

Jowdy-ism

By John Jowdy

The Credible And The Incredible

"Bowling is suffering from a lack of credibility in the scoring environment", says Jeff Henry, USBC Director of Sport. "Advancements in technology together with the artificial assist allowed by lane dressing specifications have led to an environment which minimizes the influence of player ability and skill development".

The United States Bowling Congress recently issued a news release stating USBC's concern with the degree of influence technology is having over player skills as the primary factor for success in bowling at all levels. This includes the lanes, lane conditions, bowling balls and pins. Through improved set standards, following ongoing research by the USBC Specifications Team, the USBC will ensure the future of bowling does not suffer from the lack of sporting credibility.

As a bowling purist, these statements are music to my ears. Phony scores, extremely inflated averages, and record-shattering 300 games, 800 and yes, even 900 series, have not only destroyed credibility for bowling; they have actually made a mockery of the sport.

The affirmations by USBC have justified accusations, revelations and criticisms that I have written about for the past 15 years regarding the deterioration of the "sport". I have been accused of "living in the past", not only by my usual detractors, but even by my adopted brother and best friend, Dick Evans, one of the most dedicated and most prolific bowling writers in the history of the game.

I shall reserve any further comments on this subject...pending the coming discussions between USBC and bowling manufacturers at Bowl Expo in Orlando.

In the meantime, let's define the word, "credibility". According to J.J. Ro-dale's Synonym Finder, credibility is defined as thus: reliability, believability, trustworthiness, integrity, faith, assurance, dependability, and constancy. Sounds pretty reasonable to me. In a word, it basically means HONESTY.

Are we to believe present-day bowlers have suddenly become 15 to 50 pins better than bowlers of the past? AND, in view of all the 300's, 800's, 900's currently being posted, are we expected to believe many of today's players are comparable, perhaps superior, to the immortals of the game...many whom have performed their way into City, State, ABC and WIBC Halls of Fame? No way Jose!

Credibility, you say? For example, witness the following record setting performances during the past season:

*Jacob Peters rolled the second-best series by a youth bowler, and the highest in 15 years, when he had 879 in April in the Wednesday Junior Major Trio League at Pla-Mor Lanes in Decatur, Ill. The 16 year-old Peters rolled 300-279-300.

Bowling fans, this is a 16 year-old kid who came within ONE STRIKE of perfection. Also, make note of the location of this score. Decatur, Ill.

*Fristina Stewart became the first woman with four 800 series in the same season when she rolled 805, 814, 811 and 816 between January and April in the Larry's Precision Pro Shop League at Friendship Lanes in Cape Coral, Fla.

*Shawn Reed, Decatur, Ill, rolled 15-800 series, tied for the most 800's in one season. His 17 perfect games moved him into second-place for that category. Again, note the location of this score... Decatur, Ill. Does this indicate a pattern?

*Darren and Nicole Downey became the first brother and sister duo with 300's in the same team game in March in the Friday Night Men's League at AMF Strike and Spare Lanes in Springfield, Ill. Here's
(Continued next column)

an interesting note. Springfield, Ill. is less than an hour drive from Decatur, Ill.

*Steve Nagy III, (no kin to the ABC Hall of Fame member) added his name three times to the record book at Sonny Lanes in Harpersfield, Ohio. Nagy's 248.1 average in the Massucci Ford Sunday Classic League topped the list of leagues with four-player teams. Nagy's 249.3 average in the Tuesday Night Businessman's League ranks No.2 for leagues with five-player teams. His 11-800 series tied him for fifth for most 800's in a season. Folks, ABC Hall of Famer Steve Nagy, one of bowling's all-time greatest players, NEVER, EVER came close to averaging 249.3 in his entire illustrious career.

*When the members of the Westgate Bowl team from Michigan rolled their 3,897 series in December, they also produced the most strikes by a team (142), highest low-player in a five-man team (Nate Burch's 748), tied for the most 700's (five) by a team in one series and earned a share of the second-most strikes in the 10th frame of a series.

*Tammy Jones of Decatur, Ill, tied the record for most 300 games by a woman in a season with seven in 2004-05. Again, Decatur, Ill.? Seems odd, doesn't it?

*Members of the Signature Scratch League at Signature Bowl in Elkhart, Ind., had a season that turned out even better than they thought as they topped the all-time records in five categories., The 14-team group turned in the most 800's in one season (39), most 700's in one season (689) highest per game team average (1116) and highest one night total for a 14-team league (48,222 pins, 229.63 average per bowler) became the first league to have three-300 games in the same game more than once, accomplishing the feat four times in the 2004-05 season. This league accomplished FOUR TIMES what no other league ever did ONCE. Are we talking credibility?

The USBC lists other records for the 2004-05 season, too numerous to mention, but I'm sure you get the idea. I mean no disrespect for the individuals posting these scores, but let's face it; we're not talking Patrick Allen, Walter Ray Williams, Chris Barnes, Norm Duke, Carolyn-Dorin Ballard or any other world-class performer. The aforementioned are recreational bowlers and are merely products of the environment. However, not to be overlooked, it seems rather odd that three of these records were set in Decatur, Ill.

Are we going to really see credibility in bowling? The recreational bowler deserves the recognition and pride in the scores that they achieve. Unfortunately, the Professional/Sport bowler's achievements are muddled in the controversy related to the various conditions and equipment that diminish the focus on their skill. From my point of view, it is reasonable to assume that a clearly defined definition of the recreational and the sport standards would result in an honest respect of the differences between the "sport" and the "recreation" and at the same time, bring the acknowledgment deserved by both.

Stay tuned.

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BOWLING BALLS

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COLUMBIA

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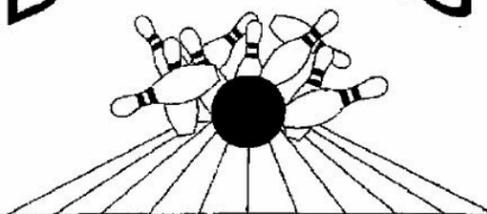
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