our feet to create a more open launch angle to the breakpoint. The Jackal Onyx is a ball that speed-dominant or rev-deprived players will want in their arsenal for medium-to-longer patterns. It is a very good replacement for the Ambush, with a strong coverstock that helps provide more continuation and cover a few more boards.



### MOTIV PRIMAL RAGE EVOLUTION

58 Hook 16.5 Length  
16.5 Breakpoint Shape

**Manufacturer's Intent:** Motiv reports this ball, that won the brand its first PBA Tour title, brings "a new level of power" to a ball that already provided a particularly angular ball motion.

**Core:** Impulse V2 Symmetric. RG: 2.55. Differential: .050. Flare: 5-6".

**Coverstock:** Propulsion FYJ Pearl Reactive. Color: Red Pearl. Finish: 5500 Grit LSP. Scan Numbers: Grit: 5100. RA: 1.70.

**Overview:** The Primal Rage Evolution brings the Primal Rage back and, in our experience testing it, better than ever with its "Evolution" to today's lanes and game. We created a good look on the Stone Street pattern as we crossed 12 to 13 at the arrows with a breakpoint between the 4 and 9 boards at 46 feet. In the same location as the Jackal Onyx, the Primal Rage Evolution was extremely clean with a 4-foot longer breakpoint, creating a PBA Washout ball reaction. Here, we lined up four to five boards right at the arrows and seven boards right with a much tighter launch angle to the breakpoint. On longer patterns like this one, the Primal Rage Evolution is a good No. 3 ball when the pattern or track area starts to open up for later in the blocks. On the BJ test pattern, we had to move into the middle of the lane to create some hold. This helped us create a great look and area to the pocket with a very strong backend reaction. We lined up crossing 19 to 20 at the arrows with a breakpoint between the 7 to 13 boards at the 45-foot mark. In the same location as the Jackal Onyx, the Primal Rage Evolution was extremely clean through the fronts, with a 4-foot longer breakpoint, yielding a washout result. On patterns like this one, the Primal Rage Evolution is a very good choice as a main ball or when patterns start to open up and you need that high RG and differential bowling ball that is clean and strong on the backend for various styles.



### STORM PHYSIX BLACKOUT

61 Hook 15.5 Length  
16 Breakpoint Shape

**Manufacturer's Intent:** Storm explains that the design of the Physix Blackout "gives bowlers an impressive blend of control and grit" adding that the ball "revs up and showcases dynamic flare potential."

**Core:** Atomic A.I Symmetric. RG: 2.47. Differential: .055. Intermediate Diff: .018. Flare: 6+."

**Coverstock:** NeX Pearl Reactive. Color: Blackout. Finish: 2000 grit Abralon Matte. Scan Numbers: Grit: 2150. RA: 32.10.

**Overview:** With its dull matte finish, the Physix Blackout brings a different looking asymmetric pearl bowling ball to the lanes for medium-to-longer patterns. Out of the box, we thought it was going to hook out of our hands. While it certainly did hook, it was cleaner than we thought and saved a lot for a strong backend reaction. On the Stone Street pattern, the Physix Blackout read the pattern nicely with a strong but predictable backend motion. The matte coverstock helped control wet/dry issues that patterns like this one sometimes present. We were lined up crossing 14 to 15 at the arrows with a breakpoint between the 4 and 10 boards at the 44-foot mark. In the same location as the Lightning Blackout, the Physix Blackout read the pattern 2 to 3 feet sooner, creating a Brooklyn ball reaction. In this case, we lined up six boards left with our feet and two to three boards left at the arrows with a much more open launch angle to the breakpoint. On the BJ test pattern, we had to move deeper into the lane to create area and hold. We were lined up crossing 21 to 22 at the arrows with a breakpoint between the 6 to 12 boards at the 43-foot mark. In the same location as the Lightning Blackout, the Physix Blackout read the pattern 3 feet sooner, creating a runaway Brooklyn ball reaction. On the BJ test pattern, the Lightning Blackout would be our choice, but on the longer Stone Street pattern, the Physix Blackout would be a good No. 1 or 2 ball and our choice for the best option to the pocket. The Physix Blackout is a very versatile asymmetric bowling ball for various styles of players.



# NON-ALC —FOR— BEER LOVERS



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# THE (BOWLING) WORLD ACCORDING TO MARK BUFFA

by GIANMARC MANZIONE

**8 ways of thinking about your fit and how to get it right with Team Canada's hall-of-fame player and renowned ball driller.**

**M**ark Buffa is one of those people about whom one truly can say, “When he speaks, people listen.”

The man is a veteran of the 2003 national-champion Wichita State squad, a nine-time member of the Team Canada program with which he won trios gold at the 2013 World Championships, has been drilling balls for the past 26 years and began doing so at age 16, and is a member of the Canadian Tenpin Federation Hall of Fame. Those accolades amount to the kind of experience that brings plenty of credibility to his words.

And Buffa spoke plenty when he gave a presentation on ball drilling at the International Bowling Pro Shop and Instructors Association (IBPSIA) convention during Bowl Expo last year. The more than hour-long presentation explored a great

variety of topics related to ball drilling. While much of it pertained to the pro-shop operator’s (PSO) perspective on the ball-drilling enterprise, the customer was an ever-present figure in the lion’s share of what Buffa had to say that day.

It is from that perspective — the consumer, the bowler, you — that we gleaned the following eight tips from Buffa’s presentation and a follow-up interview we conducted with him. The tips dig into a broad range of topics addressing ball-drilling and grip or fit, from things as basic as how to think about finding the right PSO to concepts as elevated as why two-handers who bury their fingers in the ball benefit from “excessive” reverse pitch.

Here are those eight key insights, with perspective from the man himself...



**Higher Ed**

*Buffa is a champion of continuing education as a means of elevating the pro-shop experience for the customer.*



1

## Put the 'Pro' in 'Professional'

Ideally, if possible, you want to make sure that you are patronizing a pro shop certified IBPSIA. With the insatiable curiosity that drives his commitment to continually learning about his craft, Buffa embodies the reasons why.

"I pride myself in the fact that we keep ourselves current. I went to the Innovative Camp in October of last year, and, when I signed up, the group over there — even some of the people who knew who I was — were like, 'Why are you sitting back here with us?'" Buffa chuckles.

"But I want to see how Hank [Boomershine] teaches the class, because I teach HOTS classes (Hands-On Training Session) in Canada. I want to see how the other instructors handle certain things, I want to work with [renowned ball driller and grip expert Cecil Scarborough] and people of that nature.

"Be it IBPSIA or any other association, the small tidbits you can learn at any sort of training, even if it's just one thing, it's an extra feather in your cap" and, by extension, an extra benefit to you, the bowler looking for the best chance at improving on the lanes.

2

## Span Plan

One easy way to avoid physical pain while bowling, which never should be the case and always is a red flag to investigate, is to monitor your span to make sure nothing has changed. In the case of youth bowlers, whose hands are growing as the years progress, this is especially important.

As Buffa says, "In the end, a good fit should not hurt you. That's the base principle. A good fit should enable you to change your release or manipulate different axis rotations easily. You can't be handcuffed with stuff like that."

One way to avoid a fit that causes pain or prohibits you from deploying the kind of versatility with hand releases or axis rotation he mentions is to run a little check on your span now and then. Try this: With your thumb inserted all the way into the base of the thumbhole, placing your fingers directly over the fingerholes enables you to see how far the first crease of your middle and ring finger extends. "The finger crease should be at least in the middle of the hole," Buffa says, adding that, even in that case, the span might be a bit long.

"In a best-case scenario, it should be in the top third of the hole."

### Words of Caution

Buffa cautions that YouTube only can go so far for the consumer, who ultimately benefits from in-person engagement with an IBPSIA-certified PSO.

3

## Is YouTube Your Go-To? Tread Carefully.

One of the challenges presented by our increasingly digital society's unprecedented access to information is practicing the discernment necessary to distinguish between credible and non-credible information.

There no longer is anything unusual about youth bowlers teaching themselves how to bowl by studying videos of Jason Belmonte, but when it comes to the role of the pro-shop operator in your game, you may want to tread carefully when attempting to arm yourself with information you find on YouTube.

Buffa is personally familiar with that impulse toward a self-taught approach.

"I remember when I was a kid, there was a local TV show on the local sports channel in French, and whoever won that week [on the PBA Tour], we would try to mimic their style. If Amleto [Monacelli] had made a show, we would try to do that crazy backswing. Everyone tried to do that, but that's being a fan, and that's what I tell people: 'If you want to get good at bowling, you've got to be a fan of bowling.'"

When it comes to searching for technical knowledge on aspects of the game such as ball motion or even ball drilling, however, that approach to gaining knowledge can present a bit of a slippery slope.

"Some YouTube channels have credibility, but some don't. Not all online sources are credible," Buffa advises.

"Now, people are asking, 'What's the advantage of joining IBPSIA when I can just watch a YouTube video?' I try to educate myself using forums, using Reddit, using YouTube. My background is in computer science, so, a lot of the time, when you don't know something, there are a ton of resources in the computer science world, tons of open sources you can learn from.

"But, in the end, you still need that education. You still need to know how to engineer this stuff. You can't learn the entire thing on YouTube. You can watch a video on YouTube of somebody drilling a bowling ball on a flowerpot. I don't think that's what you want to do. You have to tread carefully with YouTube, and know that there are more credible sources such as the IBPSIA YouTube channel. That's what becomes hard in today's day and age — knowing what's good and what's not."

Even in the case of those youth bowlers learning their craft by studying Belmo videos, Buffa says, "One of the hardest things to learn is ball reaction, how to watch ball reaction. And one of the easiest ways to do that is by watching a PBA telecast when they put things in slow motion. You can really see when the ball changes direction, when it starts to slow down, when it starts to lose axis rotation."

But — and here's the kicker — "You need someone to point it out to you. When I'm watching with youth players, I can then, as a pro-shop operator, take [their amazement at flying messengers and such] and say, 'Yeah, but watch this little intricacy.' The beauty with YouTube is you can rewind it. When you have access to this good data and good platforms like YouTube, now, as a pro-shop operator, you can use that to your advantage. More often than not, we'll put YouTube videos up all day in the store just to get people to watch and they're like, 'Wow! I've never seen a guy throw it like that!' It's especially great for the kids."



#### *Ideal Span*

*Buffa advises that the first crease of your fingers extend over the top third of the fingerholes for an ideal span.*

#### *Span Jam*

*You know your equipment has a span problem when this is as far as your fingers will go when you put your hand in your ball.*

## 4

### **The Beauty of the 'Swiss-Cheese Ball'**

Trial and error can be critical to establishing the best fit possible for every ball in your arsenal, and you, as the customer in the pro shop, can enhance your PSO's ability to experiment with you by bringing in what Buffa calls a "Swiss-cheese ball," that ball you have laying around, don't throw much anymore if at all, and don't mind plugging and redrilling multiple times to test out different fits until you find one that works.

One such customer in Buffa's experience highlights the efficacy of this idea. A player came in complaining of an ailment Buffa found to be unusual — pain in the tip of his thumb.

"I'd never seen that before. I said, 'Alright, do you have a ball that we can play with?' he said, 'Yeah.' So, we kind of just threw a slug in it, made a quick change, tested it, and it worked from the first shot. It may ordinarily

take a few tries, but, this is a case where you as the consumer are having a nagging problem with something, so give yourself a budget of maybe 50 to 100 dollars and try a few things."

Most such consumers are likely to find PSOs willing to experiment with them in this way, Buffa says. Think about it from their point of view: "They want to solve the problem for you, too, because bowling is a small world and we all talk about our local pro shops, and if someone solves the problem, they gain a feather in their cap."



#### *Base Fit*

*Always be sure to put your thumb in all the way to the base of the thumbhole when setting up in your stance or stretching your fingers over the fingerholes to check on your span.*

## 5

### **Your Thumb is Not Round; Why Should Your Thumbhole Be?**

Whether you're using an interchangeable thumb insert or a conventional-grip ball, Buffa counsels the importance of using an oval thumbhole, as that is more customized to the true shape of one's thumb than a round thumbhole ever could be.

"Listen, it's as simple as opening your palm, looking at your hand, and seeing that nothing's round," Buffa says. "If you're equipped to do ovals [as a PSO], do them. How often do you see posts where people are complaining about the shop next door drilling balls for 25 dollars? If you're just going to do round holes, fine, charge 25 dollars. If you want to fit a square into a round hole, well, you just make the hole bigger. But that's not a pro-shop operator; that's a hole-maker."



Buffa draws upon a sartorial analogy here.

"I'm not just buying a pair of trousers off of the shelf; I'm going to a tailor. When I put it on in the fitting room, it should fit," Buffa explains. "I see people from all walks of life come through our place, including people who are not bowlers."

"I was just talking to this gentleman yesterday who was amazed that bowling balls don't come with holes in them. That's because, when he goes to the bowling center, the balls have holes in them. He said, 'How do you do it?' I said, 'Well, we are like a tailor; we custom-fit every bowling ball. Not every ball fits the same. Not everyone's got the same hand.'"

Alright, that's certainly a conversation with a novice. But, when Buffa's way of understanding his craft as that of a tailor culminates in part with his insistence on oval thumbholes for all, he has encountered resistance even among bowlers. That resistance is misplaced.

One day, someone showed up with a bottle of nail polish at a demo Buffa was working.

"He takes this bottle of nail polish and he drops it in the thumbhole of a bowling ball, and he says, 'If this bottle doesn't fit my thumbhole, the thumbhole is no good.' And this wasn't an oval-shaped bottle. I said, 'Hold up your thumb and look at it.' It was like a cobra head, flat

#### **Do You**

*Just using the same pitch as Chris Barnes may not work for you because everyone's hands and anatomy are different.*

and wide. I said, 'Look at the bottle, and look at this.' I took the bottle and I put it behind his thumb, and you could clearly see that they weren't the same shape."

"There were about 30 people there, and I am drilling for all these people, and I asked him to give me a couple more minutes to drill for these people and then we'll spend some time together. I had just finished this ball for another client with an oval thumb, the whole nine yards. He ended up taking that guy's ball and throwing it, and he came into the pro shop and said he loved what I did for that customer and he wanted the same thing."

Buffa laughs.

"It's like, 'You just came to me with a round bottle talking about it as if it was gospel!' I said, 'Just wait and see what it will feel like when I am done drilling your ball.'"

So, remember: oval thumbs, kids. Oval thumbs.

# 6

## You Are Not Chris Barnes

Buffa's admonishment in conversation with that novice in which he advised that not all hands are the same may seem like a pretty basic or even obvious caution. However, with enough regularity that Buffa addresses it in a tone of some urgency, that idea becomes especially important in the case of customers searching for that magic pitch that is going to revolutionize their game overnight.

"More often than not — you see it online and you see it on all these platforms — 'Oh, what pitch does [Chris] Barnes use in his thumb? I want to use that.' But you don't have the same anatomy as Chris Barnes or Kris Prather, and you might not put your hand in the ball the same way that Kris Prather does, because he buries his fingers in the ball. That's not what you want to preach, but this guy's a pro athlete and that's how he does it."

A good PSO's job is to establish a reliable base fit for the customer and make tweaks based off that to ensure everything is customized to the customer's anatomy and particular preferences.

"There's no cookie-cutter way to do it, and that's the beauty of fitting. It is an art, and the only way to get good at it is to see a ton of hands and make a ton of mistakes," Buffa chuckles.

# 7

## Know How You Put Your Hand in the Ball

In the league of largely 150-average bowlers Buffa bowls these days, it is not uncommon for him to observe people putting all three fingers into the bowling ball at once.

"I keep repeating to one of my teammates, 'Hey, fingers first, thumb second.' Because the thumb comes out first and the fingers come out last. And they're like, 'Oh, yeah! I forgot!'"

What happens with players who put all three fingers into the ball at once is, "They get stuck in it because they didn't put their hands in it properly."

While Buffa advises a fingers-first, thumb-second approach generally — one whereby the fingers go in up to the first crease and the thumb goes in all the way to the base of the thumbhole — he also acknowledges the unorthodox approaches to putting one's hand in the ball that sometimes emerge on PBA Tour telecasts.

Take 20-time PBA Tour champion Tommy Jones, for instance, who is renowned for putting his thumb in first, then his fingers. But the point here is that he does it this way every time and with reason. There is a method to the madness, so to speak, just as there should be a deliberateness about the way you put your hand in the ball — an understanding of how you do that and why you do it that way. Be curious about these things.

"When it comes to these pro athletes, hey, whatever floats their boat! These guys do it for a living. I'm actually good friends with Tommy because he was on Team USA when I was bowling for Team

Canada, and my hands get really dry in the winter-time — especially now, because it's about 10 below here.

"I started using [Tommy Jones' method of putting his hand in the ball] at certain times because I felt like I did get a better grip that way. Once you get to a high level, everyone's got their little ritual or their ways of doing that."

Buffa calls to mind the example of Kyle Troup, "how meticulous he is with putting his hand in the ball, and on the ball, always the same way. You'll watch [the pros] going about a certain routine — looking at the ball, blowing in it if they have to, then securing their fingers and securing their thumb. At that high level, that's where they tinker the most. Norm Duke was one of the best at that with tinkering with the tape and all that."

Buffa adds that, "When you go to Junior Gold, the ones who make the telecast have those mannerisms, while other kids will just pick up the ball, get up on the approach and run to the foul line."

This is yet another benefit of patronizing an experienced, even IBPSIA-certified, PSO. They bring to the customer what Buffa describes as "a proximity" to great players — opportunities that present themselves to ask the greats, "Hey, why do you do that?" Just asking those questions to add more to your own knowledge [as a PSO]," which then gets passed on to their customers.

The bottom line here for Buffa is the following: "Bowling is a sport of repetition. You need to make sure the ball fits the same way every shot."

#### **Everything the Same**

Buffa marvels at the meticulousness with which Kyle Troup puts his hand on, and in, his ball the same way as he sets up for each shot.



# 8

## **Pitch Perfect**

While there is no cookie-cutter "magic pitch" that will turn a bowler into Chris Barnes, there certainly are plenty of scenarios that call for a particular pitch philosophy. One such case that Buffa addressed during his presentation at Bowl Expo is that of two-handers who tend to "bury their fingers" in the ball. Given the rapidly proliferating two-handed style, this may be a widespread circumstance that only will become more prevalent over time.

"If they bury their fingers, they usually go in between both creases, which is just a straight bone, so it won't bend at that spot," Buffa explains. "By using excessive reverse pitch, it allows them to still bury their fingers but not get excessive pressure on that bone itself. Allowing things like Vacu Grips to give them that suction, give them that grip, but then not hurt their joints in the meantime. It gives them more of a feeling of palming the ball."

None of this is to say that excessive reverse pitch can't be taken too far. In Buffa's experience, it can indeed go off the rails and need to be reined in.

#### **Pitch Point**

One reason Kris Prather's pitch may not work the same magic for you is that he is known to "bury his fingers" in his ball and likely has pitches designed to accommodate that tendency.



Buffa recalls working with a customer whose fit featured an inch-and-a-quarter reverse pitch in his ring finger, "And it was like, 'OK, let's slow down a bit. I don't think that's your problem. Let's go back to something more normal and try to figure it out.'

"In his case, he was almost burying his fingers too much. He was into size 9 inserts from Vise, which is massive, and he's smaller than me. We went back to basics with a tighter grip size and proceeded from there."

Buffa refers to Webber International coach Del Warren on this matter, "because he sees it a lot with his collegiate team, and it seems like a good baseline is about half-an-inch to three-quarters reverse. When I teach the HOTS classes, I tell them to start at a half-an-inch reverse and kind of work from there."

## **Conclusions**

Throughout this piece, Buffa repeatedly has referred to what he calls a "base fit." Nothing he has said here applies as beneficially to your game as it will if you establish a base fit with an experienced and credible PSO who then can make any needed tweaks from there, all customized to your anatomy and your needs.

Few who read magazines like this one are unfamiliar with the phrase credited to the legendary Mo Pinel, "You can't out-bowl a bad fit." But it does help to at least have a fit to begin with — a base fit that will serve as the canvas on which you then can experiment until you do stumble upon something that truly generates the kind of "Ah-Hah!" moment capable of elevating your game in an impactful way.

Once you have found a PSO whose credibility and expertise earn your trust, have those conversations with that person. Be daring enough to experiment, bring in that "Swiss-cheese ball" and tinker to your heart's content. Be mindful of how and why you put your hand in the ball on the approach. Don't just watch those YouTube videos alone; do so with your PSO, who in all likelihood will delight in your curiosity and the discovery you can experience together.

It can be said that no one is rooting more heartily for your success on the lanes than your PSO. It fills them with pride to know their expertise has enhanced your enjoyment of the game, and, as Buffa says, that good old word-of-mouth puts a feather in their cap and brings that new customer to their door. ■



# SEA CHANGE

**Katie's Crew**

Katie Thornton's SCAD-Savannah squad is among the programs trying to put the "power" in "powerhouse" on the college-bowling scene in the 2024-25 season.



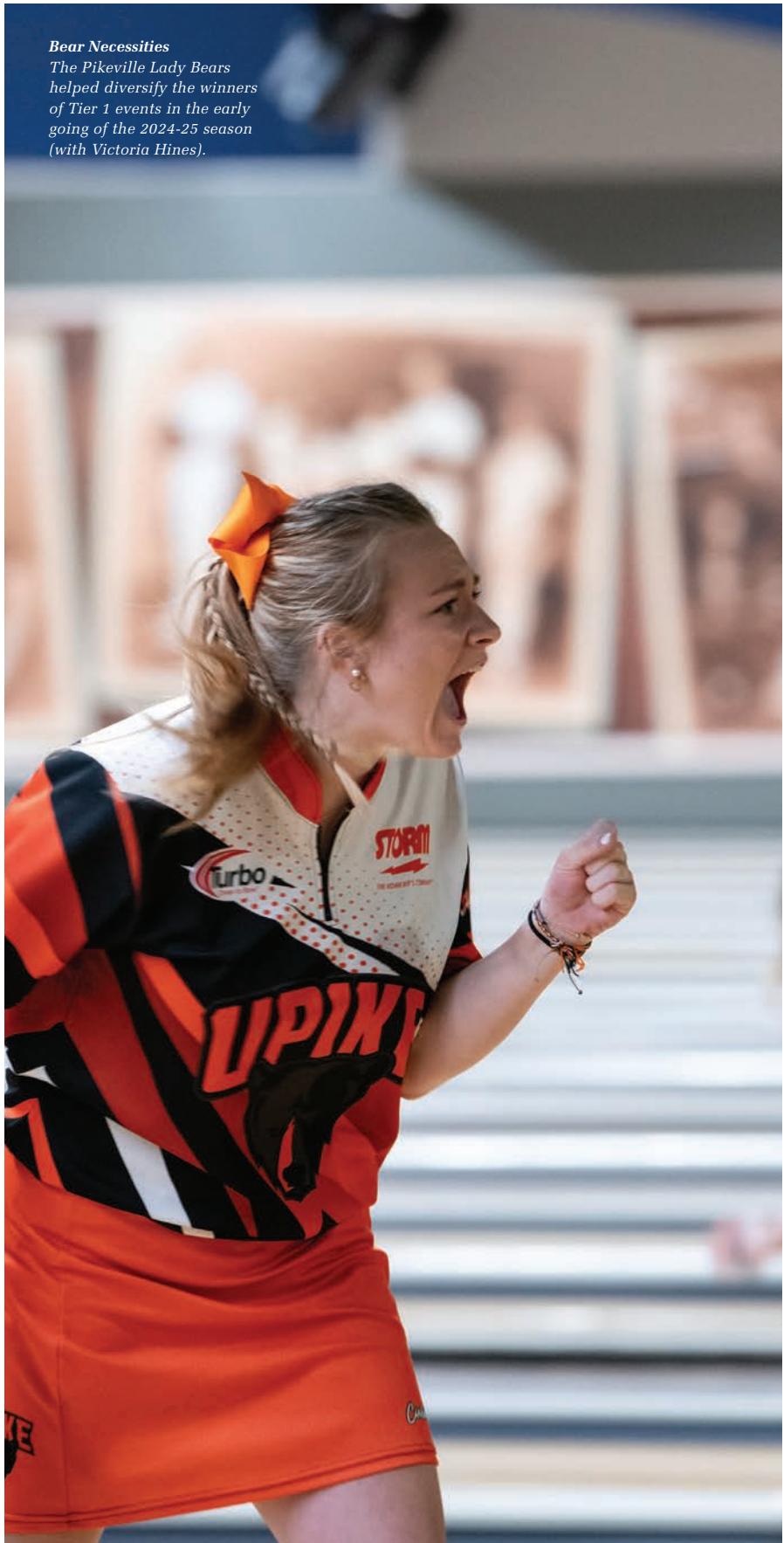
*Why the halfway point of the 2024-2025 season suggests that the face of college bowling may be changing in a big way.*

BY SYDNEY BRUMMETT



**Bear Necessities**

The Pikeville Lady Bears helped diversify the winners of Tier 1 events in the early going of the 2024-25 season (with Victoria Hines).



**For decades, pre-season** hype has cast a spotlight on three or four powerhouse programs presumed to be front-runners for a national title. Here at the halfway point of the 2024-25 season, however, that narrative appears to be undergoing some significant revision, and the change may be here to stay.

The Midwest Collegiate Classic, held in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin, in October, provided one such indication. There, two programs respectively founded in 2010 and during 2020-2021 season — the Marian University-Indiana men and Coe College women — earned the first Tier I titles in program history.

Those victories kicked off a series of wins highlighting the parity across the college bowling landscape today, culminating with six different champions in each of the season's first Tier I events. Following Marian and Coe's breakthrough wins, the Newman Jets men's squad won their home tournament — the Mid-States Championships — alongside Wichita State, who captured the women's title.

The following month, the University of Pikeville Lady Bears and the Savannah College of Art and Design-Savannah men respectively won the Bowlero Southern Classic in Marietta, Georgia.

Such a diversity of winners, including two first-time Tier I champions, across the season's first three Tier I events may have surprised some, but those less surprised rank among the most seasoned veterans of the college-bowling scene.

"There are more teams now that believe they can be competitive and beat some of the top-tier teams. Some of those teams have done that and continue to. It will only evolve so that more and more teams also believe [in themselves]," said Greg Hatzisavvas, the current President of the National Collegiate Bowling Coaches Associa-

tion (NCBCA) and formerly the longtime coach at William Paterson.

University of Pikeville women's coach Bobby Brown, who has found himself in the midst of college-bowling stars since his own career at Morehead State, agrees.

"College bowling has become more competitive. On the women's side, it is as competitive as it's ever been," he observed.

That parity echoes changes underway throughout college sports in general. With the confluence of NIL (name, image and likeness), increased exposure of women's sports, and the power of the transfer portal all coming together at once, student-athletes have never been in a better position to have positive consequences for their time in collegiate athletics.

Bowling is no different.

Paralleling our friends in collegiate basketball, college bowling is nearing the cusp of 20 schools that have an opportunity to win a National Championship in the 2025 season.

"Everything is moving in a direction of more good programs, with more talent spread across the country," Hatzisavvas said.

The main drivers of this development are two key variables:

1. The growth of Junior Gold since 1998, with more and more colleges and universities grasping at talented players who continue to bowl the tournament in greater numbers and could help their programs compete at the highest level.
2. A proposal from the NCBCA to the United States Bowling Congress (USBC) to limit the roster number available to teams to 25 for the first semester, with a maximum of 28 roster spots allowed thereafter. This allows for a higher distribution of players across established teams, and it also increases the demand for programs, which con-

tinues to allow more institutions to add bowling to their athletics department. A little context here: When college bowling first was established, there were zero limitations to the roster. Several years in, a limit for rosters began with 35 for each higher-education institution. Several years later, the NCBCA proposed to USBC a limit of 25, a change that was adopted.

### FIRST-TIMERS

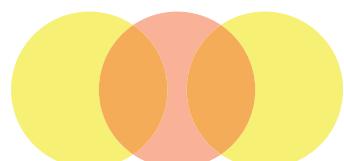
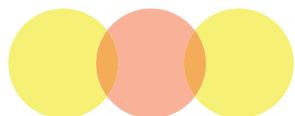
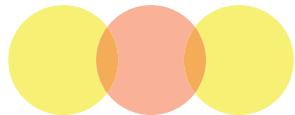
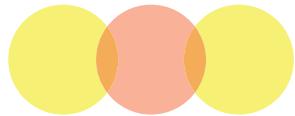
For Jordan Gray, the Head Coach of Marian University, the win in Wauwatosa was a full circle moment. Gray himself competed in the event in 2010, kicking off the collegiate venture for Marian.

"Opening the program with Wauwatosa as the first event — the first Tier I we bowled — was a rude awakening. The pattern wasn't hard, but we did not strike as much as everybody else. Fourteen years later, it is awesome to see that we have the quality to compete at a high level," Gray said.

The program advanced to the Intercollegiate Team Championships in 2013 and 2014, then returned again in 2024 after a decade-long drought. Staying a part of the community that consistently tops the standings is a challenging feat.

With less time under his belt as coach of the Coe women's program, Coach Randy Dodge said that winning the first Tier I in program history "really shows how well the kids are taking to the program and working hard. It means you can take grassroots programs with small-town kids, rather than All-Americans or nationally ranked players, and actually win."

Being a small college in Iowa that has only had a bowling program for a few seasons and a non-scholarship institution presents its challenges with respect to recruitment.





#### Hanging Tough

Former William Paterson coach Greg Hatzisavvas observes that a proliferation of college teams today believe they can hang tough with the top-tier programs.

"We basically built from the ground up," Gray explained. "The kids buy into the system and show that it can work that way."

The first year of their program, the team was ranked just fifth from last in the entire country. Now, the rest of the country is aware of the talent and potential Coe bring to the table, coming in at No. 6 on the first NCBCA Coaches Poll of the season.

The success that Marian and Coe are enjoying this year demonstrates that winning is possible for any program that buys into the amount of work it takes to do so. But, more than mere outcomes, the overarching focus for programs like these is a commitment to ongoing growth, sticking to the process of figuring out how to actively work together, and increasing the bowling IQ of the entire program. Yes, the run at a title drives coaches and players alike, but they know that doesn't happen without pursuing the aforementioned goals.

#### PERENNIAL HOPEFULS

The surge of interest in college bowling has led prospective student athletes to lock in on universities that are competitive but yet to solidify themselves as annual contenders for the Helmer Cup. The University of Pikeville ladies, along with the Newman and SCAD-Savannah men, have consistently had their time in the ring. These squads continue to show themselves to be instinctively resilient. Finding a way to compete at the highest level is not for the faint of heart, and the leaders of these programs do so with grit and a never-quit attitude.

The University of Pikeville Lady Bears, who took home the Bowlero Southern Classic Championship in November and are led by Junior Brianna Rodgers, have won the Helmer Cup twice and now strive to bowl under the CBS Sports TV lights once again. But Brown, as is the case with aforementioned programs, is keen to focus less on outcome

and more on process and even gratitude.

"It's very easy to get consumed with winning, but the part we miss is that giving yourselves an opportunity to compete for a national championship is almost as good as winning," Brown said.

Newman men's assistant coach Justin Crumley, who also entered the space after his own tenure lacing them up as a Newman Jet, parallels the thoughts of Brown.

"The goal is the same goal we have every year. The expectation is that we qualify for the national championships and have the goal to bowl for the Helmer Cup."

The Newman Jets' victory at the Mid-States Championships would appear to put them well on their way toward chasing down that goal. Here again, for Crumley, process is key.

"Consistency and commitment to the process [is the driver for our team's success]. We talk a lot about balance and fundamentals," he said.



#### Game Time

Thornton says without hesitation that she believes it's time her program brought home a Helmer Cup.

The program's Tier I win this season presents an opportunity to celebrate the fact that those small steps are pushing them toward big things.

"Winning is hard. These events are stacked with a lot of great teams. Wins are few and far between. It is a good demonstration of what [the team] is capable of," said Crumley of the stock he puts into winning Tier I events.

Keenly aware that every team but one is going to walk out of the season finishing somewhere behind the national championship, teams that continuously knock on the door have to find a mentality that allows them to consistently, year in and year out, continue to show up, and do so regardless of the outcome. They must believe that it is not a matter of if, but when that work will pay off.

#### CLOSING IN

The 'when' seems closer to the present moment than ever for one team that falls

into this fighting group: the SCAD-Savannah men.

With just its third Tier I win in program history at the Bowlero Southern Classic in November, the team is gearing itself up for what may be its most historic year yet. Ranked No. 1 in the first National Collegiate Bowling Coaches Poll of the season, there is an undeniable difference in the Bees this year.

"If you come into our locker room, you are going to hear that it is time to bring home the Helmer Cup," coach Katie Thornton said when asked about the goals for the team this season.

It is the one results-oriented accomplishment that has not been completed for the Bees. Having won the NAIA National Championships just last season, not only are the Bees catching the sights of other college coaches, but also recruits, too.

While it is more typical to see major recruits go to major powerhouses, coach Thornton and the Bees have found

themselves in the winning category of the recruiting process, as well, with the signing of the Jordan brothers — Landon and Griffin, both superstars on the youth-bowling scene.

"If you come on campus and you are anywhere within athletics, then you know bowling is a big deal here. We have excellent support from the top down, and I know it is nearly impossible to have built what we have without that," Thornton said.

As athletes come to visit the University, they are not only drawn to the excellent education at SCAD-Savannah, which often is referred to as the Harvard of art schools, but they are also drawn to the leaders of the program.

"In terms of getting bigger players and stuff like that, these are the people they are looking up to. 'I wanna be like that person, so I want to go here,'" Thornton reflected on her main emphasis for high-profile recruits.

**Peak Performance**  
Pikeville coach Bobby Brown believes women's college bowling is as competitive as it's ever been.



She adds that players like Benjamin Martinez, a rising PBA star, and Alex Glinski, a member of Team USA 2024, set the program up for ultimate success. One important way they do so is by instilling a culture that empowers younger players to strive to not only want to compete like their role models, but also be the person that their future teammates have grown to be during their time at the University.

"I really don't like to give myself credit — I think it starts with me — but the culture comes from the players, and it is my job to teach them how to create it and be better people. At the end of the day, they are the ones who do it and lead," said Thornton about her athletes' ability to maintain a culture of excellence by focusing on the task of being good people.

The players and coaches of these programs like SCAD-Savannah and Newman are going to constantly challenge the powerhouses each April. That crop of annual contenders anticipated to make a championship run as each season kicks off may soon count a new collection of regular contenders among their ranks.

#### **BOTTOM LINE**

Many coaches and athletes lean on the generations before them to provide a steady foundation for excellence.

"A big thing with coaching is you have to learn how to speed up the learning curve, and the coaches and athletes have learned how to speed up the learning curve," Hatzisavvas says of the difference maker to become a competitive team.

The coaching over the years has improved dramatically.

"You had coach Gordon Vadakin" of Wichita State and, from the University of Nebraska, "Bill Straub and some other legends. But now, what I saw while coaching is the evolution of more and more folks who bowled on tour becoming coaches in college. You have people like Kim Terrell-Kearney and [for a time with the now-defunct Tennessee Southern], Bob Learn Jr. coaching. That certainly added to the ability of the teams to improve," Hatzisavvas continued.

In addition to the legends of the tours bringing their experience to bear for up-and-coming collegiate athletes, "I also think there are a lot of exciting changes with younger coaches that have bowled for some of the successful programs, such as Katie Thornton, and Andrew Dekowski at Pikeville.

"You have a lot of younger coaches that come from a good program, so now that wealth of knowledge is spreading

across college bowling more. This next generation of coaches is coming," Hatzisavvas added.

Just like the coaches, the athletes are invested in the success of their teams and of college bowling.

"At the end of the day, they do it because they love it and love the people they are standing next to," says Thornton when reflecting on what makes college bowling worth watching.

As Wichita State women's head coach Holly Harris puts it, "Eight, 10, or 12 people doing one thing together is so much fun. To see the joy that they have spill out in bowling... we don't have that in any other part of bowling."

The love and dedication at this level within the sport is addicting, not because of the shots for a national championship, trophies that are held, or All-American or Player-of-the-Year honors. It is because the joy that athletes share with one another provides infectious optimism. It is in that way, above all others, that these young people do what their coaches most hope to see: grow in character during their time with their programs both on and off the lanes.

And, who knows? Maybe hoist a Helmer Cup or two along the way. ■

# TIM FOY JR.: READY TO WIN

Why the time is now for this Delaware standout to make his mark on the PBA Tour in 2025.

by EMIL WILLIAMS JR.

## GAME 7.

Round of 8.

Winner advances to the televised finals to face EJ Tackett in the opening match of the 2024 Professional Bowlers Association Delaware Open.

The venue is Mid-County Lanes and Entertainment located in Middletown, Delaware, which is just one hour south of Seaford, Delaware — the home of Tim Foy Jr.

Foy admittedly is nervous. Heck, who wouldn't be, considering the circumstances?

"I remember at that moment, I wasn't even sure if I had legs," Foy will recall.

Needing a 10-pin conversion and a nine-count fill to shut out Nate Stubler, the 37-year-old two-hander steps onto the approach with a chance to live out a dream in front of a packed house filled with family and friends.

He delivers. It is a shot that will provide him with a momentum he will ride for the duration of the year.

"I was so nervous because I knew I needed nine to make the show," Foy will say as he looks back on that signal moment in his career. "And then, I am at home. I got everyone I know in the building. I'm comfortable in that building, and I don't know if that made me more nervous or less nervous. I don't know. All I wanted was to give myself a chance."

That moment, and the season that followed for Foy, demonstrate that he is poised to win his first PBA national title in 2025. Let's just take a closer look at the highlight reel to see why, shall we?

In July, Foy threw a clutch strike in the 10th frame to help his squad, Before the 1st Frame #4, capture the Regular Team Eagle

at the United States Bowling Congress Open Championships.

In August, he snatched one of 12 coveted exemptions at the 2024 PBA Tour Trials. The event featured 48 games across four different centers with four different lane patterns. Earning a full-time exemption means he no longer has to qualify through a PTQ to advance to the main field in each PBA event.

If that's not enough, Foy dominated the East Region on the 2024 PBA Regional Tour. He won four titles in nine events (along with three runner-up finishes) and qualified for the Regional Players Invitational.

Foy attributes his success in 2024 to many things, including his consistency across his mental and physical games and removing his thumb from his two-handed delivery, which changed his ball roll.

His family, though, is No. 1 on the list.

They help keep his work-life balance in check. When he's not bowling, you can find Foy zipping from softball games to gymnastics meets. Without his family, "none of this even happens."



## Hard Knocks

*Foy says his experience as a prison guard helps keep his perspective grounded both on and off the lanes.*

photography  
Nathan Mays

And, with 13 years and counting as a prison corrections officer, he's grown to cherish his accomplishments just a little more.

"It keeps you grounded," said Foy, regarding his full-time job. "And it's worked, honestly. It helps the mentality a little bit. Just the environment that you're in, it kind of toughens you up and puts certain things into perspective. For me, personally, I always see the better side of

things in life with the job, so it allows me to enjoy the things that I've been able to achieve a little more than I probably could have if it wasn't for the job.

"I got to enjoy the Eagle a little more because I can understand how precious life really is and how quickly things can change in one's life. I hear all the stories from everyone who's currently incarcerated."

This might be your first introduction to Foy. But, he first introduced himself to the national bowling world at the 2021 PBA Players Championship East Region final. There, Foy bowled Chris Via in the opening match and watched as Via tossed the 30th televised 300 game in PBA history.

He took the experience in stride, but just one month later at the USBC Masters, he gave the world a true glimpse of his future. After falling behind in his opening match against Jason Belmonte, Foy battled back to defeat the player whom many believe to be the greatest of all-time.

His good friend and former ball rep, Eric Krauss, was there to witness that comeback and his Tour Trials performance.

"He's not scared of anything or anyone," Krauss said. "He has no fear. It doesn't matter if it's Belmo or EJ or Simo, he's not scared. The Tour Trials probably was the best I've ever seen him bowl. He was super consistent, and I think he bowled two games below 190 the entire week. He never

gave away frames, stayed ahead of the moves and made all the right ball choices. But, the Masters probably is 1B."

Foy has been blessed to be around hall-of-fame talent for many years in the form of Parker Bohn III. Foy's father, Tim Sr., and Bohn grew up together competing in the same bowling center, while "Timmy" held Bohn in high regard as his idol.

Bohn has watched Foy continue to add to his bag of tricks, which gives him a chance to succeed on a weekly basis.

"I think the biggest thing he's learned is how to allow his ball to float through the front part of the lane," Bohn said. "Any superstar on tour has figured out how to eliminate the front part of the lane. When you figure that out, now you only have to worry about controlling the back part."

"The next thing that he's learned is how to become a better spare shooter. Most of those guys that go out on the road, they can throw plenty of strikes, but filling frames? They don't realize how important that is until after they're out on the road for possibly a year or two."

And where does the PBA Tour kick off this month? Delaware.

"I'm hoping to start the year off with a bang," Foy says

If anyone appears poised to do just that as a new season dawns on the PBA Tour, it is Tim Foy Jr. ■



**Encore**  
Foy's Tour Trials success felt like an inevitable byproduct of his terrific 2024 season.

## THE RUNDOWN

Foy may still strike some as a newer name on the national bowling scene, but he is not new to those who have crossed paths with the man on the lanes. They know what he has done, what he is capable of, and how unsurprising it will be to see him join the spotlight of champions on the PBA Tour in 2025. Here is a rundown of key accomplishments in the 37-year-old's career at both the regional and national levels...

### CAREER NATIONAL TV APPEARANCES

#### 2021 PBA Players Championship East Region Finals

- Finished fifth
- COVID-replacement for Bill O'Neill

#### 2024 PBA Delaware Open

- Qualified fourth, finished fourth
- Defeated EJ Tackett in opening round

### PBA REGIONAL TOUR

#### 2024 PBA East Region Finishes

- 8th - PBA First State Doubles Classic presented by Anchor Buick/GMC
- 1st - PBA Rita Justice Classic presented by Bally's Dover Casino Resort
- 2nd - PBA Bowlers Supply/Storm Open
- 3rd - PBA BowlerX Open
- 2nd - PBA Kingpins Family Fun Center BowlTV RPI Open
- 1st - PBA Bowlers Discount Pro Shop Open
- 2nd - PBA Howell Lanes Open
- 1st - PBA East Providence Lanes/StrikeFX Open
- 1st - PBA Fort Meade Open

# ASHLY GALANTE: HARD WORK BEATS TALENT

From stout stats to a sterling work ethic, all indications are that the future is now for this PWBA Tour veteran.

by EMIL WILLIAMS JR.

**"WORK, WORK, WORK,"** work, work, work."

That might be one line from the chorus of Rihanna's smash hit, "Work," but it's been a way of life for Ashly Galante since she first picked up a bowling ball.

A potent work ethic developed through years of constant training has allowed Galante to see her true potential as a pro. That potential began to peek through the clouds on a consistent basis during the previous two seasons on the Professional Women's Bowling Association Tour.

It's a major reason why the 36-year-old right-hander looks poised to take another step forward in her development in 2025 and claim her first PWBA Tour title.

"I love it," said Galante, regarding her work ethic. "I always have. I've worked at it since I was a kid. From the moment I started bowling until at least (age) 18, I remember I bowled four to six hours a day."

Galante enjoyed being challenged and would attempt to roll as many games of 200 or better as she could while playing the half board or the fourth arrow to feed her mindset. Multiple games of "low-ball," which is meant to improve spare shooting, became another item on the self-created practice regimen.

"I remember coaches would come over and say, 'That's what separates you from everybody else. You're here practicing spares and nobody else will do that,'" Galante said. "To me, it was about winning. It's about what I am going to do that will help me accomplish something even better and even greater in the future. That was always my focus."

The future is here for Galante, and the proof is in the numbers.

During the 2023 season, Galante finished in the top 12 four times in 11 events and cashed in five other stops. She just missed advancing to her first career stepladder finals when she finished sixth at the 2023 PWBA Pepsi Open. She also led qualifying and finished third at the PWBA Re-gional Showdown.

By comparison, Galante finished in the top 12 just four times from 2015-2022.

In 2024, she notched her most important finish to date at the Greater Detroit Open — fourth.

After years of the stepladder finals feeling "just out of reach," Galante followed a 1-5 start to match play with a perfect final round to qualify as the event's fifth seed. She had finally closed a round like that great New York Yankees closer Mariano Rivera.

"It was amazing," said Galante, who also was selected to Team USA in 2024.



## *Looking Forward*

Galante plans to lean on her forward-looking focus and work ethic for a successful 2025 PWBA Tour season.



#### **A Confident Mind**

*Making her first PWBA telecast in 2024 provided Galante with a burst of confidence she plans to ride on tour this year.*

"You have to have that belief you can make it. I just remember it didn't feel real in the moment. It felt like it was something that wasn't happening after having a chance to reflect on it. Sometimes, I wondered if that was possible, but making my first show certainly helped my confidence. This is something that I can do. I can do this. I can do more."

Five-time champion and major winner Dasha Kovalova knows Galante is on the cusp. Kovalova and Galante are roommates on tour, but most importantly, they are friends. Friends don't let friends go through adversity alone, and the two have been perfect for each other on and off the lanes.

Whether it is playing video games like The Legend of Zelda on Nintendo Switch or drawing and creating art together, their relationship has meant the world not only to Galante, but to Kovalova.

Kovalova knew Galante belonged on that stage and was ecstatic to watch it unfold. As an athlete, she understands

the self-doubt that can hinder an athlete from their destiny and enjoyed watching Galante obtain "physical proof" of what she could achieve.

She also watched the 2023 PWBA Regional Showdown on BowlTV, and despite not being in attendance, she could tell something was different during Galante's performance. A champion's confidence was beginning to show.

"She carried herself differently on the lanes," Kovalova said. "There is a certain stillness in a player before they take it to the next level. It was calmer; it was more calculated. It was more like, 'I'm ready to do this, and I'm not afraid.' It's like, 'I'm ready to take on the responsibility that comes with becoming a champion.'"

While Kovalova has been instrumental as a roommate and friend, the coaching of Will Clark also has made a significant impact. Clark, who coaches several young stars including Jillian Martin and Julia Bond, has been working with Galante for a

little more than two years.

Yet, in such a short period of time, Clark's instructional methods coupled with Galante's work ethic have produced immediate results both physically and mentally.

"If she keeps doing the work, special things will happen," Clark said. "She eats right. She preps her food. She goes to the gym. She's always asking questions and always wants more knowledge. She started drilling bowling balls and started learning more about drilling her own stuff."

"Her willingness to acknowledge her weaknesses is excellent. And she really, really has the tenacity and the determination to go and attack the things she is not good at in order to make them better. Those are traits that are going to allow her to have more opportunities to make TV shows, which will give her more opportunities to win titles."

Opportunity knocks in 2025 beginning in Kansas at the PWBA Topeka Open in May. Galante will, it seems clear, be ready. ■

# ANNA ANTONY: WHAT A JOURNEY IT'S BEEN

An unlikely path to youth-bowling stardom may bring this shining star to even brighter destinations.

by JENNIFER ROBACK

**IT IS NOT ALL THAT** uncommon to hear young bowlers describe their earliest memories as having been forged in a bowling center — often because their parents had been taking them there early on, some even before they could walk or talk.

For Anna Antony, nothing could be further from the truth. While it was indeed her father who first got her interested in the sport, it wasn't because he was a lifelong bowler himself. He was simply just a devoted father of four, looking to spend time with his children.

"We moved to [Connecticut] from Chicago, and I wanted to find something that I could do with all the kids," her father Anthony said. "There was this program where kids bowled free all summer long, so I brought the kids during my lunchtime. [Anna's] the only one that stuck with it. She felt passionate about it and wanted to do more, and that's how our journey started."

And what a journey it's been thus far. At only 15, Antony has already racked up a slew of accomplishments, ranging from multiple Connecticut State Pepsi Championship titles, five

SYC Championship titles, the 2022 Youth Open Eagle Award, and the 2023 U15 David Dahms Sportsmanship Award, which is "given to competitors who best exemplify sportsmanship, leadership, positive attitude and enthusiasm during the Junior Gold Championships."

Most recently, she finished seventh overall in the U15 division at the 2024 Junior Gold Championships in Detroit — her third Top-10 finish to date.

These achievements are a testament to the dedication and countless hours the young star pours into mastering her craft



## Master Class

*The self-taught Antony's studious nature has paid huge dividends for her on the lanes.*

### **A Marvel**

*The consistency of Antony's Junior Gold Championships record from year to year has been something to marvel at.*

— a path that, remarkably, took flight not too long ago, fueled by the inspiration she found on YouTube.

Antony is among many young bowlers who have taken up a two-handed approach. When asked why she decided to embark on this path, she explained that she came across a YouTube clip from Jason Belmonte's 2015 USBC Masters win and "felt inspired." After that, she began looking into other two-handed bowlers and continued using YouTube videos as her education source. To this day, she still uses the platform to help perfect her craft.

"I think that if you want to get better at something, it's really good to watch examples of it and do your best to [find] what will make you better," she said. "When watching videos, what I really try to do is [look at] what the players are doing. Especially now, it's so convenient that TV shows have Specto right on the lanes, so it's nice to be able to see what types of moves the players are [making] and where they're hitting the arrows."

She added, "I think it's really convenient to just watch what the pros do and try to [incorporate] it into my practices and just see how I do with it. It's a lot of trial and error."

Her work ethic is one of the things her parents are most proud of. She comes from a family that traditionally leans toward music and education, so when she wanted to take up bowling, it was a new world for both her and her parents. But they embraced her passion wholeheartedly and have been there to support her every step of the way.

"Anna has shown passion and advocacy in her pursuit," her father shared. "We're learning this with her. Having a competitive athlete in the house, it's kind of a challenge for us because it's our first experience too, dealing with a lot of new things."

Together, Antony and her family have overcome every obstacle thrown their way, mostly because she has been able to take the initiative and advocate for what she needs.

"It's been a journey, a learning journey,"



Antony's father added. "Both me and my wife are not bowlers, but we need to help her as much as possible, and it helps that she advocates for what she needs. If a child can advocate for what they need, it's a pull rather than a push from a parent's perspective. You know, if we ask them to do something, we sometimes get pushback, whereas with bowling it's a pull. She's telling us, 'I want to go practice,' or, 'I want to go [bowl this event],' or, 'I need this,' so it's easier [on us] instead of figuring out what she might need. It [makes it] a much more joyful journey together, I would say."

There is no question that Antony will continue to add more accolades to her résumé as the years go on. Heading into 2025, she has big plans for herself, many of which involve improving skills both on and off the lanes.

"I want to grow more in the mental aspect," she added. "I want to just be able to read the lanes properly and not have as many mental blocks."

Antony is already taking steps to enhance her mental game, diving into books and scientific articles. On top of that, she's dedicating herself to improving her physical fitness to keep up with the demands of competitive bowling.

While she works hard on the lanes, she also makes time for her love of cooking and baking. Antony's involvement in school clubs like Future Business Leaders of America also plays a big role in her life, helping her prepare for whatever challenges come next on the lanes and in her life. Whatever those challenges may be in the years ahead, Antony has proven herself to be adequately equipped to transcend them. ■

# AIDAN FURUKAWA: A BUILDER AT HEART

How this aspiring architect has primed himself for glory on the college-bowling scene with SCAD.

by JENNIFER ROBACK

**IT IS NOT UNCOMMON** for college freshmen to have an adjustment period when they first enter the college-bowling scene. That experience is a beast in its own right and, for many, it can take a few tournaments to adjust and get comfortable.

But that's not the case for Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD) freshman Aidan Furukawa.

No adjustment period was needed when he hit the lanes for the first time this season, already earning All-Tournament Team recognition at Tier 1 events and Southern States Athletic Conference (SSAC) Bowlers of the Week honors.

The Sunbury, Ohio, native traded his snow boots for sunglasses when he headed down to Georgia to continue his academic and athletic career, with aspirations of becoming an architect who designs roller coasters and theme parks.

"I love roller coasters, that's probably my biggest hobby," Furukawa said. "I'll [even] try and hit roller coasters when I travel for tournaments."

To date, he has gone on over 200 coasters across North America. Still, his personal favorite is the Steel Vengeance, which is located roughly two hours from his hometown at Cedar Point.

His passion for roller coasters is a thrill-seeker's dream, but his fascination with architecture runs deeper, inspired by his uncle's footsteps in the industry. Furukawa's interest in architecture mirrors his approach to bowling, where precision and strategy play critical roles. Much like drafting blueprints, he analyzes lane conditions and maps out his game plan with careful calculation — skills he has been able to work on as a member of Junior Team USA.

After all, who better to build a game than a guy who plans to build things for a living?

"I really worked with form and then lane play," he said of his time thus far with Junior Team USA. "When [we] were working with my form, it all felt really awkward, and I almost didn't agree with it. But after giving it a little bit of time to kind of set in, I feel like it has changed a lot from being really slow to actually getting some speed and power. And I've seen the lane a lot better than I have in the past."

There is no question that Furukawa's individual game has become an asset for the Bees, but it is arguably his team-oriented personality that truly sets him apart. Whether it's offering advice during frames or cheering on his teammates from the sidelines, his positive energy and collaborative spirit have helped him settle into his role seamlessly as a freshman and contribute to the team's early success.

"This biggest thing for Aidan is that it's very evident that he's team-oriented," his coach, Katie Thornton, said. "He's not focused on [personal goals]; it's more like,



#### Thrill-Seeker

*He make look calm and collected here, but put a roller coaster anywhere near Furukawa and he'll get his party on quickly.*

when you hear him talk about the things he wants to do or the way he wants to perform, it's because he wants to do it for the benefit of the team.

"He's going to communicate, he's going to be about the team, and he's going to be consistent for us. You can't really ask for much more," Thornton added.

Furukawa's teammate, Leoj Chin, a senior in the program, echoed Thornton's remarks.

"He's been exceptional at the level of bowling he's been showcasing so far this season. I think that's what really stood out to me," Chin said. "He immediately jumped in. Even when he's not in the lineup, he is always talking to his teammates, always communicating, and always [taking initiative]."

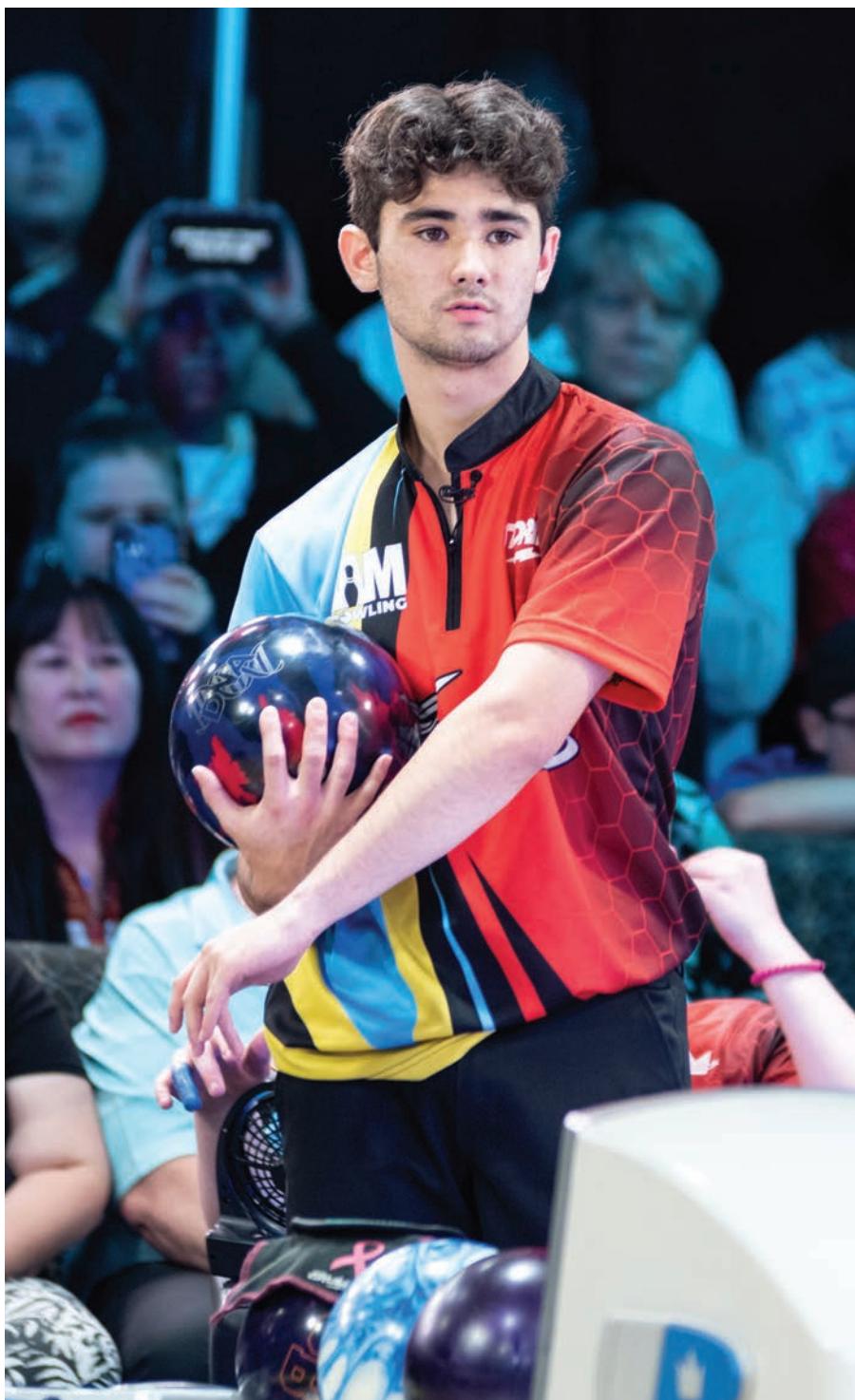
Chin also echoed Furukawa's perspective on the SCAD team, explaining how the program's family-oriented aspect helps them succeed and has played a role in Furukawa's transition onto the team this year.

"I think what sets us apart is that we really try to emphasize building a culture that's more like a family. Being able to talk to each other, not just as teammates but also as friends," Chin continued. "That's what has made us successful, those kinds of relationships that have allowed us to have tough conversations [when needed] so we can address any issue almost immediately before it becomes a problem down the line."

"We gel really well together, and we have a lot of things in common and we enjoy each other's company so that helps with the chemistry... [Aidan] is just one of the nicest people I've ever met and in the short time I've known him, he's gotten really comfortable with the team, and he just has a really genuine heart so to just seem him come into a new environment and blend right in has been great."

In short, Furukawa's debut season with SCAD has been nothing short of remark-

able. From making an immediate impact on the lanes to his seamless integration into a team that values connection and camaraderie, Furukawa embodies what it means to be a team player and a driven individual — traits destined to bring him great things both on the lanes and, someday soon, in his day job mulling over blueprints for years to come. ■



#### Quick Study

*Furukawa analyzes lane conditions and maps out his game plan with careful calculation — skills he has been able to work on as a member of Junior Team USA.*

# ON THE ROAD AGAIN

## AUGUST

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14

## JANUARY

	1	2	3	4
7	8	9	10	11
14	15	16	17	18
21	22	23	24	25
28	29	30	31	

by MARK MILLER

Non-pros have many tournaments from which to choose in 2025.

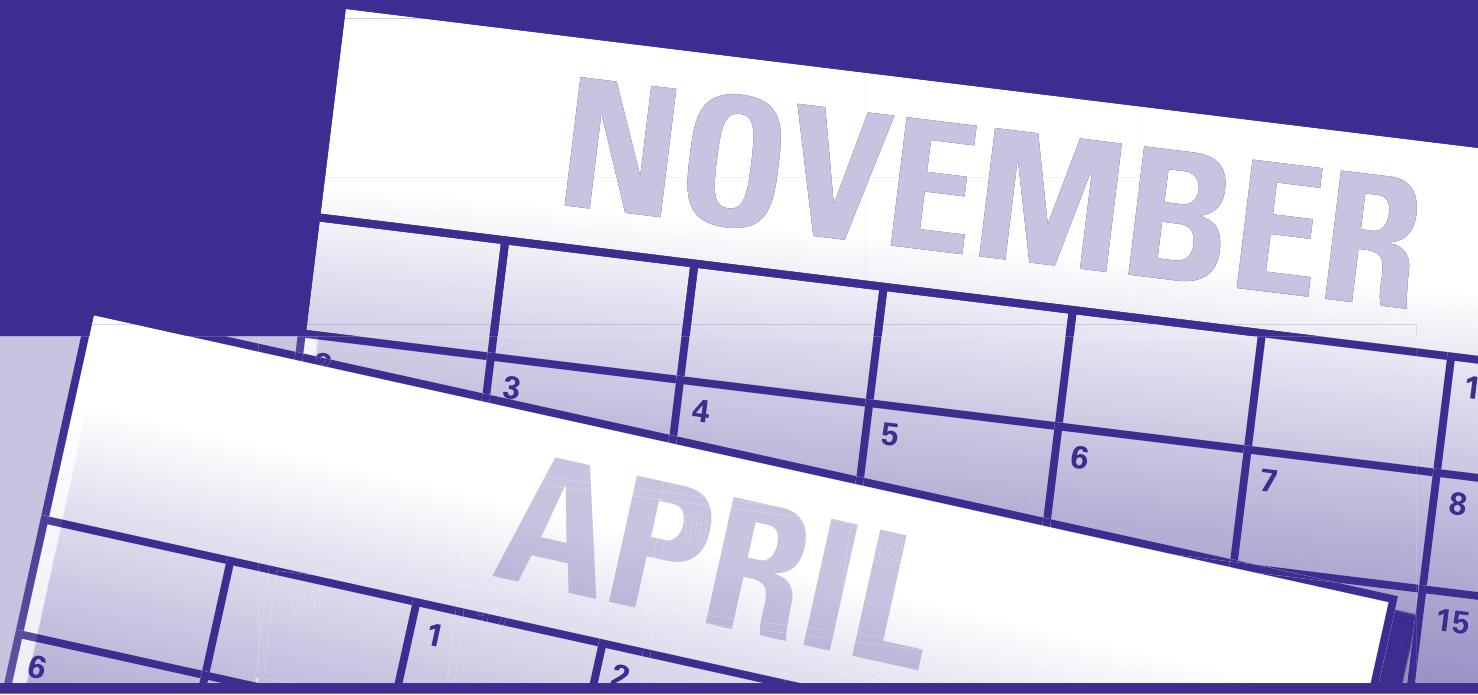
**B**idding adieu to the old year while ushering in a new means one thing to plenty of readers of this magazine: For bowlers who are not Professional Bowlers Association and Professional Women's Bowling Association members, there is a plethora of tournaments to chase down in 2025.

As has increasingly been the case in recent years, there is something for every bowler, from youth to seniors and scratch to handicap, nearly every weekend of the year.

The good news for most tournaments is the continued rebound in growth following the Covid-19 pandemic. Some events even experienced record entries in 2024 and expect to top those in 2025.

The beginning of 2025 also marks the end of the first quarter of the 21st century, providing managers of long-time events a chance to reflect on the past and look into the future. While the following capsules don't include every available competition, they do provide a good roadmap for any bowler to consider when determining where to compete in 2025.

Let's hit the road, shall we? Here we go...



## Senior All-Star Bowling Association (SASBA)

**January — December**  
**Various Locations**

Started by the legendary Jamie Brooks in 1990, this series continued under the late Jim King from 2010-2015, and since then with King's wife, Kathy. It is uniquely operated as a non-profit organization owned by its members.

SASBA annually consists of more than 30 events with a variety of formats, including some mixing seniors with younger bowlers and non-members. Events are mostly held in Texas, Oklahoma, and Louisiana.

"We've been filling the majority of our tournaments," said Kathy King. "Our membership has been going up not just in Texas and Louisiana but outside of there to places like Chicago and California. And we seem to be getting more women. It's been going good."

She said the ages of the biggest groups have dropped from the 60s to the 50s, meaning SASBA is becoming younger even within the senior community.

"I really think it's because more people are moving to Dallas because of all the bowling in the Dallas area," she said. "Dallas has become a bowling haven. There are so many tournaments, it's crazy."

King believes one reason for SASBA's long success has been its focus on spreading the wealth around.

"We are not heavy up top," she said. "We pay 1 in 3 so everybody gets a little money. It's not like you get \$10,000 for first and \$5,000 for second and nothing from No. 5 down."

## Senior Singles Open (SSO)

**January — December**  
**Various Locations**

Founded by Lew Ansara in 2011 and managed by him and United States Bowling Congress/PBA Hall of Famer Harry Sullins, this scratch tour conducted 16 events in 2024 and plans for the same number in 2025. Males ages 50 and over and females 40 and above are eligible to compete.

"Many of my bowling peers joined me in making the SSO one of the premier senior tournaments in the country," Ansara said. "I started with a modest field of about 30 and have grown it to over 100 entries per event, not including the Over/Under Tournaments that draw over 200 bowlers."

While the tour primarily focuses on singles, it does include events like the Over/Under 50 Doubles, Non-Champions, and Hall of Famers. Bowlers compete in one of three divisions – Senior (50-59), Super Senior (60-69), and Super Seniors (70+).

## New England Bowlers Association (NEBA)

**January — December**  
**Various Locations**

Billing itself as America's long-running USBC-sanctioned monthly scratch tournament, the NEBA celebrated its 60th anniversary and 1,000th tournament in 2023. It features multiple events attracting an average of 180 bowlers in most months throughout the region. While most are for individuals, there are one trio, and two doubles events offered, plus some for seniors, super seniors, women, and youth.

Mike Lichstein owns the record for most titles with 32, while Alex Aguiar is next with 28. Others with multiple titles include Brian Boghosian (15), Ed Roberts (7), Patrick Allen (6), Bill Spigner (5), Larry Lichstein (4), Chris Viale (4), Wayne Webb (3), and Pete Couture (3).

Tournament Director Justin Alves said an increased number of youths have been participating since the pandemic, including Sean Buck, a 17-year-old who won one of the 2024 events.

Alves said collaborating with a dedicated team is the key to the tournaments' success, which also lends support to potentially more future tournaments.

"We've talked about expanding out to some newer centers and going further away from our central hub," Alves said.



#### **Rolling Along**

Brad Edelman's High Roller event continues to see robust participation.

### **USA Bowling Regionals**

**Jan. 11 — May 11**

#### **Various Locations**

These team events for youth below age 15 started in November. Slated for 2025 are Jan. 11 in San Antonio; Jan. 26 in Hampton, Virginia; Feb. 16 in Bloomington, Illinois; Feb. 23 in Citrus Heights, California; March 1 in Marietta, Georgia; March 23 in Helena, Montana; March 30 in Fairfield, Connecticut; March 30 in Myrtle Beach, Florida; April 6 in Las Vegas; April 26 in Columbus, Ohio; May 4 in Eagan, Minnesota; and May 11 in Wichita, Kansas.

Regional winners will advance to the national finals in July in Green Bay, Wisconsin.

### **High Roller January Military Championships**

**Jan. 18 — Jan. 24**

#### **Las Vegas**

South Point Bowling Plaza will be the site for the 68th annual event, the first of four guided by Brad Edelman and his team that includes Hall of Famer Wendy MacPherson. Two others are for seniors and the fourth is for military competitors.

Edelman said 2025 will mark the fourth straight year of increased entries and will be the biggest ever, with 2,100 individuals on nearly 400 teams. There were 364 teams in 2024.

"As long as this event's been running the word is still getting around to people who still haven't heard of this," Edelman said of the scratch tournament. "Out of the 2,100 or so participants we've got about 400 first timers."

When the tournament started in 1958, it was conducted at Nellis Air Force Base in Las Vegas and only for active-duty military personnel. When it outgrew the 16 lanes there, it moved to the old Showboat, which was plenty spacious with 106 lanes. Edelman and his father Norm became involved in 2003 and added separate divisions for retired and senior

#### **Leading Contender**

Mike Lichstein's 32 titles continue to be a NEBA record as that storied organization looks to a new year.

retired participants, a major reason for its success.

"We're really focusing on the reunion and camaraderie aspect," Edelman said. "The prize money speaks for itself and is very good. A lot of teams and individuals go home with some nice checks. But so many of them are not there for the money. They are not even competitive bowlers even in the events that are scratch. They are there to see their friends once a year. The camaraderie is just incredible and something I've never seen. It definitely is my favorite event."

Edelman plans to add a new side event in 2026 that makes this tournament even more attractive to active and retired scratch bowlers alike.

### **U.S. Open**

**Jan. 26 — Feb. 2**

#### **Indianapolis**

One of the sport's the longest running, most prestigious, and most demanding events returns to Royal Pin Woodland in northern Indianapolis. Just making it to the stepladder requires bowling 24 qualifying games and 24 match-play games.

New this year will be three eight-game qualifying blocks rather than four rounds. Following the conclusion of the 24 match play games, the top nine bowlers will compete in the televised stepladders. Bowlers ranked Nos. 5-9 will meet on Feb. 1 on FS1, with that winner joining the top four for the finale on Feb. 2 on Fox.

Kyle Troup returns to defend his title over an all-star field. The top prize is \$100,000.

### **True Amateur Tournament**

**Jan. 31 — Feb. 9**

#### **Las Vegas**

This marks the 25th anniversary for the TAT started by the late Ed McWilliams. His son Jamie took over after his death in 2016 and oversees two annual events.

"He bowled all the High Rollers when I was growing up. He started this for the average league bowlers because he was seeing the same guys win money every time," Jamie said of his father.

The singles format featured a record of more than 1,400 individuals in 2024 from nearly every state and 14 different countries, and McWilliams expects even more to show up at South Point Bowling Plaza this year.

"There's been a lot of change and a lot of growing pains over the years, and now we're at the point where we can handle large crowds," Jamie said. "During Covid we had more than 1,000 people and we weren't prepared for it. Now, I'm much more prepared for what's going to come during the week. I'm prepared for the bowlers. I'm prepared for the long hours. There's a lot of learning going on over 25 years."

"I'm always trying to learn. I'm always trying to get better. I speak to the bowlers and make each tournament a little better than the previous ones."

Besides adding staff, McWilliams said a big reason why things run more smoothly now is a computer program he helped create. It features a membership card that, once scanned, tells the bowler his/her starting lanes and can enter them into brackets. Another was moving his young family from Eugene, Oregon, to Las Vegas three years ago.

To live up to its name, nobody who has ever won at the USBC Open or Women's Championships or at the PBA/PWBA regional or national levels in the last two years is allowed to compete.

"Basically, we're trying to knock out the professional amateurs and all the pros," McWilliams said. "We're trying to keep this as amateur as possible. The winner usually is a random guy who has a good day bowling and comes out with 25 grand."

This year features a new team tournament offering \$10,000 for first place. There's also a progressive jackpot worth more than \$100,000.

"We don't do a lot of advertising. Most of our growth comes from word of mouth," McWilliams said. "I've done a little on Facebook recently, but most people go home and tell people, their friends, their brother, their wife, their son or whatever and bring them out."

"We try to create a fun, family atmosphere where everyone feels welcome to bring their 13-14-year old kid or 90-year-old grandfather to bowl."

McWilliams hopes to double the number of tournaments in the future by running them back-to-back, so no one must spend so much time in one place. He would also like to take the show on the road to other parts of the country.

**Caption Title**  
Winners of the 2024-2025 USA  
Bowling regional events will  
converge on Ashwaubenon Bowl for  
titles in the U12 and U15 divisions.

## Northeastern Open Bowling Championships

**Jan. 31 ————— March 9**  
**Keene, New Hampshire**

A New England tradition for 58 years will be held at Yankee Lanes. It features scratch and handicap divisions for team, doubles, singles, and all events.

## Southwest Tournament

**Feb. 8 ————— April 27**  
**Wichita, Kansas**

Celebrating its 90th year in 2024, the Southwest returns to Bowlero Northrock Lanes in 2025.

The 1,033 total five-player teams competing last year was an all-time record according to Jack Story, executive director for the past 16 years. He said most consisted of men only.

"We've been going up every year," Story said. "I think it's because of several things. Me and the board of directors work hard at it and produce a good product. We have a wonderful venue and a wonderful center to bowl in and the bowlers like it."

"Most of it is word of mouth. We send flyers, posters, and stuff to centers throughout the central part of the U.S. And we have a lot of things going on. We give away a ball of their choice for every

squad. A couple of years ago we started something called The Lucky Bowler where from every bowler on that squad someone is randomly picked to receive a \$100 bonus just for the heck of it."

Other perks include entry for an entire team for being the best dressed and a separate pot for the opening squad. With extras like that, it's no wonder the tournament has grown from six weeks to 11.

An enhanced women's all-events prize fund is among the new options this year. Also being introduced is a super senior singles division for those age 65+. And for the first time, special prizes will be available for those who choose to bowl on Easter weekend.

Story's goal beyond this year is to be able to add more events, including super senior doubles, team, and all-events.

## Hoosier Classic

**Feb. 15 ————— Feb. 16**  
**Indianapolis**

Returning to its normal timeslot for its 56th year after moving up a week to avoid conflict with the National Basketball Association All-Star Game, this tournament highlights the nation's best men's and women's collegiate teams.

Nick Hoagland, the tournament director since 2009, said a full field of 78 men's



**Queen's Welcome**

Jillian Martin will seek to post an encore performance following her historic Queens win last year.

and 66 women's varsity teams are scheduled to compete at Royal Pin Western. Another 41 men's and 27 women's teams were on the waiting list by December.

New this year is a reduction of the number of regular-format team games on Day 1 from six to five to follow new USBC Collegiate guidelines to qualify as a Tier 1 event.

"That will be a welcome change for everybody," said Hoagland. "Everybody will start an hour later and finish an hour earlier."

The tournament is again expected to raise \$20,000 for the Make-a-Wish program.

"We've always had tremendous bowling industry support," Hoagland said. "We've had some sponsors that have been with us for 14-15 years. Kegel has been sponsoring the tournament since 1997. Plus, Royal Pin has been bowling's best friend for 50 years. They've been the best.

"In 1996, when I was a freshman at IU (Indiana University) it was at Suburban Lanes in Bloomington, Indiana, and we had 16 teams. It was just a local tournament. In 1997, we moved it to Indianapolis to Charlie Brehob's Sport Bowl and started to market it. In 2010, we moved to two squads. Up until then we bowled men and women together."

That allowed the tournament to grow to its current numbers and help the college game become what it is today. What would Hoagland like to do in the future?

"I've always wanted to have — and haven't figured out how to yet — the Hoosier Classic be part of like a World Series of College Bowling," Hoagland said. "Our fundraising goal is to fund a full team of Make-a-Wish kids, which is \$50,000. My goal is to continue to show more value, and we need more private donations to have that happen."

### The National Bowling Association Reed-Hawthorne Memorial Singles Classic

**Feb. 15 — Feb. 16**  
**Valley Park, Missouri**

Bowlero Lanes hosts the 66th rendition of this tournament. Open to all TNBA/USBC members, the scratch event features men's and women's classic (ages 18 and up), senior and senior women (50-59), and super seniors (60+) divisions.

### Greater Ozarks Open

**Feb. 22 — June 22**  
**Springfield, Missouri**

Sunshine Lanes hosts the team event while Enterprise Park Lanes will conduct doubles and singles for the 67th consecutive rendition of the famed tournament. Husband and wife Matt and Keegan Standage have overseen the event for the past four years.

For the first time, the Greater Ozarks Open will pay a second-place prize (\$500) in the all-women's team event. The winning team collects \$1,500. The 40-50 all-women's teams that typically participate don't pay an entry fee. There were 1,437 teams in the Open division in 2024, the fourth consecutive year of growth.

"What I feel makes our tournament a little bit different from other tournaments

is we are single entry," said Keegan, general manager of both centers. "You can only bowl one time."

Proprietor Steve Wiemer purchased the tournament in 2013 from the Iseminger family, which started it in 1959 with 90 teams. It peaked at 2,136 teams in 2000.

"We try very hard to maintain that legacy because the tournament has a really good reputation," Matt said.

To help them do that, the Standages are creating an online registration they hope will be ready for 2026. They also want to continue learning more about managing a large tournament like this, especially since Matt — a physical therapist by trade — doesn't have a bowling background.

"I married into a bowling family and kind of embraced it," Matt said. "I've always been around sports and competition and the tournament is not just about bowling but also about operations and relationships. That's kind of universal."

### Bowlers Journal Championships

**Feb. 28 — July 27**  
**Baton Rouge, Louisiana**

The long-time companion tournament to the USBC Open Championships will be conducted at the 65-lane All-Star Lanes. It features the same conditions as the USBC Championships doubles and singles, so it is a great place to practice for the Open.

Competition will be held in open, senior, super senior, and 175 & under singles; open, senior, and handicap doubles; dual entry; and jackpots.

### USBC Open Championships

**March 1 — July 28**  
**Baton Rouge, Louisiana**

The 121st edition of the USBC Open Championships is back at the Raising Canes River Center for the first time in 20 years.

While several changes relating to average levels, entry fees, and team/doubles composition for past national team members, collegiate bowlers, and pro bowlers aged 60 and older go into effect for 2026, this year promises to be much the same as in 2024. This includes men and women competing in Regular (176 and above), Standard (156-175) and Classified (155 and below) divisions.



#### Across the Ages

NEBA has seen generations of PBA Tour stars emerge from its ranks, from Wayne Webb (left) to Packy Hanrahan (right).



## Hoinke Classic

**March 8 — Nov. 23**  
**Cincinnati**

In 2024, there were 1,014 team, 3,088 doubles, and 5,186 singles entries at Western Bowl and for the first time ever there was a repeat singles winner in Erik Gakle.

Bowlers entered in 2025 have the chance to earn a share of \$51,000 in the Break the Bank jackpot that pays off for rolling strikes in designated frames. The last time anyone won was in 2017.

What has been the key to the Hoinke's success that dates to its 1943 beginnings?

"I think the fairness of the shot. Whatever we put down, we keep it that way," said Michele Herbers, the long-time tournament director. "It's a fair shot. It's consistent and the rules are applied to everyone. There are no exceptions to the rules."

"Our integrity, I think, is one thing why people like coming. We've never really had anyone say, 'That's not right. You can't do that.' I've been here for 35 years and worked with Erv Hoinke Jr. and I've tried

to keep what he took from his father and focus on fairness across the board."

Herbers has been involved with the tournament even back to its Thanksgiving-week Super Hoinke days that ended after 2010. She believes its demise came when so many top young bowlers married and began to have children. Like so many other age-old tournaments, Herbers wants more younger players to participate.

"We've had a number of squad organizers die off, so we need the younger kids to come in and be leaders and not just to tag along," she said.

Anyone who brings at least 20 people with them is paid \$100 for their efforts by the tournament.

## USBC Masters

**March 23 — March 30**  
**Allen Park, Michigan**

Thunderbowl Lanes outside Detroit will host a full field of nearly 500 of the world's top professionals and non-pros,

who gobbled up all entries even before the new year started. It is the same venue where Anthony Simonsen set match-play records two years ago to capture the event for the second consecutive time.

There will be two nationally-televised shows — March 29 on FS1 and March 30 on Fox. Earlier rounds will be available on BowlTV.

DeeRonn Booker of Albuquerque, New Mexico, is the defending champion and owner of a \$100,000 top prize.

## High Roller April Seniors Team Classic

**March 31 — April 11**  
**Las Vegas**

The second High Roller event of the year will be held at Gold Coast. As with the Military Team Championships, this tournament reached its all-time high in 2024 with 422 teams.

Open to any senior age 50+, the handicap tournament has been quite popular

since it moved from October because of the pandemic. It has remained in spring even after the fall event was reinstated a couple of years ago.



## USBC Senior Queens

April 9 — April 13

**Las Vegas**

This will be the first of three major senior events to be held at Sam's Town. The others are the USBC Super Senior Classic (May 28-June 1) and USBC Senior Masters (June 1-8)

## International Golden Ladies Classic

April 14 — April 18

**Las Vegas**

The event started by and now honoring the late Jeanette Robinson will be conducted at The Orleans.

New this year will be the expansion to three age divisions — 50-58, 59-64, and 65+. The top 12 in each division will advance to match play with the top four in each division making the stepladders. In addition, the top three overall will compete in a final match for another trophy and another top prize.

### *The Legend Continues*

The SASBA events still are going strong since their founding in 1990 by legendary proprietor Jamie Brooks.

## USBC Women's Championships

April 26 — July 6

**Las Vegas**

South Point Bowling Plaza welcomes back one of the oldest and largest of competitions strictly for women.

Once again there will be four divisions for team, doubles, singles, and all-events. But thanks to feedback from recent participant surveys, a team all-events category has been added for the first time.

Winners will be determined by the scores of 36 combined games of team, doubles, and singles. Plus, all bowlers will be entered into an overall category at no charge and with no prize fund.

## Petersen Classic

May 9 — Aug. 31

**Vernon Hills, Illinois**

For the second straight year, this venerable tournament is being held at Bowlero Vernon Hills after several years in suburban Milwaukee.

There were 1,896 entries in 2024, up 48 from the previous year.

"We're at about right where we were before Covid," said Bowlero's Mike Sledz, the tournament's manager since 2015. "I'm shooting for 2,000 this year."

Formats and optional events will remain the same this year, but Sledz said finding ways to become younger is the primary goal for the future. A youth division was added right before Covid and Sledz hopes it continues to grow in the future.

"The Pete has been around for more than 100 years and it's one of those tournaments that people continue to bowl in, but our database of entries is skewing older," he said. "As we're picking up new bowlers, we're hoping to get more younger bowlers because the people who are not bowling are typically because they just can't bowl any more or even sadly have passed away. It's trying to get the younger people involved."

Sledz said outreach has focused on area pro shops, tournament organizers, and others with the goal of getting new blood.

"People who bowl the Pete for the first time always say 'wow, what a crazy



### *Three-Peat*

Francois Lavois will be looking to register a three-peat in the 2025 New Mexico Open.



#### Green Machine

Single-season PBA Tour earnings record holder Kyle Troup will look to put on another show as he seeks to defend his U.S. Open title later this month.

concept,"' Sledz said. "I've never heard of this tournament before.' They love it and just want a shot."

One thing that has changed is the tournament's email to [petersenclassic@bowlero.com](mailto:petersenclassic@bowlero.com).

### USBC Queens

**May 14 — May 20**  
**Las Vegas**

This year's quest for the coveted tiara and top prize will be conducted at the Suncoast Hotel and Casino.

Registration opens Jan. 15. Jillian Martin is back to defend her title after securing the \$60,000 top prize in 2024 to become the youngest champion in the event's history.

### The National Bowling Association Championships

**May 22 — June 1**  
**Las Vegas**

The 83rd event will be conducted at three centers this year — Suncoast Lanes for teams, Gold Coast Bowling Center for singles and doubles, and The Orleans for mixed doubles.

New for this year will be the Battle of the Trio Tournament set for May 23-24 at the Gold Coast. Each team must have at least one female and a woman must be placed in the anchor position. On May 24, the AJR Junior Championship Roll-Off will take place at Suncoast.

Suncoast also will host the 31st annual Margae S. Lee Battle of the Sexes Scholarship Tournament, where a maximum of 32 men's and 32 women's teams will meet.

### USBC U22 Masters and Queens

**May 24 — May 27**  
**Detroit**

Thunderbowl in Allen Park will host both the U22 Masters and the U22 Queens.

The tournaments were inaugurated last year to provide a competition for the best young, non-professional adult USBC members after USBC cut off youth eligibility at age 18. They combine elements of the USBC Junior Gold Championships, USBC Masters/Queens, and U.S. Open/U.S. Women's Open.

Brandon Bohn and Dannielle Henderson captured the Masters and Queens, respectively, last year.

### Midwest Women's Tournament

**May 24 — June 22**  
**Milwaukee**

This tournament is preparing for its 12th iteration with the team division to be conducted at New Berlin Bowl and doubles and singles at AMF West.

Tournament Director Kandy Birmingham said there have been between 500 and 550 team entries in the past few years. The record is 920 in the first year of 2013.

"We have always acknowledged the scratch champion without having entered the option of each team, doubles, singles, and all-events, and we reward them with extra prizes, and they don't have to enter the scratch option to do it," Birmingham said. "It's a pure scratch championship. We try to acknowledge the wonderfulness of the scratch bowler, but we're basically a handicap tournament."

New this year will be a special promotion providing a free team entry in every squad into the 2026 event in Lafayette, Indiana. In addition, the state of Michigan has rejoined the organization when a center in Kalamazoo agreed to host the 2027 tournament. Waterloo, Iowa, will be the destination for 2028.

**Quarterflash**

The True Amateur Tournament (TAT) marks its 25th anniversary this year (with past champion Trent Marner).

**PBA LBC National Championships**

**May 31 — July 13**  
**Mount Prospect, Illinois**

For the second consecutive year, this three-year-old weekend tournament will be held at Mount Prospect Bowl in suburban Chicago. Sledz said earlier cross-promotion with the Petersen Classic is a big part of the marketing efforts for both tournaments.

Nearly 1,200 people entered the LBC in 2024, the highest in its brief history.

All eight divisions will remain for this year — men's and women's handicap, open classic, women's classic, senior classic, PBA exempt, and boys' and girls' handicap. The latter two were added in 2024. Winners in each division will meet

at the Clash finals to compete for the Duke Trophy named after Norm Duke.

**U.S. Women's Open**

**June 10 — June 17**  
**Lincoln, Nebraska**

Like its earlier counterpart, the U.S. Women's Open is one of the toughest tests in the sport for women. It includes 32 qualifying and 24 match play games to advance to the televised stepladder.

Sun Valley Lanes and Games will host the event that once again is part of the PWBA Tour though non-members are allowed to bowl.

Sin Li Jane is the defending champion.

**True Amateur Tournament**

**June 30 — July 6**  
**Las Vegas**

The Orleans hosts the second TAT of 2024. Pretty much everything is the same for this iteration as the earlier one.

**USBC USA Bowling National Championships**

**July 9 — July 13**  
**Green Bay, Wisconsin**

Winners of the 2024-2025 regional events will converge on Ashwaubenon Bowl for titles in the U12 and U15 divisions.

**USBC Bowling.com Youth Open Championships**

**July 9 — July 27**  
**Green Bay, Wisconsin**

Wisconsin hosts the major youth championships for the first time. Athletes will try their hand in team, doubles, singles, and all-events divisions.

**USBC Junior Gold Championships**

**July 11 — July 19**  
**Green Bay, Wisconsin**

Eight centers in and around the home of the Green Bay Packers host the annual national tournament for males and females aged 18 and under. They will once again compete in separate U12, U15, and U18 divisions.

As part of the opening ceremony, bowlers and their families will be able to be in the audience for the PWBA Green Bay Open in the arena setting of the Resch Center.

**USBC Senior Championships**

**Aug. 6 — Aug. 8**  
**Fort Worth, Texas**

Cityview Lanes will be the first Texas host for the event that features men and women winners of their state senior championships in four age-based divisions.

**High Roller August Military Team Classic**

**Aug. 6 — Aug. 29**  
**Las Vegas**

To prove how popular this event has become, Edelman said as many as 180 teams waited for spots in 2024 with about 80 making the final field of 1,480 teams. To accommodate the additional groups, squads are being added in 2025 which will allow for 1,620 to compete.

"I'll be surprised if it doesn't fill," Edelman said.

The handicap event features three-game blocks vs. four games in January.

**New Mexico Open**

**Aug. 15 — Aug. 17**  
**Albuquerque, New Mexico**

Overseen by the legendary Steve Mackie and his Hall of Fame wife Dana Miller-Mackie, the New Mexico Open at their Rio Rancho Lanes has been a summertime haven for top bowlers for more than 20 years.

"The lane conditions are usually a mystery and always tough," Mackie said of the tournament's success.

Francois Lavoie topped 165 other bowlers to become only the second bowler to win consecutive New Mexico Opens with his 2024 title and \$13,500 grand prize. The other was John Young, who captured the first two tournaments in 2004 and 2005. Lavoie also finished second in 2021.

Other big-name winners through the years have included Chris Barnes, David Haynes, Andrew Cain, Nathan Bohr, Lonnie Waliczek, Vernon Peterson, and Jakob Butturff.

## Midwest Collegiate Championships

**Oct. 4 — Oct. 5**  
**Milwaukee**

Hoagland and H2M Management partner Steve Harman have taken over management of this other longtime major collegiate tournament. Held at Bowlero Wauwatosa and AMF West, it was the first event Hoagland competed in as a collegiate bowler.

The goal for Hoagland and Harman's first year is to sell out the event at 72 teams.

## High Roller Senior Tournament

**Oct. 6 — Oct. 14**  
**Las Vegas**

Moving from Gold Coast to South Point in 2024 resulted in the largest entry in the event's history with 320 teams and Edelman hopes to surpass that in 2025.

"We were caught off guard coming out of the pandemic," Edelman said. "Never in our wildest dreams did we think we'd

be as successful as it was. You look at the unemployment figures and look at the number of leagues that jumped out of bowling centers and bowling center closures, it really surprised us."

## Bud Light Challenge

**Nov. 7 — Nov. 9**  
**Rochester, New York**

Started in 2004 and based on the former Lilac Scratch Challenge, this series has gone from being held twice annually during its first three years to once yearly since then. It has featured many top-name winners, including Mike Neumann, Liz Johnson, Rhino Page, Peterson, Andrew Anderson, Brad Angelo, BJ Moore, Sam Cooley, and Butturff in the most recent edition in November.

"It's a very tough shot like the New Mexico Open," said Peterson, a two-time winner. "That's what makes it fair and fun."

Originally held at the now closed Olympic Bowl in Rochester, the tournament moved to Thruway Lanes in Buffalo, Strike and Spare in Syracuse, and Tonawa-

nda Bowling Center in Buffalo before settling in at Kelvin Parker's ABC Gates Bowl since 2021.

"Hopefully this will be our new home," said Parker, who believes having all bowlers compete on one squad is a major reason for its success. "Some people like the challenge of it. People know when they come here it's going to be kind of a grind."

There were 125 entries in 2024, the most since the pandemic. Parker would like to grow entries enough to pay \$10,000 for first place.

## Northeast Megabucks Tournament

**Nov. 27 — Nov. 30**  
**Chicopee, Massachusetts**

Managed by PBA50 competitor Chris Viale and his wife Amy, this tournament drew 744 entries in just its third year. That's no wonder with a prize fund of about \$185,000.

"It's new but we're trying to get the name out there," Alves said. ■

### Viva Las Vegas

South Point Bowling Plaza in Las Vegas will see a number of marquee amateur events roll through its doors this year.



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## Yesteryear

# WHEN BOWLING'S MID-CENTURY PEAK GAVE RISE TO ONE OF ITS BIGGEST STARS

BY J.R. SCHMIDT

**A**s the Great Bowling Boom reached its peak in 1960, probably the most famous bowler in America that year was a chunky, 5-foot-9, middle-aged schoolteacher from the little hamlet of Old Forge, Pennsylvania. He was Frank Clause. If that does not strike you as an obvious prologue to a hall-of-fame career, you may want to continue reading.

The son of an insurance salesman, Frank Silvio Clause was born in Old Forge in 1913. He set pins as a boy, but he didn't take bowling seriously until he entered the University of Scranton. It was at that point that he took to the lanes with a vengeance.

After graduating, Clause got a job teaching English and history at Old Forge High School. He married and started a family. By now, he'd become a serious bowler, and that caused some problems with the small-town small minds. Mr. Clause was the schoolteacher who bowled!

"It was like saying I was the schoolteacher who beat up his grandmother," he later recalled.

Still, Clause bowled on — and we can confirm that he did not harm a single grandma in the meantime. What he did, however, was win sweepers and rolled a perfect game. In one league, he averaged 227, an unimaginable pace at a time when the best bowlers struggled to top 200.



#### Swinging 60s

Frank Clause most certainly was in the money during his 1960s heyday.



#### ***Giving Back***

*Clause took to teaching in his later years, writing two instructional books.*

In 1946, he decided to see what he could do among the big boys. Clause took a leave of absence from teaching, moving to Detroit to join the high-powered Ira Wilson Dairy team. At the end of his first season, he'd posted the highest composite league average in the city and won the city doubles championship. One local writer suggested Clause be honored as Detroit Bowling's "Rookie of the Year." But after a second season in the Motor City, he returned to Old Forge and his job at the high school.

During the 1950s, Clause continued to build his regional reputation. Along with his neighbor George Billick, he made a 290-mile weekly round trip to bowl in a premiere New York City league. He continued to post honor scores — at one time, his 11 perfect games ranked third on the "most 300 games" list. Finally, in 1957, AMF made Clause an offer he couldn't refuse. He quit teaching to join their exhibition staff.

Around this time, a new bowling show called Jackpot Bowling debuted on the

NBC-TV network. Contestants rolled for strikes-only in a king-of-the-hill format, with a growing weekly jackpot for the bowler who'd roll six consecutive strikes. Between his trips for AMF, Clause rang up six match victories on the show. In his seventh appearance, on February 13, 1960, he hit the jackpot, collecting \$25,000.

Clause's big payout was the largest single prize any bowler had ever won at the time. It also happened to be five times more than his last annual teaching salary. He was written up in newspapers and magazines; he was interviewed on radio and television. "The Bowling Schoolmaster" became a national celebrity. Attendance at his AMF exhibitions soared. There was no doubt about it at this point: Frank Clause was a star.

After the summer break, Jackpot Bowling resumed with one major change. This time, the jackpot would start at \$25,000 and expand by \$5,000. When Clause showed up on October 10, that jackpot had reached \$40,000. All Frank did was roll six strikes and break his own

record of biggest single-prize check.

Therm Gibson would set a new jackpot record before Jackpot Bowling ended its run. Still, Clause was able to cash in on his celebrity. He wrote a syndicated newspaper column and two instruction books. He built a new house in Old Forge. He bought a Cadillac for himself and cars for his daughters. He tried a few PBA tournaments, though without much success.

And he toured for AMF. Clause spread the gospel of the tenpin game on four continents. Some years, he logged more than 200,000 miles on the road. Then, a series of heart attacks and a stroke ended his traveling days.

Through it all, he kept his sense of humor. Shortly before his 1977 death, Clause told a reporter that he wanted to be buried on top of a hill. When asked why, he explained, "Then each night I can sneak out of my grave and roll a bowling ball down the hill at the other monuments."

The beloved "Bowling Schoolmaster" was elected to the ABC Hall of Fame in 1980.

## Spare Me

# 'WITH LOVE, ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE'

by JASON THOMAS

**IT IS AN OVERCAST**, chilly day as the little girl walks through the doors of the bowling center, dad alongside her, dragging a triple-ball tote, and a backpack adorned with pink and purple flowers.

When she walks in, the warm, conditioned air and scent of burgers, cleaning solution, and citrus-tinged lane oil puts her in a familiar state of blissful anticipation. She is about to bowl her four-game practice session for the week and can't wait to try out the new pushaway tip she learned while watching the PWBA on TV last Tuesday night.

As she heads down to her lane and slides on her bowling shoes with the pink laces, she notices that there is an old woman practicing on the lane next to her. The woman looks frail and haggard, with long gray hair and loose skin hanging from the back of her arms. But when she throws the ball, her age melts away as she glides slowly and gracefully to the line, delivering a perfect shot into the 1-3 pocket. She blasts all 10 pins off the deck to finish off a 236.

The girl warms up with a few hurried throws, enters her name in the computer monitor, and starts into scoring mode. She bowls a 162, trying to pay attention to the feeling of that new pushaway tip, but also keeping an eye on the old woman, whom she now desperately wants to impress.

She bowls another couple of games in the 160s, and in the middle of her fourth game, frustration starts to set in.

After an errant shot in the fifth frame, she walks back and kicks her bowling bag in disgust.

Her father gives her a stern look, but as she turns away, his face morphs into a smile of pride, as he knows this competitive spirit — even though he has no clue where it comes from — is going to take his daughter far in life, whether it is in bowling or some other pursuit.

On her last ball of the day, the girl focuses all her energy on making a perfect shot, and she splits her target and sends all 10 pins into the pit for a final score of 180. While adding up her day's total, she is disappointed, knowing that her meager tally is no match for the scores she watched Diana Zavjalova throw on TV to win her second Queens title.

Seeing her disappointment, the old woman asks, "How long have you been bowling?"

"Six years," the girl replies. "But I don't think I'm ever going to be as good as you."

"Let me ask you a question. Do you love bowling?"

"Yes, more than anything! I want to be a pro someday like Diana Z."

"Well, I think you will be, because you are a lot better than I was when I was your age, and I used to be a pro, too. Plus, if you love something as much as you love bowling, the world will help you get it, even if it doesn't seem like it wants you to have it sometimes. With love, anything is possible."



A few years later, the girl, now a young woman, gets ready to step onto the approach. One more strike and she will have her first 300 game in PWBA competition.

Diana Z., her hair looking much different than it did back when she won that second USBC Queens title, delivers another perfect strike on the pair to her immediate left, and stoically walks back to do it again as the crowd applauds.

As she waits for Jordan Richard to complete her shot on the pair to the right, she catches a glimpse of the young woman's face that is printed on the masking panel above her lane, and she thinks, "Next year, that's going to be my face up there."

Once the stage is clear, she steps up, locks her eyes on her target, tells herself to "keep your speed up", and starts her approach. The ball flies from her hand with authority and rolls exactly over the spot on which her eyes had been riveted throughout the five steps it takes her to reach the line. The ball crashes into the pins perfectly, and they all go down without a hint of a fight.

She turns away from the fallen pins, sees the crowd on its feet in cheers and spots her father — his hair a bit grayer than that day a few years back — beaming with pride. The old woman, now her coach, stands beside him, giving her a look that she knows means the same thing she'd said to her those many years ago.

"With love, anything is possible."

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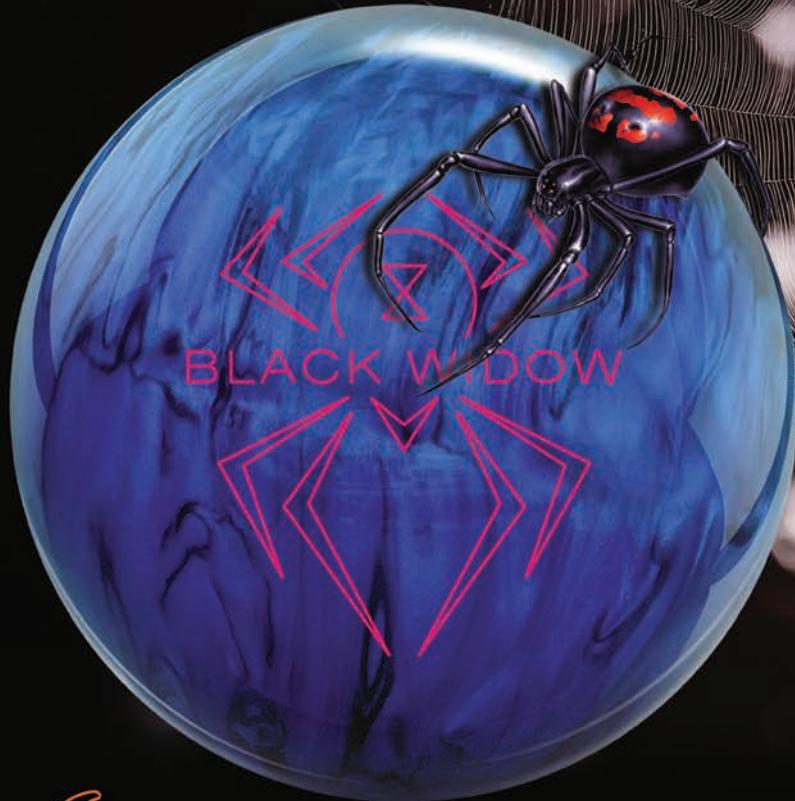
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