



BOWL • • PINION

by Jim Goodwin

The editorial opinions expressed here are offered to provoke thought on important and sometimes controversial or provocative issues.

Agree or disagree, we'd like to hear from you:

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Name Dropping

MARK

October 31st was my 56th birthday. CJ and I were in Boardman, Ohio, so we just had a quiet dinner with friends – not the usual Halloween noisefest we normally enjoy with our three children and six grandchildren; seeing their costumes and marveling at their incredible energy and eagerness to go trick-or-treating.

Oh...Did I mention that the friends we shared that evening with were Mark and Denise Roth? That's right- THE Mark Roth- one of the greatest bowlers of all time. The one who single-handedly changed the sport. The first true power player. The one who now owns 37 national professional titles after his victory in the first Generations Tour event in Bay City, Michigan October 6.

We didn't talk a lot about bowling that evening, and there were no moments of awkward silence. We just chatted like normal people about our lives, our kids, our likes and dislikes. Mark grew up in the Big Apple- as a teenager he often carted a bowling ball on the city bus to get to his league or match. Today, he enjoys building models of those NYC buses where he spent some of his youth.

Mark's wife Denise is one of the nicest people we've ever met. She is sincere, considerate, smart, and totally dedicated to helping her husband have a career as a bowler. If anyone was ever born to do something, Mark was born to bowl. The reason it's so important for our industry to have a viable senior tour is so we don't lose icons like Mark Roth from our sport.

During the GBT pro-ams, I took photos of the amateurs with their favorite pros. Without question, the most requested player for these shots was Roth. People were drawn to him. They wanted to get his auto-

graph, or they just wanted to shake his hand. Roth is not really comfortable being treated like royalty, but he understands it comes with his status, and he is immensely proud to be a bowler.

The fact that fans are so fascinated with Mark and his peers tells me that people care about the history of bowling. They remember those Saturday afternoons watching their heroes on TV, and they truly enjoy spending a few moments watching them demonstrate their considerable skills in senior events.

Just because they like the senior stars doesn't mean they don't also enjoy watching the young players on today's tour. I think most of us are fascinated by the young titans we see on the PBA tour. But it's natural to think the players from your own era are the best. That is true in all sports. We also tend to like musicians and entertainers who remind us of simpler times. It's a great way to mentally 'slow down' the world that has become so complex.

JOHNNY

Another legend of the game we truly enjoyed getting to know better during the first eight weeks of the GBT was Johnny Petraglia. Johnny is a consummate gentleman who has a deep appreciation for the history of bowling, and he is a big chapter of that history. A member of the Brunswick pro staff for more than 30 years, Johnny is as important to this industry as Dick Weber was when he represented AMF for almost a half century.

People like Weber and Petraglia don't come along every day, and it will be a shame if Johnny doesn't have an opportunity to showcase his bowling and ambassador skills for as long as possible. Like Weber, Johnny gets a paycheck from a big company, but 90% of what he gives bowling is seldom noticed.

Johnny, a decorated Viet Nam

war vet, is the official spokesman for bowling's biggest charity, Bowlers to Veterans Link. During the GBT event in New Jersey. He worked hard to raise over \$2000 for BVL. That may not sound like much, but when that money reaches a veteran in a VA hospital and makes his or her life a little more comfortable, they will have Johnny and others he enlisted in this extremely worthy cause to thank.

DAVID

If you followed the GBT results, you saw that David Ozio had an incredible eight weeks. He won two titles, \$56,000 in prize money, and his worst finish in eight events was 6th. In Jackson, Michigan where he had that 6th place finish, those of us who were paying attention found out why "Wizard" is such a great player.

After leading his division in the first two events only to be defeated in the finals, Ozio was again on top in the Jackson event entering the last round. Starting the final round, his opponents rolled games of 280, 280, 260 against him. Understandably, he lost his focus, and by the time the 8-game round was over, he had dropped from the lead to 6th, missing the top four finals for the first time in three weeks.

Here's the part most people didn't notice that makes Ozio and others like him great champions. Only two hours after suffering the devastation of falling out of the finals, David was back on the lanes practicing for the next week. Some might have been sulking in a hotel room- not Ozio, and he won his first title the following week. Roth had a similar thing happen the final week. After missing the finals in the last game, he took a few minutes to get over it, then came into the tournament office to say goodbye and thank everyone for their hard work during the tour.

It's called class and character, and great champions like Roth, Petraglia, and Ozio have an abun-

dance of it.

Without any doubt, the most rewarding aspect of working on a bowling tour is getting to know the players on a personal level, and one of the biggest challenges as a writer is to help the fans learn more about them. We all have favorites, and most of the time it's because we find something about them we admire.

Good judgement is also important, which is why it's so difficult for a rookie writer or one who doesn't know much or care much about the sport to cover it. For example, I interviewed the top GBT players after every round, and did a few feature interviews when time allowed. Occasionally, some said things out of frustration or things that just didn't make much sense.

Without an understanding of the sport, a rookie might have put some of those odd comments in print. I wish the bowling writers organizations would do more to educate sports writers and editors about bowling.

We also learned recently when the PBA announced its 2007 Senior Tour Schedule, that they have added several new senior events. Whether or not that is a result of the GBT competition, it's great for the senior players, and I hope all of them will continue to compete on both tours for many years.

We have many more fond memories of our two months with some of the world's best bowlers, and we'll share more later. During the tour, I also developed a deep respect for the journeymen players. They didn't get much attention, but they hung in there every week and they had great moments. Those who learn how to prolong those moments will someday find themselves in the spotlight. Maybe I will drop their names someday.