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More than business

As you begin to read the pages of this issue, you’ll notice a few things have changed. Some changes might be obvious at the get-go. Some bylines are new and a few long-standing bylines are “gone missing.” Some savvy IBI readers might notice a perceptible change to the look and feel of the magazine. Different type style and column widths, perhaps? Bolder and more vivid photography?

For most, the biggest difference will be the new approach IBI has taken with its content. We are, and always will be, devoted to the business of bowling. But we also understand that there is so much more to bowling than business!

IBI is the bowling trade magazine of person and place. Our goal is to inspire, motivate and innovate. Now, who couldn’t use a little dose of all that on a monthly basis?

Change can be difficult, change can be liberating.

For virtually all of IBI ’s first 17 years, we’ve prominently opened the magazine with two regular columnists, Sandy Hansell and Ray Tuttle. Between them, close to 450 columns were featured. Their contributions to the magazine and the industry have been invaluable. Though these icons have earned a much-deserved reprieve from writing a monthly column, we’ll still be tapping their expertise and knowledge throughout the year.

We’ve injected a whole new personality to the magazine. As you turn the pages, you’ll experience why bowling has persisted for so many years. You’ll share in the stories about those who’ve made this industry theirs. The newcomers, the old-timers, the successful, the pioneers, even the occasional eccentric will be covered. All that we insist is that our subjects are relevant and interesting.

More than that, we’ll continue to innovate. From a world-class print magazine, to today’s top-end web portal, to utilizing tomorrow’s technology like virtual meetings and webinars.

I hope you’ll be as excited about IBI ’s new direction as we are.

Why? Because there’s more to bowling than business!

By the way, in many of our stories and columns as the months go along, you’ll see a box that solicits feedback or asks a question. On this page, for instance, apropos of our new direction, look over to the left. Please log on to www.BowlingIndustry.com and tell us about a major change, or two, you’ve made in your career. Share your thoughts, your experience and your ideas with all of us in this exciting industry.

– SCOTT FRAGER, PUBLISHER AND EDITOR
frager@bowlingindustry.com

THIS MONTH AT www.BowlingIndustry.com

Pretty pictures of pretty impressive bowling centers. (Our members’ pix, too.)

Aliens go bowling, Jim Sturm leaves two pins on CNBC, CSI investigates a bowling center.
Energy Efficiency Tip #50:
Get your energy bills out of the gutter

Make your energy bill fall as fast as the pins.

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Alan Robock: “They opened the tail ramp and took the cargo out first, so the cold air gradually seeped in. The pilot reported the surface air temperature as -45°F. We had to go out the back, as they kept the engines running.”

A lot of things have rolled in Antarctica. Snowballs have tumbled down icy mountains. Clumsy polar bears have gone end-over-end when they could not find their footing on frozen water. And bowling balls have spun down the two lanes located on the southern-most bowling center in the world.

At least that's how meteorologist and environmental science professor Alan Robock remembers it from his stay at McMurdo Station, a research base on the frosty continent. Built by the U.S. military in 1961, the base is maintained...
by the United States Antarctic Program, a branch of the National Science Foundation (NSF). McMurdo is made up of a series of prefabricated buildings, which house Antarctica’s largest concentration of human beings—up to 1,300 or so in the summer months.

In 2004, Robock embarked on his Antarctic journey from his home base at Rutgers University to help a colleague perform weather investigations. After acclimating to the bone-chill that vanquished many an adventurer before and since explorer James Clark Ross discovered the base’s region—now called Ross Island—in the mid-19th century, Robock found the recreation center and its heavily worn lanes of wood.

“The Navy set up these two bowling lanes when they established the base almost 50 years ago,” Robock explains about the bowling center located in a two-story Quonset-style hut, which also had a weight room and arts-and-crafts area.

“A few people [at the lanes] were scientists like me. They’re called ‘beakers’,,” Robock says in reference to the researchers who stay at McMurdo for short visits. “Most people who use the facility are support staff—cooks, mechanics, electricians, and all kinds of people who keep the place running. When I was there, the alley was only open a few days a week, but they set up bowling tournaments.”

Those who used the lanes did more than throw balls down the boards. They volunteered to set pins by hand, utilizing an ancient Brunswick semi-

Striped socks, as on bowling center volunteer Mike, are de rigueur. They let bowlers make sure pinboys are out of the way.

The machine is a Brunswick B-10 semi-automatic. Introduced about 1948, it had a run of 5,000-10,000 units before the company started producing its first fully automatic pinsetter in 1955. “Bowlers, proprietors, and pinboys alike proclaim the Brunswick B-10 as the finest pinsetter ever made,” a 1950 sales brochure announced.
automatic pinsetter. As such, the lanes stood as probably the last in an American jurisdiction without automatic machines. The Smithsonian Institution requested the lanes in 2001 for historical preservation, but the station declined, allowing the center to remain active.

Brian Stone, director of operations for the NSF in Arlington, VA—which funds 150-160 research programs including those at McMurdo—worked at the base from 1990 to 1996 and met his wife there. He comments, “The building itself was never quite level and they would work hard each year to get the lanes leveled out. But it was a constant battle to [try to ensure] when you threw the ball down that it would go straight.”

The unevenness of the building and the deterioration of its support structure finally brought Antarctic bowling to a standstill when the Quonset hut had to be closed last January. Whether the building can be repaired so the bowling leagues of scientists and base workers can continue is up in the chilly air. Still, it is a place Robock recalls fondly as part of his Antarctica adventure.

An avid traveler who has researched in Russia and France, the New Jersey-based professor jumped at the chance to help a colleague measure ozone and particles in the stratosphere over Antarctica. Robock headed out from Newark, flew to Los Angeles, to Auckland and Christchurch in New Zealand (the New Zealanders have a scientific facility near McMurdo), before arriving at the base in August, at the end of one of Antarctica’s coldest months. Being in the southern hemisphere, winter blankets the land and sea during the six months opposite to northern hemisphere winter. The region has an annual average temperature of -58°F, rising as high as -22°F in the summer.

“We landed in this C17 cargo plane,” the meteorologist explains. “They took the cargo out before we could walk out, so the cold air started seeping in. When people ask me, I say it was beautiful, it was exciting, and it was very, very cold.”

During the six-and-a-half weeks Robock stayed, he worked in the Crary Science Center, estimated to be the most expensive building on the planet per unit area, including the cost of moving material to the base. When the scientists ventured outside, Robock says, “we launched balloons every three days or so, and I worked on calibrating the instruments, launching and making predictions of where the balloons would go.”

Aside from doing research, participating in the base’s dodgeball tournament, hanging out at the facility’s few bars, and bowling, Robock did not have a whole lot else to do. “But it was beautiful to stare out the window and look at the scenery,” he says. “The air was so clean you could see a tremendous distance.

“There were only four hours of daylight when I got there,” he continues, “and there were 24 hours of daylight when I left because it was going from one season to the other. The moon just circled the sky; it was always up. The sun was not above the horizon for the first few weeks because there’s a mountain to the north of us—the volcano, Mt. Erebus [which attracts much scientific study]—so we could see the sun shining on places but we couldn’t actually see the sun.”

Geographical beauty and the uniqueness of the polar experience attract more than just researchers. “The rule was that other people who worked there could stand around and watch us but couldn’t talk to us while we’re
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busy," Robock says. After finishing one day’s effort, he spoke to an observer who had come to McMurdo to volunteer for six months as a heavy equipment mechanic. Robock asked the man, “What do you do back at home?” And the man said, ‘I’m a pediatric dentist. I’m just here for the adventure.’”

The spirit of adventure had some at the base participating in activities like diving into holes made through 10 feet of ocean ice in order to explore the frigid water and retrieve starfish off the sea bottom. Robock helped tend to a dive, but found rebooting his skills in the one-of-a-kind bowling center more his speed.

“I was on my high school bowling team and I owned my own bowling ball,” Robock says. “I was never that wonderful but bowled my whole life.”

On his first two frames at the McMurdo lanes, Robock rolled strikes. From then on, he’d bowl once or twice a week. “Whenever it was open, I’d go down there and bowl a few lines.”

While Robock, a huge Bob Dylan fan, says he’d like to return to Antarctica sometime, the future continues to blow in the wind for the polar bowling lanes. The hope is that they can be resurrected in a safer building and continue for a little-known community that sees it as a colorful source of indoor exercise and recreation amidst the whiteness of the ice.

What is the most unusual place where you have bowled? Share your thoughts at www.BowlingIndustry.com.
What was your first job, Cathy DeSocio, BPAA Secretary?

My dad owned a bowling center and I was the Porter during the women’s state tournament. I kept the bathrooms clean, emptied all the ashtrays. It was not a pleasant job, but I so badly wanted to work in the bowling center!

Of course I wanted to work behind the counter, but I was only 14 so my dad was not really keen on that. That’s why he made me do portering instead. But it did teach me the value of a dollar and to be dedicated to whatever kind of work I was doing. And at 14 there really weren’t a lot of jobs available anyway.

When I attended college, I was a waitress a little while. That gave me a very good perspective of what it means to work hard for your money. When you work in that field, your pay is definitely dependent on your ability to provide good customer service. It’s a job that’s all about human interaction. My experience also taught me that you’re dependent on the people you work with. You realize that not coming to work, for example, just because you didn’t feel like working, made problems for everyone.

Another job, once I got out of college, was for a company that placed overnight funds from various companies. I created spreadsheets and business reports, a job that taught me how the banking structure worked in our country. I learned that those who saved and invested their money had more opportunities than those who didn’t.

What was your first job, John LaSpina, BPAA Past President?

My first job, in 1971, was selling health, accident and life insurance for Mutual of Omaha for about a year and a half. They hired me based on a handwriting analysis. It’s funny how I can remember that. When the analysis came back it said, “This guy is ready to go, go, go.” It was very hard work.

I specialized in a senior citizen package. I had lots and lots of older customers. It was rural upstate New York outside Rochester. [The] sales techniques included lots of telemarketing, lots of cold calling, and I put those lessons into the family bowling business. I decided to leave the insurance business when I decided to come home to run the family business [Maple Lanes in Brooklyn] full-time.

[Insurance] taught me how to be a salesman, how to earn a living on my own without any help from anyone else. Basically it taught me to stand on my own. It was where I learned my work ethic; that even on those days when you didn’t want to work, you go anyway, [and] you have to work hard if you expect to see the benefits of your efforts.
“When suddenly you cannot bowl at all, it’s a dark, sad feeling.”

SSG Darwyn Luat
287 Sustainment Brigade, Iraq

S

taff Sergeant Kenny Kutzke says the arrival of a bowling kit at his station in Iraq wasn’t especially like being home again. “I just look at bowling as something I’ve done since I was a kid.” Second nature, as one might say.

Kutzke’s bowling buddy, Staff Sergeant Darwyn Luat, is more heartfelt. “You know, when you’re used to bowling any time you want, then suddenly you cannot bowl at all due to lack of facilities, it’s a dark, sad feeling,” he says.

Their departure from Kansas, along with other personnel of the 287 Sustainment Brigade of the Army National Guard, was about that abrupt. They were activated on Oct. 1, 2008 for a year in Iraq.

Tallil is about 225 miles southeast of Baghdad. The base is also known as Camp Adder to U.S. Army people, called Ali Air Base by the U.S. Air Force there (407 Air Expeditionary Group), used to be called Tallil Air Base, but commonly, it’s just ‘Tallil,’ 36 miles of security perimeter guarding five and a half square miles of desert, two runways, and stocks of materiel.

Luat, a computer repairman when he was Stateside, is not as

Why is Kenny Kutzke smiling, since he was doing most of the work? On the other hand, Darwyn Luat, the man behind the camera, did “acquire” (Luat’s word) the plywood, 2x4s, nails and wood screws for the lane. He also modified a weapons rack to act as a backstop. White square painted on the T-wall, right, was used to show movies.
Darwyn Luat, whose ball is about to find the sweet spot to the pocket (between arrows 2 and 3).

Exclusive!

The True Story of Bowling on a Carpet

By SSG Darwyn Luat

When you release the ball, you have one chance to hit your mark if you normally throw a curve, since the carpet reacts like a dry lane. The ball sort of ricochets in the direction of rotation. I found myself standing far, far left and aimed for the middle of the second and third arrows on the right in order to have a chance of hitting the pocket.

The ball, being rubber with two sets of holes (large and small) opposite each other, is easy to handle. The weight of the ball being as light as it is (five pounds) compensates for the holes not being drilled to fit your hand and allows for some degree of control. Good job on that.

The carpet is made with high-quality material and is pretty durable. I make it a point to walk along the side of it instead of on it. Keeps it cleaner, too. The detail is really nice as well. I thought of maybe carpeting my CHU (Container Housing Unit) with it at one point. :)

The pins are balanced nicely and don’t just blow away. They have sand added for weight and the ratio of ball weight to pin weight seems about right.

A storage bag made of nylon came with the kit and will hold the carpet, ball and pins. I kept the carpet rolled and stood it in a corner.

The kit also came with score sheets, which, I thought, made the kit complete. I found a program online that keeps score automatically and loaded it on a laptop; we used that to keep score.
WHAT BOWLING MEANS TO ME

you’re going to run into, so they prepare every soldier for the same thing, whether you run into it or not.”

Working and living quarters are prepared as well. Surrounding them are concrete walls similar to the barriers protecting highway crews at work on a U.S. freeway. T-walls, as they’re called, are built of panels about three feet wide, linked together, rising up 12 or 15 feet. Three or four openings allow entry and egress. The enclosures are open across the top. That’s about the only way a mortar round could get in.

Kutzke and Luat built their bowling lane between a T-wall and a CHU (container housing unit) used for storage. After Luat extended for a second tour of duty, the building became his office.

Kutzke overestimated the time they could devote to the game, however. “Maybe seven or eight times,” altogether, he says, now back in Kansas. “There was just not enough time in the day to get out and do anything. There was a sandstorm or [it was] hot—things going on constantly.”

They usually bowled Sunday mornings, just the two of them, at the rate of three games in two hours. “It was hard to get anybody over there. It’s the location, timing.” A Personal Security Detachment filtered through, but they never had time to throw an entire game. A master sergeant dropped around once. An experienced

Gutter balls can be energetic.
league player who hadn’t bowled for years, she scored a couple of 200s. The men could hardly get above 150 that time.

Kutzke breaks into a laugh about scores, which for him ranged from around 120 to 240. He’s the better bowler, he claims, but admits to being bested by Luat now and again.

“When we were getting ready for our deployment,” Kutzke says, “Darwyn and I would bowl on Saturday nights in Salina [Kansas and] talk about the bowling times we’ve had. So I guess there would be some sense of being home” in receiving one of the bowling kits.

“A very, very nice feeling to know I could roll some balls anytime I wanted,” Luat adds, and turns expansive. “I was lucky enough to get a four-day pass to Qatar and the MWR [Army’s Morale, Welfare and Recreation Command] had an eight-lane bowling alley. I spent every morning and night there. Ha! It was great.”

He already has plans for the bowling lane and kit when his unit leaves Tallil this summer. He’s going to make sure it’s passed along to the people who will take their place, he’s decided.

No Blues on This Carpet

The first carpet bowling kit found its way to Iraq courtesy of Scott Bennett. Executive director of the Michigan state proprietors’ association at the time, Bennett sent the kit used in BPAA’s in-school bowling program to his nephew who was serving there.

The gift went over so well that not long after, Bennett raised a suggestion at the 2005 Bowling Summit that the industry launch a program to send kits en masse.

A task force under Elaine Hagin, who was then chairing the board of The Bowlers to Veterans Link, plus $50,000 got the project off the ground. The money included $20,000 from BVL and $15,000 each from USBC and the National Bowling Forum; $50,000 was a guessestimate of what it would take to put 200 kits in the Middle East.

John Sommer, proprietor and task force member, secured free shipping boxes made to military specs and thousands of printed score sheets from businesses in his Rockford, IL area.

By the end of April 2005, the 200 kits had been shipped. Another 200 were on the way after Bowl Expo that year, purchased by attendees at the BPAA booth.

To date, more than 550 carpet bowling kits have been purchased by proprietors, USBC locals, and industry suppliers and dispatched to Iraq, Afghanistan, Kuwait, and other countries around the world.

More information on BVL’s Portable Lane Campaign is available from Elizabeth Montanya at BVL, 703-934-6039. Or visit www.BowlersForVeterans.org and click on the blue “Bowlers of America Salute You” logo.

The idea for the sign was Kenny Kutzke’s, inspired by the names of Rex Haney’s two Kansas centers, Gage Center Bowl and Gage Bowl North. Why not ‘Gage Bowl Middle East’?

Kutzke used a router from the brigade woodshop to etch the letters and the diamond design copied from Haney’s logo. Kahil, a Moroccan serving as interpreter with the U.S. Army, is painting the equivalent of ‘Gage Bowl Middle East’ in the Arabic version of cursive letters. Kutzke confesses, with a laugh: the misspelling of the name was his mistake.

Our thanks to Rex Haney for background for this story.
It cost $2 million, but owners got designer Eric Fritzeen’s brand of “wow” from floor to ceiling (also more room for games and a sports bar with mezzanine).

Tim Corley, president of the Bowl New England chain (18 centers, 7 states), says projections for refurbished Spare Time Colchester, (Colchester, VT) see $3 million this year. Very nice, especially compared to the past high-water mark of $2 mil.
Clark, Jason Belmonte and the champ’s trophy at The Bowling Foundation Long Island Classic, March 2009.
deputy commissioner and chief operating officer Tom Clark is charged with putting the Pro Bowlers Tour front and center in the minds of every advertiser, bowler and casual sports viewer on earth.

Nothing surprising about that—except for the way Clark goes about doing it.

“Nothing wrong with a ‘negative’ story line,” says Clark, who oversees PBA’s marketing and TV production. “I hate the word, but the media usually only get interested if there’s something slightly negative or edgy about a story you’re pitching.”

As weird as that approach sounds, it seems to work for the former USA Today reporter. Check out the pitches behind these media scores:

· U.S. Women’s Open: “We billed that as the rebirth of women’s bowling.”
· PBA Plastic Ball Championship: “The day I found out...
Wes Malott, the points leader on tour, said he was pulling out, I was a very happy man! Now we had a story line that said some guys don’t want to bowl in this thing.”

· Two-handed Aussie bowler Jason Belmonte: “I kept selling the idea that some players disagreed with ‘Belmo’ getting [commissioner’s exemptions], or that some people think his style is dangerous or should be illegal.”

PBA commissioner Fred Schreyer says that kind of high-risk/high-gain attitude was why he asked Clark to come on board in 2008.

“We had observed what Tom was doing at USBC, and how it impacted the industry and the world of bowling in a different way,” Schreyer says. “That’s when I thought an outsider to the PBA who had a passion for bowling and was willing to take chances could be an agent of change for us.”

Although Clark didn’t join the bowling fraternity until 2005, he is no Tommy-come-lately to the sport. The Syracuse, NY, native grew up loving bowling and the Pro Bowlers Tour. He went to Buffalo State College because it had both a journalism program and a bowling team.

Clark is also an entrepreneurial sort. He likes to put his own stamp on things. He wrote, published and distributed his own free sports weekly after college. Later, he overhauled sports and news operations at three small papers, including two owned by the Media General chain, prior to joining USA Today in 2000.

“People started calling me the ‘Bill Parcells of Media General’ because I was always moving, always rebuilding,” Clark says with a laugh.

As USA Today’s golf reporter/editor, he created the “Tiger Tracker” to track Tiger Woods’ daily progress on the PGA Tour. He also assigned another reporter to travel with and write exclusively about Woods for a year. Later, he created USA Today’s annual 32-page Super Bowl special pullout section.

None of that fell into Clark’s lap by accident.

“Every day, my job beyond writing or editing or anything else was to go to the daily meetings and convince the editors to give me space,” Clark says. “You’re in competition with every other sport and editor to get your story some space.”

“Whether you’re an editor or reporter, you’re expected to come up with ideas, new approaches,” says Michael Hiestand, USA Today’s sports media columnist and a former colleague of Clark’s. “Tom was definitely above average in that regard. He was always thinking what we could do differently with the start of college football, for instance. That’s what he’s doing in bowling now.”

What got Clark re-interested in bowling, which he had fallen away from after he left Syracuse, was the Chris Peters-Mike Slade-Rob Glaser purchase of the PBA in 2000, the same year Clark joined USA Today.

“I didn’t like the way the game had been going up to then,” Clark says, “I thought it had gotten boring, and that scoring was out of whack. But when I heard about the sale, I went to the top cover story editor at USA Today and said, ‘I really want to do a story on this.’”

It didn’t take long for Clark to realize there’s a bigger difference between the PBA and the PGA than the middle letter.

“The PGA provides media with a giant tent and a buffet,” Clark says. “I

What Good Is the PBA?

It’s often said that the PBA helps drive people into bowling centers, but there’s no hard data to back up that claim.

Still, as bowling’s most visible marketing wing, the PBA is doing things to promote the tour and the sport that bowling center owners can also try:

Pitch the story that media want to hear. Media like drama, conflict, quirkiness, redemption and, yes, negativity. Try to find that compelling story line in your event.

Hitch your wagon to a star. Media love celebrities. If you know or can find one who likes to bowl—the NBA’s Chris Paul is an example—he or she can help sell your story. Affiliating with prominent charities can also attract attention.

Talk shop. Don’t be afraid to do so. “We have to let people know about all the variations in this game, so that they can become passionate about it,” Clark says. “A passionate fan base will support bowling sponsors on purpose, just to help the sport. That’s why NASCAR is so successful.”

Nurture the sport side of the game and the people in it. If people are proud to be involved with bowling, Clark says, they’re more apt not only to go more often but to bring other people with them. “Being the best bowler on my high school team didn’t get me any girls,” Clark says. “It wasn’t something I went around telling everybody. I’m dedicating my life to making sure that the kid who bowls on the high school team will boast about that, so that others want to be part of the sport, too.”
Get the benefits of the Conqueror Pro Management System, and keep your existing scoring system!

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There's a reason why more than 2,800 centers have chosen our systems and solutions for their scoring and center management needs.
walk into the tournament office at a PBA stop and there’s Kirk [von Krueger, PBA tournament director], sitting with his feet up on the desk eating a box of wings from Hooters,” Clark recalls. “You gotta love it.”

The resultant 2001 story made the front page at USA Today and elsewhere around the country. Subsequent stories about the proliferation of 300 games in the sport, Pete Weber, and a first-person account of bowling in a PBA event had similar impact, which taught Clark something.

“All the media follow USA Today,” he says. “They all get the paper, and they copy the stories. If you can get that big [placement], everyone copies it. Plus, so many bowling people contacted me afterward. I realized the kind of reach USA Today had.”

His media savvy and background made Clark an attractive “get” when the newly formed USBC was hiring in 2005.

“I know how [reporters] take a phone call, get the

“I know how [reporters] take a phone call, get the

“New era” in PBA history was proclaimed by the official program. The series was not without its critics.
mail, and what interests them [in a story],” Clark says. “I know that they have to sell that story to their editors. And I know what will land a story in a paper—you have to make a journalist feel like he’s going to be a star if he does the story.”

As USBC director of communications and vice president of marketing and communications, Clark worked with Gary Beck on Beck’s USBC Women’s Challenge in 2006, developed the U.S. Women’s Open the following year, and helped crystallize then-USBC vice president of tournaments and events Jack Mordini’s vision of the event that became known as the Clash of Champions.

Says Mordini, “I had talked to [then CEO] Roger Dalkin about taking our tournament champions and putting them in a made-for-TV format. Tom came onboard and went to work designing that and doing all the things needed to make it happen.”

To do these things, however, Clark had to break a few bureaucratic eggs. The big one was reallocating money budgeted for each operational area into one pool to

At the Plastic Ball Championship, talking with eventual winner Jeff Carter. Pete Weber was practicing before their title match.
fund programs that could have greater public impact.

“I cannot stand talking about things and saying, ‘well, we’ll do that next year or the following year,’” Clark says. “If we all think something is a good idea, and it needs extra cash, and we agree that it’s more important to do this than another thing, then why don’t we stop doing the other thing and reallocate the available money to have more impact? That’s what I did with things like the Clash.”

Nevertheless, Clark is still stung by criticism that his main priority at USBC was to stage big projects that made him look good at the expense of more grassroots outreach.

“The startling percentage of people in this country who don’t view bowling as a sport demanded ‘big’ projects with significant impact and the ability to go across many platforms in concert,” Clark replies.

“It seems the bowling culture doesn’t really like having star players. They might not like somebody being given credit for things. But when I worked for Roger Dalkin, my job was to make sure he was elevated. [Now that] I work for Fred Schreyer, I tell as many people as possible that he’s the risk taker here, not me. I try to promote players and turn them into stars, not myself,” he continues.

“Anybody who would leave a job that let him cover Tiger Woods at the Masters for bowling, which is as struggling a sport as any, and give every moment of the day to promoting it only to hear people say, well, he’s self-promoting—well, it bothers you.”

Now Clark is shaking things up on the Pro Bowlers Tour.

“I think Tom has good vision,” says Greg Trager, ESPN’s senior director of programming and acquisitions. “With a sport like bowling, your core audience will always follow you. But [you might have] to do some things to the product that may give it more appeal to a little broader audience.”

Clark’s King of Bowling series, which gave bowling 25 ESPN shows this past summer, was created with that in mind.

“It had an exciting format and some cute elements that regular viewers would be into from a branding standpoint,” Clark says.

On the other hand, the World Series of Bowling, which embraced 13 tournaments—eight men’s, five women’s—at Thunderbowl Lanes in suburban Detroit in August, was designed to minimize travel and production costs for the organization and the players.

On the plus side, it expanded PBA’s international reach by attracting entries from Sweden to Korea, bowlers who...
might not have been able to justify the cost of following
the tour from city to city for seven weeks. It also brought
more attention and traffic to PBA’s online “Xtra Frame”
live coverage.

But not everyone loved WSB’s one-stop-shopping
concept.

“I don’t think anybody is thrilled with having half of your
tour season conducted in one house,” says one long-time
tour observer who requested anonymity. “If you don’t
have good ball reaction in that house, you’re in purgatory
for seven weeks. But there’s an acceptance that if that’s
what it takes to save money and save the tour, then
that’s what it takes.”

If all Clark’s tinkering results in bettering the ESPN
universe rating of .76 that bowling had last season
(meaning that 90 million homes tuned in to the
broadcasts), and getting the tour more media coverage
and sponsor money, well, he says, bring it on.

“I just got off the phone with the Tonight show, and
Jason Belmonte is going to be a guest,” Clark shares.
“Now, if [Tonight host] Conan O’Brien wants ‘Belmo’ to
knock down some meatballs, I’ll say, absolutely. And
someone else will say, oh, you’re making a mockery of
the sport and ‘Belmo.’

“But did Peyton Manning ruin the NFL by going on
[The Late Show with David] Letterman and throwing a
football into a cab as it drove by? I don’t think so,”
Clark says. “We’re just packaging the sport of bowling
in ways that will be more attractive to fans and sponsors,
the way Eddie Elias did in 1958.”

Hiestand says Clark is simply following a trend that
began in the 1960s with ABC-TV’s “Up Close and
Personal’ profiles of Olympic athletes.

“You can’t make it a completely different sport, but you
can feature your athletes in different settings, putting
mikes on them and having the public see them do
different things,” Hiestand says. “It seems to be some of
the stuff Tom is doing.

“The blueprint for all sports right now has been getting
their athletes on Dancing with the Stars. That’s how you
get exposed to a new audience these days. Ask Tom if
he’s tried that yet,” Hiestand suggests.

Don’t bet the farm against it. Tom Clark likes that
edgy stuff.

A frequent contributor to IBI, Lydia Rypcinski has been
writing for and about bowling for more than 30 years. She
has won writing and photography awards in and outside
the sport for her coverage, which has taken her to six
continents and more than 20 countries. She co-authored
Revolutions: The Changing Game with Chip Zielke in 1998
and Sports Traveler Chicago with Anbritt Stengele in 2009.
A feather in your cap—er, lane

Next time you’re in Detroit, try a bowling game where the balls are wacky and your target is not made from trees.
scores per round. At Cadieux they are the red team and the yellow team, so named for the color of their respective balls (also national colors of Belgium). The team that wins a coin toss rolls its six balls, then the other team follows suit. The team whose ball is closest to the feather scores as many points as it has balls closer than the other team has. Got that?

Close calls are decided by man-sized measuring sticks that look like a drawing compass. A game is 10 points.

Like bocci, feather bowling is a game of strategy. Good players will try to surround the feather and opponents will try to knock those "blockers" out of the way. Feathers are used instead of rigid objects like stakes in horseshoes because feathers won’t obstruct the balls. That makes the game more challenging.

Good or not so good, players seem to get as much kick out of the performance of the balls as they do their own. The disks wobble, weave and waver like drunks, especially heading up or down along the curving
The game makes for a distinctive addition to dinner at Cadieux. Diners enjoy a taste of Belgium that will probably include mussels—the house specialty, they’re prepared nine ways—and selections from a menu of ales.

There’s league play, by the way. A men’s league has between 50 and 60 stalwarts. A mixed league is about 40 strong.

As to the strain between Cadieux and Bath City, which is mostly a thing of the past now, we’ll be diplomatic. If you happen to be in Detroit and you want to go feather bowling, head for the Cadieux Cafe. If you’d like to try Belgian trough bowling, Bath City Bistro is your destination.

Our thanks to Dante Stella for background as well as the photos.

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A tattoo league?

We could have been setting ourselves up, but Mark Voight did not come back with a zinger when we asked. He’s run into non-believers quite a few times over the past two years, ever since he tried out the idea at his South Bend, IN center by way of a suggestion from manager John Backstrom.

The idea proved successful enough that Voight took it to another three centers of his and to MUBIG, the group of chain proprietors. They asked whether he was serious. One proprietor said he wouldn’t let people like that in his center.

“We all have our hang-ups about [things] going on around us,” Voight says, “but the 18- to 24-year-old group has a whole different set of standards than the 60-year-old. For the most part, we are getting people that are pretty down-to-earth.”

Tattoos are more popular than you might think. A 2008 survey by Harris Interactive estimated that 14% of all adults in the U.S. have a tattoo. Among age groups, 9% of those ages 18–24, 32% of those 25-29, 25% of those 30-39, and 12% of those 40-49 have tattoos, as do 8% of those 50-64. Men are just slightly more likely to have a tattoo than women (15% versus 13%).

Voight’s been doing the league with local parlors that have been in business a couple of years, have a good reputation and at least a “fairly decent clientele.” He does them as a joint venture: he promotes the league in his center; the parlor promotes the league to its mailing list. All 14 Voight centers do the league. Ninety-five percent of the business they earn is brand new.

Bowlers get a gift certificate from the local tattoo parlor, usually face-valued at $70-$75. Leagues average 20-30 bowlers (he floored 32 the first time) and span 14-16 weeks.
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BPAA president Jim Sturm put on yet another hat just before Thanksgiving. He’s now on the board of the Bowlers to Veterans Link. Sturm was named by John Snyder, who will succeed Sturm as BPAA president this summer.

Art Hartman, president of Murex Services, was the roastee in a fun tribute by the Illinois State BPA. Retired BPAA E.D. John Berglund was the roastmaster.

Mickey Luongo, sole operator of the pro shop at Middleton Lanes in Middletown, NY, is the new Northeast regional sales manager for Storm and Roto Grip. Luongo worked the pro shop with his father, Mike, from 1990 to 2007.

Lydia Rypcinski, regular IBI contributor and the pen behind this month’s cover story, was honored by the Illinois proprietors’ group at its annual meeting in November. Receiving the President’s Award, she was commended for her Chicago Sun-Times bylined contributions to an annual charity event of the Chicagoland BPA and for her editing of the state proprietors’ newsletter.

Dominic Rebman, a pioneer in the Ohio industry, died in November. Entering the business in 1946 when he and his father bought a bowling center in Lorain, the younger Rebman started the first youth leagues in town. He held officer positions in four local proprietor and bowler associations, including YABA, and was a Founders Club member of the bowling museum in St. Louis. Redman was inducted into the Lorain Bowling, Lorain Sports, and Ohio Bowling halls of fame.
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MY PARADISE
When the world is too much with him, Gary Clark steps out his back door and walks the short distance to the west branch of the creek. Fish Creek, it’s called, and it meanders through town (Camden in upstate New York) to pass 25 yards or so from the back door of Liberty Lanes.

Clark steals away time when the weather is decent to relax on his bench. “Just sitting” is the idea, he says. Twilight is especially restful. He can build a campfire and listen to its crackle while water spills over stones the kids toss in the creek to make the water deep enough for swimming. ✦
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18
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MAY
24
Illinois State BPA board meeting
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Bill Duff, 847-982-1305 or billduff@bowlillinois.com.

JUNE
1-3
Kansas State BPA conference with exhibitors
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17-20
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APRIL
6
Illinois State BPA board meeting
Marriott Hotel and Conference Center, Bloomington-Normal.

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28
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East Coast Bowling Centers Convention
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