



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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The Magical History Tour It's coming to take us away!

As you are reading this, CJ and I are somewhere in Michigan or Ohio with the new Generations Bowling Tour. As press director for the new senior tour, it will be my duty, honor and privilege to work with some of the greatest bowlers of all time.

After a couple of years of planning and extremely hard work by GBT owner Steve Sanders, the tour will be reality when the first of 35 events gets underway September 29 - October 5 at Bay Lanes in Bay City, Michigan. Bill Strike and his Bay Lanes staff have the distinction of hosting the first GBT event in his very nice 32-lane center. Strike has a long history with professional bowling during his 40+ years in the business.

A couple of weeks ago, we visited Bay City, Clinton Township, Jackson, Michigan and Toledo, Ohio conducting GBT pre-event press conferences with Mark Roth. Johnny Petraglia will join us in Lake Grove, NY (Long Island), N. Brunswick, New Jersey and Providence, Rhode Island a few days before the tour starts for more promotions.

Will the tour be successful? That's the 64 million dollar query, but after attending GBT staff meetings in Florida where Steve shared all of the business plan and financials, I feel very confident we will do well.

We don't have television yet (although some first year events will be locally televised) but that, in my opinion, is a good thing when you are

trying to get a new tour off the ground. In fact, it's exactly what I've recommended to launch a new women's tour. Grassroots promotion can be profitable, but the cost of national television is enormous; virtually impossible without big sponsorship money.

We're looking forward to working with a very talented staff on the tour, all of whom have experience in the industry and a passion for the sport. In addition to Steve Sanders, we have Frank Ellenburg, Rick Hudson, Dave and Rose Buschman, Steve McGill, Larry Lichstein and Cecil Stanborough on our road staff. Backing us up in other areas are Joan and James Mack, Mike Monroe, Sandy Lustig, Linda Wirth, Jason Papa, John Bovoy, and Lee Rautenberg. This truly will be a tour run for bowlers, by bowlers.

In addition to our immediate GBT family, we will also have the support of great people at LeadDog Marketing and Drotman Communications in New York. Recently, we attended a meeting at LeadDog and the heart of Manhattan (our first trip to the Big Apple) and met the very professional folks who will lead our marketing efforts. Doug Drotman is also on the GBT job everyday, and he will set up and manage press conferences, and get our message out to the media on a regular basis.

Want to know more about the GBT? Check out the great website designed by Andrew Aiello at Digital Motion Designs. Andrew also did the Mini Eliminator website for Sanders.

On the website www.gbttour.com, you'll find the full GBT schedule, most frequently asked questions and answers, pro-am information, and much more.

Like any new venture, especially one as complex as this, it will take a few months to establish a niche in the industry. All eyes are on GBT, and the 'wait and see' caution is understandable, especially to those of us who have been in this industry for decades. I was also involved in the beginning of the last national tour that was launched, although I missed the first couple of years. The PWBA, started as the LPBT in 1981, had a pretty good run until 2003. Let's hope that if GBT is successful, it might inspire another new women's tour.

One of the most important opportunities we will have with the GBT is to talk about some of the rich history of the sport, and what better way to do it than to write about the guys who made most of that history! Guys like Mark Roth, Johnny Petraglia, Dave Davis, Dave Soutar, Marshall Holman, Bob Chamberlain, Bo Burton and many others will all be there. All these men, and many women too, have earned their place in bowling's history book, and we hope to tell the world that they have still got it.

Of one thing I'm certain. There is no better group to work with than the senior pros, and we'll savor every day. It's a new day for these greats, and if all goes well, they will have over 40 big events to bowl in between the GBT and PBA senior tours.

America is about to get re-acquainted with the greatest bowlers in history.

Take a look at the credits on page two for all those who help produce Stars & Strikes and you will see a new name this month - Heather Merryman. Heather is our very smart and attractive middle child, and she will manage the day-to-day operations of the paper, with a little help from her older sister Christa, her husband Jeremy, and younger brother Jon, so their parents (yours truly) can gallivant around the country with the greatest bowlers of all time on the Generations Tour.

Heather and her husband Robert have three beautiful children, half of our six beautiful grandchildren, and she will work on the paper mostly while they are in school, or whenever she can talk her husband into playing Mr. Mom. She's been in training for a couple of months, and she's already learned most of what it took us 16 years to learn.

So if you hear a different voice when you call the Stars & Strikes office, it will be our new 27-year-old managing editor. For those who know me, you won't be surprised she's much nicer than I've ever been - takes after her mother.

Are you watching the WIBC Women's Challenge? We'd like to hear what you think about it - please drop us an email.