

## It's Time To Consolidate Bowling's National Halls of Fame

The Ultimate Honor – Hall of Fame. It's the pinnacle of any profession in sport or business.

Now is the time for bowling's leaders to set aside their personal agendas to create a truly magnificent and extraordinary Hall of Fame. One that would garner much needed attention from the general population and positive publicity for the game.

With USBC finally a reality, with BPAA's Bowl Expo becoming more successful every year, and with the PBA making great progress, now seems like the perfect time to create an ALL BOWLING HALL OF FAME.

Think about it – why do bowling's national groups need separate Halls of Fame? Why can't bowling have a hall with categories, and create one huge Hall of Fame installation and celebration every year?

We're only talking about a few people each year. The only established Halls of Fame on the national level are the ABC and WIBC, which is now the USBC men's and women's (or is that Open and Women?) the BPAA, the PBA, the PWBA (now inactive) and perhaps the BWAA. That's it. If each group inducted one person every year, six people would achieve bowling ultimate recognition. If PBA, PWBA and USBC wanted to induct an athlete and a person for meritorious service, it would be about a dozen honorees each year.

And guess what? We already have a beautiful centrally located building where permanent displays are housed. It's called the International Bowling Hall of Fame and Museum, and it's located on Dick Weber Lane in St. Louis, Missouri. I'll bet the city of St. Louis would even help sponsor a special event surrounding the Hall of Fame they are so proud of, and maybe the first one could be named in Weber's honor.

When I saw the recent press release announcing the changes to the ABC and WIBC Halls of Fame to the USBC Hall of Fame, I was pleased by the expansion of the selection committee, but disappointed that the USBC Hall of Fame is still a limited group that only honors those who achieve greatness within the USBC structure, and the ceremonies will be held at the USBC Delegates convention, where only a few will witness.

The USBC Hall of Fame Committee now includes very good and qualified

selectors such as Mike Aulby, Anne Marie Duggan, Cindy Coburn-Carroll, Fran Deken, Bob Johnson, Dick Evans, Chuck Pezzano and others, but unless they have another reason to be there, very few people will make the expensive trip to Orlando for the induction ceremonies.

In the past, ABC always held their ceremony on the ABC Championship Tournament lanes during their convention week. WIBC had theirs at their convention in the hall with their delegates. Now, since there's no tournament being held, I guess the combined ceremony will be in the convention hall, and only delegates and a few VIP's will attend.

That's another question – how many delegates will show up in Orlando next April? I've heard some say 4000, but if half of the local associations have not yet merged, that may be a little too optimistic. And even when they do merge, how many local delegates will get their expenses paid to go to the meeting?

Some associations sent 10 or 20 people in the past, because they were also there to bowl in the ABC or WIBC tournament. Now, maybe they will only send one or two men and women, because their only purpose is to vote on rule changes and perhaps attend a workshop or two.

For the bowling writers, it will be nice to attend the Hall of Fame induction for the men and women together, but unless they have a personal connection with one of the inductees, it's unlikely very many writers will attend. In the past, they were there because the ABC tournament and the BWAA meetings were there, but very few came to the WIBC.

I've heard people say over the years that "he or she was in the bowling hall of fame," when they should have said "he is in the American Bowling Congress" Hall of Fame, "she is in the Women's International Bowling Congress" Hall of Fame. We don't see legendary bowlers like Marshall Holman or Mark Roth and several others in the ABC Hall. They are some of the greatest bowlers of all time, are in the PBA Hall of Fame, but they will never be in the USBC Hall of Fame because they chose not to bowl in the required 20 ABC National championship tournament during their illustrious careers. Thus, no chance to be in the USBC Hall, which many people regard as **bowling's** Hall of Fame.

Combining the halls would also eliminate the embarrassing situation that now exists with PWBA. The women's pro group has been out of business for over two years now, so its Hall of Fame is also out of business.

Not only that, but the last two women

inducted, Anne Marie Duggan and Virginia Norton, didn't even get an induction ceremony because PWBA went out of business; and even though USBC now owns the PWBA logo and assets, they have no foreseeable plans to revive the group or conduct a ceremony for Virginia and Anne Marie, or install any new members. The point is, consolidating the halls would remove the task from the groups and the women's pro hall could continue even when the organization is not operating.

The bowling industry could do itself proud by consolidating its various Halls of Fame and transferring the existing criteria from the individual integers to the St. Louis Hall of Fame. A new bowling Hall could have categories for professional and amateur athletes (bowlers), meritorious service, and outstanding achievement in business or journalism (the current BPAA and BWAA awards). Hall of Fame boards and selection committees could all meet at the same time in St. Louis a few months before the big week to make their selections and get together socially. It could be a great opportunity for good people from all walks of bowling to get to know each other better and catch up on what's happening at the museum each year.

Imagine the attention and excitement surrounding a 'Bowling Hall of Fame Week'. What if the BPAA Men's and Women's U. S. Open tournament were reunited and staged during Hall of Fame Week in St. Louis? Maybe they could even install special event lanes in the baseball stadium next door to Bowling's Hall of Fame for the tournament, like they did for the 2004 ABC Masters. Baseball has done something similar with its annual Old Timers Game and Hall inductions in Cooperstown, and they have made little Cooperstown New York a world famous city. St. Louis would benefit greatly from that type of positive publicity.

If the individual groups wanted to have separate recognition of their own inductees at one of their tournaments or at their conventions or Bowl Expo, there's nothing wrong with that, but it doesn't compare to how big this could become if everyone worked together to create a weeklong celebration and major event. By combining the Halls, it might also eliminate the need to have all those separate Hall of Fame boards, and it would bring bowling's major components together to work for a common cause.

And for the inductees, they could say proudly and accurately, "I'm in THE Bowling Hall of Fame."

