

“Okay, Boomer”

The number 71 has become quite symbolic for me this year:

- I turned 71 in July.
- I bought my first bowling ball in 1971.
- A recent test put my IQ at 71. (*I know, I know... "There's no way it's that high!"*)
- But most importantly, I've dedicated over 71% of my life to the world of bowling – as a player, an advocate, and a promoter.

In the 50 years I've been involved, the sport has certainly changed. But has it improved? Many claim growth, but the data I've seen points to a steady decline in membership over four decades (post-pandemic rebound notwithstanding). If there is data that shows growth – any growth, whether youth or adult – I'd love to see it.

I believe a core reason for this decline is the outsized influence of equipment and lane conditions on a bowler's success. True skill is often overshadowed. That's why I've devoted so much energy to researching and promoting a competitive environment where skill is the deciding factor. I've tackled everything including lane conditions, pins, and bowling balls. It's been an uphill battle, but recent developments have given me hope.

As Jim Collins wrote in *Good to Great*:

“You must maintain unwavering faith that you can and will prevail in the end, regardless of the difficulties, AND at the same time have the discipline to confront the most brutal facts of your current reality, whatever they might be.”

So, let's face the brutal facts: Bowling as a business is thriving, but as a sport, it's broken. The good news is that it can be fixed, but not in its current state, where factors beyond the athlete's control are the key to winning.

As I enter the final stage of my bowling journey, I'm reminded of the quote my mentor, Kegel founder John Davis, shared with me:

“We should try to be the parents of our future rather than the offspring of our past.”
Miguel de Unamuno

Ever since John's passing, the quote has been the driving force behind my unwavering vision for a revitalized sport where skill reigns supreme. By sharing my story, I hope to establish the credibility of my views and inspire others to envision a brighter future for the sport.

If you're ready for a change, I invite you to join me in shaping a new era for bowling. Whether you're a player or a partner, let's move past today's chaos and be the parents of a revitalized sport, where skill and passion determine the true champions.

The journey starts now.

Table of Contents

• Boomer Bowler.....	3
• The Transition.....	4
• Madness in the Mile High.....	5
• Espionage & Sabotage in Denver	6
• A New Arena.....	6
• The \$250,000 AMF Dick Weber Classic.....	8
• A Cautionary Tale	10
• The Birth of Teen Masters	11
• Initiative #1: Lane Conditions	11
• The Virginia Lottery Tour.....	12
• Initiative #2: The Pins.....	12
• A Tournament of the Gods	16
• Fashionable Bowling	18
• All Aboard	19
• Bowling Science	20
• Initiative #3: The Balls.....	21
• Howling at the Moon.....	22
• Random Ramblings from a Boomer Bowler.....	24
• Help Author My Final Chapter.....	26
• Appendix A: How Did We Get Here?	27
• Appendix B: Curriculum Vitae.....	28

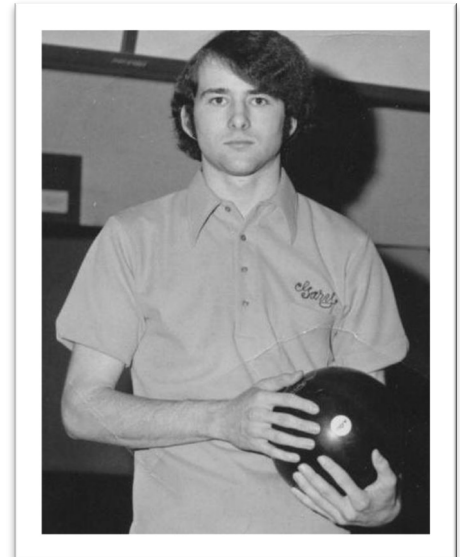
The Boomer Bowler

Early success, including two college championships and a silver medal at the FIQ World Championships in London with Team USA, fueled my desire to be in the heart of the bowling action. I moved to St. Louis, teaching during the week and immersing myself in the region's vibrant bowling scene on weekends.

From the Archway Classics and MBA events, Saturday night sweepers at Tower Lanes, to occasional PBA regionals, and even the high-stakes High Roller with its \$1,000 entry fee in Las Vegas, I constantly challenged myself against top-tier competition. This diverse experience gave me a comprehensive understanding of the sport and shaped my perspective on competitive bowling.

As a boomer bowler, my experience spans every era except Lignum Vitae. I have competed on lanes covered with lacquer, polyurethane, Guardian, and synthetic panels while rolling hard rubber, polyester, urethane, and reactive resin. My college years were spent bowling on lanes conditioned with a bug sprayer, and after college, I learned to play "the twig" in a center that used a Lucky Lane King 300.

I am too young (just barely) to have witnessed the chaos that preceded the 1913 American Bowling Congress convention that eliminated 20-pound bowling balls, the 7-9 "phony," and balls loaded with buckshot. However, I was a frequent tournament participant when the PBA banned polyester balls soaked in MEK to soften them. The chaos of this era resulted in ABC's 72 hardness rule, PBA's 75 hardness rule, mill holes, ball companies marketing 'soft' balls, and a few bowlers trying to circumvent the new rules by resorting to desperate measures like pouring ice water over bowling balls in restroom toilets to manipulate hardness test results.



If your scores aren't high enough, maybe your ball isn't soft enough.

Hard ball on hard lane surface. Ball tends to skid too far, and you lack hook too often.

AMF's soft ball on hard lane surface. Ball gives more flex, not skid; hook better than 12' hooked for more pin action.

Today's lane surfaces are harder. Which means your ball has to be softer to maintain the reaction you need to control it properly. AMF's soft rubber Powerball and soft polyester Pro Classic were especially designed to give you greater traction and bite—and therefore greater control—on today's harder lane surfaces.

Unlike ordinary vinyl balls, the Powerball's surface has thousands of tiny depressions that grip the lane surface to provide extra traction. This greater porosity results in less skid, more roll, and of course greater control.

The same thing holds true for the Pro Classic. Its soft polyester shell is designed for terrific gripping power, so it comes out of its skid earlier, hooks its roll longer and hooks into the pocket with more impact.

Both balls are designed to give you more power, better pin action and far more precision and control than any hard ball.

You'll find AMF's Powerball and Pro Classic at your local pro shop. Ask the pro to fit one for you. You'll find high scores come a lot easier, even on lanes.

The Transition

(mine, not lane oil's)

By January 1991, bowling was ten years into a urethane-fueled scoring explosion. Scratch tournaments were rapidly becoming scarce, but I refused to bowl in events where others received handicap. My only choice was to create my own, and four months later the Mile High Match Play Madness was born.

The 1991 Madness featured an all-match play format, a \$10,000 bonus for a 300 game on Sunday (won by Henry Gonzales), two airline tickets to Acapulco for the qualifying leader (won by Shawn Christensen), two airline tickets to Honolulu for a spectator at Sunday's finals, and even gas money for the top 30 bowlers who missed the cut to the finals and didn't cash.

For my encore, I brought the PBA Senior Tour to Denver's Celebrity Sports Center for the 1992 Rocky Mountain Senior Classic. Little did I know, this event would raise early red flags about the sport's evolving landscape. Bowling's first reactive resin ball, the Nu Line X-Calibur, had been on the market for several months, and other manufacturers were quick to follow suit. Scores were skyrocketing, and the game was changing faster than ever.

Heading into the crucial position round after 41 games, fifth-seeded Don Johnson needed a strong performance to secure his spot on the live ESPN telecast. Johnson rolled 10 strikes to score 269, but was unexpectedly bumped from the telecast. Sixth-seeded Teata Semiz rolled a 279, and seventh-seeded Dave Soutar fired a perfect 300, dropping Johnson to seventh place overall.

This dramatic turn of events underscored the escalating impact of technology on bowling. It was a clear sign that the sport was entering a new era, one where innovation would continue to shape both the game itself and my ongoing efforts to stage fair and competitive events.

THE FOX & Continental
ROCKS
KRFX 103.5 FM
One Airline Can Make A Difference.SM

PRESENT
MILE HIGH MATCH-PLAY Madness
A Unique, All Match Play, Scratch Bowling Tournament

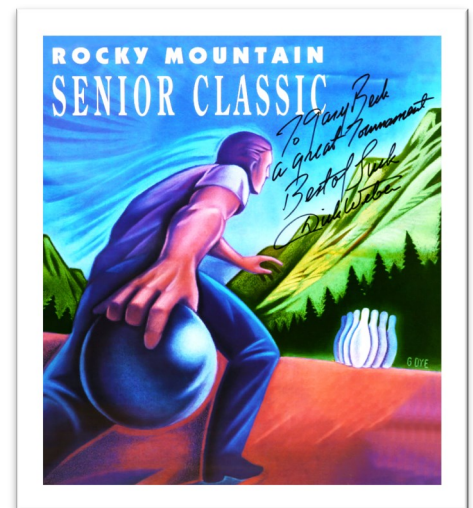
Denver, Colorado - The Mile High City
Guaranteed First Place

May 17-19 1991 **\$4,000.00** Entry Fee **\$150.00**
(Regardless of entries)
ABC & WIBC Sanctioned

Celebrity
SPORTS CENTER
888 South Colorado Boulevard
Denver, Colorado 80222
303/757-3321 Ext. 91

KILLER B
PROMOTIONS
Gary Beck, Tournament Manager: 303/331-BOWL

See the entry form [HERE](#).



Download the poster [HERE](#).

AMERICAN BOWLING CONGRESS
HALL OF FAME
FOUNDED 1941

Dick Evans
Executive Vice Chair
Denver, CO 80202
Denver, CO

Nov. 1, 1992
Mike Connor, Commissioner
Professional Bowlers Assn.
Akron, Ohio

Dear Mike:

I thought I would drop you a note and give you my evaluation of how the 1992 PBA Senior Tour went from a coverage standpoint. . . .

In my opinion, the senior tour got its best overall coverage in Denver last July. Both papers, among two of the best in America, gave the tournament daily coverage. And all three Denver television stations gave the tournament daily coverage. One station did the early sports show live from Celebrity lanes.

I think most of the credit for this coverage must go to Gary Beck. He generated early interest in the tournament by bringing ABC-TV analyst Nelson Burton Jr. into Denver for a press conference last spring.

Beck also opened some doors for me when I came into Denver to contact the media about tournament coverage. Those contacts enabled me to make direct contact with the Denver media again just before the tour arrived in Denver.

To me, Beck has a nice touch with the Denver media. He seemed to personally know most of the TV cameramen and sportscasters who came to Celebrity lanes. He also was known by the sports writers we came into contact with during our stay in Denver.

In my opinion, Beck is one of the best promoters in bowling because he got the community involved in the tournament. I remember going into a McDonald's somewhere in Denver and seeing a poster about the PBA senior tournament.

During the 30-plus years I was bowling editor for The Miami Herald, I always dreamed about working with a promotional-minded man like Gary Beck.

Sincerely,
Dick Evans
Dick Evans

CC: Gary Beck

Read the letter [HERE](#).

Madness in the Mile High

They say “third time’s a charm,” but my third event at Celebrity Sport Center was anything but. Built by Walt Disney himself, Celebrity offered everything from an indoor water park and bumper cars to 80 bowling lanes configured in an L-shape. Lanes 1-32 were wood, while 33-80 were synthetic.

The 1992 Mile High Match Play Madness began with ten games of qualifying across all 80 lanes. Talented lefty Shawn Christensen started strong, shooting 300/812 on the high side before the rotation took him to the low side where he, like the other lefties in the field, struggled to shoot 180s.

Fortunately for Shawn, his final four games of qualifying were on the high side and his ten-game total led the field, earning him the #1 seed and another pair of airline tickets to tropical Acapulco. The catch? Sunday’s finals would be held on the low side because of its stadium seating.



As a competitor, I have always believed lane conditions should remain consistent once tournament scoring begins. I left explicit instructions for Sunday's conditions to mirror Saturday's. Celebrity assured me they would. The results on Sunday told a different story.

- Shawn averaged an impressive 251 for the 15 games on Sunday and won the tournament.
- As a group, lefthanders out-averaged righthanders by 50 pins per game, 235 to 185.
- Not a single righthander won a game against a lefthander, much less a three-game match.

It was clear something was amiss. The lane conditions had changed drastically, creating an unfair advantage for lefthanders. The integrity of the tournament had been compromised, and I never held another tournament at Celebrity.

More Madness in the Mile High

In 1993, I relocated the Madness tournament to Brunswick Heather Ridge Lanes with a focus on equitable lane conditions. My goal was to ensure both right-handed and left-handed bowlers had similar paths to the pocket. Initially, this strategy proved successful. However, as the tournament progressed, the right side of the lanes opened up while the left side remained tight due to the relatively small number of lefties. Though not intentional, not a single left-hander made the cut.

Espionage & Sabotage in Denver

Rudy “Revs” Kasimakis brought 20 balls to the Madness at Heather Ridge in 1993. Like many, he struggled during his first block on Saturday and nothing seemed to click. After lunch, with his prospects looking bleak, Rudy changed to a ball he hadn’t tried during the morning block. His scores exploded, and he catapulted into Sunday’s finals.

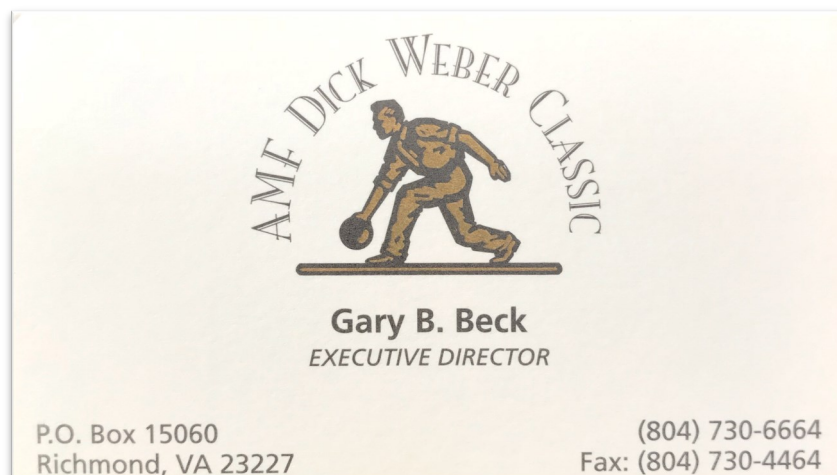
But Sunday morning brought a devious twist. As the 32 finalists gathered and the paddock door was unlocked, one bowling ball had mysteriously vanished overnight. Can you guess which one?

A New Arena

As 1994 approached, I found myself increasingly frustrated by my inability to control and balance the scoring pace and intrigued by new challenges and opportunities that were emerging. This led me to shift my focus to the PBA where their dedicated lane maintenance crew would shoulder the responsibility – and criticism – for the scoring environment.

When ESPN's televised coverage of the PBA's Senior Tour ended in 1993, I saw a chance to fill the void. I made the decision to produce my own national telecast of the 1994 PBA Rocky Mountain Senior Classic.

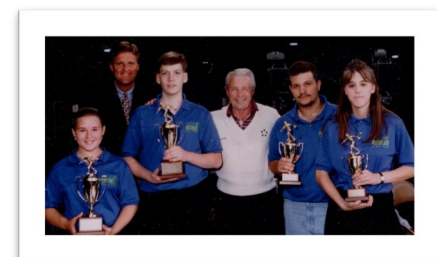
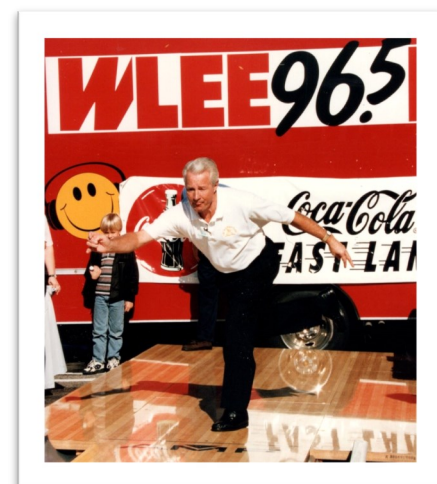
In search of sponsors to underwrite the telecast, I reached out to AMF Bowling in Richmond because the center that would be hosting the event was AMF equipped. During the phone call, I learned that AMF had just signed a contract with the PBA to sponsor a “flat-belly” tour stop. AMF agreed to sponsor my televised senior tour event in Denver under one condition: I would also come to Richmond and manage the PBA \$250,000 AMF Dick Weber Classic. My response: “You’re going to pay me twice???”



I arrived in Richmond tasked with transforming AMF's vision of a week-long celebration of bowling's greatest ambassador into reality. Ironically, despite being home to a major bowling equipment manufacturer, Richmond presented an unexpected hurdle in that local bowlers had few chances to connect with PBA stars and become fans. The PBA had never held a national tour stop in Virginia, and while Saturday afternoons across the country featured the PBA Tour on ABC Sports, Richmond viewers were shown alternate programming like ACC basketball and bass fishing instead.

To introduce Dick Weber and the stars of the PBA to the region, several initiatives were undertaken:

- An exclusive sweepstakes gave consumers the chance to win incredible prizes, including a VIP experience at the ESPN finals in Richmond and a once-in-a-lifetime private lesson with bowling legend Dick Weber.
- Supported by local radio station live-remotes and event sponsors, we took Dick Weber to the masses by staging David Letterman-style exhibitions in downtown Richmond and area grocery store parking lots.
- We hired a plane to circle NASCAR's sold-out fall race at Richmond International Raceway with a banner promoting the AMF Dick Weber Classic.
- We organized an exciting adult team pro-am tournament where four bowlers from each participating center qualified to represent their home alley. These teams were then paired with an AMF Dick Weber Classic star as their anchor bowler. The top-performing teams earned the opportunity to compete for the grand prize at the Arthur Ashe Center.
- A special youth tournament was held, offering aspiring young bowlers the chance to compete for college scholarships at the prestigious Arthur Ashe Center, with the legendary Dick Weber himself cheering them on.
- Upon arriving in Richmond for the AMF Dick Weber Classic, the PBA stars were chauffeured to Richmond's eight bowling centers in luxurious black stretch limousines. They surprised evening league bowlers with autographs, posters, and T-shirts, creating an unforgettable experience for fans and players alike.



The \$250,000 AMF Dick Weber Classic

The 1994 AMF Dick Weber Classic showcased an all-star field battling it out in an innovative, Steve Wunderlich-designed, all-match play format, culminating in a thrilling arena finals. The 30 invited competitors included the PBA Tour's top 24 points leaders, the Japan PBA Tour leader, the PBA Senior Tour leader, the AMF World Cup men's champ, the American Bowling Congress Open all-events winner, the Association of College Unions-International men's singles champ, and the legendary Dick Weber himself.

The entire week was a whirlwind of excitement, from sold-out pro-ams to a dazzling opening dinner at the historic Jefferson Hotel, building to a crescendo with a spectacular arena finals—complete with pyrotechnics, live music, and thousands of roaring fans! With two matches playing out on television simultaneously, it was non-stop action that kept the fans in the arena and at home on the edge of their seats.

While the event was an artistic success, it wasn't without its challenges. I learned that PBA's lane conditioning experts often struggled to control scoring pace and create a level playing field for both right- and left-handed bowlers, even with only 30 bowlers. In 1994, this disparity was evident as two of the three left-handers in the field, John Mazza and Parker Bohn III, dominated the event, prompting the *Richmond Times Dispatch* to declare, "Right Wingers Stew As Lefties Roll Strikes."

However, the following year saw a dramatic shift in the balance. The 1995 headline read, "All's Right At The Weber Classic." 1994 runner-up Bohn was the top left-hander finishing in 13th, while defending champion Mazza finished in last place.

The 1995 telecast was one for the record books. Champion David Ozio set a new PBA record with a remarkable 1,070 for four games. Meanwhile, Walter Ray Williams, Jr. started strong with scores of 279 and 267 but lost both games. Ironically, he rolled 214 in his third match, and won.

As I watched the matches unfold from off-camera, a question began to nag at me: "If lane oil isn't the answer to escalating scores, what is?"



Click [HERE](#) to download picture.





1994 Champion John Mazza



1995 Champion David Ozio

Click [HERE](#) to watch the final two games of the 1994 AMF Dick Weber Classic.

\$250,000

John Mazza, 1994 Champion

"THE MOST ENTERTAINING 90 MINUTES OF BOWLING WE'VE EVER SEEN."
Bowlers Journal International

"...THE PBA'S FINEST HOUR."
Sierra Strikeline

"... GREAT... FABULOUS... AWESOME. THIS WAS SPORT, THIS WAS EXCITEMENT."
World of Ten Pin

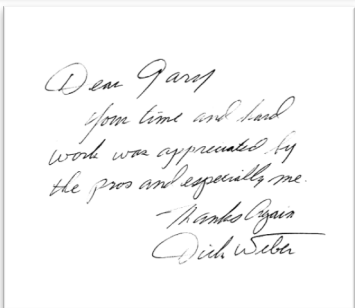
"★★★★★"
Stars and Strikes

The \$250,000 AMF Dick Weber Classic

Live from the Arthur Ashe Center in Richmond, Virginia

IF YOU MISSED THE ORIGINAL, CATCH THE SEQUEL NOVEMBER 1ST, 7:30 EST ON ESPN

AMF



Click [HERE](#) to see the card.

A Cautionary Tale

The following cautionary tale is not about me, but about the rise and fall of bowling in China and the parallels I see with the current trends in the USA and Europe.

During the several months I was at AMF headquarters managing two Dick Weber Classics, I witnessed a constant stream of shipping containers packed with lanes, pinspotters, automatic scoring, and more, all headed for China. My curiosity piqued, I flew to Hong Kong and toured showcase bowling centers in major Chinese cities.

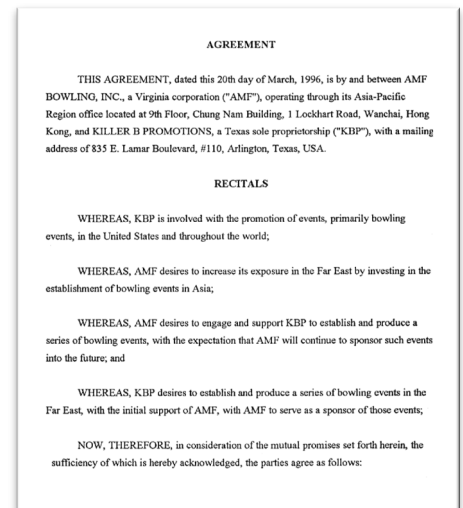
The contrast was striking. The US market for bowling equipment had stagnated, but in China, it was exploding. While a typical US alley might see 20 games per lane per day at \$2.25 each, Chinese centers averaged a whopping 100 games at \$6.00 each. Many catered to a high-end clientele with luxurious VIP lounges. Wait times were so long that AMF even developed a faster pinspotter for the Chinese market. Investors, seeing the potential for rapid returns, poured into the country.

Yet, this was a business boom, not a bowling one. China's new alleys were packed with casual bowlers, not dedicated competitors. Leagues and tournaments were virtually nonexistent.

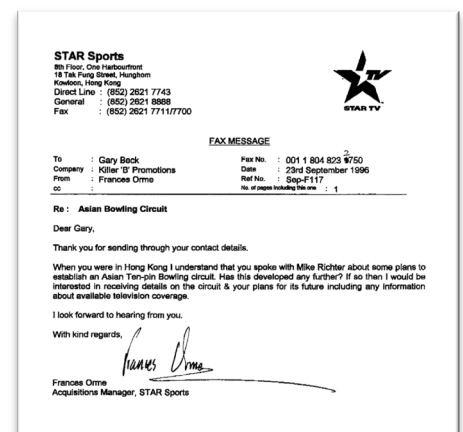
After discussions with key players in Hong Kong, Malaysia, and Asian sports media, I returned to the US and proposed the creation of the Asian Bowling Tour. AMF quickly signed on as the Presenting Sponsor. By late April 1996, my wife and I had sold our house and belongings and were in Hong Kong searching for an apartment to call home for the next three years. But shortly after our arrival, Goldman Sachs purchased controlling interest (65%) in AMF for \$1.325 billion and my multiyear contract and the 1996 Dick Weber Classic became collateral damage.

By the time China's bowling's boom ended a few years later, over 200 bowling centers had been built in Shanghai. But, unfortunately, a solid foundation for the sport was never established. Within a few years, interest in bowling began to decline and as of today, only 20 bowling centers remain in Shanghai.

Though the unexpected entry into the bowling world by a Wall Street investment firm was personally devastating, it changed my life in ways for which I will always be grateful. Unable to afford life in Hong Kong, we were forced to move back to the USA shortly after arriving. A year later, Teen Masters was born.



Click [HERE](#)



Click [HERE](#)

The Birth of Teen Masters

Upon returning to the USA from China, I was surprised to see that the scoring pace of young bowlers at the 1996 YABA Coca-Cola National Championships was significantly higher than that of the PBA Tour's top professionals. During my initial two years of staging PBA National Tour stops, Norm Duke led the 1994 season with a 221 average, and Mike Aulby set the pace in 1995 at 225. This stark contrast reignited my long-standing concerns about creating fair and realistic scoring environments within the sport of bowling. Determined to address this issue, I set out to find a solution.

Initiative #1: Lane Conditions

Having been a 9th grade teacher for five years, I decided to focus my first initiative on teenagers. Teen Masters (*originally titled Youth Masters*) was launched in 1997 at Fred Borden's Stonehedge in Akron with the mantra of "bring your spare game." To rein in scoring and emphasize precise shot-making, we oiled the lanes to 41 feet and increased the volume of oil outside the five-board area. Tiffani McCoy of Dallas, TX, and Michael Fagan of Greenlawn, NY, emerged as the inaugural champions, both receiving equal scholarship awards.



The following year brought even greater success for Teen Masters, but it also introduced the infamously challenging lane conditions that solidified its reputation as "the toughest test of skill in youth bowling." I had instructed the lane mechanic to use a 41-foot pattern similar to the first Teen Masters, so when he warned me that he had "overdone it and oiled to 43 feet," I wasn't initially concerned. I mistakenly assumed he had oiled to 25 feet and then buffed to 43 feet. It wasn't until the tournament was underway that I realized he had actually oiled all the way to 43 feet with no buffing at all.



Staying true to my belief that lane conditions should remain constant once tournament play starts, we maintained the same 43-foot oil pattern for the rest of the event. Only Amanda Gazverde from Flower Mound, TX, managed to average 200. It's baffling, but despite the boys and girls competing simultaneously on the same pairs, some parents whose sons struggled claimed "the girls' lanes were oiled with an easier pattern."

While I'll confess I was concerned that the 1998 lane conditions might chase bowlers away, the response was just the opposite. Word of the difficult environment spread and participation grew, confirming my belief that a meaningful audience of bowlers want to be challenged.

The Virginia Lottery Tour

Encouraged by the positive response from the teens at the first Teen Masters, I believed adult bowlers would also embrace a similar challenge. Having settled in Virginia's picturesque Blue Ridge Mountains after returning from China, I created a 12-city tour sponsored by the Virginia Lottery. Collaborating with Kegel and The Foundation – a new organization dedicated to the science of lane conditioning created by John Davis and Lenny “the Phantom” Nicholson – we aimed to create a scoring environment that rewarded accuracy and skill. I even went so far as to personally condition the lanes by hand at a few of the tournament venues.

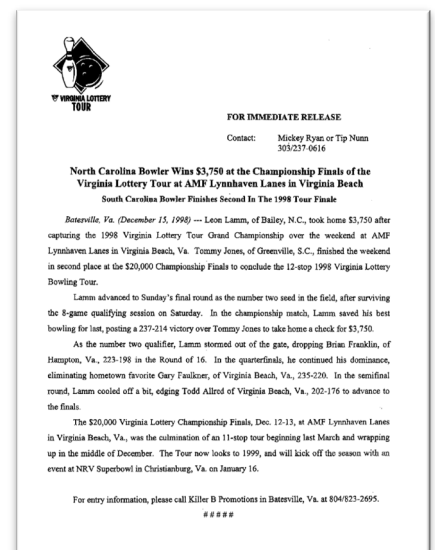
However, as the series unfolded, it became evident that our reliance on lane conditions as our sole tool for managing scores was a losing battle. Our focus had shifted from promoting skillful play to actively hindering high scores by making it difficult to hit the pocket. This approach led to volatile scoring conditions, swinging between the extremes of incredibly hard and super easy.

With our attempts to manage scoring through lane conditions proving ineffective, only two elements remained in the scoring equation: the pins and the balls. (The impact of lane topography was still a mystery.) I turned my attention to the pins.

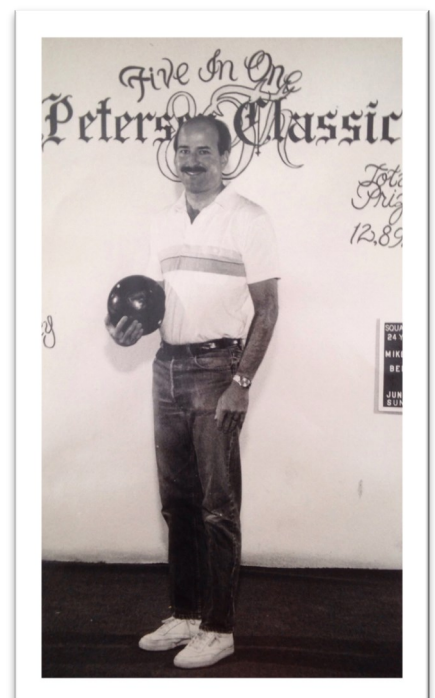
Initiative #2: The Pins

Even as long ago as 3200 BC in ancient Egypt, bowling has been a game of knocking down pins with a ball. Throughout my years as a competitor, I encountered a wide variety of bowling pins, each with its unique characteristics and challenges.

- Richard Altman's annual Santa Claus in Edmond, Oklahoma used Magna-Pins, made of magnesium.
- The Hoinke Classic in Cincinnati held a side tournament called "Heavy Wood," where the pins weighed over five pounds.
- The Petersen Classic at 35th & Archer in Chicago was renowned for its unpredictable pin sets, featuring varying weights, conditions, and intentional off-spot placement.



Click [HERE](#) for a list of VLT champions.



The Magna-Pin was a synthetic bowling pin approved by the American Bowling Congress for tournament use in 1962, but unfortunately, the production costs were too high and the manufacturer went out of business.

While the pins used in the Hoinke's Heavy Wood tournament and the Petersen Classic were readily available, they had been modified through various methods, including adding lead, soaking in water, and even rumors of freezing. These alterations, however, made them unsuitable for my specific needs.

Right after ESPN's telecast of the 1995 AMF Dick Weber Classic wrapped, I approached the PBA with a proposal: "Let's experiment with pins that are more difficult to knock down."

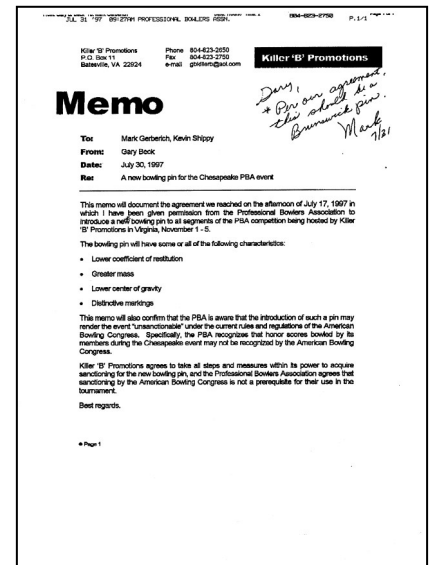
Securing their buy-in was surprisingly swift, but it turned out to be the easiest hurdle. The true challenge lay not in the agreement, but in its execution. Finding a manufacturer capable and willing to produce these pins would prove far more difficult than I anticipated.

One factor that compounded the issue was the governing body's stringent requirements. All pins used in certified competition must score within a very narrow window. Any pin deemed noticeably easier or harder to knock down would be disqualified, drastically shrinking the potential market. Valuing scoring integrity over certification, I pressed forward.

Given our established relationship and my intent to introduce the new pin during the 1996 Dick Weber Classic, my initial outreach was to AMF Bowling. However, they rejected the concept because AMF's marketing strategy centered on their pins being "the highest-scoring pins on the market, shattering one tournament record after another." Aligning with a lower-scoring pin simply didn't fit their brand narrative.

By a strange twist of fate, I was in Grand Prairie, Texas, overseeing the arena finals of the PBA Quaker State 250 on ABC Sports when I received AMF's decision not to manufacture the pin. Brunswick was providing the bowling equipment for the event at Warrior Coliseum, so it was there that I initiated my first conversation with them about the concept.

After my aborted relocation to Hong Kong and return back to the USA, I undertook managing the arena finals for the 1996 Brunswick World Team Challenge Grand Championships at the Pontchartrain Center near New Orleans and began work on creation of the Teen Masters, sponsoring/hosting a PBA Tour stop with an arena finals in Virginia, launching the Virginia Lottery Tour, and continuing my efforts to return skill to its position as the dominant factor in competition.



Click [HERE](#) for my bowling pin history.

I turned to the legendary Bill Taylor, a longtime critic of bowling's embrace of easy scoring conditions. Bill's relationship was with Vulcan Corporation, and a key component of his plan was to replace the Surlyn coating that was standard on AMF and Brunswick pins with a material he sourced out of Europe. His pin design also included:

- Lower coefficient of restitution
- Lower center of gravity
- A slightly wider base
- No voids
- A target weight of three pounds, nine ounces

Unfortunately, the flow index of Bill's material demanded excessive heat, damaging Vulcan's production molds during the initial test run. It wasn't until May 1998 that two cases of the special BT pins were finally ready for testing.

Excited to witness the concept materialize, I brought the test pins to a Virginia Lottery Tour event. A contest was announced: ten randomly selected bowlers would have the chance to win a prize by bowling the first-ever strike using these "demanding" pins. Amidst growing excitement, ten names were drawn. One by one, the chosen bowlers took their turn. Remarkably, the first seven bowlers all struck!

I was crestfallen. Because the Virginia Lottery Tour events attracted players seeking a challenge, even the successful bowlers shared a sense of disappointment. Witnessing the concept of a more demanding pin crumble before their eyes was a letdown for everyone involved.

A month later, Brunswick unveiled the PBA Gold Pin, tipping the scales an ounce heavier than my green Killer 'B' pins. Seizing the opportunity as both sponsor and host of the 1998 PBA Fall Tour's opening event, I ensured the Gold Pins were featured throughout the entire competition. From the initial Pro-Ams to the climactic ESPN finals at the Virginia Beach Pavilion, the PBA Gold Pins took center stage.



Click [HERE](#) for an enlarged version.



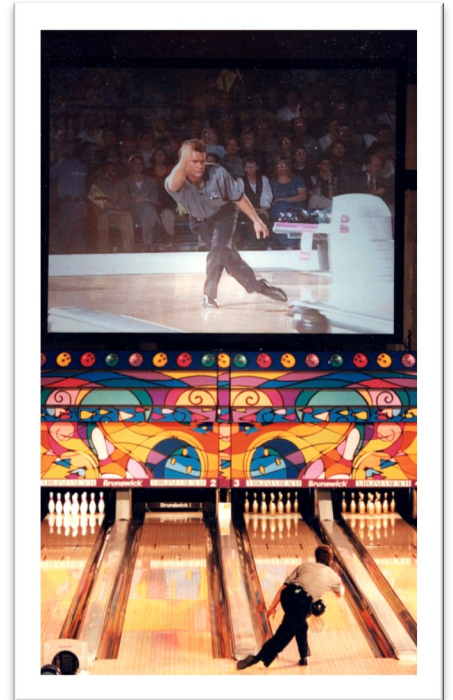
When teens arrived at Stonehedge in Akron for the 1999 Teen Masters, they were greeted with two unforgettable surprises:

- Alumni from the 1998 tournament received a commemorative "I survived the great oil spill of 1998" T-shirt, a lighthearted nod to the previous year's unexpected incident.
- Following the national anthem, as the pinsetters descended for the customary 15-minute practice session, they rose again to unveil a breathtaking spectacle: 46 lanes gleaming with shiny gold pins.



In total, the PBA Gold Pins saw action in four Killer 'B' events: two Teen Masters tournaments and two PBA national tour stops. Unfortunately, they failed to produce any noticeable change in scoring pace, a direct result of their American Bowling Congress seal of approval. To be approved by the ABC, they were required to maintain a consistent level of difficulty, neither harder nor easier to knock down.

While the psychological impact of the pins was immediate and palpable, it was short-lived. When considering the cost of the pins, the logistics of transporting the pins from center to center, the automatic scoring errors caused by their color, and the reality they didn't impact scoring pace in a meaningful way, I abandoned them in 2000. Coincidentally, so did the PBA and Brunswick.



A Tournament of the Gods

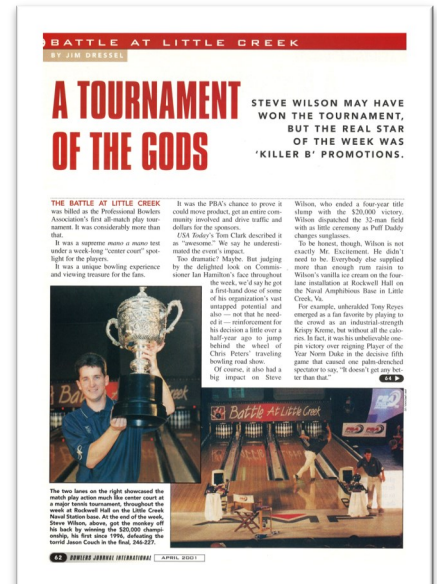
The fairest tournament I ever created was the PBA Battle At Little Creek. It featured the top 31 bowlers from the PBA's points list, plus a 32nd PBA Tour player voted into the field by fans.

Three factors made the competition fair:

- Brand new lane panels – no wear and tear on the right or left
- Perfect topography
- Balanced traffic on the left and the right

Leading up to the television finals, two matches were staged simultaneously, one on each pair of lanes. Each match featured either two righties, two lefties, or one of each. After each match we stripped and oiled the lanes.

As the bowlers were introduced for each match, a DJ played their "battle" song. And after every round, both winners and losers manned tables with lines of fans queued up for over an hour to get their autographs.



Click [HERE](#) to read the article.

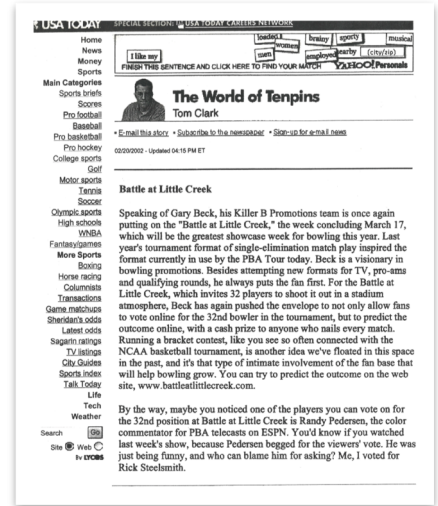


Click [HERE](#) to see the 'before' picture of Little Creek's Rockwell Hall.

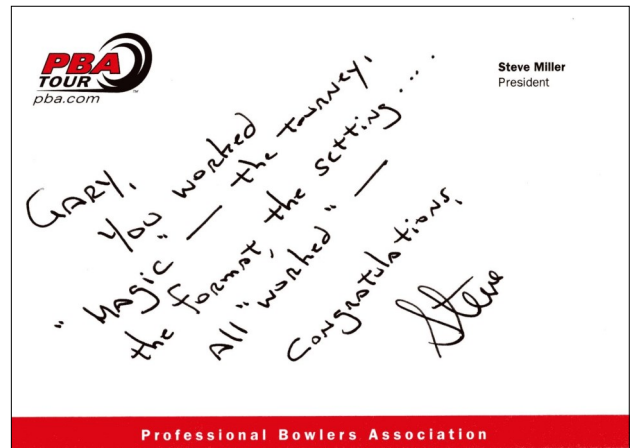
Battle II

The inaugural Battle At Little Creek took place at the Little Creek Amphibious Base in Virginia Beach, home to Navy SEAL Special Warfare Groups Two and Four. Notably, SEALs from Little Creek were among the first American troops deployed to Afghanistan following the 9/11 attacks.

Due to heightened security, the base was closed to civilians, forcing me to relocate the event. The 2002 Battle At Little Creek as the first event hosted by the new Jane P. Batten Convocation Center on the campus of Virginia Wesleyan University.



Click [HERE](#) to read article.



Fashionable Bowling

In 2006, driven by the desire to return the top female bowlers to national television and promote bowling to the general public outside the four walls of a bowling center, I created the Women's Challenge and staged it in the Las Vegas Fashion Show mall, a venue visited by over 60,000 shoppers each day.

In 2009, I returned to the Fashion Show with the finals of the Teen Masters, creating five national telecasts, the first bowling shows ever produced and aired in High Definition.



All Aboard!

With a goal of bringing main-stream media attention to bowling, the finals of the 2011 and 2012 Teen Masters were staged in the media capital of the world, New York City. The iconic Grand Central Terminal, a major transportation hub where on an average day over 750,000 people pass through was the venue.

Because of its compelling human-interest stories and the unique presentation, Teen Masters earned strong media coverage including print, television, radio, and online:

- *Wall Street Journal*
- *The New York Times*
- *USA Today*
- *Sports Illustrated*
- *New York Newsday*
- National Public Radio
- *Crain's Business News*
- ABC, NBC, CBS, Fox, and MSNBC
- HuffPost.com, NYDailyNews.com & hundreds of other websites

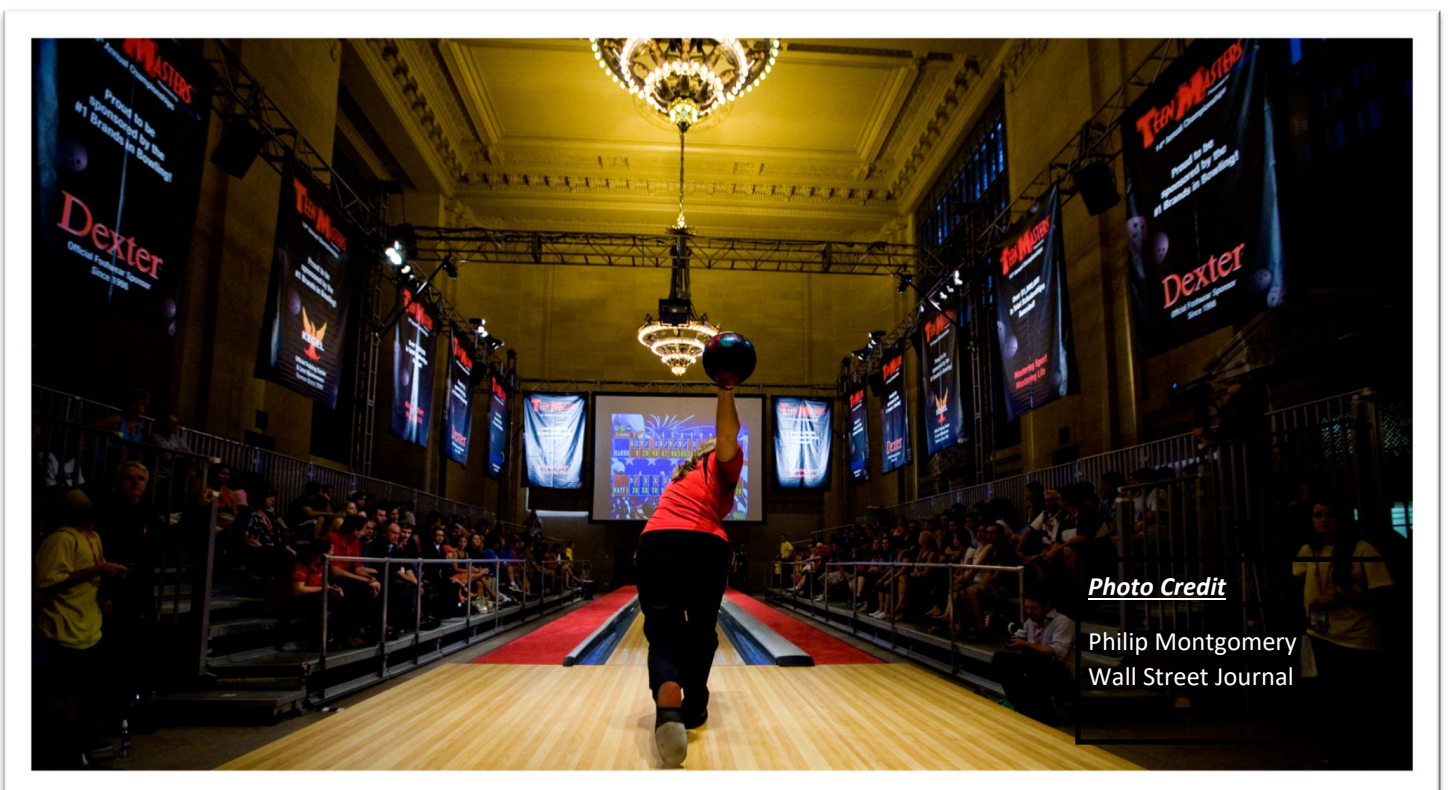
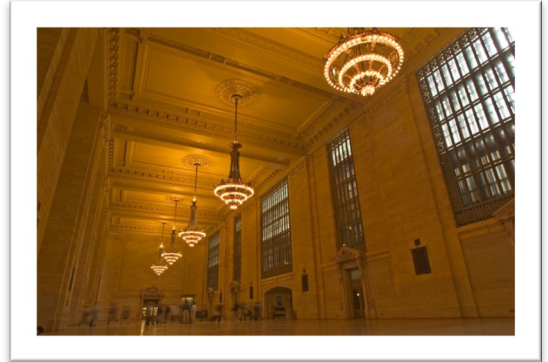
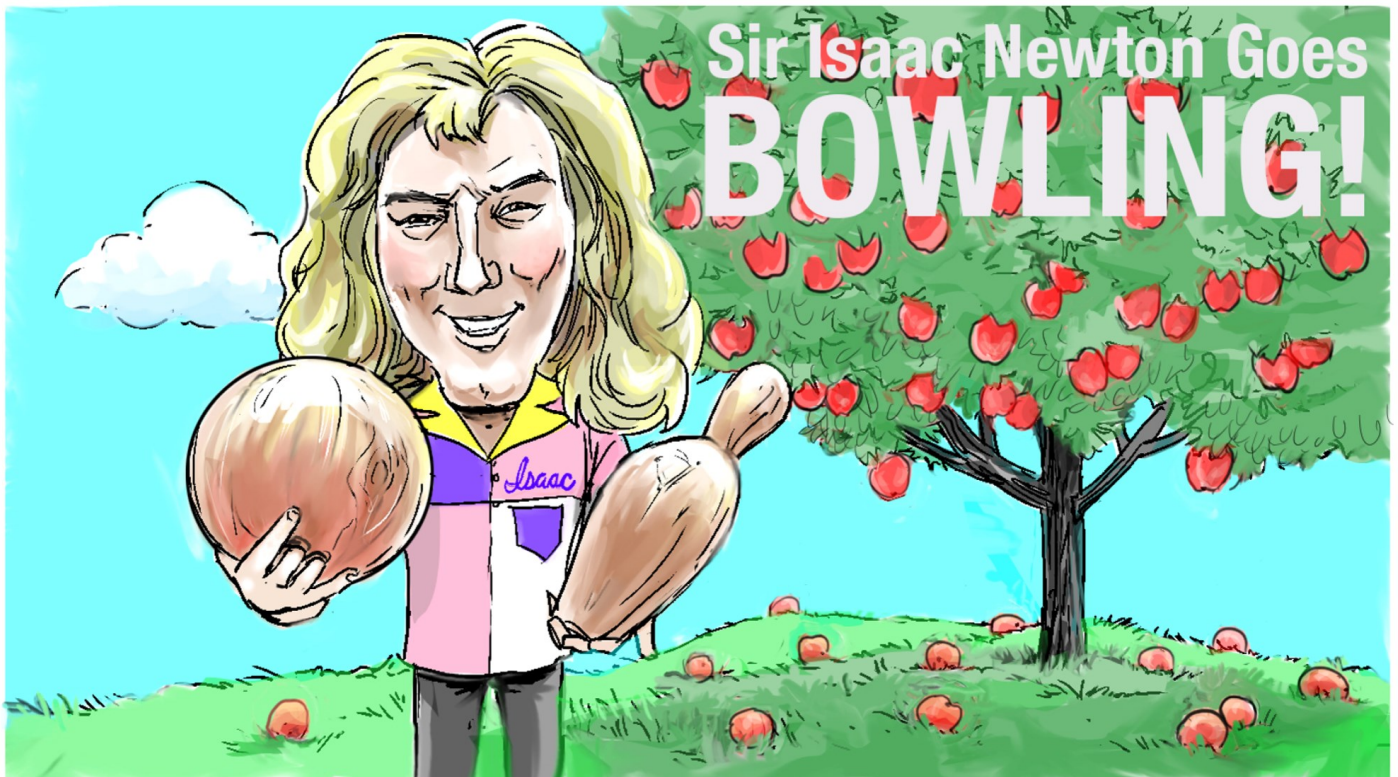


Photo Credit

Philip Montgomery
Wall Street Journal

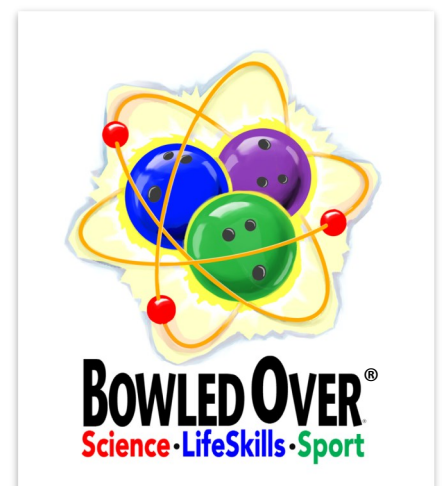
Bowling Science



As a former science teacher, I've always envisioned using bowling to teach Newton's Laws of Motion to young children. I have written a multifaceted curriculum that utilizes a storytelling format and the fun of rolling a ball and knocking down pins to teach principles of STEM (science, technology, engineering & math) and SEL (social emotional intelligence) in a real-world setting kids can relate to. The sessions are designed to simultaneously help students understand the forces that shape the physical world they live in while challenging them to examine the forces that influence how they view themselves and interact with the people around them.

Kids will learn:

- Critical Thinking
- Problem Solving
- Creativity
- Collaboration
- Communication Skills
- Emotional Intelligence



Initiative #3: The Balls

In 2007, I gathered the match play finalists together and floated the idea of a new side tournament to be held just before Teen Masters the following year: every bowler would get to pick any ball they wanted, but they'd be limited to just that one ball for the entire special tournament. Their response was immediate and unanimous:

“Make us all throw the same ball. That way we’ll know who bowled the best.”

Inspired by their suggestion, a special two-day tournament preceded the Teen Masters from 2008 to 2010. In this event, every bowler received the latest high-performance ball from Ebonite. While the concept was popular, adjusting to the oil pattern changes over 12 games with a single ball proved challenging for most.

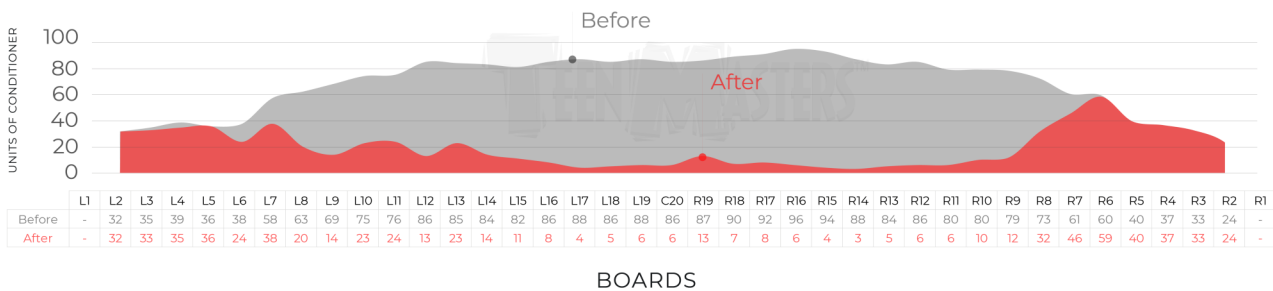
In 2011 and 2012, a different approach was undertaken. Teen Masters participants were limited to two balls: one high-performance and one mid-performance. Unfortunately, the oil patterns deteriorated too quickly due to the flare and absorption characteristics of these balls.

To understand the significant impact bowling balls have on oil patterns, check out the 1999 before/after graphs below. Keep in mind, this was using 25-year-old technology and much slower rev rates. If this removed 96% of the oil in some spots, imagine what's happening to oil patterns today. Click [HERE](#) to download all four 1999 before/after graphs.

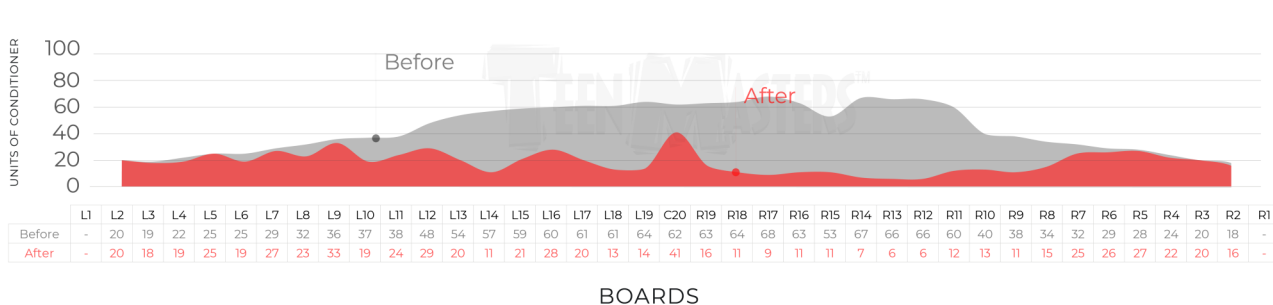
It wasn't until the summer of 2013 that the various elements finally aligned to create a truly level playing field, where a bowler's skill, rather than technological advancements, would be the ultimate deciding factor.

1999 Teen Masters Oil Volumes

7 feet



15 feet



Howling at the Moon

After two decades dedicated to understanding the interplay of lane conditions, pins, and bowling balls, I unveiled plans to introduce a regulation ball specifically for Teen Masters competitions. The industry's response was swift and forceful.

During a conversation with Chad Murphy shortly after he joined USBC, I cited the ability of high-performance bowling balls to rapidly mutate oil patterns as a compelling reason to reign them in. His response was dismissive: "You're howling at the moon." He claimed transition could be controlled by increasing the oil volume to 70 mL.

When I first met Ebonite's newly appointed CEO, Randy Schickert, he greeted me with, "Oh, you're the one advocating for a rollback in bowling ball technology. Ebonite is bowling's technology leader, and I am dedicated to upholding that position." It was a challenging three-year endeavor to persuade Ebonite that the regulation bowling ball wouldn't negatively impact their high-performance sales. Ultimately, they agreed to manufacture the ball according to the precise specifications designed by Kegels John Davis and Ted Thompson.

Starting in 2013, the Teen Masters Championships launched its non-flaring polyester and urethane regulation balls on long and short oil patterns with a minimal 7 mL of volume. This strategy aimed to promote skill and control over power. In 2017, a pearlized urethane version of the ball was introduced, offering the best of both worlds: the distance of polyester and the durability of urethane.

Up until 2021, bowlers could use two balls during competition, often scuffing one and polishing the other to adapt to the varying oil distances. However, in 2022, the rules were further tightened, limiting each bowler to a single ball and oiling the lanes only once per day, further emphasizing the importance of versatility, finesse, and shot-making consistency. Click [HERE](#) to see the 2022 patterns and before/after graphs.

AVERAGES – 36 GAMES	
Top Girl	198.17
Top 12 Girls	191.25
Top Boy	215.81
Top 12 Boys	210.19

2022 Teen Masters Scoring Pace			
	Fresh	Burn	2X Burn
Top 25 Girls	185.57	186.14	186.48
Top 25 Boys	206.14	210.48	202.18

The 2022 Teen Masters Championships were a resounding success, fulfilling John Davis's vision and the goals of the WTBA Technical Committee.

"We, the committee, understand a change in the bowling environment is required for the sport to grow to its full potential. We believe the first logical step toward this change is a *'Regulation Bowling Ball'* for top-level competition."

April 19, 2006

World Tenpin Bowling Association Technical Committee

John Davis, Chairman (United States)

Jack Edelaar (Netherlands)

Ruben Ghiragossian (Venezuela)

Dr. Pinchas Herskovitz (Israel)

Pekka Korpi (Finland)

Sami Luoto (Finland)

Neil Stremmel (United States)

Yap Kok Wee (Singapore)

William Woo (Singapore)

Consultants to the 2006 WTBA Technical Committee

John Forst, Len Nicholson, and Ted Thompson

Key takeaways from the 2022 event:

- By introducing a balanced, regulation bowling ball that does not flare or absorb oil, we were able to reduce oil volumes by 75%.
- Lane conditioner transition was gradual and predictable.
- Spare-making was critical.
- The impact of random factors that bowlers cannot control, such as "who they follow," was eliminated or significantly reduced.
- The importance of versatility, accuracy, and finesse increased, while the dominance of power decreased.
- The regulation bowling balls used by the 24 bowlers who advanced to match play averaged over three years old.
- We leveled the playing field. The *"hand in the ball was more important than the ball in the hand."*



Random Rambling's from a Boomer Bowler

How Do You Decide Who Is The Best Bowler?

In 2003, the World Tenpin Bowling Association's Technical Committee, under the leadership of Sid Allen, pinpointed essential characteristics shared by elite bowlers across all generations: Versatility, Accuracy, Power, Repeatability, and Knowledge. The committee underscored versatility as the distinguishing factor that propelled a bowler to greatness and aimed to foster an environment that necessitated bowlers to master finesse skills like varying their speed, adjusting their release, and adapting their aiming system. You can read their full report [HERE](#).

However, in today's competitive landscape, power - manifested as ball speed and revolutions - has eclipsed all other attributes. The tremendous friction generated by contemporary balls allows them to deliver significantly more energy to the pins than in previous decades, sending messengers back and forth across the pin deck, often until every pin is toppled.

Won't a Regulation Bowling Ball Hurt the Ball Manufacturers?

Whenever discussions arise about the potential negative impact of high-performance balls on the sport of bowling, a curious shift often occurs. For many, the focus moves away from what's truly beneficial for the sport itself and instead centers on the well-being of the ball companies and their employees.

- SKILL Bowling and the contemporary game are not mutually exclusive. Participants do not take a vow of bowling ball abstinence. In fact, multiple surveys over the past dozen years show SKILL Bowlers purchase an average of eight high-performance balls each season.
- SKILL Bowling can grow the sport, creating more customers for the ball manufacturers.
- Bowling ball manufacturing is already experiencing consolidation and plant closures:
 - * Faball had 48 employees and two manufacturing plants. Both plants and all of the employees are gone.
 - * Over 200 people were employed at the Columbia 300 Industries plant in San Antonio. Only three moved to Hopkinsville when Ebonite bought the Columbia and Track brands.
 - * At its peak, the Brunswick ball plant in Muskegon employed over 200 workers before manufacturing was relocated to Mexico. MOTIV, who formerly made cores for Brunswick, now employs under 50 in Muskegon.
 - * The Ebonite plant in Hopkinsville used to be a major employer with 215 workers. After Brunswick acquired the Ebonite brands, a mere four or five employees made the move to Mexico.

Bowling's Olympic Dream

The recent Paris Olympics reignited calls for bowling's inclusion, but the sport's trajectory seems to be moving in the opposite direction:

- **World Games:** Despite being a mainstay since 1981, bowling has been dropped from the 2025 World Games in Chengdu, China.
- **Asian Games:** A consistent presence since 1994, bowling is absent from the 2026 Asian Games in Japan.
- **Southeast Asian Games:** Included in 19 of the biannual events since 1977, bowling was excluded in the 2023 SEA Games in Cambodia, and is slated to be missing from the next three editions, 2025 (Thailand), 2026 (Malaysia), and 2027 (Singapore).

Does PBA Need High Scores To Build Its Audience?

It was a Saturday afternoon in 1993, and I was glued to the sofa, watching the championship match of the PBA Wichita Open on ABC Sports. Three teenagers, including my fiancée's son, wandered into the living room and lingered behind the sofa, curious about what held my attention. It was David Ozio versus Mike Aulby, and after six frames, they'd both been flawless, throwing strike after strike. As the boys abruptly turned to leave, one of them quipped, *"Why bother watching when you already know what they're going to do?"*

In baseball, a .400 batting average is a legendary feat worthy of enshrinement in Cooperstown. In basketball, even championship teams routinely miss the majority of their shots. Yet, these sports continue to enthrall audiences due to their inherent drama and unpredictability. Does the sheer volume of strikes, while impressive, create a risk that televised matches will become monotonous for casual viewers. The element of suspense, the thrill of potential failure, might be diluted when near-perfection becomes the norm.

I'm Not Alone

While the path on which I've chosen to walk the past three decades has been a lonely one, there is evidence I am not alone in my views on the state of the sport. The following are a few published quotes from industry leaders and experts:

"With the advent of the high-tech bowling ball and the method in which it is drilled being the most critical variables for success...and my utter contempt as an athlete that equipment should play such a major part in who wins."

"Skill, innovation and talent have been replaced by cover stocks, weight blocks and drill specs. Now is the time to lasso in the technology, put limitations on what bowling balls can do, and not allow anything outside defined specifications in competition."

"The power comes from the bowling balls. And, especially in the hands of less-talented players at your home bowling center, it's killing the sport."

Yes, It's Complex. But the Solution is Simpler Than You Think.

When discussing bowling's challenges, the conversation often swings between oversimplification and despair. People want easy answers or throw their hands up, saying "Bowling has changed. Deal with it." However, the reality is more nuanced. . While the issues facing the sport are complex - from societal shifts and center closures, to technology's impact on balls and lane conditions - the core problem, and its solution, remains clear.

The Problem: We've lost the balance between bowling balls and lane oil. Balls are too strong, oil patterns are too deep, and this elevates the role played by equipment and variables such as 'who you follow' in determining who wins and loses.

The Solution: Restore the balance by using a regulation ball that doesn't flare or absorb oil and significantly reduce oil volumes to create a playing field that demands skill and strategy, not just brute force. This won't solve every problem, but it's the crucial first step towards revitalizing the sport.

By focusing on what we *can* control, we can stop the decline and start building a future where bowling thrives again.

Help Author My Final Chapter

Barring unforeseen circumstances, my family history suggests I have at least another decade of productive years ahead. I'm passionate about my efforts to improve bowling, so retirement isn't on my radar.

As I embark on my most ambitious bowling project yet, I'm seeking a team of dedicated individuals who share my vision for the sport's growth. Together, we'll create a lasting legacy. To further support this endeavor, I'm also in the process of establishing a separate 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

Whether you're a potential equity partner or board member, a bowling center interested in offering your customers an experience in which their skill is the critical variable, or a competitive bowler who wants to compete on a level playing field, I invite you to get in touch with me.



Gary Beck

Mobile & WhatsApp: 1-434-227-0205

Email: garyb@killerbpromotions.com

Click the link below to schedule a call:

[Strike Up A Conversation](#)

Appendix A: *How Did We Get Here?*

Bill Taylor argued that the bowling industry's misstep lay in prioritizing easily achievable high scores (akin to "candy") over fostering a genuine learning environment. Manufacturers focused on promoting high-scoring pins and powerful bowling balls, while proprietors competed to offer the easiest lane conditions. This approach, Taylor contended, catered to bowlers' perceived desires rather than addressing their true need for a challenging and rewarding experience that encouraged skill development.

Here is a timeline of key milestones in the sport's evolution:

- **1913:** ABC implemented its 'Balanced Ball' rules, limiting balls to 16 pounds, one ounce of side, finger, and thumb weight, and three ounces of top or bottom weight.
- **1939:** ABC implemented the 'Level Lane' rule, requiring yearly sanding and inspections.
- **1964:** ABC rescinded the annual resurfacing rule. *Lefty-righty balance disappears from the PBA Tour.*
- **1973:** Soaking takes over the PBA Tour. Read the Sports Illustrated story [HERE](#).
- **1975:** PBA bans soaking, ABC implements a 72 hardness rule, PBA sets hardness at 75.
- **1980:** Adult membership peaked at 8,986,248. Perfect games recognized: 5,446.
- **1981:** AMF introduced the Angle, bowling's first urethane ball. *The PBA Tournament Committee votes 11-0 to ban urethane balls, but the Executive Committee approves them.*
- **1982:** Glenn Allison rolled the first 900 series in an ABC-certified league. *Glenn used a Columbia Yellow Dot during the second league shift, but ABC refused to approve his achievement.*
- **1991:** The Nu Line X-Calibur, the first reactive resin ball was released. *Honor scores climbed 20% the following season.*
- **1997:** Collegiate bowler Jeremy Sonnenfeld bowls the first ABC-approved 900 series. *Jeremy's series was bowled across three pairs of lanes during a school fund-raiser.*
- **2000:** Adult membership was 3,431,919. Perfect games approved: 40,335.
- **2010:** Adult membership was 1,941,336. Perfect games approved: 56,217.
- **2011:** USBC published study stressing the importance of maintaining the 98-year-old static weight limit at one ounce. Click [HERE](#) for the press release.
- **2018:** USBC tripled the static weight limit to three ounces. Click [HERE](#) for the release.
- **2019:** USBC eliminated the 3-unit rule for lane conditioning, citing the destructive impact of modern balls on oil patterns. *The ruling effectively makes blocked lanes legal.* Click [HERE](#) for the press release.
- **2022:** The number of USBC-approved 900 series reaches 44.
- **2023:** USBC dropped the requirement for lane oil to contain UV additives. *Combined with the depletion of the remaining inventory of oil take-up tape, future tournaments and leagues will be unable to verify lane conditions.*

Appendix B: *Curriculum Vitae*

Killer 'B' Promotions 1991 – Present

- Founder of the Teen Masters, an annual championship for teens that has attracted participants from all fifty states and as far away as Berlin, Caracas, Shanghai, Sidney, and Singapore.
- Created and/or managed sixteen arena events: PBA AMF Dick Weber Classic (1994, 1995), PBA Quaker State 250 (1996), Brunswick World Team Challenge Grand Championship (1996, 1999), PBA Ebonite Classic (1997), BPAA US Open (1998), PBA National Finance Championship (1998), PBA AC Delco Challenge (1999), PBA Battle at Little Creek (2001, 2002), Teen Masters Championships (2006, 2009, 2011, 2012), Women's Challenge (2006)
- Sponsored, hosted and promoted seven PBA50 National Tour stops (1992, 1993, 1994, 2014, 2015, 2016, and 2017) and five PBA National Tour stops (1997, 1998, 1999, 2001, 2002).
- Successfully sold bowling sponsorships to GEICO Insurance, Coca-Cola, GMAC, Chevrolet, American Airlines, Sandals Resorts, Continental Airlines, and Miller Beer.
- Generated record mainstream media coverage of a bowling event by staging the Teen Masters finals in Grand Central Terminal in New York City.
- Floored thousands of new bowlers through league promotions such as "Bowl Up A Storm" and "Bowl Your Way To Montego Bay."
- Delivered the first live, frame-by-frame internet scoring of a PBA event.
- Produced the first bowling telecasts in High Definition.
- Recipient of the 2011 John Davis Award for "outstanding contributions and extraordinary efforts on behalf of the advancement of the sport of bowling."
- Retained as a consultant by AMF Bowling (1994 - 1996), Brunswick (1997 - 2000), Dexter (1998 - 2000), and PBA (2004 - 2005)

Competitive Bowling Experience

- Colorado/Team USA State Amateur Champion (1990)
- Member of United States team that toured Germany and competed with Finland, Germany and Sweden (1980)
- Silver Medalist, 5-man team, World FIQ Championships, London, England (1975)
- NAIA Collegiate National Champion in Team (1972, 1975), Doubles, Singles and All-Events (1975)

International Experience

- Bowled competitively in Amsterdam, Berlin, Bournemouth, Bremerhaven, Copenhagen, Dublin, Frankfurt, Hamburg, Kiel, Kuala Lumpur, London, Paris, and Singapore.
- Relocated to Hong Kong in 1996 to start the Asian Bowling Tour.
- Worked extensively in Dubai prior to 9/11.
- Have traveled to bowling facilities in Abu Dhabi, Bangkok, Beijing, Brussels, Doha, Guangzhou, Hong Kong, Macau, Seoul, Shanghai, Singapore, and Taipei.