



# 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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## It's A Start!

Is the new Generations Bowling Tour drawing hundreds of senior bowlers and packing the centers with pro-am bowlers? Not exactly, but the good news is that the tour is underway and there is much good news to report.

As this is being written, we are in Toledo, Ohio for the first 'major' of the new tour at Southwyck Lanes. The field here is 97 players – among them some of the best of all time – Mark Roth, Johnny Petraglia, Gary Dickinson, David Ozio, Roy Buckley and many, many more.

Thus far, in only four events, 180 different players have participated, and the event entry numbers are growing steadily – 72 in Bay City, 75 in Detroit, 85 in Jackson, and 97 here in Toledo. As expected, the greatest players are doing very well. Mark Roth won the first event. A great local bowler, Dave Patchen, came out on top in Detroit, and top amateur Vinnie Atria, known for his megabuck prowess, won in Jackson to become the first 'Classic' division player (60+) to win.

The win for Roth was very emotional. No one has worked harder to get ready for the Generations Bowling Tour than the great Roth. He has been working out, getting in shape, practicing daily, and he is

thrilled to be back in action; and the GBT is thrilled to have him and many more stars in the event. Fans love them because these are the best known bowlers in the world.

Pro-am entries were a little disappointing in the first two events, but by the third week, there was a dramatic difference. Thanks to the promotional efforts of Mel Wolf, the Jackson pro-am drew over 400 participants. This week in Toledo, Sherri Gratop and her staff put more than 250 on the floor.

So, as mentioned earlier, we're not hitting homers every week, but there is no question this is a real tour. When it rolls into a center with our truck, trailers, rolling pro shop, inflatable buildings, and all of the other trappings – bleachers, merchandise booth, autograph stage, fans and the media know something is happening.

Media coverage has been very good. The first week in Bay City, GBT was on the front page of the sports every day with color photos. Twice, we made the front page of the paper in section one. Two TV stations ran features. To show his support of the event and to witness history, Bowlers Journal Editor Jim Dressel came to Bay City. He wasn't disappointed when Mark Roth won in a dramatic finish.

In Detroit, our friends

from the media, legendary writer Matt Fiorito from the Detroit Free Press and Darrin Hill from the Detroit News gave us good coverage.

In Jackson, the coverage was similar to Bay City. Small town media is great for bowling, and in Toledo, we are being covered by several TV stations, and the ABC affiliate, Channel 13, will air our stepladder finals live with legendary bowler and announcer Nelson 'Bo' Burton making the calls.

To summarize, the GBT is a work in progress, and we're proud of what we have accomplished thus far for one very important reason – it's good for the sport. Steve Sanders deserves a big thank you from our industry and bowlers everywhere for having the courage to launch this new senior tour. It's a multi million dollar investment for Steve.

Our hope is that fans everywhere, and the senior bowlers will start coming to the events and supporting the tour with bigger numbers, and if they do, all of bowling will benefit. We also need industry support, we need bowlers support, and we're working as hard as we can to earn it.

Did you watch the USBC Women's Challenge? Let's hope Gary Beck and Tom Clark can take the show to attract a few sponsors for future

women's events. Will it lead to a new women's tour? I don't see how. There are simply not enough great women bowlers who are willing to travel on a tour unless the money is really big.

To be honest, I enjoyed the Teen Masters more than the Women's Challenge. The TM was real bowling, with four lanes instead of one, with tough qualifying rounds to make the finals. The teens even bowled with long oil on one lane and short oil on the other. It was great.

The Women's Challenge was interesting, but more of an exhibition, and I really missed seeing players like Wendy Macpherson, Kim Adler, Marianne DiRupo and others. Maybe next time.

In the "What's Up With That?" department, does anyone besides me think it's ridiculous to count the Japan Cup as a PBA title? Hats off to Walter Ray, but give us a break. If the PBA is going to count the JC as a title and make the Tournament of Champions so a player can roll eleven games to win, then surely they can find a way to add Two Masters titles to Earl Anthony's 41.

If that happens, maybe Glenn Allison's 900 could even be recognized – Guess What – IT AIN'T GONNA HAPPEN!