

15 and Counting

Can you believe it's been 15 years since we started this little 'ol bowling paper?!

Our first issue back in 1991 featured Dana Miller-Mackie and Norm Duke. Dana is now retired from the tour (and the tour retired shortly after she did) and she helps her husband Steve Mackie run their bowling center in New Mexico. Mr. Duke is still going strong as one of the best players in the world. Both achieved Hall of Fame status, as we predicted they would in that first issue.

It's been a very busy month here in the Stars & Strikes office, and it looks like it's going to stay busy for awhile. Now, if we can just figure out how to turn that

activity into income, we'll be OK.

LCT still seeking sponsorship

After a wonderful holiday season with our friends and family, we spent the few days of the year finishing a sponsorship proposal for our Ladies Classic Tour. We can't say much about it right now, but we're hopeful something good will happen

that will allow us to take the LCT to the next level. We worked very hard on the plan, and we're confident we can get women's bowling going in the right direction if sponsorship can be secured.

PWBA status

Speaking of women's bowling, I had the chance to talk with Roseann Kuhn and Roger Dalkin of USBC during the Team USA National Amateur Championship tournament in Dallas recently, (see results this issue) and they had some interesting things to say about the possibility of USBC starting a new PWBA.

Since Kuhn first announced the acquisition of PWBA last June during Bowl Expo, top women bowlers and PWBA fans everywhere have been anticipating an announcement about a new tour. In June, Kuhn and Jan Schmidt promised to spend the next several weeks writing a business plan, and they expressed optimism they would be able to start a new tour early in 2005. They even said they thought it might be possible to have a couple of events in late 2004.

In August, they formed a new task force, which included several WIBC (USBC) officials, Steve Miller of PBA, Chip Zielke, and former touring pros Cathy Dorin-Lizzi and Kim Adler. They had a meeting in August, and sent out a press release in November reporting that they were still working on the business plan.

Kuhn told me during the NAC event that Jan Schmidt had spent three days at PBA headquarters in Seattle, and that the PBA had been very helpful in providing ideas and support for the project, but not monetary support.

To put the rumor that the PBA might start a women's tour to rest, I asked her

if PBA had any such intentions. Her reply was, "If they were, they would have already done it." PBA Tournament Director Kirk Von Krueger also told me he believes the PBA has no intention of starting a women's tour.

Obviously, they have been very busy getting USBC underway, so that has delayed the PWBA project. They tell me the plan now is to have a proposal together before the ABC and WIBC conventions in March and April.

I asked Roger Dalkin, who is the new CEO of USBC, what the odds were that USBC would start a new PWBA Tour and he said "50/50". I also asked him if it was likely or unlikely anything would happen before the end of this year, and he said "unlikely", so don't look for a new women's televised tour until at least 2006. I also spoke with Cathy Dorin-Lizzi during the Dallas PBA event, and she said there has been no meetings of the new task force since their initial meeting in August.

Team USA 2005 determined in Dallas

Check out the new Team USA members that emerged from the USA Bowling National Amateur Championship tournament in Dallas. The two winners earning the title of National Amateur Champion are Lynda Barnes and Rhino Page. Barnes wins the crown for the second time and makes a record eighth appearance on Team USA. Page finished third last year and returns to the team for the second time.

Lynda, of course, is married to PBA star Chris Barnes, and they now live in Flower Mound, Texas near Dallas with their 2 1/2 year old twins Troy and Ryan. Lynda liked the convenience of having the NAC close to home, but said she didn't get much sleep during the event because she had to care for the boys when she wasn't bowling.

I was very impressed with the new attitude of 21-year-old Rhino. By his own admission, he has had some temper issues in the past, but he kept it in-check in the NAC and came out on top. After completing school at the University of Kansas next year, he plans to try the PBA tour, and after that, he wants to be a math teacher.

The top five women and top five men automatically made Team USA 2005 with their performance in the NAC. Three more players on each side were selected from the matchplay finalists to complete the team roster.

The selection committee is a very powerful group! Not only do they have the duty and privilege to pick almost 40% of the team, they determine which direction several bowlers lives will go in 2005, both those they picked, and a few who did not get chosen.

I found the committee to be very diligent and professional in performing their extremely important task. Five top USA Bowling coaches made up the committee, led by Team USA Head Coach Jeri

Edwards. The others were Ken Yokobowsky, Rod Ross, Susie Minshe and Kendra Gaines. Kendra was at her best when the PWBA tour folded, so she was very disappointed. She told me she now operates two pro shops and does a lot of coaching in Florida.

This distinguished group worked hard to make sure their job was done with integrity. They made notes, they had meetings, they never left the lanes during the matchplay; and they had a very tough job. The depth of talent in this event is better than ever. I'm sure everyone wasn't happy with their selections, especially those who could have been but were not chosen, but no one should question their integrity and their serious and diligent approach to their duty.

PBA back to earth in Dallas after space voyage in El Paso

Finally, I got a chance to spend a week with the PBA Tour when they came to Dallas January 17-23. The tour continues to evolve from the old days, and this was my first time to see the exempt 64 version.

In Dallas, the Scorpion oil pattern was used, and the average to make the cut fell from 234 in El Paso, where the Cheetah Pattern was used, to 204 in Dallas! A huge 30-pin per game difference!

I was looking forward to watching the all matchplay format, but they changed it after the first half of the tour to go with a 14-game qualifying round before cutting to the top 32. It was better for the fans and the players, but since Carolyn Dorin-Ballard got the commissioners exemption for the Dallas event, I wish it had been the old format so she could have bowled in matchplay.

Carolyn finished 41st to miss the cut, but she gave it her best, and it would have been interesting to see how she would have done in matchplay. She is a very good matchplay bowler.

During the Dallas event, I had several conversations with PBA tournament director Kirk Von Krueger. I met Kirk years ago when he was living in Corpus Christi and we both bowled in several PBA regional events.

A former career Naval officer, Kirk is now the second most tenured PBA tour director behind the late great Harry "Goose" Golden. He is knowledgeable, fair and consistent in his approach. Kirk started with the tour in 1996 as asst. TD and became Tournament Director in 1997.

With all the changes of the PBA, the new management has been wise to keep good people like Kirk, Dave Schroeder and Bobby Dinkins on board, and it's nice to see those guys and others enjoying the rewards and satisfaction that comes with building a better tour.

So, were off in our 15th year, and with the USBC getting started, the PBA fine-tuning its product, and the PWBA nearing a decision (hopefully) it's going to be another very interesting year in the world of bowling.

