



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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Send In The Clowns

Is anyone watching the PBA Skills Challenge? Isn't it remarkable what the pros can do with a bowling ball? Or, are you one of those who would like to tell the PBA *what to do* with that ball, and the Skills Challenge?

I know there are a lot of people who are amazed by the odd talents of some of the world's greatest bowlers, and I admit that some of the antics are very entertaining; and they give the pros an opportunity to show some of their personality without the pressure of winning.

But . . . when it reaches the point of risking serious injury or damage to the lane or equipment, it's gone too far. Norm Duke throwing a ball from a towel or tossing two balls simultaneously to make the 7-10 split is entertaining. Mike Machuga belly flopping on the lane and diving under a chair is just flat stupid, and dangerous. Tossing balls over the tops of chairs resulting in almost certain damage to the lane surface also falls into the outrageous category.

Is this 'dumb and dumber' mentality just a generational thing, or does it appeal to a wide audience? I know a lot of people my age or older that actually like it. They also liked bowling movies such as 'Kingpin'. Maybe I just need

to lighten up. Bowling is fun, right!?

Without question, the 'Machuga Flop' performed by Mike Machuga, at the USBC Masters and after winning his first title in Omaha, generated

at least one serious injury, and seriously lofting balls on wood lanes, because it always caused serious damage. Odds are it still does; and dents in synthetic lanes are extremely expensive to repair.

Perhaps the worst aspect of

lane or send a negative message to kids, and the PBA has put a stop to the 'Machuga Flop'. According to P.R. Director Mitch Germann, "The PBA does not condone Mike Machuga's action, and the league has deemed it improper for a tournament setting. He will be fined an undisclosed amount for conduct unbecoming a professional."

I wonder if that would have happened if Steve Miller were still around? Miller may have applauded the loudest and done his best to get some footage on Sports Center. If I recall, he was a huge fan of Pete Weber's infamous 'Crotch Chop'. Only Weber himself stopped it when his dad suggested that it might have a negative impact with kids.

I don't envy the PBA – their challenge is to try to get their professional



"Bowling fans, here come the clowns for our next skilled challenges."

a lot of talk, and a lot of gasps and laughter, but have you ever seen any professional athlete deliberately risk serious injury for a few laughs? We don't see too many active pro athletes on 'Fear Factor'.

And what genius came up with the idea to throw bowling balls over the tops of chairs? These days, most lane surfaces are synthetic and may withstand such hard impact, but we used to throw people out of our center for deliber-

these ill-advised clown shows is the message they send to kids. Young people are easily impressed by off-the-wall behavior, and they see plenty of it in Hollywood movies, video games, and TV wrestling. Do we want bowling to fall into that category?

Apparently, both PBA and BPAA leaders have noticed that things are getting a little out of hand. A few proprietors have voiced their objection to anything that may damage the

athletes noticed while performing a relatively tame sport. In this era where the younger generation seems to worship wild and outrageous behavior and performances, it's extremely difficult for bowling to compete. If things like the 'Machuga Flop' are the only way to get noticed, then I think they better find some ways to cut expenses, because if bowling becomes 'wrestlemania', all credibility is lost.

XXX

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