Bowlers Journal INTERNATIONAL
JANUARY 2026



2026 PLAYERS TO WATCH

DREAM BIG

Youth Bowler Nehemiah Keefer Has Lofty Goals

BREAKDOWN: SPIGNER EVALUATES ETHAN FIORE'S GAME **PG 36**

SWEET REVENGE FOR LUKOSIUS AT PWBA SHOWDOWN **PG 42**

ZAC TACKETT IS CREATING HIS OWN IDENTITY **PG 58**

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Game Changers

Embedded within one of this issue's pieces spotlighting our "Players to Watch" selections for 2026 is the echo of a trend this magazine has chronicled over the past year: It is the women, not the men, who are confronting the boundaries of bowling-style orthodoxy here in the back half of the 2020s.

Emil Williams Jr. smartly observes in his piece on Sweden's Nora Johansson that she has positioned herself potentially to become the first two-hander to win a PWBA Tour title. At the same time, he points to another player —15-year-old Emma Palermaa, herself a two-hander, who has won the European Championship of Champions event.

Does the name ring a bell? It should. Her uncle is this guy named Osku Palermaa. You know, the major PBA Tour champion who has amassed five PBA Tour titles overall. Expect to hear his niece's name again.

And while they are at it, let us not forget those crafty young ladies who turned heads firing fingerless bowling balls from chest-level at the 2025 Junior Gold Championships. One of them, Makynna Hodges of Killen, Alabama, narrowly missed the TV finals with her fifth-place finish among U12 girls at that event this year.

More recently, we reported on 12-year-old Irené Heward of Honolulu, Hawaii, who threw the ball in much the same manner at the same event, but added the entertaining twist of doing so while sliding off of the wrong foot. Despite that additional quirk, she, like Hodges, is proving her mettle, having blasted high games of 237, 236 and 228 in the tournament to ultimately finish 12th.

Given the accuracy and elite-level spare games both Hodges and Heward flaunt, who is to say those styles won't position them for greatness at a marquee event in which the scoring pace puts a premium on leaving makeable spares and converting them at a near 100-percent clip?

While those players follow their quirky paths to the top, two-handers like Johansson and Palermaa find themselves joined by fellow two-handed phenom Dannielle Henderson, among others, who are seeking to make history deploying that style in women's competition.

This may be the most exciting moment for women's bowling in recent memory, and 2026, for all we know, may well be the year in which history is made in their ranks.



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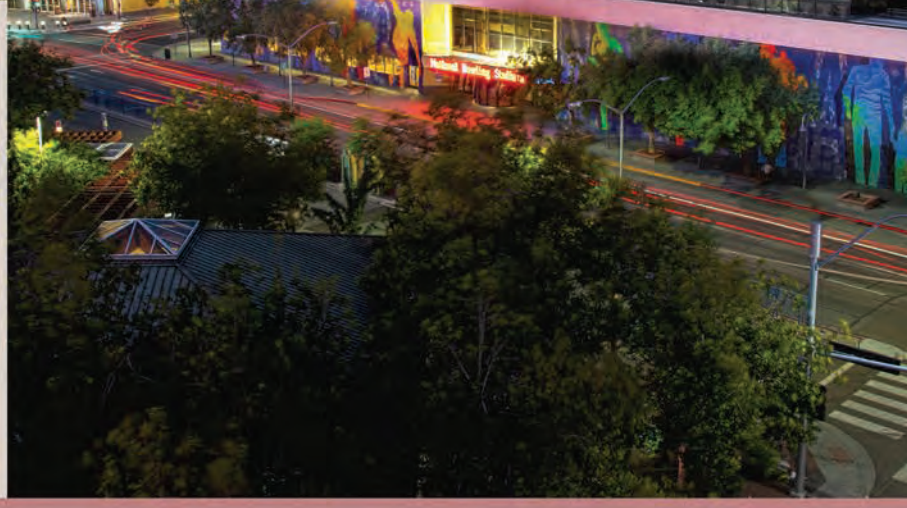
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BOWLING A SLIPPERY SLOPE

Conditions at the annual USBC Open Championships are notoriously stingy, but it is doubtful they compare to ice bowling tournaments held throughout the upper Midwest and Northeast during the winter months, where strikes are harder to come by than suntans.

HEADLINES

PBA Tour Announces Schedule on CBS, Paramount+

IN MAY 2025, the PBA and CBS Sports announced a new, two-year media rights deal, including simultaneous streaming on Paramount+. Now, that new schedule has been released and features even more coverage than was originally promised. The second half of the PBA's schedule will include 35 hours of live coverage, a significant increase over 2025's nine hours. The 2026 season marks the tour's 14th consecutive year of coverage on CBS.

The first event of the CBS broadcasts will air on April 4 and is USA vs. The World in Columbus, Ohio, at the Columbus Square Bowling Palace. This event will feature newly promoted USA team captain EJ Tackett and returning world captain Australian Jason Belmonte, the top two bowlers of this millennium. Each will put together a team of the best bowlers from the respective pools based on nationality. USA lost the last contest in 2023.

May is a big month for coverage, as the PBA World Series of Bowling XVII (WSOB) and the PBA50 WSOB will be held together for the first time in the greater Minneapolis area. This significant collaboration will be the first televised PBA50 event since 2009. The WSOB once again features four different championships on four distinct animal-named oil patterns. PBA qualifying for all four will be held at Bowlero Brooklyn Park, while qualifying for the PBA50 version will take place at AMF Southtown Lanes. Finals action for all moves across town to Bowlero Lakeville. From May 9-12, CBS Sports Network will air five hours of live coverage each night that includes all four WSOB championships for PBA and PBA50, as well as the PBA50 World Championship.

The second CBS aired event will take place on June 13: the PBA World Championship, which will be the fifth and final major of the season. Strobl Arena at Thunderbowl Lanes in Allen Park, Michigan, will host what could be an historic night, as EJ Tackett looks to become the first bowler to win four consecutive PBA World Championships. Tackett is currently tied with Earl Anthony, who did it twice, and Jason Belmonte (2017, 2019, and 2020 — the tournament wasn't held in 2018 calendar year) as the only players to win three in a row.

The season wraps up in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, at Steel City Bowl and Brews for the final two events. The PBA Elite League: Battle of the Brands returns for the second year, and the stepladder finals will be broadcast on CBS Sports Network on June 20. PBA Tour players represent their brand all season long, earning points for their performance. This culminates in the top bowlers from each brand facing off in Baker-format matches. Last year, Team Storm defeated Team Motiv in the inaugural event.

The final event is the first ever PBA Norm Duke Open, replacing the PBA Tour Finals. Named after the PBA Hall of Famer who retired in 2022, Duke is one of only three players to win 40 career PBA titles. Eight finalists will compete for the title during five hours of live coverage on June 21 on CBS Sports Network to wrap up the 2026 PBA season.

Bowling fans old and new will get their fill of programming as the PBA is set to air 55 hours of live coverage between The CW, CBS and CBS Sports Network this season. Thanks to the new media deals, bowling will have a consistent television presence from the end of February through the end of June.



Summer Swing
CBS Sports Network once again will be a key player in PBA Tour coverage in 2026, especially in June.

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Around the Regions

PBA Regional Honors Usher in Prestigious RPI Event

WHILE KARSYN LUKOSIUS was busy punctuating her complete dominance over PWBA Regional action with her PBA Regional Showdown victory at Airport Lanes in Sanford, Florida, on Dec. 6, PBA Tour hopefuls packed the lanes for the PBA Regional Players Invitational at Reno's National Bowling Stadium, an event about which we will have much more in our February issue.

As they hit the lanes at that iconic venue, though, the PBA Regional program announced winners of its annual awards, including each region's coveted Player of the Year honors. Some names stand out among recipients.

The PBA Southwest Region bestowed its Pat Patterson Award, which recognizes "outstanding contributions to the regional program and efforts to promote bowling," to Eric Adolphson, for whom the award essentially also functions as a lifetime achievement honor. The reason? Adolphson won his lone PBA Tour title 33 years ago in 1992, when he overwhelmed the late, strapping power player Dave D'Entremont, 234-161, in the championship match of the 1992 PBA Seattle Open. More than three decades later, Adolphson continues to make a difference in the sport.

Another notable honoree is Graham Fach, whose career resurgency saw him win his first PBA Tour title in nearly a decade with his blowout win over fellow southpaw Jakob Butturff, 277-200, after having gone winless since bagging his lone major title in the 2016 PBA Players Championship. He took home PBA Central Region Player of the Year honors.

Deo Benard, this magazine's selection for PBA Player to Watch on the 2026 tour, banked back-to-back Southwest Region Player of the Year honors after having become the youngest to earn the recognition last year.

Tom Hess, the 2011 USBC Masters champion who has enjoyed an incredible run on the senior circuit with a whopping 11 titles — tying him with Parker Bohn III, Gene Stus and Ron Mohr for fourth place on the PBA50 Tour's all-time titlists list — continues to wreck the senior regional ranks as he took Senior Player of the Year honors in the Midwest Region.

Here are all the PBA Regional program annual award honorees for 2025…

EAST REGION

Player of the Year	Aaron Major, Taunton, Mass.
Rookie of the Year	Ethan Crouse, Lowville, N.Y.
Senior Player of the Year	Rick Graham, Elizabethtown, Pa.
Pat Patterson	Bruce Hall, Southborough, Mass.

CENTRAL REGION

Player of the Year	Graham Fach, Urbana, Ohio
Rookie of the Year	Gage Blackford, Elwood, Ind.
Senior Player of the Year	Michael Haggitt, Springfield, Ohio
Pat Patterson	Rick Zakrajsek, Lorain, Ohio

MIDWEST REGION

Player of the Year	Ben Sobel, Collinsville, Ill.
Rookie of the Year	River Van Veghel, Waterloo, Ill.
Senior Player of the Year	Tom Hess, Granger, Iowa
Pat Patterson	Dan Beaman, St. Louis, Mo.

SOUTH REGION

Player of the Year	Matt Taylor, Zebulon, N.C.
Rookie of the Year	CJ Petrin, Chattanooga, Tenn.
Senior Player of the Year	Jon Rakoski, Estero, Fla.
Pat Patterson	Crystal Hall, Hope Mills, N.C.

SOUTHWEST REGION

Player of the Year	Deo Benard, Roanoke, Texas
Rookie of the Year	Brandon Bonta, Wichita, Kan.
Senior Player of the Year	Tony Lanning, Yukon, Okla.
Pat Patterson	Beau Peterson, McPherson, Kan.

WEST REGION

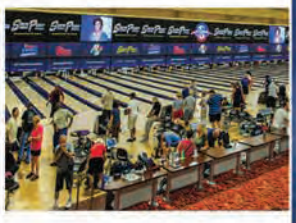
Player of the Year	Darren Tang, Las Vegas
Rookie of the Year	Kyle Morrison, Draper, Utah
Senior Player of the Year	David Leverage, Goodyear, Ariz.
Pat Patterson	Eric Adolphson, San Ramon, Calif.

NORTHWEST REGION

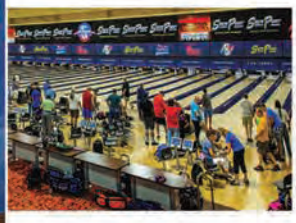
Player of the Year	Christopher Tuholski, Vancouver, Wash.
Rookie of the Year	Jerry Jennings, Yakima, Wash.
Senior Player of the Year	Blaine Weninger, Clackamas, Ore.
Pat Patterson	Joshua Groves, Meridian, Idaho



Central Player
Graham Fach punctuated his resurgent 2025 with PBA Central Region Player of the Year honors.







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The average three-time PWBA Tour champion Liz Kuhlkin compiled over 120 games in the Towne Mixed Doubles league at Towne Bowling Academy in Schenectady, New York, to win the USBC National High Average Award for the second straight year and fourth time in the past six seasons. Other USBC High Average Award winners included Jake Washington, who took the men's honor with a 253.86 average over 93 games in the Monday Money league at AMF Woodstock Lanes in Georgia, and Kaitlyn Stull and Ryan Campbell, who respectively won USBC Youth National High Average Awards. Stull averaged 226.84 across 71 games in the #NorthHouseEliteLeague at Buffaloe Lanes in Raleigh, North Carolina, while Campbell recorded a 248.11 average over 72 games in the Saturday morning Youth/Junior Masters 24-25 league at Expo 300 in Greenwood, South Carolina.


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Generation Next

Know of a promising youth bowler who belongs in **GENERATION NEXT**? Let us know! Email the editor at *Gianmarc.Manzione@bowl.com.*

Stevie Newton

HANOVER, PA | **AGE 12** | **JUNIOR GOLD TV FINALIST**

THIS PENNSYLVANIA PHENOM wasted no time staking an early claim to notoriety in the youth ranks with a performance for the ages among U12 Girls at the 2025 USBC Junior Gold Championships. There, Newton placed third among 107 competitors, making the TV finals as the No. 2 seed and putting up a strong showing in a 228-193 loss to eventual runner-up Caitlin Stahl.

Newton, a two-handed competitor from the right side, saw her 2025 tournament mark a dramatic improvement over a 2024 showing during which she finished in 83rd place. Perhaps that provided the basis for the confidence with which she spoke to Bowl.com's Donovan Grubaugh at the time, remarking that, "I worked a lot on consistency, making sure I hit my mark most of the time and spare shooting. I expected to see myself in match play, but my main goal was to make the TV finals."

You hear that language about goal-setting and expectations from this three-time Storm Youth Championships titlist? Those are the words of a competitor destined for greatness in the years to come.



Great Expectations
A confident Newton said she "expected" to make match play at Junior Gold this year, then exceeded that goal with a TV finals appearance.

Caitlin Stahl

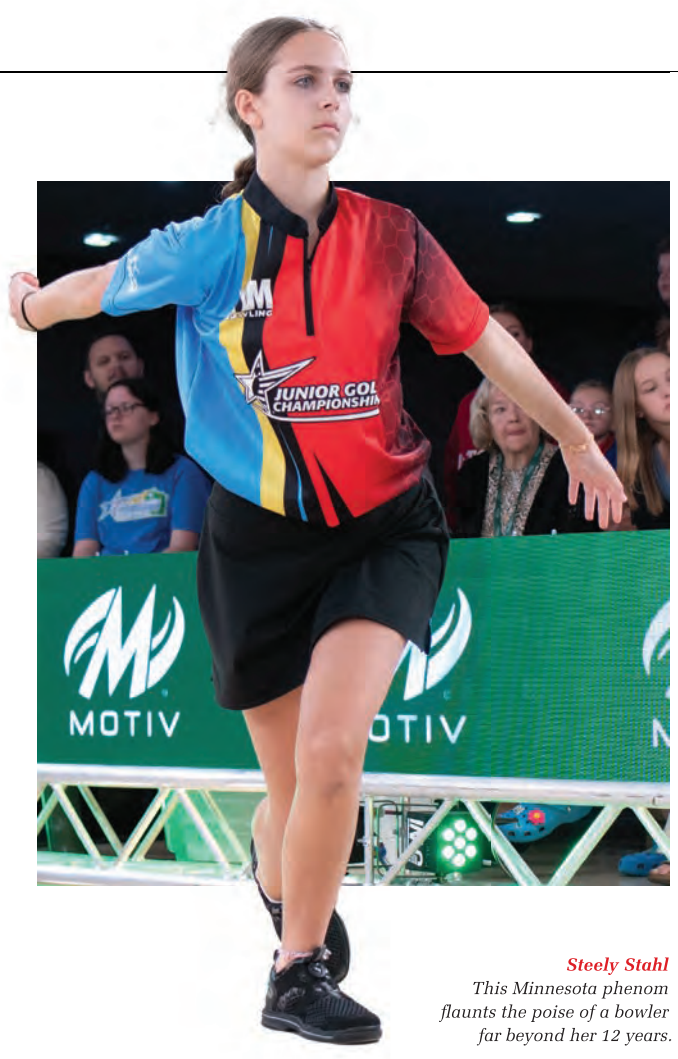
MANTAKO, MN | **AGE 12** | **JUNIOR GOLD TV FINALIST**

This Minnesota masher flaunted some serious grit in the 2025 USBC Junior Gold Championships, where an early journey to the Elimination Bracket following a 386-334 loss to Stevie Newton did nothing to deter her competitive tenacity.

Stahl blasted her next two opponents — first handing Candace Oakes a 364-287 loss, then handling Norah Rowe by the sizable margin of 99 pins, 435-336, to make the TV finals. No one who followed that gutsy trip to the championship round would have been surprised to see her rise to that occasion with her 228-193 victory over Newton before giving eventual champion Isabelle Jones all she could handle in a 213-196 loss.

Her title-match performance featured a clutch turkey in Frames 7 through 9 after seeing Jones open in her seventh, a sign of her ability to capitalize on an opponent's errors even here in the very early going of her career.

Expect to see more grit, and someday even greatness, from this Midwest star in the making.



Steely Stahl
This Minnesota phenom flaunts the poise of a bowler far beyond her 12 years.



2019



2025

WHAT ARE THEY UP TO?

ANNALISE OBRYANT

20 | Ball Ground, GA | **GENERATION NEXT DEBUT** October 2019

This Jacksonville State junior willed her way onto the pages of Generation Next at age 15 in October 2019, by which time she was riding the phenomenal high of having won the U15 Girls Division title at the USBC Junior Gold Championships not once, but two years in a row, prompting her sometime coach at the time and PBA50 Tour champion Mike Dias to praise her as "very talented" and a player who "has worked very hard for the opportunity."

The opportunities the Georgia Youth Hall of Famer has since created for herself with that work ethic have been plentiful, as she never let up in the USBC Junior Gold Championships, where she finished runner-up among U18 Girls in the 2022 event after blasting a 300 in the same tournament the year prior.

More recently, the Junior Team USA member bagged silver medals in the Team and Doubles events at the 2025 PANAM Bowling Youth Championship. OBryant also already has made some waves in PWBA Regional action, leading the field and finishing runner-up in the 2024 PWBA Myrtle Beach Regional, and then again led the field and finished runner-up just a couple weeks later in the 2024 PWBA Mooresville Regional.

Earlier this year, Obryant put up a stout performance in the 2025 USBC U22 Queens, proceeding deep into the bracket to come within a match of that event's stepladder finals, falling to Mia Stolakis in a narrow 455-463 loss.

Count on OBryant delivering a clutch performance throughout championship season this year for Jacksonville State — and doing much the same on the PWBA Tour in the years to come.

Conversation

JOHN ASBATY

Ever since this former collegiate bowler with William Paterson and Nebraska transitioned from bowling to a career in the culinary arts, he has applied skills he gleaned from his time competing at a high level on the lanes to the kitchens in which the chef has toiled for more than the past 20 years. The husband of USBC Hall of Famer Diandra, Asbaty earned an Associate's degree at the Cooking and Hospitality Institute of Chicago (now Le Cordon Bleu) in 2003, and he spoke with us about the ways in which the values he picked up as a bowler inform his approach to his latest restaurant venture, Ox Bar & Hearth in Chicago's Lincoln Park neighborhood, which opened in November — from poise under pressure to work ethic, team work and more.



Changing Lanes
Asbaty draws upon many life skills he gleaned from bowling in his career as a chef and restauranteur.

Q Congratulations on the new restaurant!

A Thank you very much. I appreciate that.

Q What is the culinary theme of the restaurant?.

A We're predominantly focused on Midwestern products and sourcing and representing this region, along with a huge live-fire focus. So, Midwestern ingredients cooked over a live fire. But we're really adamant about sourcing locally and partnering with equally passionate people about what they grow, what they raise, what they make, and partnering with them to showcase that as much as possible. We want to be a simple and familiar, but slightly elevated, neighborhood American restaurant focused on the Midwest.

Q Tell us more about the "live-fire" theme.

A Half of our hot line in our kitchen is devoted to live-fuel cooking, so we have a whole-log wood smoker; we have a charcoal oven that does hardwood lump charcoal and gets up anywhere between 500 and 800 degrees — so, really, really hot; and then we have the main focus of that hot line, which is the hearth. That is a 5-foot, word-burning fireplace. It's modular, so we're able to set it up however we want, with different racks, heights and configurations based on what our menu is at that time. It's essentially an open fire pit, and it's a huge part of the restaurant and obviously part of the name.

Q It appears from the outside looking in that the restaurant business requires you to work long, grueling hours. What can you tell us about that?

A That's definitely not incorrect (laughs). But, I think, with anything that you want to devote your life's work to — if you want to do that well — there are not a lot of shortcuts. Restaurant life in general is one in which you're working while other people are going out and celebrating, and that makes us part of that celebration. Yes, it is really, really hard work. There can be some grunge work at times, too; it's not always the celebrity-chef lifestyle that a lot of people think it is. At the same time, it's extremely rewarding to get a team of people together with the same common goal and moving in the same direction. When a restaurant is firing on all cylinders, it's kind of a beautiful dance. It's not always a beautiful dance (laughs); there are some interesting things at times, but it's a pretty amazing responsibility to feed people. It's a pretty intimate thing, feeding people who you don't know. It's hard to get closer to someone than serving them a meal, and I think that's the best way to bring people together. It crosses cultures, and it does amazing things in terms of bringing people to the table and sharing food.

Q You're a chef now and you have been for a long time, but you also have a background in college bowling. What more can you tell us about your bowling experience?

A I bowled for William Paterson University — I'm originally from New Jersey — and I bowled for William Paterson in 1998-1999, and then 1999-2000. In 1998 is when I met Diandra, and she had

just gone to Nebraska. We were kind of doing the long-distance relationship thing at the time.

I went out to visit her at Nebraska, and I had no intention of transferring or anything like that. It was just like, 'Hey, let's hang out one weekend and actually see each other instead of just emailing — or AOL Instant Messengering or whatever we were doing at that time. I'm dating myself!

She had practice while I was out there and she invited me to that, and I knew Coach [Bill] Straub at that time. I had a really good year my freshman year in 1998, so he kind of knew who I was, and we just got to talking, and I watched their practice and I was like, 'I have no idea what's happening here.'

William Paterson was a great team of people; we were friends, but we were kind of like a club sport. There wasn't a ton of structure. So, when I was exposed to a Nebraska practice, it was so eye-opening, the focus on fundamentals and the structure to the practice. I said to Diandra, 'You do this every day?' And she said, 'For two hours, every day!' I was like, 'Oh, my God! This is insane!'

Then I was talking with [Coach Straub] and one thing led to another. I jokingly put on a Nebraska jacket when I was there. And then, sure enough, I had transferred the following year. I bowled my last year there and graduated in 2002.

Q Are there ways in which you've had to draw from the poise you practiced in high-stakes moments on the lanes that also have served you well in the kitchen as a chef?

A That's a great question. That's a question that's never been asked of me! I love it. So, yeah, I think that level of focus and calm that you need to have, even if you're not internally calm — especially as a leader in a kitchen, if you start freaking out and losing your cool, that trickles down pretty quickly.

I always compare cooking in kitchens to a team sport because it really is like a bowling team. You need everyone to align to work toward a common goal, you need everybody in sync, you need everybody communicating, you need everybody having each other's backs. So, it's a very similar environment to team sports, and I think that's probably why I gravitated toward it, because I've always loved team sports. It's a lot of that same mentality — staying focused and keeping calm. Diandra talks a lot about process, and when things start to get a little hairy and crazy, and people are sending food back, it's like, 'Well, what is the process? What do we need to do now to get to the next step?'

I think it's the same thing with bowling. When you need one in the 10th and you step up, you can't think, 'Oh, my God! If I don't have a strike here, this is going to happen!' You don't focus on that. You focus on what you have to do to throw the best shot you can. If you get 9, you get 9, but it's process over outcome, which is a phrase that Diandra uses a lot. It's so true, and that lends itself to a lot of things in life generally. What do I have to do to put one foot in front of the other and get to where I'm trying to go, as opposed to focusing on all these other factors and noise that is cluttering my brain.

Q Surfacing on the radar of a coach as renowned as Bill Straub at a program as celebrated as Nebraska required a great deal of work ethic from you. In what ways does the work ethic you refined on the lanes help you now in your culinary career?

A Although my freshman year [in college bowling] was pretty solid, when I went to Nebraska, I got a fresh perspective. It was an opportunity to look at things with a blank slate, and I essentially ripped my game apart to the point where I didn't hook the ball for a few months at all. That got my swing back in line; I worked on my training and footwork, and I basically learned to bowl again.

That was difficult. At one point, I thought I was a pretty good bowler, and then I broke everything down, and, at that school, everybody's good, so how do you take your game to the next level? Sometimes, that requires taking a step back to go forward.

I definitely took some steps back, broke my game down and built it back up, and I do that a lot with food and cooking. We look at things critically every day — probably too critically sometimes. When people eat in the restaurant, I don't want them to tell me what was good. I want to know what wasn't good, what we can work on, what we can do better.

You're only as good as your last shot on the lanes, and you're only as good as the last dish that you serve.



Team Spirit
Asbaty says his passion for team sports attracted him to a career in the kitchen, where teamwork is key to success.

Action

TEAM USA WOMEN RALLY TO ENJOY SUCCESS AT IBF WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

by MARK MILLER



Learning Curve
Hanrahan believes he and his teammates learned a lot in Hong Kong that will carry over into the future.

UNTIL THE WOMEN TURNED in a great final day, things were looking bleak for Team USA at the International Bowling Federation World Championships that ended Dec. 5 in Hong Kong.

Struggling with the tournament's shorter formats and success international players had with the Hammer Purple Urethane ball, the men's squad captured only one medal – a bronze in singles by Ryan Barnes of Denton, Texas.

"The bronze medal is still something I'm really proud of," Barnes said. "It means a lot to me personally and it's not something I take lightly."

At that point, the women only had bronze by Breanna Clemmer of Pikeville, Kentucky, in singles and Jillian Martin of Stow, Ohio, and Julia Bond of Lincoln, Nebraska, in doubles.

"It felt like during the moment, even though I was bowling individually, I felt like I was still bowling with a team because of the support that I had off and on the lanes," Clemmer said. "We worked together, we had fun, and most importantly, we enjoyed the moment and did it together."

Clemmer, Martin, and Bond joined Shannon Pluhowsky of Dayton, Ohio; Bryanna Coté of Tucson, Arizona; and Lauren Russo of O'Fallon, Missouri, to earn gold in team and overall women's federation while Pluhowsky added silver in all-events on the last day.

"The week ended in the best way that we could imagine with a team gold medal and a world championship," Clemmer said. "I'm very thankful for the experience and the opportunity."

"For us, though we didn't have as many medals at the beginning, we still all bowled consistently well," Martin said. "Obviously, we would have liked to have made more medal rounds but the format of the World Championships was just brutal. We just grinded it out all week.

"We know as part of the Team USA program we get stronger when we get to those team events. We had that goal and worked off each other's energy and just worked together based on what we learned throughout the week and we did a good job of executing and staying patient."

Team USA's women edged out Malaysia two games to one, in the best-of-three title match. Japan and Korea earned bronze medals. The Americans led the 22-nation women's field with the most points based

on finishing positions in each event. Singapore was second and Malaysia third.

Ironically, Pluhowsky, Coté, Martin, and Russo started 2025 with a gold medal in the 2025 IBF World Cup in the same venue in January. Martin, a senior at the University of Nebraska, culminated a great year that included one gold and two silver medals at the PANAM Youth Championships. Even better, she was able to bowl for the first time with Bond, her collegiate coach.

"We work so well together," Martin said. "Obviously, I've known her for a long time. I think we're just comfortable bowling with each other, had good chemistry together, and she was able to keep me grounded."

All-events results also were based on a points system much like the one used at the U.S. Team Trials with athletes assigned numbers based on where they finished in each event (one point for first, two for second, etc.). Pluhowsky's 22 points ranked behind Finland's Essi Pakarinen (17) and ahead of bronze medalist Shayna Ng of Singapore (23).

Pakarinen and Peppi Konsteri won the women's doubles gold over sisters Cherie and Daphne Tan of Singapore. The Tans ousted Martin-Bond in three games.

Sweden's James Blomgren (16) earned gold in men's all-events. Korea's Ji Geun (20) took silver and Lukas Jelinek of the Czech Republic (31) bronze. France secured the men's team gold while Sweden was the overall men's winner among 28 federations.

The American men – Barnes; Andrew Anderson of Chesterfield Township, Michigan; Packy Hanrahan of Wichita, Kansas; A.J. Johnson of Kenosha, Wisconsin; Kristopher Prather of Romeoville, Illinois, and Chris Via of Blacklick, Ohio, ended ninth overall.

"It was a combination of everything," said Team USA head coach Bryan O'Keefe. "The format made our guys feel they had to be perfect because there wasn't a lot of time to make up for a mistake and then their overall ball reaction as a whole wasn't as good as a lot of their competitors and so they were fighting back which made them feel like they had to be perfect. Our inability to get comfortable on the lanes probably was the biggest factor.

"World competition has become more challenging for us especially with the formats so much Baker. We were bowling just seven games to qualify so it was a crapshoot. It takes a little while to get our feet underneath us and feel what's happening on the lanes.

"The guys' event turned out to be a very heavy urethane event so, unfortunately, we could never match what some of the other countries were having success or doing. The guys kept trying and trying and trying but never felt like it was our day. We constantly felt like we were fighting uphill."

But Hanrahan believes he and his teammates learned a lot that will carry over into the future.

"We'll be better and find ways maybe through equipment, maybe a mindset, a slightly different way of preparation," Hanrahan said. "Bryan is one of the best in the world. Every time we step on the lanes, we have full confidence he's one of the sharpest minds ready to attack the lanes with us. At the same time, he's prepared as well as anyone could have."

- Mark Miller



Golden Grind
Jillian Martin (front and center) said the women's team gold marked a triumph over a format that made for a brutal grind (with Bryanna Coté, Lauren Russo, Breanna Clemmer, Julia Bond, l-r., front; and Shannon Pluhowsky with coaches Bryan O'Keefe and Kelly Kulick, l-r., back row).

Angles



New Year, New Me — *On the Lanes, at Least*

by EMILY SALLEE

I'VE NEVER BEEN A "New Year's Resolutions" kind of gal. Making changes for the sake of keeping to a list feels performative rather than transformative. And this is coming from a person who loves checklists.

Now, just because I'm not into resolutions doesn't mean I don't embrace the new year as a time for reflection and reform, especially when it comes to my bowling game. I'm not talking about a Stuart Smalley-esque pep talk to make yourself feel better (feel free to Google him, Gen Z). I'm talking about sitting down and having an honest talk with yourself about how you're REALLY bowling. I'm talking about breaking out of the comfort of what's sorta-kinda been working some of the time. It's time to change your game, for real this time.

We're about halfway through league season and eyeing the beginning of the national professional tour seasons (PBA starts next month, PWBA at the end of April). There are a lot of bowlers prepping, planning, and practicing for the year ahead. Maybe you like resolutions and this year's are to bowl a regional or make a run at high average in your weekly league. Great goals, but this is where I suggest reflection over resolution.

By this point, if you've bowled consistently, you should have a good idea about what's going on with your game. If you think there's nothing that needs improving, then that's a much bigger problem that I'm not qualified to address nor want to. You might work on whatever that is first. Anyway, if you can be honest with yourself about your shortcomings, there's no better time than the new year to try to fix them.

It's easy to get stuck doing the same thing over and over again, especially during league competition, or any competition, for that matter. You want those points, and you don't want to disappoint your teammates. However, you know what's more disappointing than not winning points? Struggling. Eeking your way through each game.

In the same breath, I get it. It's hard to change direction midstream. What if you make things worse? Let me be frank: it's rarely worse. It's pretty hard to make something that doesn't work to begin with any worse. Now, it might be a different type of wrong that leaves you really confused and scratching your head, but it won't be worse.

With that in mind, we all know the "no risk, no reward" cliché. In bowling, I believed this to be particularly apt. Deciding to change a major part of your game feels like a huge risk. Is it, though? Changing your footwork, adjusting your push away, and reworking your timing are big steps, but the reward is huge.

I specifically list these because I've done them all over the past couple of years. The minute I figured out what changes to make, I started implementing them. The benefit was seeing the results in real time, and my game is more consistent than it's ever been. I became less fearful — not "fearless" because, let's be real, there's still apprehension — of making adjustments when it finally clicked that the worst thing that could happen is that it doesn't work.

Think about that for a second. That's the only risk. The worst thing that can happen is that you go back to the drawing board to figure out a different way to fix the problem. You can literally stop at any time. So, in reality, what risk is there?

We bowlers are often our own worst enemies. We get in our own heads and trip over our own feet, sometimes literally. I'm as guilty as anybody. We think that we have to keep on keeping on until the season is over because that's what we've always done. But it's time to be brave. Now, at the beginning of a fresh, shiny new year, is the perfect time to resolve to be a different bowler.

Pick one thing that could use some work, whether it's spare shooting or your mental game, and commit to changing it. I'm not advocating for a complete overhaul. Far from it. In fact, *PLEASE* don't try to fix or tweak every aspect of your game all at once (it absolutely does not work — trust me). What I'm suggesting is to choose this year to not be satisfied with where you're at; wipe off the confetti, put down the champagne flute, and grab your bowling bag. Let's roll (pun fully intended) into the new year and change our game for good.

Emily Sallee has a Master's degree in literature from the University of Texas at Dallas and has been a competitive bowler both locally and nationally for more than 20 years.

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Drill Bits

DON'T LET WINTER WEATHER COOL YOUR SCORING PACE

LIKE IT OR NOT, winter is in full swing, which means many of us are forced to contend with snow, ice and frigid temperatures as we head to league each week.

But while wet bowling center carpet and settee space cluttered with snow boots and heavy coats may be unavoidable, winter-warped bowling equipment isn't.

Nevertheless, some of us put ourselves behind the eight-ball before we even start our sets because of where and how we're storing our equipment.

Just like most of us don't perform our best when frozen, neither do our bowling balls, shoes, tape, inserts, etc. As such, it's crucial that you not keep your bowling bag in a state of deep freeze in the hours leading up to the start of league every week.

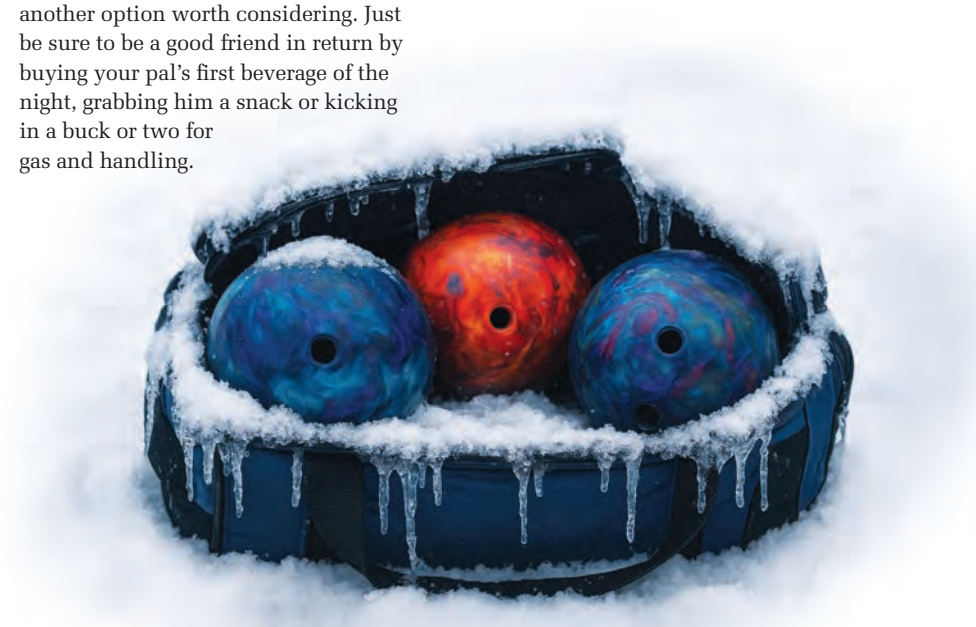
With that in mind, here are some quick suggestions to help you make sure your bowling bag is warmed up and in proper working order during the cold-weather months:

- Get a locker — I don't like spending extra money any more than the next guy or gal, but if you don't have adequate indoor storage space at home, this is a great way to avoid having to keep your bowling equipment in an ice-cold garage or trunk all day prior to bowling.
  - One thing to always remember though is that you'll only have access to your locker when the bowling center is open. That's fine on your normal league night, but always think ahead if you're planning to bowl outside of that because you don't want to be in a position where you can't get access to your equipment as needed.
- Bring your bag inside the night before and/or the day of bowling — Some of us have no choice but to store our equipment in a garage or trunk; however, that doesn't mean the bag has to stay there 24/7. Consider bringing your bowling bag indoors in the hours leading up to bowling. I used to store my two three-ball rollers behind my desk in my classroom when I was still teaching. Yes, the students asked questions about them the first couple of times, but after that, they just became features of the landscape once a week, and I no longer had to use frigid equipment.
- Send your gear with a friend/teammate — You'll need to have a pretty good buddy in order to utilize this one, but if you can find a friend or teammate who is willing to bring your gear to the bowling center along with theirs, this is another option worth considering. Just be sure to be a good friend in return by buying your pal's first beverage of the night, grabbing him a snack or kicking in a buck or two for gas and handling.
- Keep your bag in the passenger compartment instead of the trunk — If keeping your bag in the car all day prior to bowling is the only option you have, at the very least, keep the bag inside the cab instead of the trunk. At least the passenger compartment is heated, which means less time for the bag to sit at the lowest temps. Also, the longer your drive, the longer your equipment has to be brought up to temperature prior to arriving at the bowling center.

We go to league night looking to get on a heater and light up the lanes with high scores, and that's highly unlikely to happen with frozen bowling equipment that's working against us instead of for us.

So, if you find yourself battling ice cold gear week in and week out during the winter months, consider one of the suggestions above, or troubleshoot on your own to find a way to ensure your equipment is warmed up and ready to go when you hit the lanes. It may take a little more time and effort, but, trust me, it will be worth it in the end.

— Gene J. Kanak



Elemental
Bowlers living in areas vulnerable to seasonal extremes must have a plan for protecting their equipment from the elements.


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THE PRACTICE NOBODY SEES: TRAINING THE MENTAL GAME

WE SPEND HOURS FINE-TUNING OUR PHYSICAL GAME. Spare drills. Analyzing video. Testing layouts. Adjusting surfaces. Swapping balls mid-block. We obsess over entry angle, rev rate, and axis rotation like they're sacred metrics. And they are. To a point.

But what about the part of us that controls it all?

The part that decides how we handle a bad break. The part that shows up when you need the shot in the 10th. The part that either cracks or steps up when the moment gets heavy.

That part is our mind. And if we're not training it with the same attention we give to our swing, spares, or our arsenal, we're leaving strikes and growth on the table.

Everyone wants a stronger mental game. Not many are doing the work to get one. I tell bowlers every day: you should spend the same amount of time on your mental game as you do on your physical game.

Why the Mental Game Gets Overlooked

I get it. Mental game training doesn't show up in highlight reels. You can't track it with a stat. No one claps when you take a calming breath or restart your pre-shot routine. But the athletes who win consistently — the ones who show up calm, composed, and confident when the moment matters — they're the ones doing the invisible work.

Your mindset doesn't just shape your game. It is your game.

You can have the best equipment, the purest release, and the consistency that would rival Norm Duke, but if your head gets in the way, if you spiral after a split or panic under pressure, all that talent gets buried.

I've learned this lesson the hard way. I've watched myself unravel on live TV. I've let one bad shot turn into four. I've walked off the lanes knowing I lost not because of my physical game, but because I wasn't mentally prepared.

It's humbling. But it's also empowering. Because mindset is trainable. And when you commit to it, everything changes.

My Mental Toolbox

Let me share a few things I practice. These have helped me win titles and, more importantly, helped me stay grounded when I didn't.

1. Pre-Shot Routine: Your Mental Reset Button

Think of your pre-shot routine as a security blanket for your brain. It tells your body, "We've been here. We've got this."

Mine is simple. I wipe my bowling ball off. Wipe the bottom of my slide foot. I align my feet. I take a deep breath. I visualize the path in a vibrant color that I want my ball to take going down the

Invisible Work
Consistent winners who show up calm, composed, and confident when the moment matters are the ones doing the invisible work.



lane. I clear my head. Then I go.

But the magic isn't in the steps. It's in the consistency. When you practice your routine every time, your brain learns to trust it. That trust becomes your anchor in chaos.

The next time you feel the pressure mounting, go back to your routine. That's your reset. That's your control.

2. Breathwork: The Easiest Tool You're Not Using

When your breathing is shallow, your brain thinks you're in danger. It floods your body with adrenaline. Your heart races. Your muscles tighten. Your brain thinks you're about to be attacked by a lion, but it's just that you need to make that 10 pin to win the league point. Sound familiar?

Deep, intentional breathing flips that switch.

Try this: Breathe in for four counts. Hold for two. Breathe out for six. Repeat it between shots, after a miss, or even during practice. This slows your heart rate and brings you back to the moment.

It sounds too simple to matter, but it matters more than you think.

3. Focus Strategies: Training Attention Like a Muscle

Your focus is like a flashlight. It can shine on what's wrong, or it can light up what's next.

During events, I narrow my focus to what I can control: my target, my process, my breath, my energy. I don't focus on standings, cut lines, or so-and-so running out shots four lanes away.

That takes discipline. But discipline is a muscle. And like any muscle, it needs reps.

During practice, challenge yourself to hold attention for a full game. No distractions. No commentary. No judgment. Just presence. Then build from there.

And if your mind wanders? That's not failure. That's the rep. Bring it back, again and again.

4. Visualize It Until It Feels Real.

Three months before I won the World Ranking Masters, I started seeing it in my mind. I would sit in silence and imagine myself there, in the finals, needing to throw strikes to win. I felt the nerves. I saw the pins fall. Fast forward to that moment in real life, and it felt like I had already been there because I had, so many times in my mind.

Practicing Pressure Without the Pressure

One of the best ways to train the mental game is to simulate pressure when it doesn't count.

Here's how I do that:

- **Make one shot matter.** End practice with a 10th-frame scenario. Give yourself one shot to win. No redos.
- **Play games with consequences.** Miss a spare? Do five push-ups. Miss your target? Start the frame over.
- **Invite eyes. Have someone watch you bowl.** Or better, have them record it. It mimics the nerves you feel in competition.
- **Challenge your friends to a best-ball competition.** Put something on the line — whether it's pride, push-ups, or who carries the equipment to the car. Make it count.

The more you replicate pressure, the more familiar it becomes.

Pressure isn't something you should avoid. It's something you should rehearse. When the real moment comes, it won't feel foreign. It will feel familiar.

After the Shot: Mental Recovery

What do you do after the shot? That's where the growth happens.

When I was younger, I'd stew after a bad shot. Replay it. Relive it. Carry it with me for six more frames.

Now? I give myself five seconds. I call it the "five-second rule."

In those five seconds, I let myself feel it. Be mad. Be disappointed. Be human.

Then I move on. Because holding onto the last shot only messes up the next one.

"YOU SHOULD SPEND AS MUCH TIME ON YOUR MENTAL GAME AS YOU DO ON YOUR PHYSICAL GAME."

Emotional Neutrality: Don't Let the Highs Fool You Either

Training the mental game isn't just about handling bad moments. It's about managing the good ones, too.

When we get hyped after a string of strikes, we sometimes speed up. We lose touch with our routine. We bowl with ego instead of intention.

Emotional neutrality doesn't mean you stop feeling. It means you stay even. Steady. Grounded.

Let the highs fuel you, but don't let them sweep you away. Stay focused on the next frame. The next breath. The next decision.

You Can Train This… and You Should

The mental game isn't mystical. It's not just for the elite. It's not a talent. It's a skill set. A toolkit. A daily choice.

If you want to compete at your highest level, you have to train it.

You wouldn't show up to a tournament with a ball you've never thrown. So don't show up with a mind you've never practiced.

Final Frame

The thing about the mental game is that there is rarely applause for it. There's no highlight reel for presence. No trophy for emotional recovery. No banner for self-awareness.

But you feel it. Your teammates feel it. Your opponents feel it.

It shows up in the moments between frames. In how you breathe before the 10th. In how you respond after a split. In how you carry yourself after defeat.

The mental game is quiet. But it's loud in what it builds.

So train it. Nourish it. Make it part of your practice. The best version of you doesn't just show up with a perfect approach and a clean release.

That person shows up with a clear mind, a grounded heart, and a belief that you can handle anything.

Even when the scoreboard says otherwise.

— Diandra Asbaty

Training Camp

SIX KEYS TO BETTER TWO-HANDED BOWLING

The style isn't as easy as it looks, but the rewards of proper execution can be immense.

by GENE J. KANAK

It's easy to understand why so many young bowlers are opting to learn the two-handed style and why droves of veterans are attempting to convert to it after a lifetime spent bowling traditionally.

After all, there's no denying it. When paired with accuracy and precision, the speed and power generated by two-handed bowling are a gamechanger, producing pin-punishing power that can take a bowler's game to new heights.

But if you've ever dabbled with two-handed bowling, you already know that it's not as easy as it looks and that simply taking your thumb out of the ball and cradling it with two hands won't turn you into a superstar overnight.

With that in mind, this month, we're going to discuss six keys you can focus on to try to help get and keep your two-handed game on track.

KEY 1 CONSISTENT GRIP AND BOWLING-HAND LOCATION

When your thumb isn't in the ball, you have a lot more freedom to alter how deep you put your fingers into the holes and to change where your palm rests on the ball's surface during setup. Some two-handers can use that flexibility to their advantage, but, for most of us, it's best to stay consistent.

- Find the finger-hole depth that's most comfortable for you. Some of you may prefer a semi-finger-tip grip where you insert your fingers into the ball between the first and second knuckle; others may opt for a traditional finger-tip grip (fingers inserted up to the first knuckle). There isn't a right or wrong, so just go with what feels right, and stick with it.
- Figure out where you want your palm to rest on the ball, and make sure it's there each and every time you throw a shot as allowing it to wander may cause big differences in ball roll from one delivery to the next.



1

KEY 2 BE MINDFUL OF YOUR TOP HAND

With two-handed bowling, your top hand is just as crucial as your bowling hand, so you need to make sure you're mindful of its location at all times.

- Find a comfortable position for your top hand to rest on the ball, experimenting as needed until you come up with the location that works best for you.
  - Some of the world's best two-handers have the fingers of their top hand nearly touching the fingers on their bowling hand as that creates a very stable cradle. If you're flexible enough to accomplish that, it might be worth giving it a shot.
- Once you find your preferred top-hand position, be sure that's where that hand goes during each delivery.
  - When you're first starting out, during practice, consider using a ball marking pencil to have someone trace the outline of your top hand while in the proper location so that you'll have a visual aide to help you until you get to the point where you can consistently find it on your own.
- Make sure your top hand stays firmly planted on the ball throughout the push-away, backswing and downswing. Until the moment of release, the non-bowling hand should feel like it's glued to the ball.

KEY 3 BOWLING ELBOW TIGHT TO THE BODY

Getting the bowling elbow away from the body and "chicken-winging it" is a no-no regardless of whether you're bowling with one hand or two, so we need to avoid that at all costs. Here's how:

- As you push the ball away, let gravity take over and allow the ball to fall into the downswing as opposed to feeling like you're pulling the ball backward.
- Make sure you've cleared your ball-side hip out of the way so that the swing can come straight back without having to go around you.
  - Employing a bit of forward torso lean can help here as it will get you in a more front-to-back position as opposed to side to side.

KEY 4 ARM DIRECTLY BENEATH OR INSIDE BOWLING SHOULDER

Even if you successfully keep the elbow tucked during the backswing, all is lost if you let it flare out as you approach release. As such, it's crucial that your arm remains directly beneath your bowling shoulder (or just slightly inside) prior to release just as Ryan Barnes demonstrates here.

- To help you do so, make sure to apply enough forward and/or side torso lean as it will be nearly impossible to avoid rotating side to side if you're too upright.

KEY 5 STAY BEHIND OR SLIGHTLY INSIDE THE BALL

A powerful release, one-handed or two, comes from keeping the hand and wrist in strong positions, which means being under and inside the ball like Ryan displays here. Here are some things to think about to help you get there:

- Focus on your wrist position as you approach release, not during the entire swing. A lot of bowlers display maximum wrist cupping during setup but quickly lose that strong position as soon as the ball starts moving. If you're strong enough to keep your wrist cupped from start to finish, great. If not, keep your wrist relaxed during setup and push-away and just focus on getting into that strong position during the downswing as that's when it's easiest to accomplish and when it actually matters.
- Actively think about the feeling of having your bowling-hand palm completely flat on the ball's surface.


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5



6

- As you approach release, be mindful about keeping your palm behind the ball until after the ball crosses the foul line. You aren't likely to actually start rotation that late, but having this swing thought may help you avoid the urge to get around the ball too soon.
- Set a camera up on the pair next to your bowling-arm side and record yourself performing reps of the Standing Foul-line Drill like Ryan is doing here. That way, you can see how much wrist cup you're achieving and whether or not you're doing a good job of staying behind the ball from shot to shot.

KEY 6 POST THE FINISH

Balance is a critical element of shot repeatability no matter how many hands you're using or whether or not your thumb is in the ball. If you don't have a solid foundation at release, you're going to lose power and likely be very inaccurate. Obviously, we don't want that, so we need to figure out how to post up our shots and remain stable at the foul line. Try this:

- Make it your goal to stay firmly planted in your finishing position as long as possible. If you can comfortably hold it until the ball hits the pins, that's great. If not, try staying down until the ball rolls over the down-lane range finders (if your center has them) or, at the very least, the arrows.
- Be mindful of where your non-bowling arm goes at release because that arm should be helping you with balance. As you can see, Ryan's goes back at roughly a 45-degree angle behind him. Where does yours go, and is it helping you stay posted up? If not, experiment with it a bit until you feel like it's helping your stability.
- Keep your slide-foot toe pointed up the lane or with minimal side rotation. It's very common for new two-handers to get their slide-foot turned almost completely parallel to the foul line, which makes it nearly impossible to stay balanced. Work on getting your slide-foot toe pointed toward the head pin or just slightly open to your bowling-ball side like Ryan's is here.
- Move up and slow down; don't feel like you have to use the full length of the approach. Another common issue I see with newer two-handers (or new bowlers in general) is that they stand way too far back on the approach. The further back you stand, the larger and faster your steps will need to be in order to finish reasonably close to the foul line. It's not always easy to maintain body control when taking large, fast steps, so consider moving forward on the approach and slowing the cadence of your footwork a bit to help you achieve better balance.

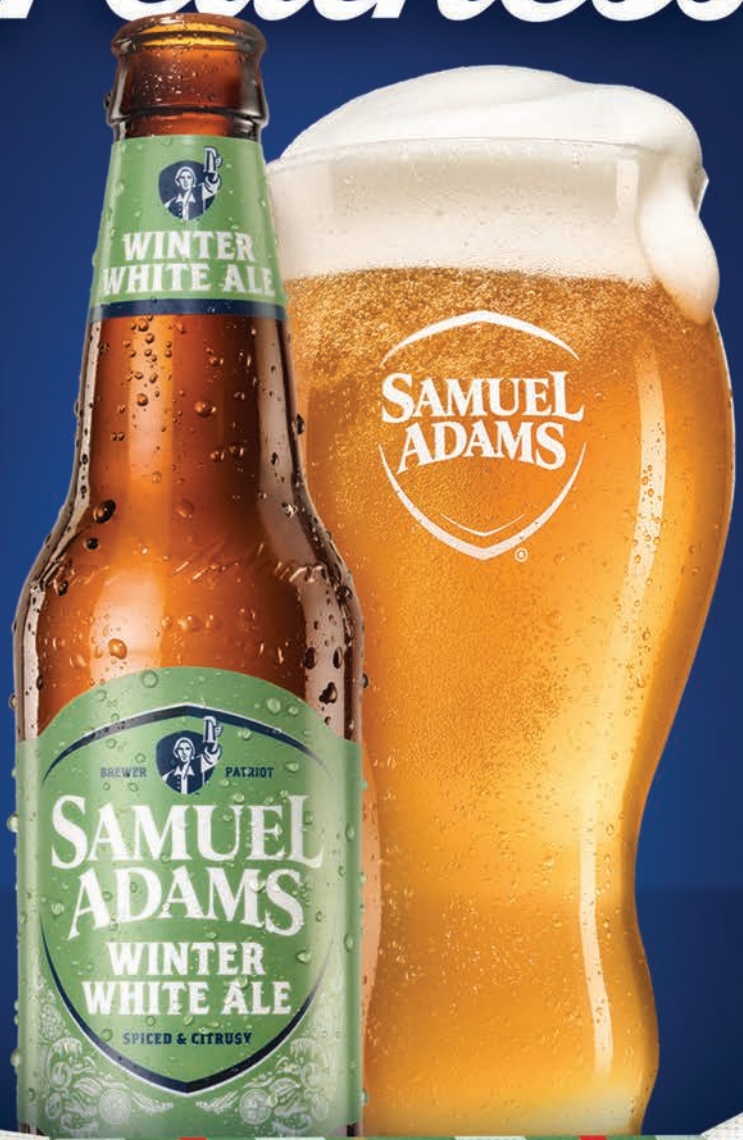
As you read through these six keys, you may have found yourself saying "these are the same things I have to do to bowl well with one hand," and you'd be right. Yes, there are definitely unique elements to the two-handed delivery, but many of the core principles of good shotmaking remain the same no matter what style you employ.

With that in mind, remember that there are no shortcuts. If you think that switching to two-handed is going to be some sort of cheat code to elite bowling, you're likely to be sorely disappointed. It takes just as much time, effort and practice to become a successful two-hander as it does to dominate as a traditional player.

But make no mistake, if you are willing to make the investment, you just might find yourself having more fun and putting up bigger numbers than you ever have before.

UNWRAP HOLIDAY *Greatness*

NEW



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BALL MOTION POTENTIAL

Hook Potential	Breakpoint Shape															
		10	11	12	12.5	13	13.5	14	14.5	15	15.5	16	16.5	17	17.5	18
Very Dry to Lighter Volume Oil Patterns	40.5															
	41															
	41.5															
	42															
	42.5															
	43															
	43.5															
	44															
	44.5															
	45															
	45.5															
	46															
Light: Medium and Medium-Heavy Volume Oil Patterns	46.5															
	47															
	47.5															
	48															
	48.5															
	49															
	49.5															
	50															
	50.5															
	51															
	51.5															
	52															
	52.5															
	53															
Medium-Heavy to Heavier Oil Volume Oil Patterns	53.5															
	54															
	54.5					1										
	55															
	55.5															
	56															
	56.5															
	57											3				
	57.5															
	58											5				
	58.5															
	59											4				
	59.5									2						
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	62.5															
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	63.5															
	64															
	64.5															
	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 2026

1. Brunswick Crown 78U
2. Brunswick Danger Zone Black Solid
3. Brunswick Danger Zone Purple Ice
4. Columbia 300 Street Rally
5. Motiv Nebula

RECENTLY REVIEWED

DECEMBER	
DV8 Heckler Hybrid	59 / 15
Ebonite Entity Pearl	59.5 / 15
Motiv Shadow Tank	52.5 / 12.5
Hammer Nu 2.0	58 / 13
Hammer Zero Mercy Pearl	59.5 / 15.5
Hammer Zero Mercy Solid	65 / 15
Storm Next Factor	60.25 / 15.5
Storm Phaze II Pearl	59 / 16

NOVEMBER	
900 Global Viking	59.5 / 15.5
Brunswick Alert	58.5 / 15
Brunswick Energize	60.5 / 15
Columbia 300 Ricochet Return	60.5 / 15
Motiv Raptor Reign	64 / 15
Radical Evil Eye	63 / 14.5
Radical Intel Recon	58.5 / 16.25
Track Criterion Inverse	59.5 / 15.75

OCTOBER 2025	
Ebonite The One Ovation	58.5 / 15.5
DV8 Mantra Solid	63 / 15
Hammer Black Widow Tour V1	63 / 15.5
Hammer Maximum Effect	65.5 / 15
Storm Equinox Solid	65.5 / 15.5
Roto Grip Rock Star Amped	57.5 / 15.75

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

New Year, New Possibilities

by VERNON PETERSON

WELL, 2026 IS HERE and we hope it brings you no shortage of strikes! This month, we didn't get hit with a blizzard of bowling balls, but these five options each promise to fill a special place in your arsenal. Brunswick has brought their answer to the new 78 hardness rule with their Crown 78U for the urethane lovers. They also brought back the namesake of the famous Danger Zone with a 2026 version in the Solid and Purple Ice. Columbia 300, meanwhile, has unleashed the Street Rally, and this ball is terrorizing the house patterns. Last but not least, Motiv has the Nebula, which stands out by itself on the lanes.

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 ¾ over and 5/8 up.



BRUNSWICK
CROWN 78U

54.5 Hook 13 Length
13 Breakpoint Shape

Manufacturer's Intent: Brunswick reports that, "The Crown 78U offers ... more roll and traction in the mid-lane compared to the other more tumbly and directional options that are available."

Core: Tiered Hexagon Symmetric. RG: 2.549. Differential: .046. Flare:4".

Coverstock: Urethane Solid 78D. Color: Purple and Grey. Finish: 500, 1000 Siaair. Scan Numbers: Grit: 1500 . RA: 26.50.

Overview: Brunswick's answer to the new 78 hardness rule — a restriction of particular concern for urethane lovers — is the new Crown 78U for the urethane lovers on tournament shots. The Crown 78U allowed us to play in the very outside and dry part of the Stone Street pattern, where we lined up crossing 8 to 9 at the arrows with a breakpoint between the 3 to 7 boards at the 39-foot mark. In the same location as the Danger Zone Solid, the Crown 78U got into the urethane roll and with a 6-foot longer breakpoint. On patterns like this one, we could stand in the friction area and create some area to the right with unlimited hold area. The Crown 78U really created some hitting power for this old tweener. On the BJ test pattern, we were able to play the outside area close to the gutter to create some area to the pocket. In the same location as the Danger Zone Solid, the Crown 78U read the pattern like a true urethane ball should and created a 6 to 7-foot longer breakpoint with a 3-6 pocket ball reaction. The Crown 78U is a very good urethane option for those shorter patterns where urethane is in play, and for us old-schoolers who are not the biggest fans of urethane, the Crown created more room than expected and we were able to get the 5 and 8-10 out pretty easily. This 78U doesn't disappoint, and it won't for even non-urethane lovers.



BRUNSWICK
DANGER ZONE
BLACK SOLID

59.5 Hook 15 Length
15 Breakpoint Shape

Manufacturer's Intent: Brunswick advises that the Danger Zone Black Solid provides "a heavy roll in the mid-lane with a very arcing and continuous motion on the backend and through the pins. The Danger Zone Black Solid will have similar length to the Crown Victory, but will be more predictable on the breakpoint."

Core: Danger Zone Symmetric. RG: 2.501. Differential: .048. Flare: 4.

Coverstock: HK22-Powerkoil 26 Solid Reactive. Color: Black. Finish: Finish: 500, 1000, 2000 Siaair then Factory Compound. Scan Numbers: Grit: 5050. RA: 2.70.

Overview: The Danger Zone Black Solid is back for medium lane patterns. On the Stone Street pattern, we created a very good area to the pocket playing the track. We lined up crossing 13 to 14 at the arrows with a breakpoint between the 4 to 10 boards at the 43-foot mark. In the same location as the Crown Victory, the Danger Zone Black Solid read the mid-lane 2 feet sooner, creating a "Big Four" ball reaction with a smoother and more predictable backend motion. On patterns like Stone Street, the Danger Zone Black Solid hooked more than we expected with its compound finish, but it didn't see any wet/dry issues. On the BJ test pattern, we had to move into the middle of the lane to create our hold area and open up the pattern to the pocket. In the same area as the Crown Victory, the Danger Zone Black Solid read the mid-lane 1 to 2 feet sooner with a smoother, more predictable backend motion for a through-the-face reaction. The Danger Zone Black Solid was lined up two to three boards left at the arrows and five boards left with our feet creating a more open launch angle to the breakpoint. The Danger Zone Black Solid is a very good choice on the fresh because of the smooth and predictable backend motion to create hold area and recovery from the track. Any bowler who loved the OG Danger Zone will have flashbacks and be happy with the 2026 version.



BRUNSWICK
DANGER ZONE
PURPLE ICE

57 Hook 16 Length
16 Breakpoint Shape

Manufacturer's Intent: Brunswick explains that the Danger Zone Purple Ice "offers more length through the first two-thirds of the lane compared to the Danger Zone Black Solid and Crown Victory, with a similar backend shape compared to the Black Solid."

Core: Danger Zone Symmetric. RG: 2.501. Differential: .048. Flare: 4".

Coverstock: HK22-Powerkoil 26 Pearl Reactive. Color: Purple Ice. Finish: 500 Siaair then Factory Compound. Scan Numbers: Grit: 4900. RA: 1.80.

Overview: You can't bring back the Danger Zone without bringing back the Ice, i.e., the pearl version for drier lane patterns. The Danger Zone Purple Ice allowed us to line up on the Stone Street pattern crossing 8 to 9 at the arrows with a breakpoint between the 2 to 7 boards at the 45-foot mark on the Specto. In the same location as the Danger Zone Black Solid, the Purple Ice was much cleaner through the fronts with a much stronger and angular backend motion, creating a 3-foot longer breakpoint and a 2-10 ball reaction. On patterns like Stone Street, the Purple Ice is a go-to ball late in the blocks or for speed-deprived players. On the BJ test pattern, we were able to stay more to the right of the lane to create good entry angle to the pocket with quite a bit of hold area. In the same location as the Danger Zone Black Solid, the Purple Ice was much cleaner and could see the more angular and responsive backend motion a lot more on this pattern. The Purple Ice read the breakpoint 3 feet longer, creating a washout ball reaction. The Danger Zone Purple Ice is a good choice for speed-deprived players, and it reminded us of the OG Danger Zone Black Ice when we made Team USA for the first time in 1996 and that ball was my MVP of the week. Any Danger Zone fans will be happy to get this Ice in their hands again.



COLUMBIA 300
STREET RALLY

59 Hook 16 Length
16 Breakpoint Shape

Manufacturer's Intent: Columbia advises that the Street Rally "delivers a quick response when it sees the breakpoint. This ball is designed for bowlers who want more from a shiny pearl, offering confidence on medium-to-heavy oil conditions with a motion that never misses the spot."

Core: Shifter. RG: 2.478. Differential: .050. Intermediate Diff: .015. Flare: 5-6".

Coverstock: HK22C(squared) Formula 1 Pearl Reactive. Color: Black, Rose Gold and Purple. Finish: 500, 1000, 1500 Siaair then Factory Compound. Scan Numbers: Grit: 5150. RA: 2.25.

Overview: The new Street Rally provides very good push through the fronts with a strong, responsive backend reaction for a big asymmetric bowling ball to complement the Rally. On the Stone Street pattern, we were able to create area to the pocket playing the track. In the same location as the Rally, this ball was cleaner through the fronts with a more angular and responsive backend reaction, creating a 2-foot longer breakpoint and a 2-pin result. On patterns like this, the Street Rally is a good No. 2 or 3 ball in a tournament arsenal for various players, especially those who are rev-deprived. On the BJ test pattern, we had to move into the middle of the lane to open up the pattern, which we did pretty easily. In the same location as the Rally, the Street Rally featured a cleaner and much stronger backend reaction with a 2-foot longer breakpoint, creating a 2-10 outcome. The Street Rally was lined up 3 boards right at the arrows and 6 boards right with our feet, creating a tighter launch angle and more hold area. On patterns like this one, even though it's a big asymmetric ball, the Street Rally really allowed us to open up the pattern with a lot of total backend area. Speed-deprived and rev-deprived players will like this ball on these types of patterns.



MOTIV
NEBULA

58 Hook 15.5 Length
16 Breakpoint Shape

Manufacturer's Intent: Motiv tells us that the Black Pearl Nebula "is cleaner in the front, sharper in the back, and more explosive through the pins."

Core: Hadron Symmetric. RG: 2.50. Differential: .045. Flare: 5".

Coverstock: Dark Matter Propulsion Pearl Reactive. Color Black Pearl. Finish: 5500 Grit LSP. Scan Numbers: Grit: 5100. RA: 2.50.

Overview: The new Motiv Nebula brings a different motion to medium patterns to make it a very versatile pearl bowling ball that will provide a backend reaction even tweeners will appreciate. On the Stone Street pattern, we were able to create a good look to the pocket with good area. We were lined up crossing 10 to 11 at the arrows with a breakpoint between the 3 to 8 boards at the 45-foot mark on the Specto. In the same location as the Steel Forge, the Nebula was cleaner though the fronts with a stronger and more predictable backend reaction and 1-foot longer breakpoint, creating a lighter pocket ball reaction. On patterns like Stone Street, the Nebula is a good No. 2 or 3 ball when the pattern starts to open up or breakdown. On the BJ test pattern, we could stay more to the right to create a very good entry angle with hold area and strong recovery from the track area. In the same location as the Steel Forge, the Nebula was 2 to 3 feet longer at the breakpoint with a much stronger backend reaction and cleaner motion through the fronts, creating a 2-pin ball reaction. On patterns like the BJ test, we could see the cleaner and stronger backend reaction much more easily than the Steel Forge because we were able to stay more to the right with a very good entry angle. On medium patterns like this one, the Nebula is a very versatile pearl symmetric ball for various types of players.

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THE GAME



THE FIRST EVER HP5 HIGH PERFORMANCE

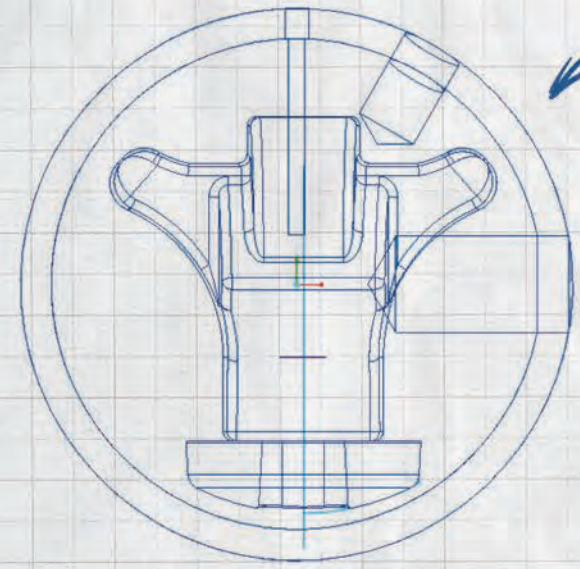
THE TRANSFORMATION STARTS HERE

STORM INNOVATION

INNOVATION SPARKS TRANSFORMATION

The Technology Advantage: Our precision-engineered core design gives you control over ball motion that others simply cannot match. By strategically placing or avoiding the precession wing during drilling, you get predictable, repeatable results tailored to your style and lane conditions.

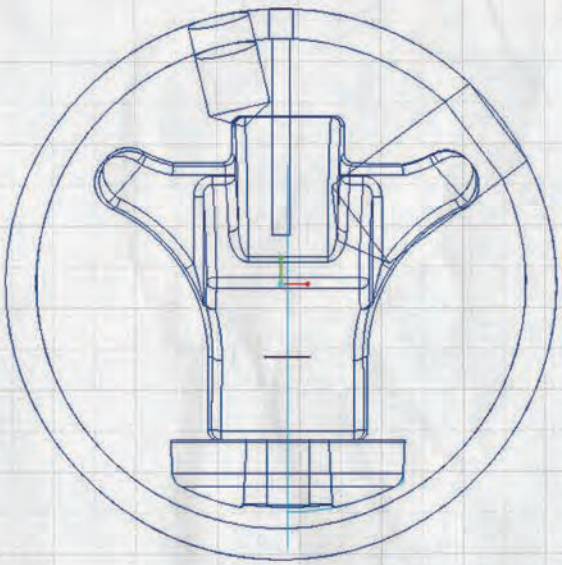




PIN UP LAYOUT

For traditional thumb players, this drilling keeps your thumb hole away from the precession wing. As a result:

- Enhances torque-induced precession, helping the ball retain axis rotation.
- Creating a stronger backend motion and more entry angle.
- Best for: More open angles as lanes begin to transition.



PIN DOWN LAYOUT

For traditional thumb players, this drilling puts your thumb hole right through the precession wing. As a result:

- Inhibits torque-induced precession and enhances asymmetry/dynamics.
- An earlier, smoother hook and rounder shape downlane.
- Best for: Straighter angles and fresh oil conditions when you need control.

2-HANDED BOWLERS

Drilling options offers flexibility in shaping reaction:

Hitting the precession wing (3½" to 5½" pin-to-COG):

- Earlier and smoother motion

Missing the precession wing (under 3½" or over 5½" pin-to-COG):

- Cleaner, more angular motion

BE THE FIRST TO KNOW ABOUT THE NEWEST INNOVATION

THE OLD SCHOOL FINDS A DISCIPLE

How Ethan Fiore combines old-school form with the two-handed game to set himself apart on tour.

by BILL SPIGNER





Finger Point
Fiore spreads out his index finger to create more turn when moving in. Here, his index finger is inline with the ring finger of his left hand. This places the right hand inside the supporting hand, enabling that hand to execute the kind of inside-out turn that will position him to more easily swing and hook the ball.

The case can be made that Ethan Fiore is as close to an overnight sensation as the PBA Tour has seen in recent memory.

Consider the improbability of his rise to prominence on tour: He started out the 2025 season as a non-exempt player, meaning he had to bowl the PTQs (Pro Tour Qualifiers) to get into a given tournament. As any PTQ warrior can tell you, the cuts are steep in these events; about 1 in 10 make it each week. Fiore, for his part, missed making the cut in some and led a couple others.

The turning point for this 20-year-old, who first shoed up on tour at age 17, was the Mike Aulby PBA Nevada Classic at the National Bowling Stadium in Reno. There, he led the PTQ and went on to make the TV show.

The upstart hardly stopped there, winning his first-ever televised game against another rising star, Alec Keplinger, to earn the right to face the best bowler on the planet over the last three years in the semi-final match — EJ Tackett. And, oh, what a show of talent, will and poise this young man flaunted — all attributes he possesses in quantities beyond his years.

His match against EJ became an instant classic. A 238 tie sent them into the PBA's one-ball, sudden-death shootout procedure. It lasted a record seven frames as Fiore and Tackett combined for a 300 game with dueling six-baggers before Fiore left a 7 pin on his seventh shot. Tackett, veteran of clutch moments that he is as a 27-time PBA Tour champion, struck again to punch through for the victory. Nontheless, it was definitely a coming-out party for Fiore and, crucially, a huge confidence builder.

Fiore wasted no time riding that tsunami of confidence to the top of his profession, as he soon went on to make his first PBA Tour title a major at the PBA Players Championship. This time, he was the top seed, placing him in the luxurious position of having to bowl just one game to close in on the title. Once again, he faced another rising young star, Ryan Barnes, for the title.

An Accidental Career

Fiore wasn't a child prodigy like Tackett. He did not start out looking to be or training to be a pro. Having begun bowling at age 7, he deployed the traditional, one-handed style until age 13, and he had no real coaching, as his engagement with the sport was more of a causal pastime.

And just as is the case in any casual pastime, he played around a bit, at one point trying his luck at the two-handed game when he was 13. As plenty of youth bowlers before him had discovered, Fiore was able to instantly hook the ball — something he could not do well bowling one handed. Prior to this gambit, Fiore had form, but no release. Switching styles changed everything, as his ability to hook the ball a lot more easily made the sport fun for him and ignited a love affair with bowling that would pave a path toward a career on the lanes.

He didn't bowl junior scholarship tournaments, but after becoming a two-hander, he told his dad he wanted to bowl Junior Gold. His dad said if he got good enough,



Lofty Heights
Fiore's loft game requires some quite visible contrasts between his usual delivery (left) and the delivery he deploys to ensure his ball gets some air under it when needed (right).

he could try it. That summer, he took his father up on the deal and worked his butt off to get better.

Fiore said he would walk two miles to the bowling center every day, bowl 20 games, and when pricing specials went into effect later at night he would bowl 20 more games. He bowled 40 games in a day many days that summer. Today, his practice regimen on the lanes is less, as he rolls about 100 shots per session, incorporates stretching beforehand, three-step drills for timing, some versatility work and spare shooting, and never bowls for score.

He bowled his first of two Junior Gold events at 15 and the second one at 17. In the first one, which he bowled in 2019 in Detroit, he finished a very respectable 78th out of 715 U15 contestants. The following year was a Covid year, so he returned in 2021 to Indianapolis to compete in the U18 division and placed an impressive 28th out of 1,169 players — an exceptionally good showing.

Fiore says of his first Junior Gold experience that, "Your first time going to JG, take it all in, have fun. It's an experience. Learn all you can from it. Go home and work on the things you struggled with. For me after my first JG, I went home and worked hard to get better at spares and become more versatile, something everyone should do, and things I still work on. My second time, I felt more prepared and had the mindset to win."

From Casual Player to Major Champion

Fiore's ability to blossom from a 13-year-old who didn't care much about bowling to a major PBA champion derived from a combination of things. First, he developed a burning desire to get better, and second, he was watching a lot of YouTube videos of two-handers' releases and lane-play decisions, and three, he landed a coach to bring an objective set of eyes to the festivities, and have a voice off of which to bounce ideas and talk through bumps in the road.

Fiore is a five-step player whose approach features long strides. He starts at the back of the approach and walks straight. This sets him apart from peers. In today's game, we see many of the tour's right-handed two-handers use shorter steps and start at or even in front of the front row of dots. They also tend to walk left.

It is here that his style bears some resemblance to the strokers of the sport's old school — a very smooth player who reminds me a lot of David Ozio. Like that great champion, Fiore's style exhibits great form with a strong release, versatility, and tremendous extension through the ball to go along with his pinpoint accuracy. Fiore occasionally practices taping a dime on the lane about where his break point would be and works at hitting the dime.

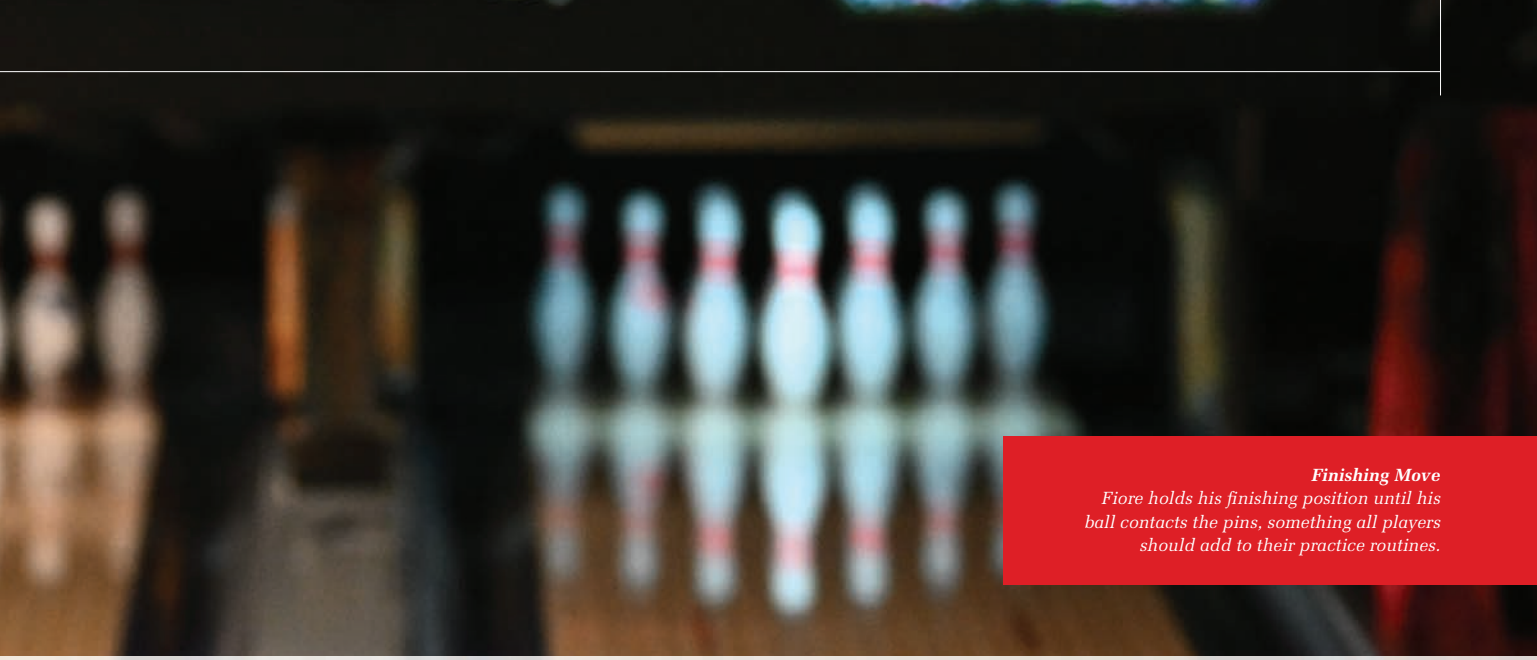
Three Steps to Success

Another distinctive element of his game that distinguishes him from peers deploying the same style is his embrace of the three-step approach — a tack he took to facilitate greater versatility. While Fiore was very good playing most of the lane with straighter angles, it could, at times, be a bit of a different story when the lane-play angles got steeper.

In those cases, he sometimes had trouble opening his angles when moving left. The three-step approach allowed him to move way up on the approach and get a lot farther left on the lane. Additionally, going to the three-step delivery increased his ability to loft the ball. It was in this way that his three-step delivery came




Ethan
Fiore
MOTIV



Finishing Move
Fiore holds his finishing position until his ball contacts the pins, something all players should add to their practice routines.

to his aid in an impactful manner and continues to, as lofting the ball is easier to achieve by taking shorter steps because doing so keeps the legs straighter and gives Fiore the ability to release the ball from a higher position.

When he rolls the ball, the release is very close to the lane, and he says it is like skimming the ball down the lane. Lofting it, he releases the ball well above his ankle and can vary how high he lofts the ball by releasing it from farther off the floor. This gets the ball farther out onto the lane without physically working hard to do it.

In addition to his frequent deployment of the three-step delivery, Fiore, like other top right-handed two-handers, has three-step timing. Fiore's timing is very similar to Kyle Troup and Chris Via, as all three of these players' games lean toward the stroker category. These players move the ball into the swing later, walk tall the first few steps and finish lower with increasing forward tilt going into the release.

The Postman

Fiore continues getting lower through the release and into his finish. His knee-bend at the completion of his shot shows his left knee moving forward past his toe, which is called knee-continuation — yet another old-school way of finishing the shot. He uses more knee-bend than top tour players, one or two-handed.

In the past year, he worked at posting his finish like a statue, holding the finish position until the ball gets to the pins. He said he started doing this at the recommendation of his coach and found that it helped his shot-making become a little more consistent and made him feel more confident.

Jason Belmonte's game became better when he started practicing walking taller during his approach and posting his finish. Fiore, for his part, found that finishing off his shot by holding his finish not only made his shots a little more repeatable, but also gave him time to really watch the ball all the way down the lane through the pins. This helped him see his ball reaction better, which helped him understand when the reactions were driven by oil, burn, or topography — especially since seeing topographical influences on a ball is the hardest to learn and see. Posting his finish also helped him understand the feeling of his physical delivery of the ball, good and bad shots.

Loft Game

Fiore's ability to manage his loft angles on command with control is a great tool for players generally to have in their physical repertoire. Lofting requires a few different adjustments in Fiore's normal delivery. These include:

- He moves up on the approach, from the back of the approach to in front of the first row of dots.
- He changes from five to three steps.
- He takes shorter steps.
- He uses a lot less knee-bend to release the ball higher off the floor.
- He releases the ball on the upswing instead of parallel to the lane.

Feeling His Way

As with many tour players, he too plays the lane by feel, doing what he feels he needs to do to get the ball into the pocket. He looks down-lane and draws a line back to him that he wants the ball to travel to get to the right area so the ball will have enough angle to strike and have some room. He uses mental imagery, visualizing the shot that he wants to create. He doesn't really analyze the pattern that's on paper, as he instinctively knows from experience what he wants to see and how to experiment in practice to figure out how to get the right angle to start.

Carry On

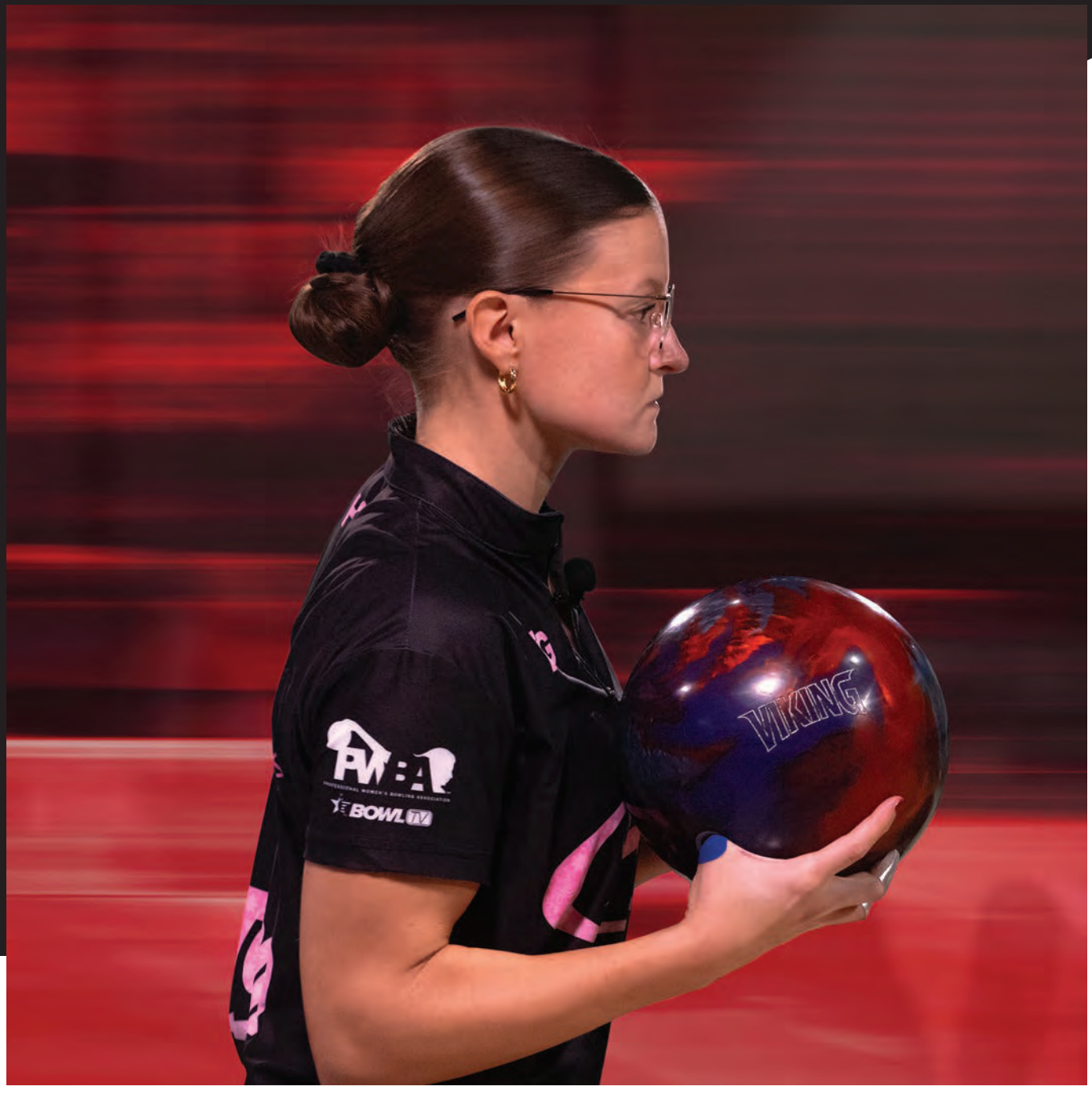
One thing Fiore says he had problems with was pin carry. The big thing he did to increase his carry percentage was to slow down his ball speed, reducing his benchmark speed from about 18 to 16 mph. These numbers are the ones that you see on the computers in many bowling centers, recorded down-lane by a scanner. It's really not mph, as it calculates how long it takes for a ball to travel from the point it reads it until it contacts the headpin and sends the info to you in mph. When the ball reads about 18, it truly came off the hand about 20 mph. Fiore found that a number in the 16s carried better than one in the 18s.

Limitless Potential

The sky's the limit for Fiore, as his blending of old-school, proven techniques combined with the contemporary two-hander's release at a young age accelerated his learning curve dramatically and positioned him to capture a stardom he seems likely to perpetuate for years to come. ■

SWEET

By GIANMARC MANZIONE



She's Game
Lukosius showed up with her game face and a score to settle at the 2025 PWBA Regional Showdown.

REVENGE

"THEY TELL ME REVENGE IS SWEET, AND FROM WHERE THEY STAND, I'M SURE IT IS."

Side 1

Perhaps no bowler brought to the PWBA Regional Showdown a mission as personal as the one Karsyn Lukosius pursued in December.

It seemed fitting that Bob Dylan had turned his attention toward revenge by the time his 1985 album "Empire Burlesque" was released to tepid notice and underwhelming sales compared to peers whose stars burned more brightly at the time (Michael Jackson, Bruce Springsteen). Dylan completed the record with a spare, acoustic coda called "Dark Eyes" in which he sings in part,

"They tell me revenge is sweet, and from where they stand, I'm sure it is."

Perhaps Dylan wanted a little revenge on the critics or fans who seemed to have abandoned him at that low point in his career, or perhaps that was just the kind of game played by others from where they stood.

Karsyn Lukosius knew exactly where she stood when she walked into Airport Lanes in Sanford, Florida, on Dec. 4, to bowl the event that had broken her heart a year earlier. Make no mistake about it: This young woman wanted revenge. And 35-time PBA Tour champion Parker Bohn III, who was there to see her exact that revenge, knew better than anyone in the building the conditions that generate a lust for vengeance on the lanes.

"I know that I have been on the wrong end of the coin flip sometimes. No, nobody likes being there. But, just like the time I was able to bowl my first TV show, a reporter asked me if I was upset or hurt because I lost. I said, 'You know what? I may be a little bit down, but I'm a firm believer that, if I can get there once, I'll get there again.' Three months later, I bowled for the title and won."

Decades later in Sanford, Florida, Bohn walked up to Lukosius after seeing her lead the field at the 2025 PWBA Regional Showdown and spoke out loud the thought he knew she was nursing in her head.

"Got a little revenge coming, don't you?" he said.

"She just kind of smiled, because, yeah, she had that taste in her mouth still."



Nonverbal Cue
Lukosius's facial expression here speaks volumes of her desire to get even following last year's heartbreak.

Lukosius tried to wash that taste out of her mouth over and over again in the weeks and months leading into the tournament. She watched on repeat the one shot she knew she never would get back, as if, perhaps, things might somehow turn out differently if she just tapped the play button on her screen enough times.

But, every time, the same brutal break repeated itself like some bit of bad news she couldn't clear from her mind. There she was, needing to double in her 10th frame of the title match at the 2024 PWBA Regional Showdown, pausing over the ball return's air vent before a crowd hushed to silence by their knowledge of how high-stakes a moment they were about to witness. A double and Lukosius would have her entry fees paid for all individual-title events of the 2025 PWBA Tour season. Anything less, and that honor would go to her 17-year-old opponent, Kaitlyn Stull. So quiet was the crowd, in fact, that the hum and rattle of the ball return's conveyer belt sliced the silence as Lukosius gathered herself.

She then adopted her stance, bent her knees just so as she always does, and launched into a speedy approach the swiftness of which Bohn likens to the momentum EJ Tackett seizes amid his charging approach to the line. Then she let go of the ball she would see in her nightmares.

It seemed to be in line with prior shots that had struck on that right lane, then cut hard to the left to assault the pocket. The resultant high-flush pocket shot got the job done. Until it didn't. A 9 pin withstood the blow and sent Lukosius packing with a runner-up finish. She turned away from the shot and seemed to hunch forward slightly as if in response to a gut punch. Her arms dropped at her sides in a combination of disbelief and resignation.

Lukosius's mom Cara, herself a New Jersey State Bowling Association Hall of Famer who was there to witness that painful moment for her daughter in person, explains that, "The old Karsyn, back when she was 14, 15, 16, would have flipped her lid," Cara laughs. "There would have been no coming back from that. When she left that 9 pin, she needed the hit, and she just turned around and came back to me. I said, 'Karsyn, you did exactly what you needed to do in that moment. And, guess what? That's bowling. Could you have done something different? No. You aced the shot. You buried the pocket. And you're not the only person that's ever happened to.'"

Showdown Lowdown

The PWBA Regional Showdown held its inaugural event in 2019 as a mechanism by which non-champions on the PWBA Tour found their path to national prominence made a little easier by an event Parker Bohn III likens to the PBA Tour's Regional Players Invitational event. "What [Lukosius] just won, in my eyes, is equivalent to the RPI in the PBA. Although she's not getting national-title recognition for it, in my eyes, that [accomplishment is akin to] national-title recognition," said the PBA and USBC Hall of Famer. The event's first champion, Julia Bond, wasted no time ensuring she got all the national-title recognition she could, swiftly establishing herself as, by far to this point, the PWBA Regional Showdown champion who went on to the greatest prominence on the national stage. Bond, who had amassed four PWBA Regional titles by 2020, won a major in the USBC Queens the following year. Today, she is a three-time champion sure to find her way into the winner's circle again on the national tour. Subsequent champions Smith, Stull and Lukosius have big shoes to fill in that regard. Here is the rundown of each year's PWBA Regional Showdown events and champions since its inaugural year…

YEAR	CHAMPION
2019	Julia Bond
2023	Kerry Smith
2024	Kaitlin Stull
2025	Karsyn Lukosius



Second Family
The entire Bohn family had every reason to feel invested in the outcome of the 2025 PWBA Regional Showdown (with Leslie, Brandon, Sydney, Justin and Parker, l-r.)

While that certainly is bowling, Karsyn, for her part, told BowlTV's Emil Williams Jr. and Stefanie Johnson that, "That 9 pin was brutal. I had nightmares."

As she watched that stinging moment on repeat with the 2025 event approaching, she said, "I kept telling myself, 'Don't let this happen again.'"

Perhaps adding to her incentive to not let it happen again were those in attendance to witness her vengeance. Particularly Bohn, whose three children — sons Justin and Brandon and daughter Sydney — had a unique reason for wanting to see her taste that sweet revenge she craved.

"I used to babysit those little rugrats," Lukosius, who holds a fulltime job managing a golf course for the Monmouth County Parks System in New Jersey, laughs as she describes a connection to the Bohn children that remains tight to this day. Despite having experienced plenty of success in the USBC Queens — an event in which she finished 17th this year, 30th last year, and 12th in 2023 — "One year, I decided not to bowl the Queens so that I could attend Sydney's Sweet 16," Lukosius recalls.



Smith's Stand
2023 champ Kerry Smith made a spirited run at her second career PWBA Regional Showdown title.



To the Wire
Maryssa Carey's intense match versus runner-up Alyssa Ferraro came down to a do-or-die 10th frame.

Parker adds that, "Karsyn lived with us for the better part of two years, and it was a really good thing for us because Sydney was just starting high school, and that is a big change in life, and Sydney had someone to look up to."

And do much more, as Lukosius's dad Mike, another New Jersey State Bowling Association Hall of Famer, explains.

"They loved having her around, living in the other half of the house back then. It helped the Bohns out a great deal when they traveled. Karsyn was bringing Sydney to school, picking her up from the bus stop, taking care of the house and the cats," he says.

As for her days babysitting those rugrats, Parker says, "Karsyn is not a very big lady; she is more on the petite side, and she'd get down there and sit on the floor and play with those kids, and she loved every minute of it."

The job was not easy.

"They'd never go to bed on time," Lukosius chuckles.

Mike adds that, "The kids had to go to bed at 10 o'clock, and Justin and them would be downstairs and they wouldn't go to bed, so they'd come downstairs and then the headlights would be coming into the driveway, and here comes [mom] Leslie, and then they had to run upstairs!"

"I would always have to walk around the house with Sydney on my shoulders," Lukosius said. "She always wanted to be carried around that way. They had a big house in Jackson [New Jersey], and they had this Parker Bohn bowling game with this tiny ball and pins you would have to set up, and we would play that. We'd watch America's Got Talent, and my sister [Madison] would be there sometimes, and we'd go swimming in their pool sometimes. Good times."

Which is exactly the way Sydney remembers those days.

"Those were the nights that we always looked forward to," Sydney recalls. "We had another great babysitter, but, just being with bowlers was really fun. She would babysit us at our old house, and I have one specific picture with her of me and her in the mirror, and I think I was playing with her hair. It was just fun. She would come over, she would cook, we would watch TV, and even if she didn't babysit us at the house, she would babysit us at bowling centers. She was always someone that we looked up to."

A Record to Behold

Lukosius' PWBA Regional record depicts a clear picture of dominance. As the below rundown indicates, this New Jersey phenom has bowled 10 PWBA regionals since 2023 and advanced to the stepladder finals in all but one of them. Perhaps more astoundingly, she won half of them. There is not a pro bowler on the face of this earth who would pass on a .500 winning percentage at the regional level. That hardly is the only element in Lukosius's performance that speaks to the dominant player she has been in these events. In addition to winning literally half the time, her stepladder finals average of 217 indicates that opponents will need to shoot about 220 or better to have any chance of outpacing her. Here is a look at her PWBA Regional record since 2023, including all events she bowled over those three seasons, her ultimate finish, and her scores in the stepladder finals she bowled along the way…

Year	Event	Finish	Stepladder Score(s)
2023	PWBA Greater Pittsburgh Regional	Third	190
2024	PWBA Myrtle Beach Regional	Champion	257, 186, 212
2024	PWBA Eastern Pennsylvania Regional	Champion	202, 202, 259
2024	PWBA Rhode Island Regional	Champion	236
2024	PWBA Rochester Regional	Runner-up	227
2024	PWBA Regional Showdown	Runner-up	217, 218, 232
2025	PWBA Albany Regional	Runner-up	197, 205
2025	PWBA Eastern Pennsylvania Regional	Champion	225
2025	PWBA Myrtle Beach Regional	Eighth	N/A
2025	PWBA Regional Showdown	Champion	207
			217 Average

The feeling is mutual.

"Those three are like my idols now; they all have done such amazing things," Lukosius says of the Bohn children, all of whom have gone on to represent Team USA since their days as rugrats climbing Lukosius's shoulders.

On a balmy December day in Sanford, Florida, Lukosius would be the one climbing shoulders — the shoulders of giants like Parker and wife Leslie, who was Lukosius's coach in her youth — as she pursued greatness of her own in the pro ranks.

Lukosius posted a final match play-round record of 5-1 as she recorded the tournament's only block of 200+ or better, going 240+ to snatch the No. 1 seed. Parker could, at that point, consider her revenge inevitable.

"She is a very petite girl, but she has a powerhouse for a bowling ball," Parker says. "She can make her ball go through the pins and do things a lot of people can't do. Her ball can do a lot of talking."

In Sanford, that ball spoke resoundingly, as it had for the past two years on the PWBA's regional circuit. Incredibly, in the 10 regionals Lukosius had bowled since 2023, she had won five of them, finished runner-up in three others, third in another, and suffered a "lowly" eighth-place finish in one. That .500 winning percentage at the pro



Fab Ferraro
Alyssa Ferraro's run through the 2025 PWBA Regional Showdown comprised a statement-making performance that won't soon be forgotten.



Flex
Lukosius did not yet know how appropriate a pose this would be when this photo was snapped at the start of a surreal run through the PWBA's Regional ranks.

level is nothing short of insane, and worthy of the astonishment of even a player of Bohn's caliber.

"It's just incredible," he says. "To think that half the time she puts her shoes on at the regional level, she's bowling for the title? It's an amazing feat. If you were to put that into perspective and know that 50 percent of the time you put your shoes on at the regional level, you're bowling for the title? Sign me up!"

Still, things got off to a dicey start in the title match at the Showdown. Alyssa Ferraro, the only competitor to shoot 300 in the event, which she did during the pre-qualifier to advance into the tournament, had carved up the competition amid her ascendancy of the stepladder.

First, she vanquished former Junior Team USA member Maryssa Carey by punching up a turkey in her 10th frame, then defeated 2023 champion Kerry Smith with must-have marks in her 10th again.

Ferraro, whose husband Peter is cousin to PBA Tour legend Dave Ferraro and PBA50 Tour champion Steve Ferraro, served early notice to Lukosius that this would be a fight to the finish. And neither player would have it any other way.

"She's from Florida (where Lukosius's parents live now), so she knows my parents very well. Her husband Pete runs tournaments down there that I bowl, so I know her pretty well. So, before our match started, I gave her a big hug and I said, 'Hey, let's fight for this. I'm proud of both of us.' She's a solid player, and I hope she gets confidence from this and bowls a lot more next year, too."

If Lukosius was going to have anything to say about it, though, she herself would be doing no more to boost her friend's confidence than Alyssa's vanquished foes had done previously in the stepladder finals. It was revenge time.

No one needed to assure Cara that revenge would be firmly within her daughter's grasp if she wanted it to be.

"She's determined. She was always that child who, whenever she did something, she wanted to do it 110 percent. She was a soccer player, and she was a really good soccer player. But, when she got to middle school, she got onto the team and the coach was not sure whether he should let her play because she was a tinier person. But she did play, and she loved it.

"In high school, she went to try out for the team and she was just too small. She decided she wanted to still do something that was active, so her sister was playing field hockey, and she ended up playing field hockey and was varsity for three years. She's very determined in anything she does."

Ferraro picked up where she had left off in previous matches as she opened the championship game with a turkey. Then, disaster struck.

"The personal fan I had been using the whole tournament to keep my hand dry died, and that threw off my whole pre-shot routine, because I'd dry my thumb with the fan, put some powder on it, and then hold it over the ball return air," Ferraro explained.

A sweaty and swollen thumb asserted itself in Frame 4 for Ferraro, who had only bowled about 10 pro events previously and "had not bowled that many games in a long time." Thanks to that thumb, she lost her fourth-frame shot at the bottom and left a 3 pin, then, shockingly, whiffed that makeable spare for an open and turned around shaking her thumb in discomfort.

Still, a gutsy Ferraro generally kept her ball in and around the pocket until a 7-10 split in her seventh finally put the tournament out of reach for her. The disappointment was real.

Ferraro, who works two jobs — one dealing poker and the other working insurance remotely from home for Advent — said that, "If I had won, I was going to bowl every single stop on tour [in 2026] and take a leave of absence at work, because that money you have covered in entry fees is a big chunk of change that's not coming out of your own pocket. So, I would have found a way to bowl every event."

Nonetheless, says Ferraro, "I'm still going to try to bowl as many as a I can and hope that I can get time [from work] to go."

For Lukosius, the revenge was just as real as the disappointment was for the runner-up.

"Looking back [at that 9 pin], I made the best shot that I could, and, unfortunately, it wasn't meant to be back then. But, yeah, I came back this year, and it was meant to be."

Mike admits to breaking down crying after watching his daughter chase down the revenge she waited a year to seize. For Cara, the spectacle was no less emotional.

"When your children can follow in your footsteps and then exceed your expectations in those prestigious events, it was pretty crazy," Cara says.

Something else is meant to be. Just ask Parker.

"The ladies' tour has a new force to be reckoned with, and that force's name is Karsyn Lukosius," he says in convicted fashion.

The way Leslie sees it, "In these regionals, she's really proven herself with the success that she has had. Her .500 winning percentage is amazing. Absolutely amazing. I definitely think she can continue her regional success on the national tour, and certainly people will know her name."

As far as mom is concerned, the time for her daughter to strike is now.

"She's very focused. She's on a mission. She is in it 110 percent. And, you know what? Win or lose, she's going to say, 'Hey, I did it.'"

"THE LADIES' TOUR HAS A NEW FORCE TO BE RECKONED WITH, AND THAT FORCE'S NAME IS KARSYN LUKOSIUS."

Side 2

"She's very focused. She's on a mission. She is in it 110 percent. And, you know what? Win or lose, she's going to say, 'Hey, I did it.'"

Revenge proved sweet enough for Dylan, who re-emerged to win Album of the Year honors in 1998 for his record "Time out of Mind" and sold his song catalog for $300 million in 2020. Lukosius may not be banking hundreds of millions of dollars as a professional bowler, but, when she shoes up to bowl her first national tour stop of 2026, her reward for the revenge she captured in Sanford will be the priceless knowledge that she has earned her place among the greatest women's bowlers on the face of this Earth. ■



Power Point
Keefer flaunts a power on the lanes that far exceeds his age.

NO AVERAGE 12-YEAR-OLD

With a power that far exceeds his age, Nehemiah Keefer is determined to dominate the youth-bowling landscape.

by EMIL WILLIAMS JR.

At just 4 years old, Nidiea Yarbrough knew there was something special about her grandson, Nehemiah Keefer.

"We would go watch my dad and my son bowl," said Yarbrough, with a laugh, "and we would look up and Nehemiah would be out on the approach. My dad looked back and said, 'Get this boy. He's going to get hurt, or somebody's going to hurt him. Get this baby.'"

Nehemiah wasn't the typical toddler who would have been enthralled by the adventures of the arcade. As Yarbrough said, "We couldn't keep him in the game room."

No, the sights and sounds of pins crashing and bowling balls bouncing is what caught Nehemiah's early attention.

"What I love about bowling is the competition and meeting new friends," Nehemiah said. "Bowling challenges you a lot."

Yarbrough recalls signing him up for the Stardust Snackers youth league as a 5-year-old at Stardust Bowl in Addison, Illinois, and he quickly excelled while using a one-handed backup release. In fact, Nehemiah asked his grandmother if he could bowl without bumpers, because he already was seeking the next challenge.

His backup release drew attention because it wasn't the norm. But after seeing seven-time PBA Player of the Year Jason Belmonte on TV, Nehemiah wanted to give two-handed bowling a try, which was becoming a new standard at the time.

However, Yarbrough had set ground rules regarding a possible switch, which included practicing one-handed for one hour before working on his two-handed delivery. As she said, "We were at the bowling alley every freaking day."

After a new ball didn't fit him correctly and the influence from Belmonte, Nehemiah made the switch with his grandmother's blessing.

"One reason I wanted to switch was because of Jason Belmonte," said Nehemiah, who rolled his first certified 300 game in 2025. "His power was so interesting. I just wanted to do it. That's why I wanted to become two-handed, and that's why I stick to it."

Last summer, Nehemiah gave the bowling world a glimpse into what the future might hold for the tall, soon-to-be 13-year-



First Love
The sights and sounds of pins crashing and bowling balls bouncing is what caught Keefer's early attention at age 4.

old excellent student from the western suburbs of Chicago as he appeared on CBS Sports Network not once, but twice.

First, he helped Dem Midwest Boyz, the Lower Great Lakes Regional Champions, win the USA Bowling National Championships in the 12-and-under division after defeating the Atlantic East region's Lane Damage team, 3-1.

The show was contested inside the Resch Center in Green Bay, Wisconsin, on specially constructed lanes that were prepared for the stepladder finals of the PWBA Anniversary Open. Nehemiah and his teammates won on the same lanes that saw Josie Barnes take home the Anniversary Open title in front of more than 6,500 fans, including himself.

"It was very exciting, especially when we won," said Nehemiah, who enjoys playing video games like PBA Bowling 2023, NBA 2K and Rocket League. "Our 268 game was incredible and when I threw those last three shots … it was very intriguing."

The following week, Nehemiah found himself rolling through the U12 boys competition at the Junior Gold Championships, which also was contested in Green Bay. After five days of competition, Nehemiah earned the No. 1 seed for the TV finals at The Ashwaubenon Bowling Alley, where he fell to Noah Ausderau in the title match, 201-154.

Like any good athlete, Nehemiah takes the good with the bad and keeps an honest assessment of each performance.

"It was very nerve-wracking," said Nehemiah, referring to the title match. "I lost and I missed two 10 pins on TV. It was kind of embarrassing, but the nerves were insane."

Nehemiah has quickly developed a winning mindset with his natural gifts, plus a little assistance from his grandmother, his dad, Steven Smith, and his youth league coaches who've all helped shape his foundation. Those coaches include Linda Avent (Stardust Bowl), Roman Barnes (Stardust Bowl) and Derrick Gunn (Hillside Bowl).

It was Barnes who suggested to Yarbrough that Nehemiah needed a new challenge outside of league bowling, which came in the form of the Elite Youth Tour founded by Diandra Asbaty and Belmonte in 2012.

Nehemiah competed in the EYT for the first time in 2024 and it didn't take long to leave an impression on Asbaty, who also was impressed with his power, similar to that of her friend Belmonte.

"I remember how strong he looked as a bowler in the U12 division," Asbaty said. "He was bigger than the other kids. He was taller, and he just had a lot more power behind him. In the beginning, when he first started bowling the EYT, he really didn't know where his ball was going. He just wanted it to be as strong and powerful as possible, which is how most kids start. But his ball was more powerful and stronger than any U12 bowler I've seen in a really long time."

Nehemiah has since racked up 12 career EYT titles, including 10 in U12 and two in the new U14 division. He's nearly halfway to 30 titles, which is the record for EYT and held by Team USA member Landin Jordan, who now bowls collegiately at Savannah College of Art and Design-Savannah.

But, perhaps more impressive than his jaw-dropping physical abilities is his empathetic and compassionate attitude toward his opponents. There have been multiple moments where Nehemiah has hugged an emotional opponent after he had locked up victories.

"As much as he is a winner, he's really empathetic," Asbaty said. "There have been moments that have made me emotional, because he was hard to beat in the U12 division. And, I think just talking about it kind of makes me emotional because I like to be able to sense that in another competitor. And, of course, you want to win and you believe you can, but to be empathetic toward the one that lost and acknowledge that he knew that it was hard in that moment for them showed me everything I needed to know about his character."

While Nehemiah is just getting started, his list of goals is clear: Roll an 800 series, win a PBA Regional, win a PBA National title in his mid-20s, and, of course, more EYT titles.

"I want 30," said Nehemiah, referring to Jordan's record. "I want at least 30."



A LEADER THROUGH AND THROUGH

Why Zac Andresen's leadership abilities may be Mount Mercy's key to glory in 2026.

by EMIL WILLIAMS JR.

Pool Party
Andresen proven leadership abilities may be the thing that thrusts the Mustangs into the promised land of college bowling's championship season.

During the first semester of his freshman season at Mount Mercy, Zach Andresen found himself as a major player in a match that would become his favorite college bowling moment to date and a key foundational building block for the men's program.

Andresen and his teammates had worked their way to the title match of the 2023 Leatherneck Classic, a tournament widely considered to be the toughest Tier II tournament in the country. And, who opposed them in the title match? Just college bowling's version of a blue-blood team, Wichita State.

As Andresen recalled, Mount Mercy was the underdog in the bout and competing on a pair of lanes that provided more tricks than treats. Specifically, one lane was more difficult to combat than the other, with each team rolling games in the 160s on the tougher of the two lanes.

It was a moment in college sports when a young team looking to prove that it belongs can either fold its hand at the behest of its historical counterpart or go all in and let the chips fall as they may.

Mount Mercy went all in as a family and outlasted the Shockers in a program-changing victory.

"It was a really cool experience because we were huge underdogs," Andresen said. "It showed what we were really all about. Having a deep connection with all the guys and having good team chemistry can really set yourself apart."

Fast forward two seasons and Andresen, now a junior, has set himself apart with his on-lane performance, and most importantly, his leadership qualities since that championship day in 2023.

As a sophomore, Andresen was selected as the National Collegiate Bowling Coaches Association Most Valuable Player, a First-Team All-American and the International Bowling Media Association Bowler of the Year. According to collegebowling.bowl.com, he led the country in average (229.56) and average differential (42.486) and garnered three individual tournament wins, which tied him with Brandon Bohn of Webber International and Zachary Oliver-Davis of Fresno State for the most amongst the men's division.

As a freshman, Andresen earned a spot as an NCBCA Honor-

able Mention All-American along with capturing the NCBCA Rookie of the Year award.

Andresen's youth résumé includes a $5,000 win at the Midwest Junior Championships, a runner-up finish at the PBA Jr. National Championship, 11 Minnesota Junior Bowlers Tour titles, MJBT Player of the Year and Rookie of the Year, a fifth-place finish at Junior Gold in 2022 (U18), two high school state championships and more.

Part of the reason for his success is that Andresen taught himself how to bowl two-handed after spending his early years (5-12) as a one-handed bowler in Princeton, Minnesota. He believes that teaching himself and watching many hours of video of two-handed pros helped his physical game, but also his mental game and quick decision-making.

He also gives an assist to high-school teammate, Bryce Keykal, who bowled two-handed. Watching Keykal gave Andresen something to think about.

"I think it was good for me mentally, just being self-taught," Andresen said. "I spent a lot of time in high school just watching old PBA bowling shows and just learning through that. I consumed a bunch of content and, for me, that was so beneficial. I was able to learn through my mistakes and once I saw progress, I saw success. Being self-taught and not having to rely on anybody for answers really made learning the game a lot easier."

But, it's his leadership that elevates him from a good collegiate player to a great collegiate player. As the starting varsity point guard for the Princeton High School basketball team, Andresen led on a different type of hardwood and worked as an extension of his head coach while on the floor.

If you ask Cassidy Courey about Andresen's value, she'll confirm the former point guard is right at home as a leader with Mount Mercy. Courey is the assistant coach for the bowling program, but she is the leader of the men's team as head coach Andy Diercks works with the women's team.

When Andresen originally committed to Mount Mercy, Courey wasn't the coach, and she is grateful he decided to honor his commitment and lace up for the Mustangs after she was hired. She trusts what Andresen sees on the lane, whether it's his own ball reaction or his teammates, and his teammates also trust Andresen to suggest and share advice.

Courey, who was an NCBCA and NAIA All-American and All-Conference selection at Mount Mercy as a player, said Andresen "didn't want to step on any toes during his freshman year, but he still understood what it took to be a successful team."

"I'm very grateful to have him as a player," Courey said. "The way that he sees the lane, and his natural leadership abilities, are amazing. With a little bit of mentoring and work, he quickly realized what leadership qualities he had and how he could use them to help the team. With that, we've had a lot of conversations, a lot of talk just about the team in general, and he's always very invested in it. If there's anything he can do, or any way he can help the team be more successful, he's always willing to do that."

Make no mistake about it: Andresen wants to win a national championship. He believes Mount Mercy is ready to do it as a family. He preaches to incoming freshmen about "bowling for each other, which creates good team chemistry." He has helped fill the leadership void of former player Kai Yamada, who graduated last season and was a leader Andresen looked up to during his first two seasons.



Self-Starter
Andresen developed his sturdy physical game largely from watching videos of two-handed pros.

"What I truly focus on and try to bring to Mount Mercy, is once you step up to college bowling, there's no such thing as 'I'm Zach Andresen bowling for Mount Mercy,'" Andresen said. "'No, I'm just a Mount Mercy bowler. There is no Zach Andresen.' College bowling is all about putting your ego aside and just bowling for one another. That family feeling is what we're looking for. It's putting everything aside and coming together to bowl for each other. That's all it is."



History in the Making
Johansson seems poised to make history as the PWBA Tour's first two-handed champion.

CREATING HER OWN LANE

Why Sweden's Nora Johansson may change women's bowling forever.

by EMIL WILLIAMS JR.

I still remember it very strongly," said Robert Andersson, Sweden National Team Manager and Captain. "It was during a national team camp before we picked the team for a youth championship in 2019. She didn't have that high of an average, but it was for sure the first time I saw a female bowl two-handed."

That female is 22-year-old Nora Johansson of Sweden, and she is the same woman who showed more than 6,500 fans inside the Resch Center last July at the PWBA Anniversary Open, and those watching live on CBS Sports Network, why she could be the first two-handed woman to win a PWBA title and change women's bowling forever.

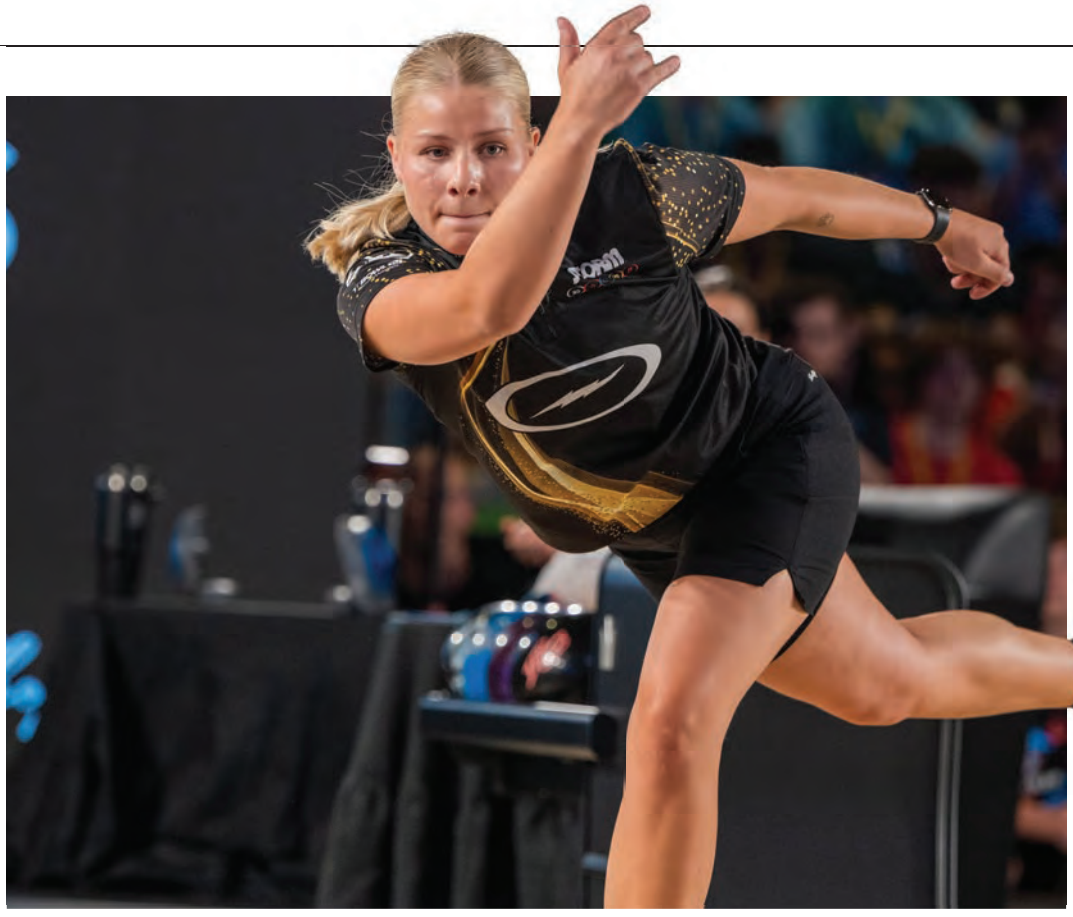
Johansson is shy by nature, but you don't have to say much when you have the boldness of her physical game and unapologetic nature of her bowling ball as it powers through the pins.

"She stands out a bit because she has a background in gymnastics," Andersson added. "So, she's very strong. What was very different to see was that she bowled just like the guys and had the same rev rate as the men. Her parents are not from bowling, so they had a lot of questions about how she bowled differently from all the other girls. So, that's my first memory."

Johansson picked up the style by watching another youth male bowl two-handed at her bowling center. First, she just admired his style. Then, she tried it. Her coach at the time said to her, "You should probably stick with that."

"I think I developed my own style, because there were no women," Johansson said. "I was the first [two-handed] woman to play at the (European) championships in youth. So, I was kind of on my own for a while."

The solo act in this case can be appreciated because Johansson didn't want to directly mimic a male two-handed bowler, but she did watch multiple players like fellow Swede Jesper Svensson or



Big Time
Johansson's powerful game saw her break through to national notice on the 2025 PBA Anniversary Open show in an arena setting.

Jason Belmonte to compare what may or may not work for her. Belmonte often is credited for the two-handed influence which can be seen amongst every level of youth bowling, including boys and girls.

Johansson simply wanted to create her own lane.

"I watched a lot of good two-handed men as well, but I didn't want to be like someone else," Johannson said. "I just want to have my own style. I don't want to be a copy of Jesper because we don't bowl alike. I don't want to be a Belmo copy, either. I just want to have my own style."

Johansson's jet-setting pace has now seen a 30 percent increase in two-handed women in Sweden, according to Andersson. Across Europe, Osku Palermaa's niece, Emma Palermaa, recently won the European Championship of Champions event at just 15 years old as a two-handed player.

Palermaa made waves with his two-handed style when he became the first two-handed player to make a PBA stepladder finals appearance at the 2004 U.S. Open.

Johansson has been trying to make memories on the PWBA Tour since her first short stint in 2023, but it was her performance in 2025, specifically near the end of the season, that left you believing she will eventually add to her story. Her first real opportunity came in Green Bay, as she became the first two-handed woman to advance to a PWBA stepladder final.

"The atmosphere was really amazing," said Johansson, who lost to Colombia's Rocio Restrepo, 215-209, in the opening match. "And all those people cheering, it was amazing to make that show. With all those people watching, it was a lot of pressure, but I'm so happy that I made it to that show. And, when I look back at it now, I just want to go back and do it all over again."

Johansson's bar is trending upward after making a second stepladder appearance at the PWBA Pepsi Open in Rochester, New York, where she lost to PWBA and USBC Hall of Famer Liz Johnson in the semifinal match. That provides a stark contrast to the beginning of the season, when she flew to the U.S. "with expectations," but was met again with the harsh reality of life on tour with travel and lifestyle adjustments along with the "challenging lane conditions and extra friction" she encounters in comparison to Sweden.

When the tour ended in August, Johansson continued to bowl well back in Europe. She took down the Norwegian Open title as part of the European Bowling Tour, won the Eslöv Ladies Open crown to qualify for the finals of the 2026 Elite Swedish Championship and was selected to represent Sweden at the International Bowling Federation World Championships in Hong Kong.

She also received an invitation to participate in an event in Korea to close out 2025, which began with a bronze medal in singles at the IBF World Cup in January.

At just 22, she is far from a finished product, but Johansson truly is starting to show consistency across varying lane conditions and lower scoring environments after struggling in those areas just a short time ago.

But make no mistake about it, the journey is hers, and she will go as far as she wants to despite any pressure or expectations from the outside world. The only pressure is the type she puts on herself.

"I just want to win," Johansson said. "It doesn't matter. I just want to win. I don't care what other people want me to do. It's just me thinking that I should be able to win, and that is the pressure I put on myself.

"When I lose, it sucks. It really sucks. I just want to be the best two-handed woman, and the first to win. And, you know, be like Belmo and Jesper and all of them, but on the women's side of course. That would be cool, but I'm just happy if I can win."



Don't Worry, Be Happy
The PBA's 2025 Steve Nagy Sportsmanship Award recipient says, "I try to make friends on tour, be happy and be nice. It was so cool that they recognized me for that."

CHESS MASTER

On the chessboard and on the lanes, Deo Benard is poised to be the aggressor in 2026.

by JILL WINTERS

Deo Benard is living the dream.

The tall, slender, two-handed lefty with dark, curly hair has quickly made a name for himself, winning 15 PBA Regional titles and one PBA Tour title. He's done it all while bowling for fewer than 10 years.

He closed out the 2025 season winning the BowlTV PBA Regional Players Invitational on Dec. 14 for $15,000 and three consecutive Southwest Region titles to secure back-to-back Southwest Region Player of the Year Awards. He also won the DV8 Nightmare Doubles, finished third at the New Mexico Open and won the SNBT/South Point Masters open division championship to earn an entry into the 2026 USBC Masters. However, he said his biggest accomplishment of his young and decorated career was being chosen by his peers as the PBA Tour's 2025 Steve Nagy Sportsmanship Award recipient.

"It makes me so thankful that I have the opportunity. Every day, I am always trying to get better," he said. "I like to have a good time. I try to make friends on tour, be happy and be nice. It was so cool that they recognized me for that. Me being friends with people helped me bowl better."

His mom, Amy, added proudly, "I have always seen his beauty and have known it. For other people to recognize that and see the soul that Deo has, it means everything. He is truly honored to be surrounded by the people he [has around him] because he looks up to each and every one of them."

Deo, who turned 22 on Christmas Eve, has always had a different mentality. He quietly goes about his business while genuinely cheering for everybody. He believes being naturally calm is an amazing gift and feels like he has only gotten calmer over the years.

"I try to be unique and stand out as much as possible. I try to think of what is in front of me and not what other people are doing," he said. "I can't really change or affect what they are doing, so I might as well focus on what I am doing and try to master it and let it come to me."

According to his dad, Rick, who owns three PBA regional titles, Deo's demeanor is like Amy's. And once he is focused on something, the young man is all-in.

Rick has been a bowling coach for 30 years. Typically, it takes those he coaches several days or even months to get the muscle



Riding the Wave
Benard capped his wave of momentum in 2025 with a coveted PBA RPI title in December.

memory down to be able to repeat. When Deo finally asked his dad to teach him how to bowl at the age of 13, Rick was impressed with his progression. Deo started out bowling traditionally left-handed but, after throwing a few shots two-handed, he made the switch because it was fun.

"He can do it the next shot and it looks like he has done it his whole life," Rick said. "I told my wife, 'There is something different about Deo.' I have never coached anybody that I can tell them to do something and they do it the first time; it is unreal."

Deo committed to constant practice and watching endless videos of Jason Belmonte to improve his game. Just two years later, he told his parents he was ready to make the professional leap.

"I wanted to learn at a young age, so I could get a head start. I figured if I just started with a few regionals and local tour events, that maybe I can learn quicker," Deo recalled.

"That is the Deo I know. He picks up something, and he doesn't stop until he masters it," Amy said. "He watched every video and every step Belmo took. He puts his all into everything he does."

Deo's self-belief, commitment and determination paid off. He holds countless titles being the youngest PBA member to win a regional title at 16, youngest to his now 15 regional wins and counting, and the youngest to be named Southwest Region Player of the Year last year.

"If you can get more practice hours in than other people, you get more of an edge," Deo said. "The more you learn, you can find ways to cash by doing something unique. Try to stand out, think outside the box as much as possible; being more aggressive with some unique ideas."

He has proven his ability to think outside the box by winning a regional throwing a back-up ball and another throwing plastic.

"I had to bite my tongue. It was hard for me to sit back and watch," Rick said. "I had to realize this is Deo. Let him do what he is good at and trust the process. Let Deo be Deo. I have learned when Deo says he is going to do something, just trust him because he can do it."

For Deo, "The amount of support from my parents is amazing. They allowed me to do my thing, learn afterward how to do better and have fun on the side."

One way Deo has been working on his mental game is by playing chess. It's a game his dad has always been good at and, about four years ago, Deo told his dad he wanted to play. Rick has seen a correlation between Deo's chess skills and his bowling skills. Both require focus on what you need to do while anticipating your opponent's response.

"He is a lot more aggressive in chess now, too. That is why he is beating me. Before I could be aggressive and he was always playing defense," Rick said. "Now, he is really strong on offense, and he is making moves before I see it. With bowling, he is more offensive and aggressive now in taking the risk."

Throughout this season, Deo found himself behind the field early in qualifying before figuring out the right moves. Toward the end of the season, Rick saw Deo be more aggressive, making quicker moves and the results showed.

"It is so easy to put pressure on yourself with all of the distractions of comparing yourself to others. That is the hardest thing," Deo said. "If people can be confident, go out there and do the thing that they are best at, it causes them to bowl really good. I've learned that."

Rick added, "It is really easy to get caught up in the limelight and start losing who you are. But this is who he is, and bowling is just something he loves to do."

Off the lanes, Deo estimates he has produced between 500 and 1,000 songs that he only shares with friends and family. His leans toward "jazz and a little pop; more chill," he explained.

"It is very calming, natural music. I told him he needs to put it out there for people to meditate to because it's calming," Amy said. "It matches Deo all around."

Maybe in the future, we will enjoy a collaboration between Deo and fellow two-handed lefty musician Keven Williams. Regardless, Deo hopes to win his second national title and to keep piling up the regional titles, too. He ended 2025 with a lot of confidence, and his focus is on being even more aggressive as he carries his new knowledge and outside the box thinking into the 2026 season.

"I am living the dream," Deo said. "I want to be known as the nicest person who was one of the best bowlers." ■

MORE THAN JUST 'THE OTHER TACKETT'

How a life-changing diagnosis forged an unbreakable bond between Zac Tackett and his superstar brother.

BY JASON THOMAS



WHILE SITTING IN A RENO HOSPITAL ROOM that looked like so many others he'd been stuck in before, Zac Tackett looked at his older brother EJ and asked the question, "Why is this happening to me?"

After experiencing excruciating pain from kidney stones that are a side effect of the medication he takes to control his epilepsy, Zac checked into the emergency room at 5 a.m. after withdrawing from the Pre-Tournament Qualifier for the 2025 Mike Aulby Classic and was scheduled for surgery a short time later.

While the surgeons were able to successfully extract the larger stones that were causing the greatest pain, some smaller ones required stents to be inserted in Zac's kidneys to help them pass. Upon learning this, Zac realized that he was likely to miss the impending World Series of Bowling for the second time in his PBA career and, probably with it, a chance to secure his exemption from PTQs for the 2026 tour season.

In the moment, EJ, whose historic success and recent run of utter dominance on the PBA Tour often fills him with unbridled confidence and an optimistic outlook towards just about everything, didn't have much to offer beyond his brotherly love, sympathy, and presence, which he'd shown his younger brother countless times before. But in time, a satisfying answer to Zac's question would reveal itself.

A LIFE-ALTERING DIAGNOSIS

The way Zac, 29, who speaks uncannily like his older brother — with the exception of a slightly slower, more measured cadence — learned that he had the treatable but incurable brain disorder that causes recurrent, sometimes fatal, seizures, was somewhat fortuitous.

His mother, Angie, recounted that a former bowling-center employee whose daughter also suffered from epilepsy noticed Zac's recent behavior and suggested that he might also have the disorder. Zac had been suffering from occasional fainting spells and other strange symptoms but had never experienced the telltale sign of the disorder: a seizure, which is blatantly obvious and terrifying not only for the victim, but also for those who witness it. Up until then, no one knew what had been causing Zac's recent health issues but, after the tip, Angie and her husband, Ed, decided to suggest it to Zac's doctor and have him tested.

A month's worth of EEGs, EKGs, blood work and other screening tests later — including one designed to induce mild seizures — the diagnosis was confirmed, and a treatment plan commenced. Unfortunately, the medication Zac was initially prescribed (called Keppra) was not very effective, and in 2012, he suffered a half-dozen seizures in just two months' time. At one point, he spent eight days in the hospital, in a coma, after a particularly serious episode. Ed and Angie had seen enough



Brotherly Love
EJ's (right) encouragement of Zac both as a bowler and as a brother facing tough odds has meant everything to Zac.



Running Down a Dream
As a competitor, Zac has shown every sign that he has what it takes to join his famed brother in the PBA Tour winners' circle.

and decided to change doctors, opting to seek the help of the Cleveland Clinic, a top epilepsy treatment facility in the U.S.

After considering their options, which included a different medication that can sometimes cause a terrifying and potentially deadly skin condition called Stevens Johnsons disease — as well as a daunting surgical procedure called a corpus callosotomy that involves severing the thick band of fibers that connects the two hemispheres of the brain — Zac and his family opted for a different type of medication called Vimpat. The medication curbed the seizures, but it also caused him to lose a great deal of weight, in addition to triggering many other side effects.

"I lost about 40 pounds soon after going on the new meds," said Zac. "My parents kept asking me if I was eating and I told them, 'I can't stop eating!' But it was good in a way, because I was always a little chubby as a kid, so at least it helped me slim down and eventually my weight levelled off."

BROTHERS IN ARMS

Since their parents owned a local bowling center (Oak Lanes in Huntington, Indiana) and the brothers had unfettered access to open lanes, EJ (now 33), was always pushing Zac to get off the couch to come out to practice and work on his bowling game and, before long, the younger Tackett was holding his own against his brother.



"EJ didn't like it very much when I would beat him," said Zac, with a sly laugh, "We were like two typical brothers who were always going at it and trying to beat each other at everything, whether it was bowling, or golf, or board games."

Their father, Ed, who was also a former professional bowler and accomplished golfer, confirmed that it wasn't just the brothers who liked to compete, but that he often got in on the action as well.

He said, "There was always a healthy competition between all of us. But I never let them win. If they beat me, they would earn it. I always felt like those competitions really helped them learn how to win and to never give up."

Ed and the boys were also excellent golfers, and one of the scariest incidents involving Zac's condition happened on the golf course shortly after his diagnosis, when he and EJ were playing together in one group, while Ed was playing in another foursome, a few holes away.

"He started acting a little strange — kind of zoning out and not talking to me — but as I was about to hit my approach shot into the green, he almost walked into me while I was taking my practice swings and I said to him, 'What the heck are you doing?'" said EJ. "By the time we got up to the green, he started looking pretty bad, and then went into a seizure. I had no idea what to do at the time, so I thought I needed to just lay him down on his back so he wouldn't fall down and get hurt, so I got him to lay flat on the green and went running to find my dad."

Luckily, Ed was playing on the adjacent hole and was able to run over quickly and assist Zac by turning him on his side until the seizure subsided.

"Since it was so soon after the diagnosis and Zac hadn't ever had any major seizures, we hadn't had a chance to sit EJ down and explain to him what to do if Zac was having one. One of the worst things you can do is to put the person flat on their back, because they could actually choke on their own saliva – that's the thing that gets you in a grand mal seizure, which is the most serious kind." said Ed, who added, "When I told EJ this, he broke down and was pretty upset with me, knowing that because he didn't know what to do, it could have cost Zac his life. After that, he learned everything there is to know about epilepsy, and what to do if Zac ever had any more seizures. He's helped save Zac's life many times since, like the time when Zac had a seizure over at EJ's house during a blizzard."

EJ said the incident on the golf course haunted him for quite some time. "I kept wondering what would have happened if my dad hadn't been around, or if he hadn't been playing on the next hole over, or if I hadn't even been there. It was pretty tough to deal with the thought that my brother could have died and I'm just glad Zac was OK and that I was able to learn more about what to do if it ever happened again, which it has."

After Zac switched to his current medication, which still carries some pretty severe side effects such as the aforementioned kidney stones, occasional brain fog, and respiratory problems (a friend of his once had to have double lung replacement due to side effects from the drugs), he has only experienced two major seizures in the past eight years. One of these happened in 2019 while he was driving to a bowling tournament that PBA champion Matt Ogle was hosting after that year's U.S. Open. He lost control of his vehicle and crashed into a median, where tension wires

severely damaged a portion of the car's passenger cabin, requiring police officers to break open the driver's side window to extricate Zac. Amazingly, the only injury he sustained was a cut on his hand from when the officers broke the glass. (As a side note, people with epilepsy may drive, but they lose their driving privileges for six months following any grand mal seizure, regardless of whether the seizure happened while driving.)

"I don't want to use the word 'privileged' to describe the way I feel about my meds, but I am very thankful that they seem to be helping to keep the major seizures at bay," said Zac. "That is probably the worst thing about epilepsy — not knowing when the next seizure might happen, and that you could actually die from it. It's pretty scary to think about sometimes, although I try my best not to."

A TANGLE OF TACKETTS

Zac Tackett joined the PBA in 2015, right out of high school, and he's been competing off and on ever since. Despite many setbacks that he's experienced because of his condition, he's continued to make strides as a player and has become one of the most respected and knowledgeable among the crop of under-30 bowlers on tour. He's won four times in PBA Regional competition and is currently one of the best players in the highly competitive Central Region (he ranks fifth on the current point list for the region, despite competing in just eight events in 2025).

He made his first national-tour telecast in 2023 at the PBA Players Championship and was pitted against fellow Indiana native Kevin McCune. The winner of their match would face Zac's brother EJ, who was the top seed in the bracket after 48 games of qualifying, and in the midst of one of the greatest seasons in the history of the tour.

The match would come down to the 10th frame, with Zac needing a double to force McCune to mark to move on. After getting the first strike, Zac said he felt pretty pumped up and noticed on his Apple Watch that his heart rate was up to 160 beats per minute. He took a moment to compose himself before throwing the next shot, but with his adrenaline still flying high, he threw the ball a little hard. Fortunately, luck was on his side, and he rolled the 2 pin forward for the strike, then added one more perfect shot to force the mark from McCune, which the latter pulled off by converting a 10 pin to advance, 200-189. (McCune would later defeat EJ in the next match and go on to capture his first PBA win).

EJ was sitting right there in the front row supporting Zac throughout the match, and he did his best beforehand to pass on the wisdom he's attained since joining the tour in 2013 and competing on more than 80 career telecasts.

"EJ really gave me some great advice going into that show," said Zac, "But even though it was all 100% correct, the matches on TV go so fast that it's almost impossible to follow it all in the moment. But I totally understood what he was telling me, especially after experiencing it for myself. I wish I could have gotten the win against Kevin and bowled against EJ — that would have been a lot of fun."

One event where the two did have a chance to bowl against each other was earlier in the 2023 season, at the PBA Shawnee Classic in Oklahoma City. In that one, they were matched up late in the round robin portion of the tournament, and EJ was putting on such a dominant performance that he was nearly 300 pins ahead of his closest competitor, virtually assured of the top seed for the stepladder finals. Zac was fighting with several other players for one of the remaining three spots on the show and desperately needed to win every match to earn the extra 30 bonus pins that were offered as part of the format.

The two Tacketts put on a striking clinic, both shooting one of their highest games of the day, with Zac posting a score of 275 that forced EJ to get the first strike in the 10th to take the match. As he'd done so many times growing up back at Oak Lanes in Huntington, EJ aced the shot, then walked off to the left, sending all 10 pins straight into the pit. He gave a little fist pump after the pins were safely down (nothing too demonstrative) and collected a 9-spare to fill out the frame for a 279, enough to steal the 30 bonus pins away from his younger brother. When all was said and done in match play, EJ had secured the top seed by an eye-popping 545 pins (in just 28 games), and Zac finished just 13 pins out of the final spot for the show.

When asked to recall the match, Zac's response (which was accompanied by a laugh) was, "You mean the tournament where EJ knocked me off the show?"

EJ also remembered it well, saying, "I know Zac is going to win out here, and when he does, he'll earn it. And that moment was a reminder for him of just how hard it is to win out here, and when he does get it, it will be that much sweeter because he'll know how great the guys are that he had to beat."

EJ added, "When I first went out on tour, my goal was to win just one title, and once that goal was accomplished, I wanted more — and they've continued to keep piling up. Like I said, I really believe Zac is good enough to win out here. Will he win 10 titles? 15? I don't know. I think if he can get that first one, anything's possible. But he's the one who's got to believe it."

SCARES AND SOLUTIONS

Whenever some misfortune befalls us, it is only natural to ask the question of why it is happening. In the case of Zac's epilepsy diagnosis, he has spent countless hours researching every aspect of his condition, including what may have led to it presenting in him in the first place.

The disorder affects approximately one in every 26 people in the U.S., and there are currently about 2.9 million adults and 456,000 children under the age of 17 who have been diagnosed. Experts suggest that it can be caused by a wide range of possible factors, including genetics, infection, immune or metabolic disorders, or structural damage to the brain that could be caused by any number of things such as a stroke, brain tumor, developmental issue, or head injuries.

Zac believes that the latter is the most likely culprit in his case, saying that he was a "rambunctious little kid" who "fell down a lot." But he also jokes that figuring out how you got it is a bit like consulting the U.S. Open lane topography graph right after you just shot 150 on a pair of lanes. Ultimately, knowing what caused the low score to happen isn't going to change it.



Mr. Congeniality
Zac's affable demeanor and love for the sport have made him a beloved tour player who sometimes pitches in as a ball rep for Motiv.



Carry On
Zac's dad Ed hails him as a "hero" for carrying on as life gave him reason not to.



As most people know, the main feature or symptom of people with epilepsy is that they experience seizures. What most people don't know is that these seizures can fall along a wide spectrum of severity, all the way from barely perceptible, to ones that overtake the sufferer's entire body, drive it into uncontrollable convulsions, and can even cause death. Zac experiences the full range of seizure types, and sometimes a more minor one — referred to as an Absence Seizure characterized by staring spells either with or without slight twitching — can signal a bigger one (called a "Generalized" or "Grand Mal" seizure) that could be on the horizon.

What happens in the brain during a seizure is that a misfiring patch of neurons (of which there are 86 billion in an average human) become excited, which then excites other neurons, causing them to fire until the brain is completely engulfed by these involuntary firings, leading to a loss of conscious control of the body and its normal functions. The patient has no choice or control over how or when this process happens, although there are a few things (such as consuming alcohol or being exposed to flashing or strobing lights) that are known to trigger seizures. Zac says that he avoids drinking or going to concerts so that he can avoid these triggers, which are things he says he often misses being able to do with his friends.

Sometimes, there is no warning for when a seizure is coming, but in some cases, like Zac's episode on the golf course, there are signs that could alert someone that a big one might be on its way. Zac says that when this happens, the best thing to do is to find a quiet place to lie down so that his brain can calm itself.

One such instance occurred during this year's PBA World Series of Bowling in Reno, when Motiv Tour Rep Brett Spangler brought Zac over to EJ during one of the final rounds of the Shark Championship to ask if something might be wrong. EJ, who is now acutely adept at spotting it, said that Zac needed to lie down immediately, so EJ's roommate, Ronnie Russell, took Zac back to the hotel to monitor him while EJ continued to compete. As soon as he was done, EJ sat with his brother in the hotel room all night long until the danger had passed, and several fellow PBA athletes, including Christian Azcona, who brought food for everyone, also offered to help. Incidentally, even though EJ was worried for his brother, he was able to focus on the task at hand and later ended up winning the Shark Championship for his 26th career PBA title.

Many people who suffer from epilepsy begin to withdraw from normal life activities, and even become reclusive, as their fear of having a seizure and harming themselves or others, or becoming a burden to those around, causes them to decide not to participate. But Zac has never allowed his condition to define him or to hold him back from participating in bowling, and he continues to move forward even when going through a period as difficult as the one he experienced in Reno during the World Series of Bowling.

In fact, when he was first sidelined by kidney stones just prior to the start of the event, Spangler offered Zac an opportunity to serve as a tour rep to assist with the Motiv staff. Even though he was feeling miserable, Zac accepted the challenge and did such a great job for the team that Spangler offered him more work repping for the Professional Women's Bowling Association Tour during the summer.

Zac's work on the women's tour was also stellar, and he has just been named the PWBA's full-time tour rep starting with the 2026 season. At Spangler's urging, Zac applied to the PBA for a medical exemption for the 2026 season to avoid having to bowl PTQs, which was recently granted by PBA Tour Commissioner Tom Clark. But Spangler also said he is welcome to fill in as a rep for Motiv whenever he is not bowling.

"I really enjoy working as a tour rep on both the PBA and PWBA tours, and I'm not sure it would have happened if it wasn't for the health issues I had in Reno. But I hope I don't have to rep very much on the PBA next season," said Zac, with a laugh. "My biggest goal is to win on tour so that EJ isn't the only Tackett with a PBA title."

"There have been numerous times in Zac's life when he had a seizure and could have chosen not to carry on, but he always did. He's my hero," said Ed. "I know he would be a lot further along in his life and career had he not been forced to deal with the cards he's been dealt, but his mom Angie and I couldn't be more proud of who he's become as a person and what he's been able to accomplish in spite of everything. I'm not a religious person, but I have prayed many times for the seizures to subside, and I'd happily give my right arm if they would just go away completely."

BOND OF BROTHERS

The bond that develops between two brothers with similar goals and interests is rare and something very special indeed — even more so when their shared vocation is one that is so high profile. And when something as serious and life-altering as epilepsy is woven into the mix, the bond, and the ways in which the lives of the two brothers are transformed, often becomes that much stronger and more profound.

"I'd like to think I would have been as successful as I've been even if Zac wasn't my brother, but I'm not so sure," said EJ. "Having a younger brother who's as talented and competitive as Zac definitely pushed me to be better as we were growing up, but I think the bigger effect it's had on me is seeing what he's been through and how he's able to deal with it, and that has given me perspective and the ability to compartmentalize certain aspects of my life so I can focus on my bowling when the time comes to compete. Without that, I'm not sure I would have been able to win as often as I have."

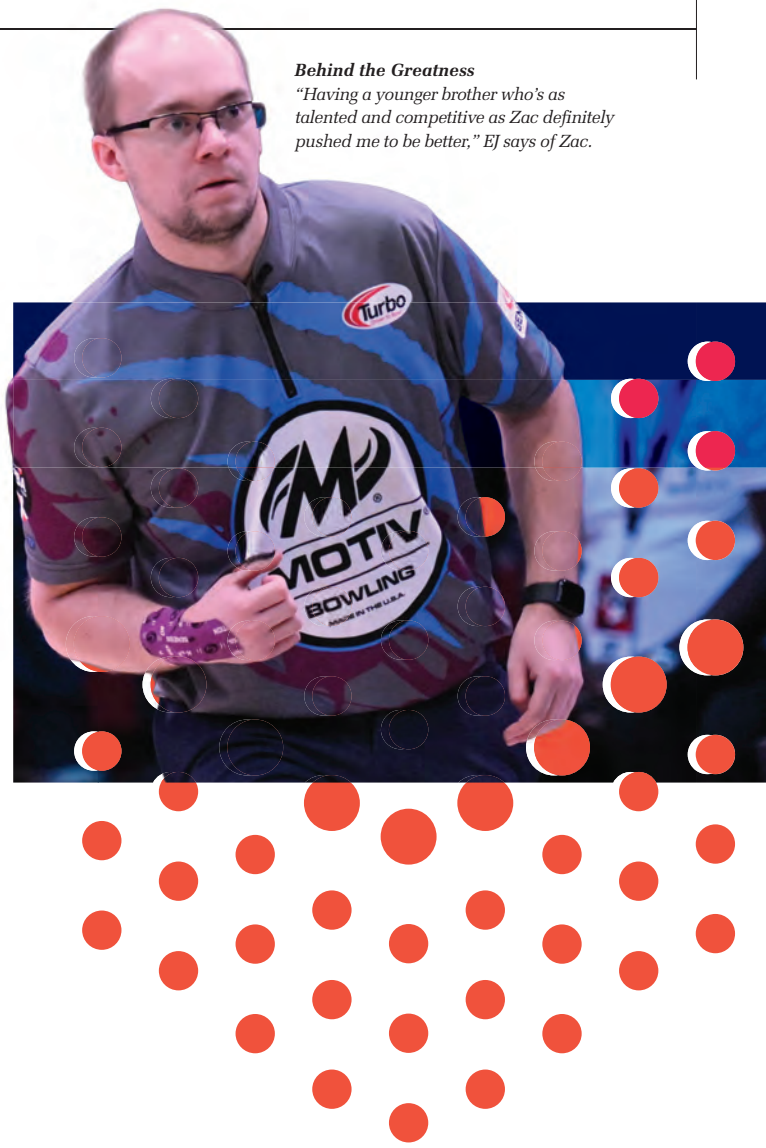
Zac is equally appreciative to have one of the greatest bowlers of all time as his brother, a perspective that not all brothers of famous athletes, actors, or other successful high-profile individuals share due to the pressure of comparison and expectations that come with it.

"My brother has always pushed me to be better and has always shared any insight I've asked for when it comes to how he's achieved his success," said Zac. "Plus, he's always been there for me whenever I've needed him. I couldn't be more thankful to have him as a brother."

EJ also has put his money where his mouth is when it comes to supporting the cause of epilepsy research. For example, when Motiv decided to put his name on one of their new bowling ball releases, EJ donated 100% of his share of the profits to epilepsy research, and he continues to support the cause in whatever way he can.

"It's great that EJ has done so many things to help the cause of finding a cure for epilepsy, and I'd love to be as involved as I can when it comes to generating more awareness for the cause," said Zac. "But for now, I'm focused on not letting my epilepsy define me so I can continue to pursue my goals in the sport, whether that is competing on tour or helping other bowlers as a tour rep for Motiv; and helping to run our family bowling center when I'm home from the tour."

When asked about his hopes for his sons' futures, Ed pauses for a moment before saying, "EJ is chasing history and I believe when all is said and done, he will be one of the greatest bowlers of all time, if not the greatest. If Zac can just get that one break he needs to get over the hump, I think he can win a lot out there on the PBA Tour as well. But they are both amazing young men and they both have wonderful women in their lives to help support them as well." (EJ is married to Natalie, whom he credits for taking care of everything at home so he can focus on his bowling career, while Zac is in a relationship with PWBA bowler Kayla Crawford, who also helps run the Tackett's current family bowling center — EZ Bowl in Bluffton, Indiana — in addition to her work for the American Cancer Society.)



Behind the Greatness
"Having a younger brother who's as talented and competitive as Zac definitely pushed me to be better," EJ says of Zac.

While the answer to Zac's question of why this is happening to him may have been provided in the short run, a bigger answer is still yet to come, and in his case, it probably has something to do with the idea that sometimes difficult things happen to certain people because they are the ones who are strong enough to handle it. And those also tend to be the kinds of people who end up setting an example of perseverance that ultimately changes the world for the better.

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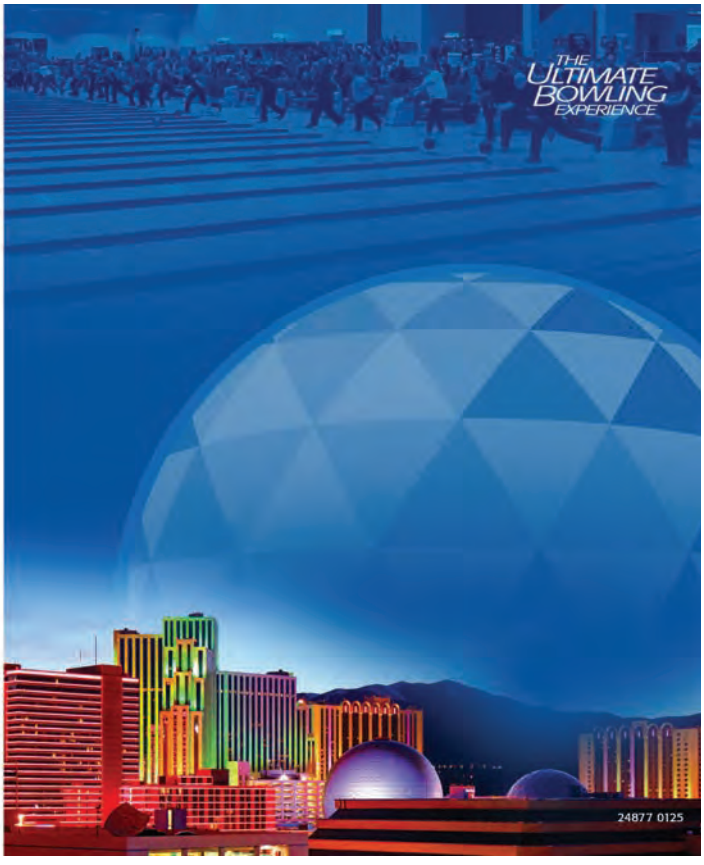
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Yesteryear

THE LEGACY OF THE STROHS, PART ONE



Buzz in the Air
Buzz Fazio ushered in a new era for the Strohs when he took the captain's role in 1947.

In 1933, after 13 long years, national Prohibition was ending. That April, Michigan became the first state to repeal its dry laws. Residents could once again enjoy intoxicating beverages without hassle.

The Stroh Brewery Company of Detroit had weathered those 13 years by making soft drinks and ice cream. Now it would again be producing its distinctive "fire-brewed Bohemian style" beer. What better way to promote its beer than sponsoring one of the city's elite bowling teams?

For the 1933-1934 season, the brewery signed the team captained by 25-year-old dynamo Joe Norris. The initial sponsorship was for $800 — about $20,000 in today's money. In a bit of coincidental symbolism, Norris's team had previously been sponsored by Coca-Cola.

The Coca-Cola roster stayed intact with the switch to Strohs. Like Norris, Phil Bauman and Cass Grygier were in their 20s. Walter Reppenhagen was 35. At 40, Fred Gardella was the "old man" of the bunch.

The team posted some gaudy numbers in league play that first season. In April, they traveled to Peoria for the 1934 ABC Tournament. As Coca-Cola, the crew had placed sixth in the Team event the year before. Now, they were going for the Eagles!

It didn't start well. None of the boys cracked 200 the first game, and they posted a mediocre 920. But in the second game, the Strohs came alive with 1,101. They rolled 1,068 the third game to vault into the tournament lead with 3,089.

And they weren't through yet. The next day Reppenhagen took over the All-Events lead with 1,972. The "Grey Fox" was still on top of the board when the tournament ended, and Detroit had its first ABC Team champions.

The ABC championship came with a bonus. For years, there had been an

unofficial team match-game championship, with one team reigning and fending off challengers in the style of the heavyweight boxing champ. Now, the BPAA announced it was taking over that event. Challenge matches would have specified rules and procedures. To start with, the first official team match-game champion would be the most recent ABC team champion — the Strohs of Detroit.

The team made its first defense in December, winning easily over the Hermann Undertakers of St. Louis. They defended again in February 1935 against Milwaukee's Heil Products team. This time, the Strohs came up short. They lost the 18-game home-and-home match by 191 pins.

Even with the title gone, the Strohs team stayed in the news. In 1936, the Olympic Games were being held in Berlin, Germany. American promoters used the opportunity to schedule a concurrent event there called the World Bowling Tournament, and the Stroh Brewery sent its bowlers. Although their nemesis Heil Products won the Team event, Bauman and Grygier won the Doubles. The Three-Man event was also won by Stroh bowlers — Norris, Reppenhagen, and new recruit Johnny Crimmins.

The Strohs won back their match-game title in 1942, defeating the National Bowlers Journal team. During the next three years, they successfully defended four times. Meanwhile, Reppenhagen and teammate Bill Kenet won the doubles match-game crown in 1944. The next year, the Strohs finally lost their match-game title to the E & B Beer team.

Ekhardt & Becker was a Detroit brewery. Following the Stroh example, they had begun sponsoring a bowling team in 1935. And again, following the Stroh example, E & B started importing talent to build their own super-team. Now, they had succeeded. It was the start of one of bowling's greatest rivalries.

Through it all, Joe Norris was the Strohs captain. Then, in December 1946, he was named head of lane installations for Brunswick. That meant a move to Chicago headquarters. Before he left for his new job, more than 350 people, including the mayor of Detroit, gathered to give Norris a farewell dinner.

Walter Reppenhagen now took over as interim team captain. A few months later,

Bill Kenet assumed the role. Finally, in 1947, Buzz Fazio became the new Strohs captain.

Part One of Two Parts



Captain's Call
Norris's long captaincy of the Strohs ended when Brunswick offered him a role as head of lane installations in 1946.

Spare Me



COURTING THE GREATS

by JASON THOMAS

I MENTIONED IN THIS COLUMN a few months back that I intended to compete in some PBA50 action this summer, which I did. In passing, I briefly mentioned that the one I did end up bowling on the national tour — the PBA50 South Shore Classic in Hammond, Indiana — didn't go all that well from the standpoint of my finish in the tournament (near the bottom of the standings). However, I did very much enjoy the experience, learned a great deal for the next time I choose to dip my toe into the boiling-hot water of high-level competition, and also have a tip for those of you who are looking to try and improve your own game.

Now, why would you want to receive a bowling tip from a guy who finished in the bottom portion of the field, do you ask? (And also, why would I possibly think I have anything worthwhile to offer after putting up the scores I put up that week?) Well, first off, it's my job to pass on what I've learned here, even the failures (especially the failures). But in this case, the access I have to the players who finished in the very highest positions in the field that week (specifically John Janawicz, who was the defending champion, then led qualifying, ultimately finishing third in this year's event) allows me to pass on the wisdom I was able to glean from them during the week.

When I arrived on site, I ran into Janawicz briefly during the practice session, and — now here's the tip for all you folks out there — asked him if he might be interested in joining me for dinner. He said he couldn't that night, and then said he competed on B Squad in Round 1 of qualifying (which finished late) so he couldn't make that either, but said after Round 2 of qualifying would work. Unfortunately, I shot myself out of the tournament before I could pick his brain, but JJ bowled well and was the tournament leader and said we were still on if I could have him back to the hotel at a reasonable hour so he could get up early the next day to compete. (He also asked me if I could drive because his car, as many of the PBA50 guys know, is full to the brim with extra bowling balls.)

We ate at a decent chain restaurant called Cooper's Hawk (which is nice, but also reasonably inexpensive, which I was thankful for because JJ is known to enjoy some of the finer cuisine in whichever town he happens to be in), and we were able to get a table for two without a wait. After catching up with the things we've each been up to since the last time we saw one another, we got down to business and started talking bowling — specifically how we each did in that week's tournament. To hear JJ speak, you'd have thought that we were in a similar position in the tournament, as he rigorously and ruthlessly critiqued his performance, mentioning a catalog of all the mistakes he'd made during qualifying, and how he was hoping to execute a lot better during the match-play portion of the tournament.

When I told him how I'd done, he listened empathetically and nonjudgmentally, then gave me some very sage advice about what I should have done. The first piece included the fact that I needed a urethane ball that flared more than the one I had, as the top players that week chose to throw higher-flaring urethane balls from a lot deeper than you would expect, and my urethane wouldn't allow me to play that deep. The other advice was "never try to line up off of Brad Angelo," which is the mistake I made on Day 2 after realizing my urethane ball wasn't suited to follow the other advice he'd just mentioned.

After a wonderful meal and great conversation, we headed back to the hotel, and I realized that my entire experience for the week had just paid off, as I'd just got some incredible advice from one of the greatest bowlers in our sport today. So, my advice to you is this: If you ever have a chance to be around one of these greats, like JJ, Chris Barnes, Parker Bohn III, or Tom Hess, don't be afraid to offer to take them to lunch or dinner so you can learn from them. They all love a free meal (especially Chris) and are also free and generous with sharing their vast wisdom. (And you're welcome for the future free meals, JJ, CB, PBIII and TH).



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2026 BOWLTV SCHEDULE

Dates subject to change

JANUARY

Jan. 2-7	Team USA Trials
Jan. 23-25	Prairie View A&M Invitational

FEBRUARY

Feb. 16-20	PBA Players Championship*
Feb. 18	ITC Sectionals Assignment Show
Feb. 21	PBA Hall of Fame Banquet
Feb. 22	PWBA Orlando Regional
Feb. 24-27	PBA Pete Weber Missouri Classic*
Feb. 27-28	PBA Jr. National Championship

MARCH

March 1-7	U.S. Open presented by Go Bowling*
March 9-13	PBA Illinois Classic*
March 13-15	ITC Sectionals
March 17-20	PBA Indiana Classic*
March 19-21	NAIA Bowling National Championship
March 20-22	SWAC Women's Bowling Championship
March 23-28	USBC Masters*
March 28	PWBA Eastern Pennsylvania Regional
March 30-April 2	PBA Ohio Classic*

APRIL

April 6-10	PBA New York Classic*
April 14-15	Intercollegiate Singles Championships*
April 14-17	PBA Roth/Holman Doubles Championship*
April 16-17	Intercollegiate Team Championships*
April 16-19	USBC Senior Queens
April 18	PWBA Rhode Island Regional
April 21-24	PBA Tournament of Champions*
April 28-30	USBC Convention
April 30-May 2	PWBA Rockford Open

MAY

May 7-9	PWBA Northern Colorado Open
May 13	PWBA Hall of Fame Ceremony
May 13-18	USBC Queens*
May 22-25	U22 Queens and Masters
May 26-June 1	PWBA Summer Series - Rochester
May 27-31	USBC Super Senior Classic

JUNE

June 1-7	USBC Senior Masters
June 4-6	PWBA Columbus Open
June 8-12	PBA Jr. World Series of Bowling
June 9-15	U.S. Women's Open*

JULY

July 8-9	USA Bowling National Championships
July 12	Junior Gold Championships - Opening Ceremonies
July 13-18	Junior Gold Championships-Youth*
July 30-Aug. 2	PBA/PWBA Striking Against Breast Cancer Mixed Doubles

AUGUST

Aug. 11-17	PWBA Tour Championship Week
Aug. 30	PWBA Wichita Regional

SEPTEMBER

Sept. 13	PWBA Twin Cities Regional
Sept. 27	PWBA Albany Regional

OCTOBER

Oct. 10	PWBA Oklahoma Regional
Oct. 24	PWBA Greater Cleveland Regional

NOVEMBER

Nov. 22	PWBA Greater Pittsburgh Regional

DECEMBER

Dec. 10-12	PWBA Regional Showdown

* Finals on National TV. Please check your local TV station for times.

PBA Regional, PBA50, PBA JR. and more events to be added

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