

THE STATE OF BOWLING 1950-2000

BY BOWLING PROFESSOR BOB DAUBNEY
1950-2000

PART I INTRODUCTION

At present, the game and the business of Bowling are in the intensive care unit. However, things were not always this way. In fact they were quite the opposite. To start, the years from 1950 to 1970 saw the development and deployment of the Automatic Pin Setters. Bowling grew at an unbelievable pace. Bowling Centers were going up left and right! Centers were being built with 12,16,24, and yes even 50 lanes. During the years from 1950 to 1954 I worked setting pins while attending LaSalle Military Academy in Troy, New York. In 1954 I had neither the resources nor the desire to go to college. So I decided to work at a local bowling center doing lane maintenance. A short time later, I was hired by AMF to travel the eastern part of the United States to build bowling lanes and to convert existing lanes from pin boys to automatics. In the Albany area I was considered an up and coming high average bowler. I mention some of my personal involvement not to brag or to be biographic, but to in some way give me the credibility to write this article.

In 1957, after working for AMF building about 1500 lanes throughout the east coast, work started to slow down. I saw a need for yearly resurfacing and maintenance on all those lanes which had been built. So I opened a business to sell bowling balls in the winter and to do resurfacing and repairs in the summer. The business continues to this day in its latest location, Latham, New York. I decided to give up resurfacing and repair in 1981. Instead of the lane maintenance business, I bought a 50 lane bowling center. After running it for nearly five years I decided to sell the bowling center in 1986. At this time the bowling business was at its best state in recent history! Shortly after, it started its long painful 14 year slide to its present weakened state.

To this day at 65 years old, I still bowl with an average in the 190's, in two leagues. I teach bowling classes every Sunday night with 10-18 students and operate my store six days a week. The store is still selling about \$200,000.00 in balls, bags and shoes. The store caters to the beginners and low average bowlers. -They often look for a way to progress in their bowling skills by asking for advice on technique as well as advice on the latest developments in equipment.

So now its the year 2000, the business and the sport of bowling find themselves in a terrible state, in almost every possible aspect. In the following pages you will learn, in my opinion, that there is plenty of blame to go around. The real unwritten problem is the declining revenues and the refusal of organizations and

industries to face the pure fact that we live in a changing world. There has been a reluctance to change with this changing world for the long range good of the sport and the business. In this article I will try to explain some of the short comings and problems, as I see them. I will also try to offer some solutions and advice. There certainly will be many other ideas and solutions that perhaps this article might bring to light by inspiring the people who read this narrative.

Part II The Decline Of The Sport & The ABC "ETAL"

In the 1960's and 70's the sport's problem started with the blocking of lanes to create higher scores. This would hopefully have attracted more bowlers and kept the existing ones happier. Wow, what a mistake by the proprietors. The ABC passed some new rules and hoped they would get the cooperation of the proprietors. The ABC held the proprietors responsible for maintaining their new rules and conditions. As a result of this situation the bowlers were the ones who were punished. The bowlers were denied awards for honor scores they achieved on conditions they had little or no control over. Throughout the 60's & 70's this got to be a frustrating situation for everyone involved, including the ABC, proprietors, and especially the bowlers. ABC Officials and "volunteers" took abuse from proprietors and bowlers alike. A few suits followed draining the assets of ABC and created bad feelings between the bowlers, the proprietors, and the ABC. This went on for years and believe me, everyone came out a loser. Nobody wins in showdowns. I can still remember when I realized such a cancer had developed and was eating away at our great game of bowling. In 1976 I presented my first proposal to Mr. Hurley, Executive Director of the ABC to reduce the resurfacing tolerance from 40 thousandths to 20 thousandths. This was rejected by the ABC Board, as were all my proposals up until my last proposal in 1994 in Reno, Nevada.

Ironically, I find it amazing that with all the thousands of articles written chastising the ABC, I cannot recall anyone placing any blame on the proprietors. Scores have gone out of sight! To this very day, I feel that blocking the lanes along with the very high performance balls are the primary reasons to blame for the soaring scores. I believe in 1990 the ABC had reached a point where they had enough of all that was going on with blocking by the proprietors. They gave in and gave up, knowing that they could not turn the tide of blocking the proprietors had started. So, in response, the "System of Bowling" was developed and passed about ten years ago. This basically legalized blocking and was designed so that just about all the high scores created by these lane conditions, were now acceptable. There were plenty of high scores out there now. The problem I personally have with System of Bowling is with high powered balls, updated lane machines, and technical advances in bowling balls the system should have been reviewed and adjusted automatically every two years to adjust to these technical advancements and keep scores in check.

Another factor to consider in the higher scores is the bowling pin. Bill Taylor wrote for years about the bowling pins. I believe he was correct. Bowling pins are moving 15% to 20% faster off the decks in the last 15 years or so. As a result, in 1994, I sent the ABC a proposal to lower the center of gravity of the bowling pin from 5 1/2 inches above the base to 5 1/4 inches above the base. However, they asked me to withdraw it because they were in the middle of a study concerning pinfall at that time. I agreed and finally I got the results of the study which implied that the pins of the 60's and 70's are falling the same as the pins of the 80's and 90's. They suggest attack angle and ball speed causes pins to fly and move faster off the decks. With all due respect I believe the ABC and their laboratory tests were incorrect or at the very least should have been deemed inconclusive. Current pins can tilt 11 degrees before falling. Lower the CG from 5 3/4" from the base to 5 1/4 and they will have to tilt 15 degrees before falling. In my days of bowling in the 50, 60's & 70's I never saw head pins fly off the kickbacks and cross the lane and take out a 10 pin, which had been left standing, the way they do now-a—days. Today, you have 12 year olds rolling 300's. Do you really believe they are throwing the ball faster, too?

Adjusting the construction of a bowling pin is something the ABC can do without worrying about compliance. I would never suggest you take the pocket away, but what can be done is to limit the carry, so scores will fall back into line. This will help change bowling from recreation back to a true sport again. Implementing a change in pins will take 2 to 3 years but in the long run scores will decrease. Increasing the gross weight could unfairly hurt women and juniors. Increased Gross Weight may not have an effect on today's scoring like an adjustment of the bowling pin's Center of Gravity would have. Remember, I had recommended the center of gravity be lowered 1/2 of an inch but the ABC rejected that idea.

The ABC seems to operate with a large Board of Directors and needs Committees for everything. They spend a lot of money on studies which have been expensive and very ineffectual at re-energizing bowling. One mistake I believe the ABC made, was in passing bowling balls that have materials that are similar to metal. The major difference is that these materials do not conduct electricity. Well there are 100,000 balls out there now and there is no taking them back. So there really is only one way to slow their effectiveness. That is to use more dressing on the lanes. To do this they will need the cooperation of the proprietors. At this time, such a proposal could pass and might even work since higher scores do not stop the decline of the ABC membership. The proprietors now know this all too well. The higher scores did not bring in any more business over all, and they still lost bowlers regardless of these high scores. Most of the bowlers that shoot the high scores do not practice, they do not spend money at the bar, nor do they spend money at the pro shop. So how much value can the high scores be? The ABC wasted 2 million dollars on their idea of having membership tiers. Then they followed that up with a request to increase dues on an already shrinking membership. This forced the membership to shrink even further. In most American

Corporations anyone making this error with the diminished assets that the ABC had left, would be history! The purely ceremonial presidents do very little and have little or no say on the rules. The paid executives run the organization whether they produce or fail. Maybe it is time that they are replaced with elected people. New people who know what to do and have the power to make the necessary changes.

So in closing (Part II) I'd like to suggest some new courses of action. I believe the ABC will be forced to downsize to stay within its budget. It must modify the "System Of Bowling" now. Those modifications should include adding more dressing to the lanes to lower the scores. The "System of Bowling" must be reviewed every year or two to keep the integrity of the game and the feel of its membership. It must be concerned about maintaining honest and fair conditions not just the administration of a bureaucracy. This bureaucracy has wasted money, done very little to pass beneficial rules, and has been lax on enforcing the existing rules. It will not be easy, but something must be done. Lastly, Jim Goodwin's recent remarks that the ABC is corrupt, is in my opinion incorrect. If he had said the ABC was administration, heavy, he would have been right on the money. They certainly can be considered guilty of procrastinating and wasting the little money they have left. I believe Jim could have gone a step further and wrote that they were negligent in passing the correct rules to preserve the integrity of bowling. This negligence allowed scores to get completely out of hand. These high scores also helped cause its loss in membership by further separating the skilled bowlers from the pack.

Part III will deal with the ABC's declining membership, the problems with the proprietors, and the problems with the PBA. Please read on.

PART III

THE STATE OF BOWLING ORGANIZATIONS "ABC & WIBC ETAL"

The meltdown continues for the bowling organizations. As of this writing Bowling Organizations are losing 200,000 league bowlers each year. At that rate there will no longer be an ABC at all in a decade or so. Mergers, consolidations, and new locations would have little or no effect on this deterioration of our governing organizations. Oddly enough however. Collegiate Bowling is doing well. Could this be a bright spot for the future of bowling. What can we learn from Collegiate bowling that might help all of bowling? Maybe, this is something we ought to look into!

Over the last 10 years scoring certainly got out of line with the antiquated "System of Bowling". Thousands of articles have been written about it. Last year there were 35,000 scores of 300. A man from Amarillo, Texas averaged 256.8 for 78 games. I could write a whole book on high scores, but as my friend, colleague,

and fellow bowling writer, Mr. Tom Kouros said and I quote "Scores are meaningless if realized at the expense of the games integrity". Unfortunately the out of line scoring is a problem that the organizations have been too slow to correct.

While high scores are a problem, I do not believe they are the only cause of the reduction in the size of the bowling organizations. Just the thought of mergers, changes in locations, and the raising of dues all seem so ridiculous. Hopefully, the organizations, will in time, see the value of placing more of an even dressing on the lane surface. Hopefully, they will become very careful about approving new bowling balls. Maybe they may even see the value of changing the center of gravity on bowling pins by that [^] inch I am so in favor of. I also believe the 16 inch ruler must be discarded by the testing labs. All of these things will help bring scoring back in line. Of course, this will take the cooperation of the manufacturers and the proprietors.

Now to get to the real tough problem. I believe organizations for the last 30 years have relied too much on the aging baby boomers. Not enough people 35 and younger are being attracted to the lanes. What happens to all those Collegiate bowlers after they graduate? Why can't we retain them? Organizations are raising dues and proprietors are raising prices on a game that young people are disenchanted about playing. A game which the Collegiate bowler seems to discard after he or she graduates.

In the 60's & 70's bowling had about 23% of the recreational dollar in the United States. Today it barely gets 5% of the recreational dollar spent. Over the last few years the U.S. economy has been booming, but bowling continues to decline. So what is the problem? Well there are a few, that unfortunately, organizations and proprietors have little control over. The proliferation of legalized gambling is now approaching a 1 trillion dollar a year business. VCR's are now located in over 90% of all homes. Computers and the Internet are occupying young peoples time and money. This my readers is competition. Today's young people are not joiners. They tend to get bored easily if there is not continued interest generated and continued action. If this downward movement is to be reversed and I can tell you that there are no guarantees that it can be, then we must take action. We must find a way to generate that interest.

I would like to make a few suggestions for some courses of action. First, any new rules the organization may pass must have the cooperation of the proprietors. High scores have not increased their business so by now they should be ready to cooperate. They must cooperate for a long term positive effect on our once great game. A positive effect that is so desperately needed right now!

Secondly, the organizations must consider broadening their market appeal to a huge number of people. They need, with the help of the proprietors, an open membership card. Then one segment could continue in leagues. The other segment

would be an Open Card Member who might pay \$10.00 per year. The Open Card Member could then use the computerized scoring machines to gain recognition and awards in open bowling. Last year 50 million people bowled once. Why didn't they come back? If the organizations could get just 5% of this market they would increase their membership by 2.5 million members and raise 25 million in just a few years. The cost for an Open Membership should be less than a regular league members cost! Then the proprietors would benefit by an increase in the Open Bowling Membership and the associated additional revenue generated. The bowling proprietors are an A trade organization. They, in my opinion, have no business becoming a rules and playing condition organization. Period! Together they can stem the damage right now. Dues must be frozen for the remaining league members and the organization must do everything possible to give reasons for collecting those dues. There has to be a value and a concern to set honest standards. There must be a return to a fair shot for everyone. Administrative changes and rules are meaningless to most bowlers. If the current organizations and their leaders are not interested in making changes now, not 2 or 3 years from now, then it must be time for the rank and file to consider removing these people. Yes, removing and replacing them with new people who will create a modern, up-to-date, fast moving organization.

Good luck everyone on the above, next I will attempt to write on the State of Bowling concerning the business, read on.

Part IV The Business

About 2 or 3 times a week I travel from my home to Albany to visit with my son. On the way I drive by a big 40,000 square foot building that housed a 50 lane bowling center, up until last June. There were 2,500 Bowlers bowling in that building when it closed its doors after 30 years of business. Many of the bowlers went to other partially filled centers, but several hundred just quit the game. So everyone lost when that Bowling Center closed.

In our area, the northeast, we lost 115 lanes last summer. We expect to lose 50 or 60 more this year (2000). What happened? Well, I think I can tell you from first hand experience. In 1985 I was the proprietor forced out of a rented building which housed 50 lanes because my rent was raised from \$5,000 per month to \$15,000 per month. This is also what happened to that 50 lane bowling center I pass on my way to visit my son. I can tell you this, people who own their own buildings with their mortgages paid can continue with 60% of their normal business, but if you are renting and paying more than 10% of your gross income for rent and taxes, it can be just a question of time until you face the day that you will have to close. Landlords who own these buildings can get \$6.00 or \$7.00 per square foot for warehouse space. Based on the current overall income of a bowling center, \$4.00 to \$5.00 is the top dollar that can be paid, just to break

even. When the, ABC and WIBC lose 200,000 bowlers so do the proprietors, the Pro Shops, and any businesses that are in some way involved in the bowling industry.

I am in my 40th year of selling bowling equipment and in the past five years my bowling sales have dropped from \$250,000 to \$-185,000 per year and I might add that the only way I managed to hang on to the sales I have, is to concentrate on beginners, and the low average bowling market. I buy discontinued and closeout Secondly, the organizations must consider broadening their market appeal to a huge number of people. They need, with the help of the proprietors, an open membership card. Then one segment could continue in leagues. The other segment would be an Open Card Member who might pay \$10.00 per year. The Open Card Member

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The Pro Shops in lanes will at most break even, but they can be of valuable service to the bowlers by providing good help and consistent hours. Proprietors could do no wrong in subsidizing pro shops in their centers. As I mentioned previously the thinking of proprietors was high scores, happy bowlers and lots of business. Well it has been going on for ten years now and the high average bowlers are a long way from being happy, and the business is still heading south. My suggestion is not go to extremes either way. We do not need bumper bowling but what we do need is a consistent demanding shot that allows bowlers to score well when they bowl well. A shot that is consistent for everyone on any given day. A bowler should be able to bowl in his or her center on any day of the week and find basically the same condition. Extreme conditions drive bowlers crazy and drive them away.

In bowling, brackets are okay for the tournament bowler, but I do not like to see them in leagues. It is a form of gambling that takes advantage of the lower average bowler. It increases the cost of bowling for the lower average bowlers to a point where they either can no longer afford to bowl or they loose interest due to the unfairness of the system. So the low average bowlers quit. Brackets, league dues, and jackpots can cost a bowler \$50.00 to \$75.00 per night. This is too high a cost for the majority of the bowlers. This situation also tends to take away from the match play and the real competition between the bowlers. A competition which use to be a more friendly competition. Now the jackpots are more important than the human element of the game.

Rock & Bowl is a gimmick, it is recreational, and it has nothing to do with the sport of bowling. When you consider the improvements made in the bowling center to create the disco atmosphere, the D J, and the inconvenience to the regular bowlers; I wonder just how much it is all worth. If you could sign those kids up to short league or get some repeat business from them, then it would be worth it. One evening, I was at my center, where I bowl and teach weekly classes, and I was able to observe a Rock & Bowl session. I noticed the Rock & Bowl bowlers walking down the lane and dragging back the oil all over the approaches. To be fair, this was not all their fault since the bowling center had turned down the lighting. This is just one of the undesirable things that I noticed. Now if those approaches are not cleaned after each Rock & Bowl session you are going to have bad approaches for your regular bowlers. I would suggest keeping the foul line light on during Rock & Bowl to try to keep the bowlers off the lane surface.

In 1985, I charged \$1.65 for league bowling. Nowadays, most centers charge \$3.00 per game. I believe this is a fair price. The problem that I see is that most centers are doing a lot fewer games. Therefore, the bowling centers are chasing less people for more dollars. More than likely, you need that \$3.00 per game to help make ends meet. However, I believe you also need lots of special promotions and discounts for your regular bowlers. I believe you should never charge leagues more than what you charge open bowlers. The reason being, is that you may only see most open bowlers just once a year. They are not going to generate a major portion of the revenue! The league bowlers will do that!

AMF and Brunswick are the biggest proprietors in the nation and they are certainly in trouble in their businesses as of this writing. As a shareholder in excess of 20,000 shares, I am very aware that AMF's Stock is trading under \$1.00. It appears to me that AMF is flowing in a sea of red ink. In 1999 on sales of some 775 million they lost \$2.40 per share with 80 million shares outstanding. I'm surprised they haven't filed for bankruptcy. The giant investment firm of Goldman and Sacks currently owns 53% of their stock. AMF did manage to show a profit of some 35 million in there bowling center division. As a former shareholder, I have noticed that their biggest problem is the interest expense they incurred in the expansion program which has been recently completed. That expansion program cost almost 1/2 billion dollars. Additionally, there was the cost to re-equip all those centers purchased a few years ago in that expansion.

Another problem is the depreciation they take. This is a huge part of their loss. They claim to have 489 million dollars of equity for their shareholders, but I personally disagree because they have an item in their assets called Good Will Net. I believe this Good Will Net is a fluff figure. This fluff figure is stated at 775 million. So, without this soft asset, AMF would be in a negative position of some 50 million dollars. If they were going to make a positive move they need to do more than focus, they have to shed some debt and lower their interest expense.

The Brunswick Corporation is now restructuring so I am sure they must be having their problems also. The only two reasons they are better off than their peer (AMF) is the fact that they are more diversified and that they do not have the burden of debt that AMF has. I am sure that both AMF and Brunswick would suffer more in their consumer business if they did not own several hundred bowling centers. These bowling centers offer a built in captive market for their consumer products and their capital equipment. As I mentioned earlier, Brunswick is currently restructuring and as a result, their stock is trading at a much lower value. It is currently trading at about \$18.00. This is down significantly from the \$38.00 a share it had been trading at only 2 years ago.

As bad as things are in the bowling business, I believe the individual proprietor still has a big advantage over the large bowling center chains. It seems to me that chains hire people that have no vested interest in their bowling center. They just work at their bowling center. They do not have the incentive to do as good a job as the individual proprietor would do. Even though the chains often have an edge in having lower expenses, if they do not have knowledgeable personable caring employees, they will be in for a-very rough time.

Charge all you can reasonably get, but be sure to give the service and a good product. The ABC deciding to raise their dues, at this time, is sheer suicide. You just do not increase prices in a soft and free falling market. I believe a smart move for proprietors would be to give the bowlers some free coupon games to offset the dues increase. At this point you must work harder to keep what you've got, not lose more by charging more and giving less. People young and older seem to get bored easily these days. So, in response, an effort must be made to create many more short term leagues. Team bowling with 3 or 4 at the most on a team must be promoted.

Birthday parties are great and so are bowling ball leagues, just keep them short and affordable for all classes of bowlers. Use them to start developing a database for future use and a future customer base. Keep track of the people who come into the center and mail them information on leagues and special promotions. We must do something to reach out and bring in new customers and entice them to give us repeat business. There is a lot of competition for the entertainment dollar out there and we have to do something proactive to compete for it.

I believe that every bowling center should have a teacher who walks among the open bowlers. Someone who would help them free of charge. That same person should conduct classes at convenient times and charge prices that are affordable for everyone. This is an opportunity to show bowlers you care. The Bowling Center of the future will have to have a variety of interests and entertainment to attract customers of many tastes, interests, and walks of life. I can picture a center of the future having league play tournaments, and open play every single day. In many cases there would be no season, just bowling every week of the year. Customers will be able to have breakfast, lunch or dinner. There would be

a disco and a regular bar. There would be a child care center with attendants night and day. I see a billiard room with 12 or 20 tables. There would be games and video rooms. The Pro Shop will have bowling equipment, billiards, apparel, gifts and awards. A health club with an exercise area could attract still another type, of customer. Bowling would only be a part of the entertainment, so 32 to 40 lanes should be a fine size for most areas. A tournament area for regular and PBA events with permanent seating for 1500 spectators. A center like this could gross 40 to 50 thousand dollars a lane per year with a pretax profit of 15% to 20%. I also see an oil less bowling lane where accuracy, ball speed, an execution would be a true measure of a bowlers ability. Customers should be able to prepay by the hour and be able to place any spare combination they want to improve their spare shooting or just do regular bowling. The Bowling Center of the future could cause the return of the sport from occasional recreation to a true sport again. A rejuvenated sport, with enough popularity, could even become an Olympic Sport. There could, should, and would need to be an International standard of conditions if popularity caused bowling to become an Olympic Sport. This would truly be a great thing for Bowling. With the Olympics starting to expand its venue, as it has in recent history, who knows what could happen if enough people wanted to see bowling added to the Olympics.

Bowling must embrace technology and make it work for us like many other industries have done. The current generation of teenagers are as comfortable with a computer and the internet as we were with a calculator. I could see a website where there could be almost real time information on Bowling Tournaments and video clips of highlights from that tournament. This would provide information with out the high cost of television time. The website could be provided and maintained by the PBA and WPBA. It could provide video clips of tips from all the current and past(recent past of course) champs. Just imagine how great it would be if you could just hop on the internet and click and get an interview or tip from a professional bowler. It could also provide basic instructions, equipment guides, and future tournament schedules that can be accessed 24 hours a day.

In wrapping up this section I would like to remind the Bowling Proprietors that they are a trade organization. They should embrace each member and not just leave the care of that member to the ABC or WIBC. The ABC and WIBC are not currently doing enough to energize bowling and stop the steady decline of the business. The responsibility now lies on the individual proprietors as well.

This concludes my writing on the business, read on for my views and opinions on the PBA the last part of the State of Bowling.

Part V The PBA

This is the last part of my article. In 1956 I had a job working as a lane man at a 16 lane center in Albany, New York. I worked for a then local top bowler by the name of Morris Cramer. I personally assisted Mr. Cramer and the Albany Bowling Committee. This was stage one of the very first PBA style bowling tournament at the Shades Bowling Academy in 1957. Top bowlers were invited to come and bowl from all over the country for a First Place Prize of \$3,000. The following year the PBA was formed, but I was too young to join so I had to wait until 1958. During the same year, 1958, I started my bowling business. The PBA grew along with bowling for almost 25 years. The Saturday show on ABC was a must for all bowlers and its consistent showing time helped the ratings soar. While being very involved in my business, I still managed to bowl in two tournaments each year and stayed a member of the PBA until 1975. In 1975, I decided to resign after repeated requests to the PBA for a published statement were refused. As a shareholder I felt very strongly that I was entitled to a published statement. For a long time the leadership of the PBA was representing the top bowlers, which to me was a clear conflict of interest. I was also aware that ABC TV was paying the PBA some \$200,000 per show for 17 shows in the 90's. The 3.4 million the PBA received went into the general operating fund. I felt this was not in the best interest of the bowlers especially when there was not a clear public statement of how the money was being used. I felt that 50% of that money, say \$100,000 per show, could have been used to increase the prize money and the prize list. This most certainly would have helped raise the shows ratings even further. When ABC TV cut the money to \$50,000 per show in 1997 it started a downward trend for the PBA. CBS came along and picked up the pieces for 1999 but the PBA signed a deal that cost them millions. So the shows current position is at best confused, inconsistent, and very poorly watched. The ESPN version is on in the fall and winter. The Fox Network version, as if things were not bad enough, is on in May June and July. This is hardly the regular bowling season and not a good time of year due to all the other summer activities. Still, it is an attempt to reach out to entice new and existing bowlers. However, it is an attempt that could use some fine tuning.

Apparently in a near state of bankruptcy the PBA sold out to former Microsoft Vice President Chris Peters and his associates in the year of 2000. First, it appears that these people have the money to make the PBA solid again. It also appears that their expertise will allow them to move the PBA worldwide through the Internet. It is absolutely necessary for the PBA to open their membership to more bowlers as juniors or associate members. This will increase the amount of bowlers bowling in the tournaments and thus increase the prize list. I also believe a three man bowling team concept should be considered. Furthermore, I believe that the arena setting is an absolute must. Regular bowling centers should not be used, there is just too limited spectator space in a regular center. With this in mind I believe four arenas should be built, one north, one

east, one south, and one west that could accommodate a qualifying area of 40 lanes and an adjacent arena with at least six lanes and permanent seating for at least 2,000 spectators. These arenas could even be attached to existing bowling centers to expedite the process. The tour could travel to these locations once or twice a year until four more new centers could be built. These centers could be regular commercially operated centers when the PBA Tour was not in town, but would be the PBA's exclusively during the tour stops.

Larger fields, more prize money and maybe a three man competition concept could make the PBA acceptable once again to the networks where it has the best chance to return to the level it truly deserves. With the equipment available to dress lanes much more must be done to equalize conditions for both right and left handers. Money opens lots of doors but it will take a show that is acceptable to the networks that will return bowling to its popularity of the 70's & 80's. I certainly hope some of the above may be of some help to the PBA as we move forward into the 21st century.

Summary

I must apologize for the length of this article but I could not find a way to write on a subject that lasted for 50 years without using the length necessary to outline history, state problems and offer a few suggestions that may be of some help.

In closing I urge the ABC & WIBC to change their way of operating. They must down size and deliver a valuable product to their members. The Board and Committee process is not working. They must stop wasting money and get a wall built between them and the industry, so they can function independently, efficiently, and effectively. The change can be gradual but it must come. New rules are needed now. Proprietors must modernize their centers. They must diversify their centers to more than just bowling. Their staff must be polite, courteous, and helpful to every customer that walks through their doors.

This ends my article. I certainly hope it is enlightening and helpful to everyone who truly loves bowling. If you have any comments or would like copies please call, e-mail, or write me. I am also available for lectures and appearances.

Thank you so much for your time and attention.

Sincerely Your,

Professor Bob Daubney