



# 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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## USBC Convention Officially Open New Era, New Philosophy

I spent three days of April attending the first United States Bowling Congress convention in Orlando, and although there were a few awkward moments, it seemed fairly 'normal', or at least the 'new normal'. It was a blend of the old ABC and WIBC get-togethers, and I think most who attended probably enjoyed their stay.

Like any new organization, especially one that evolved from more than 100 years of history, it's going to take a few years to find a focus, and since I was a strong proponent of the merger, I think we should be very patient in our expectations of the new group.

Anyone who expects USBC to quickly solve any of the problems that challenged ABC and WIBC is simply not being realistic. At this early stage, we should just be grateful that USBC leaders finally had the courage to change the course of bowling's membership groups, and applaud their efforts.

Was the first USBC convention a success? I think it was, and I hope most will measure that success in terms of quality and not quantity of members in attendance. Only a few months ago, USBC optimistically projected

4000-5000 members and delegates would attend, but they only got a little over 1600, about 1300 of them voting delegates.

I can understand their hopes that more would come, if for no other reason to be a part of history; but apparently, most opted to stay home and take a 'wait and see' approach. Although this was the first time delegates and non-delegate members could attend the annual meeting, very few came. According to USBC officials, over 2500 pre-registered. Does that mean almost 1000 changed their minds in the days leading up to

the meeting? Maybe when they learned they could follow the meeting live on their computers, they chose to do that rather than spend the money to travel.

I only attended the first day of the annual meeting, and I watched the second day on my computer at home. If you watched both days of the meeting on your computer, the only thing you missed was keynote speaker Greg Gumbel's opening remarks. He spent about a half hour sharing silly quotes from athletes and another 20 minutes talking about the inspirational stories of athletes in the Olympics.

I enjoyed Gumbel even though I've heard some of his shtick before, like the Yogi Berra lines – "What time is it, Yogi? You mean now?", and other brilliant athlete pronouncements. I think most of the men probably liked his speech. I was sitting close to USBC Hall of Famer Les Zikes, and he laughed a lot.

I couldn't help but wonder what the women thought. They probably liked the inspirational stuff, but some may not have known of the athletes Gumbel quoted, and even cared who they were. Some of them may have thought Gumbel was selected by the good 'ol boy club. Maybe next time, they'll get Oprah, and the men can nod off.

The BVL presentation was terrific, and I congratulate Roger and company for showing such strong support for the troops. Bringing in Marine Sergeant David Alexander was a nice touch. Dalkin even got teary eyed for a moment, and when the video showed a photo of a little girl holding a sign that said 'My Daddy, My Hero', we all got a lump in our throat.

The Susan G Komen presentation was also good – I didn't see it live this time, but CJ and I did witness the twirling pink lightsticks in Tulsa at the last WIBC convention. This year we watched on our computer. I noticed two things about the

Komen presentation. One was that the donation went down significantly from last year, and that's a shame. We're hoping it was only because everyone was so busy with the merger and it will increase next year.

The other thing we noticed was the presentation was just too long. Maybe they were trying to balance the Gumbel thing for the women. The good news is USBC will continue to support this worthy charity. We were proud to make a nice donation this year.

The Hall of Fame induction was much different than the former ABC ceremonies. Because it took place in an auditorium setting, it was more similar to the former WIBC style, which I always thought was better. I never cared for ABC's ceremony 'on the lanes'. What was the purpose of having 40 lanes of bowlers sit and wait for their squad to start, which was always late, sometimes very late because of the length of the speeches.

Of the five inductees, I thought our friend Fran Deken gave the best answer to the "how does it feel" question. She simply said, "Pretty damn good!" USBC's 'red carpet treatment and limo rides for the new inductees was very cool.

Both Deken and PWBA owner John Sommer used their hall of fame bully pulpit to encourage USBC to revive the women's pro tour, and there was nothing wrong with that. They are both passionate about women's and youth bowling, and it was primarily their involvement in LPBT and PWBA that elevated them to hall of fame honors.

The other inductees, Indiana brothers Rick and Ron Pollard, and Cincinnati's Nancy Fehr, were humble in their acceptance speeches. They Pollards have outstanding records in the ABC tournament, and Fehr also stands out in the WIBC and other amateur events. She joins her husband Steve in the hall.

I still think it's a shame they

didn't put anyone from the pro ranks in the first USBC class. It would have been nice to see Del Ballard and Shirley Levens walking down that aisle with the others.

Both Roger Dalkin and Mike Carroll did a nice job with their reports at the annual meeting. Carroll started by quoting author Jack Dixon "If you focus on results you will never change; if you focus on change, you will get results."

Carroll pointed out that even with the dues increase, USBC still shows a budget deficit, with income of \$47 million and expenses of \$53 million. He also told the delegates that the books cannot be balanced by continuing to increase dues, which was nice to hear, and he strongly emphasized the need to work closer with bowling center owners and their staffs.

Roger also sounded pro-business, and echoed Carroll's call for more involvement with the proprietors, calling them the "key part of the service pipeline." He pointed out that USBC must be relevant to bowling centers business to get their support, and that stopping the drop in membership will be a joint effort between USBC, proprietors and volunteers. A large part of Dalkin's presentation compared old philosophy of ABC/WIBC and new philosophy of USBC.

Among the more interesting changes of thinking was that maybe rules only need to be reviewed every 2-4 years instead of annually, and that simple recognition may be more important than the tangible awards that have been given to bowlers in the past.

One thing is certain – this is not your father's NGB. This governing body seems determined to move bowling forward as a business and a sport, and they deserve our support in those efforts.