

Ozio, High Roller, Make Their Mark In Las Vegas

By: Dick Evans

LAS VEGAS - The High Roller mega-buck bowling tournament has come to mean many things to many people over the past 24 years.

For David Ozio, named Rookie of the Year on the PBA Senior Tour last year, it meant a thrilling finals victory over Jason Belmonte, reigning international amateur of the year, in the championship match Thursday and a \$21,000 check.

"If there is a better word than ecstatic to describe my feeling right now, I can't think of it right now," said the 50-year-old PBA Hall of Fame bowler.

For founder Norm Edelman and son Brad it has become a way of life as they eventually moved their families from New Jersey to Vegas - world recognized as the gambling and bowling mecca of the world.

The Edelmanns, the Professional Bowlers Association of America and the old Showboat Hotel/Casino/Bowling center all played paramount roles in establishing Vegas' world wide bowling appeal back in the early 1980s.

Little wonder that bowlers from 11 nations and every state make a pilgrimage to Vegas.

"When we first came to Vegas back in 1982 we were the only amateur tournament in town," Norm Edelman said Thursday during the High Roller A Game Tournament at Sam's Town - the permanent home of High Roller tournaments five times a year.

"We really like the facilities here at Sam's Town, this is a first class operation from the hotel to the casino to the restaurants to the bowling center. But it is a smaller bowling center (56 lanes) compared to the old Showboat (106 lanes) so it requires a lot more time to get in all of our games."

Back in the early 1990s it wasn't unusual for the High Roller to draw 1,200 plus amateur bowlers from across the world who were eager to put up \$1,000 for a shot at making \$200,000.

But that was before the introduction of the Mini-Eliminator at The Orleans and the TAT event at Texas Station.

Now, instead of staying at the host hotel and spending their free time gambling in the casino or entering side tournaments the thousands and thousands of amateur bowlers who flock to Vegas at least three times a year to Vegas are jumping in cars and rushing from one side of this sprawling city to another in order to compete in all three events.

From the standpoint of a local resident who enjoys watching great bowling competition this may be the best of all worlds.

Dick Ruckard, a retired Master Sgt. After 24 years in the Air Force, these tournaments enable him to renew some friendships.

Ruckard was an active bowler at the old Homestead Air Force base back in 1972-76 and now bowls in five leagues a week at three Vegas bowling centers. He has been at Sam's Town several times this week watching great pro champions like John Petraglia, Ernie Schlegel, Wayne Webb and Ozio, who admitted he surprised himself with his outstanding pressurize bowling.

"I don't think my heart has ever beat harder during a match than today's finals. Maybe it's because I'm no longer a competitive pro bowler. Now I have a fantastic job with the Dexter Shoe Company."

Friday he goes back to his old life and you can be sure his latest bowling trophy will be on display at the Dexter shoe booth at Sam's Town during next week's regular High Roller Tournament.

Over the years some of the bowlers making a big name for themselves - Chris Barnes, Pat Healey, Brad Angelo and Robert Smith for example - became battled tested in High Roller competition. Matter of fact, Healey and Angelo were two of the top 10 all-time money winners in High Roller tournaments before joining the PBA.

Then there are bowlers like Jason Belmonte, the man the World Bowling Writers named the top amateur bowler in 2004.

Or how about this international field at the top of the early standings - No. 1 Mario Quintero of Mexico, No. 2 Or Aviram of Israel and No. 3 Arturo Quintero of Mexico.

When was the last time you can remember two brothers bowling so great? It well could be a first in Mexican bowling history.

Also competing was Jeremy Sonnenfeld, who bowls out of Sioux Falls, S.D. In case you forgot, Jeremy bowled the first 300-300-300-900 approved by the American Bowling Congress in the early 1990s.

And how about Craig Auerbach, who was an average-to-good junior bowler in Miami who has matured into one of the elite amateur mega-buck tournament bowlers in the world?

In one of the many side events, Auerbach carded a 749 three-game score and won \$3,500 leading up to the High Roller A Game Tournament.

The bowler from Sunrise, Fla., proved that was no fluke by leading the qualifying in the 40-49 age category with a 660 score.

Three women pros who are praying that either the USBC and BPAA will come up with a tour - Tish Johnson, Liz Johnson and Kelly Kulick - entered.

Although Tish Johnson had won several old PWBA titles on the Sam's Town lanes, it was young Kelly Kulick who came through with the most impressive performance showing that she can hold her own again any rival.

Kelly won a high game award in a preliminary event and then advanced early Thursday to advance to the quarterfinal round.

Although Norm Edelman is now unofficially retired and son Brad is the affable president and workhorse of the High Roller tournaments, it was Norm who made a few

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L to R: Jon Farinholt, Vice-President Sales, AMF Bowling Products, Sergej Racman, President of Kolosej Kinematografi Ltd and Ms. Danica Simsic, Mayor of Ljubljana.

41ST AMF Bowling World Cup To Be Held In Ljubljana, Slovenia

AMF Bowling Products is pleased to announce that the 41st AMF Bowling World Cup will be held in Ljubljana, Slovenia, from November 13th to 20th 2005.

The tournament will take place in the Gladiator Bowling Centre, a brand new 28-lane facility scheduled to open in April 2005. The centre is part of a leisure complex owned and operated by Kolosej Kinematografi Ltd, one of the biggest companies in Slovenia and AMF's key partner for the 41st AMF Bowling World Cup.

Sergej Racman, President of Kolesej, said: "We have been working with the Slovenian Tenpin Bowling Federation for several months to bring the AMF Bowling World Cup to Ljubljana and now our wishes have been fulfilled. We are very pleased that the Mayor's office is lending its full support to the event and we intend to put on the best World Cup ever!"

The Mayor of Ljubljana, Ms. Danica Simšič, commented: "It is a great honour for the city of Ljubljana to have been chosen to host the 2005 AMF Bowling World Cup and we are all absolutely delighted. I am looking forward to welcoming many athletes from around the world to this prestigious event."

95 countries sent representatives to last year's event in Singapore and Anne-Marie Board, AMF Bowling World Cup Manager is hoping to hit the 100 mark this year. "The AMF Bowling World Cup is now the largest annual sports event in the world in terms of the number of countries competing and we hope that we will beat our own record in Ljubljana in November."

Kolosej is part of the KD Group, a blue chip company quoted on the New York Stock Exchange. The Gladiator Centre is the second bowling centre Kolosej owns and operates in Slovenia. For more details on the company please see www.kolosej.si

Slovenia is bordered by Italy, Austria, Hungary and Croatia, with nearly 50km (30 miles) of coastline on the Adriatic. It is regarded by many as a bridge between eastern and western Europe. Slovenia is one of the newest members of the European Union having joined in May last year.

Ljubljana is a city of 276,000 people with a proud history dating back 5000 years and a delightful old town contrasting with modern buildings, all set against the backdrop of the Alps. It is a major centre for the arts and its university is internationally renowned, especially in sciences. To find out more about Ljubljana, log on to www.ljubljana-tourism.si

The official hotel for the event will be the Grand Hotel Union, set in the old city surrounded by cobbled streets and close to many amenities and restaurants. To find out more about the hotel please go to www.gh-union.si

Slovenian bowlers first participated in the AMF Bowling World Cup in 2000. Last year Uros Kus achieved the best ever placing when he came 63rd, averaging 194 with a high game of 245. The Slovenian tournament to determine the participants in this year's event will take place at the Gladiator Lanes on 24th September 2005.

The Slovenian Tenpin Bowling Federation was formed in 2000 and now boasts 6

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predictions:

1. Although the entry of 96 was disappointing, he promised that the A Game is open to pro bowlers not currently on the exempt PBA tour will return next year.
2. Some special fireworks will be added for the 25th anniversary tournaments in 2006.
3. A new concept event for recruiters will be announced this winter that will feature \$60 entry fees.

This writer has to believe that the keen competition among the three current mega-buck organizations in operation across Vegas is benefiting the contestants in more ways than one.

There is nothing like competition to keep a bowling organization on their toes at all times.