

# PBA INSIDER

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## Behind the Move of the Masters

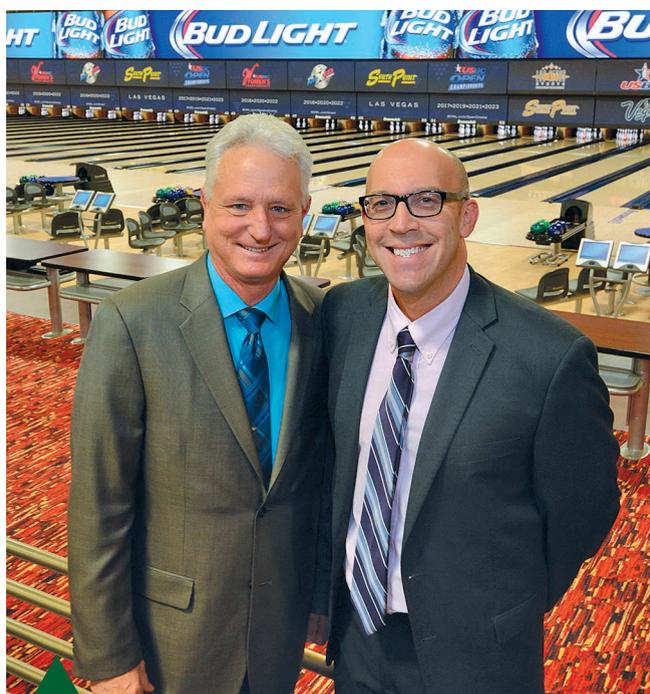
**GIVE THE PBA A JERSEY STRIKE.** There may have been some luck involved, but faced with a rather sudden need to change the venue for the USBC Masters, the PBA got the best possible result, given the unsettling set of circumstances.

The site was going to be Brunswick Zone Carolier in North Brunswick, N.J. The general time frame was sometime in February 2016. At least, that's the way it was announced in a May 14, 2014 press release, and presumed to be the case until quite recently.

Instead, the 2016 Masters will be conducted at Woodland Bowl in Indianapolis, Feb. 7-14. Victims of the change include a couple dozen potential bowlers who won't be able to compete because the new site has 12 fewer lanes than the original location. Also affected will be loyal East Coast bowling fans who won't have a chance to watch.

But Woodland Bowl has been a staple on the PBA Tour since 1981, including playing host to three U.S. Opens and two Tournaments of Champions. Clearly, it can handle major championships, and its management and staff will be pleased to add a new one to the center's legacy.

Still, anyone with the slightest bit of curiosity had to wonder what precipitated this site change. Why did the PBA feel compelled to pull the Masters out of New



**Changing Lanes:** PBA Commissioner, Tom Clark, and Deputy Commissioner, Kirk Von Krueger, moved next February's Masters to Indianapolis from New Jersey after correspondence led them to believe it would conflict with a major remodel at Carolier.

Jersey? And why did Bowlmor AMF, which now owns Brunswick Zone Carolier, let it happen?

Part of that answer can be traced to the ownership transformation — more specifically, the departure of two key PBA contacts, former Brunswick regional

managers Rich Valentine and Kathy Kuvinak, from the scene. (Keep in mind, the deal to bring the Masters back to New Jersey in 2016 — the site that attracted sold-out fields of 468 bowlers in 2013 and 2014 — was sealed before the all of the Brunswick-owned centers

were purchased en masse by Bowlmor AMF.)

According to the PBA, a contract cementing the details of the arrangement was part of the negotiations. As far as Bowlmor is concerned, it was verbal agreement.

Let's just conclude that papers, along with people, can get lost in the shuffle of a major corporate buyout.

The PBA wants to be careful not to burn bridges. Separate from the Masters tournament, AMF is an official PBA sponsor. Bowlmor also was the title sponsor of the U.S. Women's Open conducted at Carolier last month, and will bring the U.S. Open to Garland, Texas, next month. If the company didn't know before, it now understands that the nitty-gritty of preparing a bowling center for a week-long tournament is a different discipline than producing fun, clever commercials to encourage people to enjoy a bowling party on a Saturday night.

For example, you can't plan a center renovation when all of the lanes will be needed for a major tournament, or while ESPN trucks are setting up outside the building in preparation for a

live, two-hour telecast that's expected to attract better than a million viewers.

The tipping point came after correspondence led PBA Commissioner Tom Clark, along with Deputy Commissioner Kirk von Krueger, to believe Bowlmor AMF had been considering closing at least part of the 82-lane center beginning in February for a major remodel. Based on that concern, the PBA executives quickly moved to rearrange the winter schedule.

The PBA did not mention the change of sites when releasing its 2016 winter tournament schedule, although that may have made Carolier's absence even more conspicuous. Rumors began to fly. Many were convinced a good portion of the lanes would be coming out. Others speculated the future of the property would be as a strip mall.

Unfortunately, it has become common in the bowling industry for centers to close literally on a moment's notice. Since Bowlmor has been known to follow that path with underperforming centers, it can lead to dire predictions about their facilities, even when there is scant supporting evidence. *Bowlers Journal* Editor, Gianmarc Manzione, sought clarification from Bowlmor regarding its plans for Carolier, paving the way for an interview with Vice President of Marketing, Colie Edison. Among the major points she stressed:

No lanes are going to be removed from Carolier.

Renovations will begin after the center hosts the NCAA Collegiate Women's

## TRIPLE-DIGIT PERFECTION FOR BOHN AND WILLIAMS

**DURING QUALIFYING** play at the PBA50 Treasure Island Resort Open in Minnesota in July, Parker Bohn III started a game with the first 11 strikes. Then, much to the surprise of everyone watching, his final shot snapped squarely through the nose for a seven-count split.

Bohn reacted to the 297 by spreading his index finger and thumb across his Adam's apple, indicating he had choked. He is one bowler who can comfortably joke about that. After all, 101 other times in PBA tournament competition, he has succeeded on a pressure-packed 12th shot — including live on ESPN during the 1998 Masters telecast from the National Bowling Stadium in Reno.

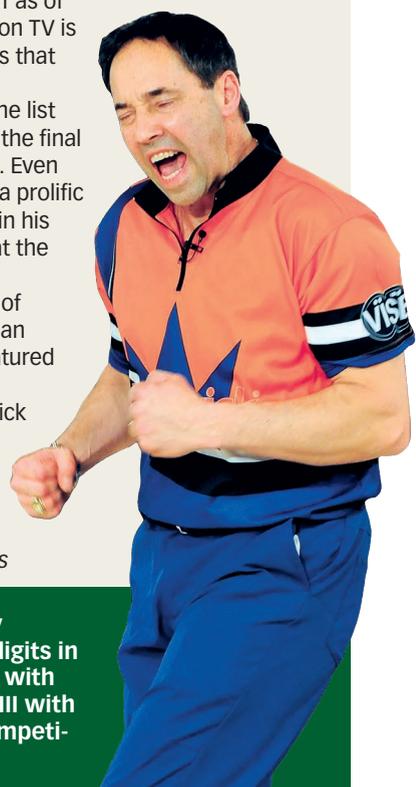
Bohn is not the only PBA player to have gone into triple digits with 300 games. Walter Ray Williams Jr. also has 101 as of the end of August, although getting one on TV is one of the few bowling accomplishments that somehow has eluded him.

Third on the PBA's lifetime perfect game list is Pete Weber, who rolled his 80th during the final PBA50 stop of the year in Fort Wayne, Ind. Even before joining the PBA Tour, Weber was a prolific 300 game shooter; he even rolled one in his first game as an adult league bowler at the age of 16.

To the best of his recollection, five of Weber's first 33 games as an American Bowling Congress league bowler featured all strikes.

"It didn't hurt that I was bowling at Dick Weber Lanes and Crestwood Bowl," he recalls, noting that they were two of the highest scoring centers in the St. Louis area at the time.

— Lyle Zikes



**Summer Spectacular:** Walter Ray Williams Jr. (left) reached triple digits in August, and it had nothing to do with the heat. He joined Parker Bohn III with triple-digit 300 games in PBA Competition (101 each).

Championship in mid-April, with a likely rebranding/renaming of the facility to an AMF Bowlero center late in 2016.

It will be an "open renovation," with lanes 49-82 staying in use throughout the reconstruction, providing the opportunity to "black light" the first 48 lanes, along with mounting large video screens in that area. The video arcade will be upgraded, a laser tag attraction will be added to the

facility, and upgraded food and beverage services will be put in place.

"We will be able to provide the black light bowling for those who want that overriding experience," Edison said. "At the same time, that section can be converted back to white lighting for leagues and competitive play. The center has a long-standing tradition for hosting big tournaments, and we look forward to having major PBA events in the future."

But that doesn't really answer the mystery of why Carolier couldn't, or simply did not want to, host the USBC Masters in February, since renovations won't actually begin until two months later. Presuming the makeover of one of the largest bowling centers in the country into a Bowlero-branded entertainment complex doesn't prove offensive to major tournament entities, perhaps next time will be different.