

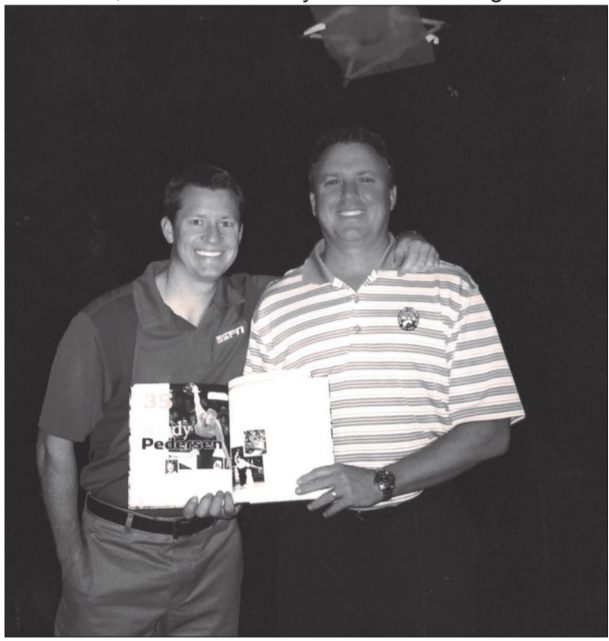


Coast-To-Coast

By Richard Kolb

Pedersen And Stone Rock The PBA Tour On ESPN

After going through the ranks of several commentators and color analysts for the PBA Tour, ESPN has finally found the lasting combination of Randy Pedersen and



Bob Stone and Randy Pedersen have become the new "Schenkel and Burton" of the PBA Tour on ESPN. Pedersen and Stone are displaying Randy's 35th ranking, in the top 50 PBA players book.

Rob Stone.

Similarities to the PBA-ABC Sports tandem of Nelson Burton, Jr. and the late Chris Schenkel grab the attention of viewers who remember the highly rated televised PBA Tour beginning in the 1960s through the 1997 season.

Stone matches up to Schenkel as the all-sports commentator who focused on bowling toward the end of his career and Pedersen is 35th among the 50 greatest players in PBA history while Burton is 20 spots higher at 15th.

The duo of Pedersen and Stone are more upscale and accurate in their analysis which is best for the sport of bowling in our high tech age. In the 1960s the technology wasn't much better than it was in the late 1940s after World War II.

Now the only evidence of the stone age on TV are the pretend cavemen bowling on the GEICO commercials.

Pedersen won 13 career titles and one major on the PBA Tour and would have won more but most of his luck was bad as a touring pro. He still won over \$1 million in the 1980s and 90s which was special for pro bowlers back then.

Two glaring examples of his bad luck on the tour was when he needed a strike to win the 1995 PBA Touring Players Championship against Ernie Schlegel. Randy crushed the pocket as he coined the term "nothing left but pin shrapnel" but a piece of it marred his victory when Pedersen left a pesky 8-pin to lose the title match. It was the first time he had lost the championship as the top seed so when he talks about Walter Ray Williams losing in the same fashion, he has the insight of his own experience.

The second setback was just as memorable for Randy and the TV audience who wondered what happened in a championship match against Norm Duke when he needed a 10th-frame turkey to tie Norm and force a roll-off and maintain his tour exemption. Suddenly Randy yelled at the fan during the 10th that "I saw that" and it was so distracting that he left a 7-pin on his final shot losing it all to Duke.

Pedersen still won't comment on the specifics of the incident except to say that it helped to speed his career in the PBA broadcast booth. "Shame on that fan and may his pants catch on fire," he said.

Randy also has arthritis in the wrist which he says is permanent in spite of all of the efforts he has made to alleviate the pain.

In response to a question I asked him about his ESPN colleague Jim Rome bad mouthing bowling in reference to positive bowling stories written in the USA Today by Tom Clark before he joined the PBA Tour, Pedersen and Stone both said Rome didn't know what he was talking about.

"He's not an athlete and he got his job by using his mouth," Pedersen continued. "Rob Stone is a professional in every way and is the opposite of Jim Rome."

Tom Clark, the boss of Randy and Rob, says, "It takes a gimmick such as the King of Bowling that I created and the team competition and Rob and Randy do a great job of promoting those gimmicks to get the fans to watch bowling."

Stone says he treats all sports fairly and reports them as he sees it.

Stone lives in Tampa near Lake Wales and Pederson lives two hours away in Clermont along with Norm Duke, Jason Couch and Tiger Woods. They bowl and communicate in the off season.

"I didn't know much or paid attention to pro bowling before I started covering the tour with Randy but he taught me a lot about the sport and now I love it and it shows on TV," Stone said. "When you love what you're doing, it gives you a much better show than just reading and it gives the fans more interest in following bowling and that's ideal for our sponsors."

(Continued next column)



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Pedersen and Stone say they covered the GEICO shootout team competition at Six Flags in Jackson, New Jersey with the same enthusiasm as they did with the King of Bowling. Parker Bohn III competed with one of the teams in front of his home town crowd.

Brienne Pedigo covered the King of Bowling and interviewed each candidate to beat the King including the crowned one Wes Malott and said she should have been a bowling commentator a long time ago because she feels comfortable with Randy and Rob.

"The bowlers give excellent comments for our ESPN audience and I have more fun and it goes more smoothly than when I interviewed auto racing drivers with the Indy style drivers like Danica Patrick and Helio Castroneves," said Indiana native Pedigo. "I hope ESPN has me do similar coverage when they do the team bowling in Jackson, NJ at Six Flags. That tournament promises keen competition for the fans to watch."

Pedigo did not return to her job to do those on-camera interviews at Six Flags but another reporter is doing it instead. Brienne is another victim of the economy having done a stellar job with the "King of Bowling" series covering all three days in warm, humid Lake Wales, Florida.



Rick Kolb with ESPN sideline reporter Brienne Pedigo at the Kong of Bowling in FL.