

YOUTH BOWLING

A YOUNG BOWLER'S JOURNEY

SETTING GOALS as a bowler is not uncommon, whether it is trying to have a clean series or looking to increase your average by a certain amount of pins.

Natalie Savant of San Antonio, at the age of nine, also set an ambitious goal – to bowl in each of the 48 contiguous states. With the help of her parents, Ginger and Donald, they built a Facebook page – Natalie's Striking Summer – to let family know how the adventure was going.

It wasn't long before word got out about her journey and Natalie, now age 11, has become somewhat of an ambassador for the sport.

"It was something she wanted to do and she decided after she had a plan to do it that she would try to raise some scholarship money to donate back," Ginger said. "It took on a life of its own."

During her travels, she shared her story and watched her Facebook page "Likes" grow. During a trip to the 2013 Junior Gold Championships, she was on BowlTV and saw her Facebook followers reach the 3,000 mark (it's now more than 5,000). Then, she was invited to bowl with Kelly Ripa and Michael Strahan on *LIVE with Kelly and Michael* during National Learn to Bowl Month.

"The only TV I thought I would be able to be on would be BowlTV," Natalie said, "and then I'm on *LIVE with Kelly and Michael*. It was amazing."

Natalie's parents are bowlers – her dad was a first-team All-American in college – and she happens to be a pretty good herself. She bowls in a couple of leagues, including a Sport shot league to practice for Junior Gold, and made her first Junior Gold Championships appearance as a competitor last year.

"I had a lot of fun but it was a little intimidating because I was one of the youngest



people there," she said. "There's so many people that are really, really good."

A Future for the Sport means having programs in place so young bowlers such as Natalie can set goals in the sport. Her bowling goals are probably like most young bowlers who bowl the Junior Gold Championships each year – make the Developmental Team and eventually make Junior Team USA. She wants to bowl in college and is excited about the Professional Women's Bowling Association returning this summer, saying "it gives me something to strive for."

She's already building her college fund in SMART, having earned scholarships for winning the Singles Division 10 and placing sixth in all-events at the 2012 Texas State USBC Youth Championships.

Natalie, who now has visited 44 states, says she enjoys the opportunity to meet new people through leagues and during her trips but there is really just one reason she competes in bowling.

"It's just fun," she said. "That's the one word I would say to describe our sport – fun."

 **JUNIOR GOLD CHAMPIONSHIPS**
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RAISING HIS GAME

STEP BY STEP, AJ JOHNSON HAS WORKED TO SUCCEED AT EVERY LEVEL

AJ JOHNSON'S story about he became involved in the sport of bowling really isn't much different from so many others. His father was a bowler, his parents met in a bowling center and he had a bowling ball in his hand when he was four years old.

But the real question is: How did Johnson, a college senior who finished second at the USBC Masters in February, go from being just another kid at the bowling center to the elite player he is today?

The simple answer: Structure and hard work.



Johnson used the stepping stones put in place for him and other youth bowlers to make the most of his natural bowling ability. From the Junior Gold program to USBC Collegiate to Team USA to the USBC Masters, Johnson improved each step of the way and now finds himself on the cusp of a promising bowling career.

"I think that each level of my career has been instrumental," Johnson said. "Each level has made me better along the way and helped me get to the next level."

Johnson's focus wasn't always on bowling. He played quarterback for his high school football team and that kept him from taking part in the pinnacle event of the youth bowling season, the Junior Gold Championships.

"My focus at first was football and baseball, but as I started to bowl more youth tournaments in my area and was exposed to the Junior Gold program, it made me give bowling a lot of thought," Johnson said. "The first two years I qualified for Junior Gold, I actually couldn't bowl because I had to stay home for football camps. Later on,



I realized bowling was going to be where I was going to stay."

He would make his first Junior Gold Championships appearance as a senior in high school. He said the Junior Gold tournaments helped with his mental game and shot-making abilities.

"You have to have a different mindset when you bowl in Junior Gold than when you bowl any other tournament, especially as a youth," Johnson said. "I learned something every time I bowled Junior Gold because of how long the tournament is and how much of a grind it is."



And bowling in college benefitted his physical game because of the amount of hours he had to practice, bowling on Sport shots every day. Having a tournament almost every weekend also didn't hurt.

"Bowling every day on Sport shots and having a constant routine for practice was a huge help in making my game better," said Johnson.

His focus on bowling paid big dividends in 2012, his freshman season at McKendree. Johnson took third at the Team USA Trials in January to earn spots on Team USA and Junior Team USA. In the summer, he won the U20 division at Junior Gold. Oh, and as an amateur, he also would capture his first Professional Bowlers

Association regional title.

"That is kind of when I told myself that I needed to pursue this more and make myself better in any way possible," said Johnson.

As a Team USA and Junior Team USA member, he took part in week-long training camps for the teams at the International Training and Research Center in Arlington, Texas.

"The Team USA program has been a huge part of making my game better, having a week at a time at the ITRC," Johnson said. "The coaching staff and capabilities that they have at that place is indescribable for what they have been able to do to help my game."

He would continue to excel at the collegiate level, earning Collegiate Most Valuable Player honors as a junior. As he completes his senior year at McKendree, the real secret to Johnson's success is dedication and the constant work to improve his game.

"Having success at each level has made me realize that no matter who you are, you can be successful as long as you put in the time and effort," Johnson said. "Each stepping stone has made me hungry for the next and always keeps me working even harder. I have always prided myself on how hard I have worked to get to each level and I plan on keeping it that way."

"I absolutely love this sport and I can only hope to continue the path that I am on and dream that one day I will be regarded as one of the best."



SCHOLARSHIPS THROUGH YOUTH BOWLING

Each year, youth bowlers have the opportunity to earn college scholarships through leagues, tournaments and special awards. USBC provides several scholarships each year and recently announced the recipients of several major awards.



Stars of Tomorrow recipients each receive a \$6,000 scholarship, the Earl Anthony Memorial Scholarship award is \$5,000 for each winner, the Annual Zeb Award winner receives a \$2,500 scholarship and Youth Ambassadors each receive \$1,500 scholarships.

Learn more about these and other scholarship awards at BOWL.com/ScholarshipAwards. This year's award winners are:

Alberta E. Crowe Star of Tomorrow
Emma Kuhn, Texas City, Texas

Chuck Hall Star of Tomorrow
Anthony Sidari, Hazleton, Pa.

Earl Anthony Memorial Scholarships
Grant Bayer, Bernville, Pa.; Thomas Carter Frye, Palm Bay, Fla.; John Payne, Louisville, Ky.; Alexander Peck, Wake Forest, N.C.; Gregory Tack, Port Murray, N.J.

Annual Zeb Scholarship
Christopher Kenny, Gamerville, N.Y.

Youth Ambassadors of the Year
Molly Gallagher, Reno, Nev.; Sean Wilcox, Altamonte Springs, Fla.

USBC QUICK STRIKES

NEWS AND NOTES FROM THE UNITED STATES BOWLING CONGRESS

Women's Championships, Mixed event underway

The 2015 USBC Women's Championships kicked off April 10 at the National Bowling Stadium in Reno, Nevada, along with the new USBC Mixed tournament.

While this year marks the 96th edition of the Women's Championships, this is the inaugural Mixed tournament. The Mixed has four-player teams (two men and two women per team), mixed doubles (one man and one woman per team) and open singles competition. It features several divisions so participants compete against bowlers of similar skill levels. Keep up with the tournaments at BOWL.com.



The series will kick off May 4 with the women's singles followed by men's singles (May 11), women's team (May 18) and men's team (May 25) title shows. Each show starts at 7 p.m. Eastern; singles shows are one hour and team shows are 90 minutes. CBS Sports Network is available on DirecTV ch. 221, Dish Network ch. 158 or check your area listings.

Bidwell, Jones heading to the Pan Am Games

Devin Bidwell of Wichita, Kansas, and Tommy Jones of Simpsonville, South Carolina, will represent Team USA at the prestigious 2015 Pan American Games this July in Toronto. Each qualified based on their performances at the 2015 USBC Team USA Trials and the 2015 USBC Masters.

Two men and two women will represent Team USA at the event, which is considered the most important event in the four-year cycle of the Team USA bowling program. The Team USA women's representatives will be decided after the 2015 USBC Queens, which takes place May

13-19 at The Ashwaubenon Bowling Alley in Green Bay, Wisconsin.

Youth Open adds option; West Region site set

The 2015 Bowling.com Youth Open Championships will provide more opportunities for youth bowlers to grab a share of the scholarship fund with a handicap option



for all of the events. The \$10 entry fee for the handicap option will go directly to the scholarship fund and the handicap divisions will be the same as the scratch divisions. The 2015 event will take place July 9-26 at Orland Bowl in Orland Park, Illinois.

The Youth Open West Region returns for a third year and will take place June 20-21 at Cloverleaf Family Bowl in Fremont, California. The West Region event was created in 2013 so youth bowlers in the western part of the country could have a major tournament option closer to home. Go to BOWL.com/YouthOpen to learn more.

Special Olympics event celebrates 25 years

The Special Olympics National Unified Tournament celebrated its 25th year alongside the USBC Open Championships when more than 330 competitors made their way to the El Paso Convention Center in March.

The two-day tournament welcomed Special Olympics athletes and their unified partners from 14 states, and together, they experienced the largest convention-center build in USBC Open Championships history. They competed for gold, silver and bronze medals in four-player team and doubles events.

CALENDAR

Now-July 12, 2015
USBC Open Championships
El Paso Convention Center
El Paso, Texas

Now-June 30, 2015
USBC Women's Championships
National Bowling Stadium
Reno, Nev.

Now-June 30, 2015
USBC Mixed
National Bowling Stadium
Reno, Nev.

May 13-19, 2015
USBC Queens
USBC Senior Queens
Ashwaubenon Bowl
Green Bay, Wis.

June 20-21, 2015
Bowling.com Youth Open West Region
Cloverleaf Family Bowl
Fremont, Calif.

June 28-July 3, 2015
PABCON Youth Championships
Panama

July 8-10, 2015
BPAA's All American Family Tournament
Stardust Bowl
Addison, Ill.

July 9-12
PWBA Storm Sacramento Open
Steve Cook's Fireside Lanes
Sacramento, Calif.

July 9-26, 2015
Bowling.com Youth Open
Orland Bowl
Orland Park, Ill.

July 11-17, 2015
Junior Gold Championships presented by Storm, Roto Grip and Master
Stardust Bowl, Hillside Bowl, Classic Bowl, Orland Bowl, Brunswick River Grove
Dupage County, Ill.

Go to BOWL.com/Tournaments for complete information.

CBS Sports Network to air ITC, ISC in May

CBS Sports Network will air the title matches of the XBowling Intercollegiate Team Championships and the XBowling Intercollegiate Singles Championships as a four-week series in May.



Science of Bowling exhibit in El Paso

Visitors to the El Paso Exploreum Children's Museum will find a detailed Science of Bowling exhibit that will run through July. The El Paso Exploreum is a hands-on living laboratory that includes multiple interactive exhibits in four theme areas – construction, aviation, role-play and high-tech.

With the support of USBC's Gold industry partners – Columbia 300, Hammer, Kegel and Storm Products – along with a grant from the International Bowling Campus Youth department's Bowler's Ed In-School Bowling program, museum visitors will get to see and touch a variety of bowling balls, cores, pins, lane machine parts and more.



Sites determined for U.S. Opens

The 2015 Bowlmor AMF U.S. Women's Open will take place at Brunswick Zone Carolier in North Brunswick, New Jersey, Aug. 31-Sept. 6 and the 2015 Bowlmor AMF U.S. Open will take place at AMF Garland Lanes in suburban Dallas/Fort Worth from Nov. 2-8.

Bowlmor AMF, the largest operator of bowling centers in the world, will host and provide television sponsorship for both events. The U.S. Women's Open will be a part of the new PWBA Tour schedule.