

Schreyer Will Continue PBA Quest For Success

A lot of people in the bowling industry have been playing the 'speculation game', attempting to read between the lines and guess the reasons for the major change in the management of the Professional Bowlers Association that surprised some in September.

It didn't surprise us. From where we sit, it looked like former CEO Steve Miller had become increasingly frustrated with the pace of progress, and his ability to coax a relatively

conservative industry into supporting PBA to the degree he wanted.

Or, maybe he just got a better job. Whatever the reason, Miller has moved on to a new job in the running industry - which as a former track and field coach, he has a passion for; and Fred Schreyer has moved into the top spot at PBA headquarters.

If you believe Miller left because he accomplished all he wanted to, which is the way the PR people spin it, that's possible,

but neither should we believe that Miller left a sinking ship; and there is no doubt he left it in very capable hands with Schreyer at the helm.

One thing is certain - the PBA's goal is still to become a profitable business, and Chris Peters and his partners will not sustain and fund it indefinitely. Schreyer knows that, and tries to make his staff and the industry understand the importance of getting the organization into the black as soon as possible.

Signing Denny's to a multi-year umbrella sponsorship deal should have turned the trick, but the loss of a few past sponsors leaves the PBA still seeking the golden goose. Will Schreyer be 'the man' that makes it happen? With the owner's support, he's going to give it his best shot.

Schreyer sat down with Jim Goodwin at the first 2005-06 event in Tulsa and shared his thoughts about the new season. Here's what he had to say:

With all you have accomplished in your career, what motivates you to lead the PBA?

My motivation to lead the PBA comes from a variety of sources, but primarily from an appreciation and love of the sport that has developed over the past several years and an interest in keeping the professional end of the sport alive.

I also have a sincere fondness for the players and a desire to help them get the attention, respect and ultimately the type of compensation they deserve. I would like to see us establish a tour that provides a true career path and professional opportunity for a young athlete with an interest in bowling.

We also have the challenge of rewarding our owners with a return on their investment, and providing the PBA employees with a thriving organization in which to work and devote their energies.

Would the PBA still be in business if Steve Miller had not been in charge for the past 5 years?

I think he was very instrumental in getting the PBA back in the mainstream of the industry and did a lot of things to push the PBA as an organization forward with the public and the industry. If Steve hadn't done it, someone else would have been brought in to run it, and I don't know how you evaluate how someone else would have done. I think what has kept the PBA alive is the commitment of the owners. Steve certainly played a major role in moving it forward and getting it front and center in the bowling industry. We've made a definite mark on the sports

landscape, but in terms of what would have happened without him, I think if Steve were sitting here he would tell you it wasn't him alone. It's a collective effort. He was the leader and he drove the thing and played a big role, but when it's all said and done, what's keeping the PBA going is the

at the tour level. They are not a sponsor of our regional or senior programs. We still hope to bring in sponsors for those. Clearly, they stepped up and made a major commitment to the PBA. It's a three-year deal that we hope will go beyond that. It's a significant commitment by them and by us.

pending on the level of investment, sponsors get more or less, with commercial units, with signage, with players, with merchandising. It's an economic bargaining. Clearly, Denny's investment is significantly beyond what we've ever had before.

The deal happened through Winnercomm and StrikeTen?

Yes.

How long did it take to put it together?

We added Denny's as a tour sponsor in January '05 when Winnercomm brought them in on a one-year trial. Over the course of working with them in the second half of last season and through the summer leading into this season, they concluded that the tour was a great place to make a statement and make an investment, and they elected to expand their relationship from an individual sponsorship to an overall title sponsorship. Clearly, they wanted a much greater impact than an individual sponsorship would provide.

Was the same offer made to other sponsors?

Sure. Winnercomm was out there as part of its role as our sponsorship agency; was out there seeking sponsors for the tour. Some of it was conversations with existing sponsors and some was proposals to potential new sponsors. Others were in consideration and had expectations or hopes, but Denny's stepped up first, and it was done.

What new features will we see on the new Denny's Tour?

I think mostly you'll see a continuation of introductions



Fred Schreyer getting ready for first 2005-06 arena finals in Tulsa

commitment of the owners - 'end of story' and that's still a strong commitment.

You know him pretty well. Didn't he and Ian Hamilton both work in your department at Nike?

Yes. I was pretty instrumental in getting Steve to leave Kansas State to work for Nike. We brought him in to run the running business because of his experience as a track coach.

Can you give us more details on Denny's Deal?

They are our title sponsor. They will be incorporated into pretty much every thing we do

How does their financial commitment compare to a normal sponsorship?

It's a multiple. It's a significantly greater investment because their name goes on everything we do now. It's the Denny's PBA Tour.

I know you can't give me the numbers, but how about a comparison of the Denny's deal to a normal sponsorship - is the financial commitment double, triple, more?

It's a multiple. I can't tell you what the numbers are. Every deal stands on its own based on benefits we give them for their investment and benefits we get from them. De-

we made last year. We'll continue to highlight our best players. You'll see further use on the show of the promotion feature we introduced a year ago. We have one additional arena event this year. We've introduced the first step in our uniform program with our players. Hopefully, we'll see some new sponsors step up soon. We've added one new event for a total of 21. Two new events actually. We've also added a second special event. It's called The Final Frame. It's going to be a Christmas Day event. That's a separate stand-alone event. The Motel 6 event will return. We're doing what we think we need to do to move the tour forward. Regarding the Final Frame, ESPN had a strong interest in a show on Christmas day. There are not a lot of sports televised that day so a prime-time spot was attractive. They wanted a unique format. They wanted something significant. They wanted, for lack of a better term, a dose of 'reality TV'. We came up with the Final Frame.

Speaking of reality TV, the Kingpin Million Dollar Challenge, recently postponed in Reno, was supposed to be that type of show. One of the owners, John Gumas, told me they made an attractive offer to PBA that was rejected. Can you comment on that?

They approached us on a few occasions about possibly supporting them, but their show was going to run on TV directly against our show, so how did they think we would support them? It made no sense. I think the economics of their deal was very tough.

I don't know what it was specifically, but what they had to do to make it successful was very aggressive. Obviously things didn't play out the way they planned. I can relate to that. We all have ambitious plans sometimes. I don't think they misled anybody. They had a business plan and it didn't work. We can all question their assumptions, but I'm sure they were convinced it would work or they wouldn't have tried it. I think it was aggressive and it didn't work, but it's not because they misled anyone.

In your opinion, does it have a chance to return?

I have no way of knowing. I don't really know the people. I follow it the same way a lot of people in the industry did, people with general interest. I would think they will have a difficult time regaining the trust and credibility they would need to get people to sign up and make that commitment at this point. I think it was a big commitment. To get 2600 people to fly to Reno and pay that much money and spend that much time ... obviously they were counting on a lot of re-entries, and they had a big pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, but, it was tough.

Would you say the possibility of PBA involvement with Kingpin in the future is slim, or not?

I don't think anybody is coming to ask us, but it's all speculation. Until somebody puts a proposal in front of you, there's no reason to say we would or would not. They came to us before mostly for our cooperation and the possibility of doing some joint marketing programs. The configuration and the way it was planned didn't make sense for us, but my feeling is that we just have a lot on our own plate right now. To me, having their show against ours was shortsighted. People look to us to play a role in the sport in general. They see us as fairly well funded and trying to make an impact, and surviving, and in some cases starting to thrive, so we should step up and do all this other stuff. We've got to take care of ourselves. I'm not saying that selfishly, but just to say we have a long way to go until we are self-sustaining and profitable. To get diverted by other things before we accomplish our true mission would be a mistake.

I've heard you hired Gary Beck to help put your 2006-07 schedule together?

Yes we have. We brought him in on a consultant basis. That was the primary responsibility of Nick Hoagland, who is leaving, and Gary is somebody who has an interest, and I think he'll do a good job for us. We're looking forward to working with him.

Any progress on a new commissioner?

There's really not a specific timetable for that. It would be-

hoove us if its sooner than later, but there is so much on our plate right now we haven't really been aggressively searching. I would hope we'll find somebody before this season is over.

Did you have a good meeting with the players to kick off the year? Was it a lot quieter without Steve Miller?

Yes, we had a good meeting, and it was a little different. A year ago we had what we called Player Camp to kind of indoctrinate the players. We did it in the summer in Las Vegas. It was a sort of transition from the old tour to the new tour. An educational thing and a business meeting combined. We didn't do it this year because we brought them all here to Tulsa and a lot of the TV production work we would do with them in preparation for the season. Since Winnercomm is here, we did it here at the beginning of the week. We also had a players meeting. We typically have one at the start of each segment, first half, second half.

Anything new on the Senior tour?

We're trying to put the Senior schedule together as we speak.

Will Steve Sanders' new Generations Tour have any impact on your senior schedule?

It's hard to say. I'm still waiting to see how that's going to play out. I've had conversations with Steve, and we're obviously watching to see how he does. He's made certain pledges to us about where and when he'll go, so we'll see what happens.

He tells me there is a new spirit of cooperation between his company and PBA?

I don't know if that's true or not. I know that he and Steve Miller, for whatever reason, did not get along. But, if there is a way that we can do things together that helps both of us, I see no reason because of personalities not to do it. I'll take a guy at his word until he burns me, and he probably feels the same about me. We're exploring some ideas, and if it offers more opportunity for seniors to bowl, I don't see anything wrong with that. On the other hand, if he's aggressively trying to compete with us, then

we have to defend our turf. But, I don't think that's his intent. I thought what happened this week with Gary Dickinson getting the commissioners exemption and doing so well was good for the seniors. We recognize that our senior bowlers would like to be on TV again and would like more money in their prize funds, and we'd like to be able to sell the senior bowlers. We'd like to bring in new sponsors for the Senior Tour. We're running that tour as well as we can, but it's a challenge.

Is it tough to pick that commissioner's exemption sometimes? How do you go about it?

Sure. I don't think there is any formula. You just try to find somebody that has a fit to the community or the event. You want somebody that's going to add a storyline to the event. This week it certainly did. Gary is a well-known bowler in Oklahoma and is obviously somebody who has had some great accomplishments in his career. He has a following and recognition, and obviously it was a good choice. It makes you feel good to give a guy like that who has done so much for the sport the opportunity to bowl. Usually, it's mostly for publicity purposes, but with his performance this week, Gary gave some guys a run for their money, and it was fun to watch.

Are you still involved in any way in other sports? Do you still represent any athletes? Any involvement in Troy Aikman's new NASCAR deal?

The PBA is a full time job, and then some, so I don't have time to "dabble" in the sports representation business in the manner that I did prior to joining the PBA full time. I worked with Troy Aikman for a number of years in the 90's but haven't for some time and I have no role in his recent NASCAR investment. The last major athlete that I worked for was LeBron James. I was hired by LeBron's agent to assist them in negotiations when LeBron first entered the NBA, and I was primarily responsible for negotiating his NIKE endorsement deal as well as a few other endorsement deals at that time. It's been over two years now since I last worked for LeBron.