

12 QUESTIONS

Bobby Hall Sr.

Veteran area competitor Bobby Hall Sr., of Landover was back in the spotlight during the recent PBA Senior Manassas Open when the right-hander reached the Round of 16 and created some buzz among the spectators at Bowl America Manassas during a most exciting opening match before falling in four games to PBA Hall of Famer and eventual champion David Ozio. Hall and Fredericksburg's Jim Wolfe were the only area players to advance that far in the event, and each took home \$1,300.

Hall recently reflected on his performance at Manassas and other topics with editor Bob Cosgrove.

What was the key to your success in the PBA Senior Manassas Open?

The biggest key was my spare game. Just recently, I got to understand it, and I bowled the entire qualifying round missing one spare in the morning—and that was on a count ball, so it really wasn't a spare, per se.

The game is nothing like it used to be—the equipment, the oil patterns, the information out there. The game has pretty much gone through a metamorphoses, so to speak.

Have you made any effort to work on your spares?

Yes, I have because I know that's where the heart of the game is.

Did you make any special mental or physical preparations for facing David Ozio in the Round of 16?

No, I didn't. The reason why I lost basically was because I did something I don't normally do: Up until that point, every time I needed to get up in the tenth frame ready to shut my opponent out or to lock him out, I did it. And the one time—just the one time—I didn't do something, and I didn't throw a quality shot. I think that was the match itself because had I—I'm not going to mention

what it was—but had I did what I had been doing up until that point, I'm pretty sure I would have struck out. The first game I had to strike out to beat him—I struck out for 258; he had 246, and I had to throw the second one in the tenth, and I did.

Was there an extra confidence when you came through at the end against a player of that caliber?

Actually, no. What had gotten me was that we had to move to another pair, and I came out with like five in-a-row, and I left a split I hadn't left the entire tournament—I left the 2-4-8-10, and I went to shoot it and missed the whole thing.

I threw 11 strikes for 256, but I knew I couldn't bowl a whole game bowling that way, so it took me a couple of games to realign because it was tighter—I had a tremendous hang on the lane. I had to reassess myself, so I looked up.

And then starting the next game, I left

that same shot three times. I say, *You know, I'm really going to have to give this game up and maybe the next game; I have to realign myself.* And I did.

Then came the fourth game. I'm on like four or five in-a-row and a chance to strike out for 250. And if I strike out for 250, I shut him out.

And I did something: I was so caught up on my alignment that I *didn't* do something, and I didn't throw a quality shot in the tenth frame. He got up and struck out and beat me. He had to strike out for real—and he did. But had I thrown the first one in the tenth, it was done.

Will your performance in that event af-

flect future participation in more PBA Senior events?

Oh, absolutely. I had planned on playing the whole schedule for next year. It wasn't based on what I did [in Manassas].

For the last couple of years, I've been hurt. I hurt myself doing my daughter's basement, then I hurt myself putting up her front door. The next year I was laying tile in her basement and caught a cold in my back.

So two years went down the drain, but that wasn't really bothering me because I knew I wasn't doing anything stupid again. So I pretty much had planned on going out and playing the entire 2008 year.

And you're also thinking about the Generations Tour?

I'm definitely considering that, but first I wanted to do two things: I wanted to go to Vegas and play the U.S. Open and play the Masters. Then I would consider the Generations Tour, but I wanted to do that first.

As the game itself has changed, what's been the biggest change in your game today in 2007 versus in 1967 or 1972?

The biggest part of my game I suspect would be that I'm a lot more solid at the line—something I've never been able to do because of my leg. I had my knee replaced several years ago, and I'm just getting accustomed to it.

It took me an extra couple of years after I healed from my surgery just to adapt myself to bowl today. Once I adapted, I saw the progress in my game.

The game is nothing like it used to be—the equipment, the oil patterns, the information out there. The game has pretty much gone through a metamorphoses, so to speak.

When I was coming along, the thing they call "Sport shot" today, that was nothing but a PBA shot 30 years ago. And they didn't have the kind of information they have out there today. Not only do they tell you what kind of shot you're going to be playing on, they give you a diagram of the oil pattern itself—something that wasn't available to me 30 years ago. You had to learn that *yourself!*

I'm not surprised I didn't have a lot of success because information was not there. Now that there is information out there, I have a better idea of how I want

to attack a shot and how I want to play a shot. What kind of ball reaction I'm looking for. That kind of thing.

So the game in some ways is a lot easier for the young people today to understand what they are doing. But still, after saying that, it's still somewhat a little confusing based on the fact that not only do you have to understand the oil pattern itself, you have to make good decisions on what type of equipment to throw, what type of layout to put on the bowling ball—so many other factors that wasn't a factor 30 years ago when you basically had one type of bowling ball or two types and that's it.

So we all had to deal with the same thing, but today, they have such a vast variety of equipment that it takes a person a while to understand their limitations and not to get outside of them, and that's one thing that can hurt the average young bowler today.

Speaking of limitations, what would you say is the most difficult bowling task for you to perform as you have gotten older?

That's easy. The biggest thing for me today is to generate a lot of speed and throw the big hook. It takes a lot of energy. Fortunately for me in Manassas, they allowed me to stand [on the] 10 [board] and point it up five, which didn't take any physical effort on my part.

But if you're going to play with the young fellas, and they're going to put your feet on 35-40 and you've got to send it back out to the neverlands and bring it back, that takes a lot of energy. And the older you get, the more you realize that it takes a lot out of you—an *awful* lot out of you.

When you go with the young players, you've got to generate some speed and you've got to do a lot of torqueing and wrist rotation with that ball—it's got to

come back. And as you get older, you realize your joints won't tolerate that.

It's not so hard that you can't get over there and do that; but in order to maintain the same break point, your rev rate has to match up with your speed. And if you can't generate the speed, your rev rate won't match up, and you won't throw a consistent ball. It's just that plain and simple.

And your spare game is the best part of your game today?

My spare game is *everything* right now. It just has gone on to another level over the last month and a half.

I figured out how I wanted to play. See, when I came back, I wasn't sure how I wanted to throw my spare ball, *per se*, and I bowled for the last three or four years practicing a lot—well, not a lot actually, but more than I had been practicing.

One day I was out practicing, and my son wondered, "Dad, every time you practice, why do you always play your whole game?" He wanted to get up and [just] throw the first ball. I told him that I didn't like my spare game. He said, "You make most all your spares." I said, "Most all of 'em is *not* good enough. I want to make 'em all."

That's right. He looked at me and said, "Come on, Dad!"

I said, "I want to make *all* my spares." And I said I'm not going to be content until I'm in that position where I'm comfortable shooting 99 percent of all my spares, and that's the way I want to be.

Six weeks ago or maybe two months, I was practicing and I threw a ball and said that's what I want, that's what I want. I took it in to Manassas, and I was 99, actually I was 100 percent on the spares. And that's what got me in the [match play] finals—nothing else.

I averaged almost 230 qualifying the first day, and I never shot a game over 250. I think I shot one 258 game. So what does that tell you? I was very steady. I never missed a spare.

So when people tell you about their game, how well they're playing, if you're not making your spares, you can't keep up with the best in the world. You just can't do it. I don't care how many strikes you throw.



What role have you played in the development of your son's game?

Basically what I did with Bob, I did what all parents should do: I started him out on basic fundamentals throwing duckpin balls—I even drilled them for his hand as well as my daughter—and I never let him throw a heavy ball until he was about 14 or 15. I think I let him [use] a 14- or 15-pound ball then. Bobby and my daughter both could throw my 16-pound ball when they were 12 or 13. They could throw it, but I said, “No, you’re gonna stay with that 12-pound-ball.”

So by not allowing him to throw a heavy ball, in order for him to get that ball to hit, he had to put it down on the lane and roll it. In doing so, he developed an instinct on getting the ball down early and rolling it. So when he did go to a heavy ball, it’s not surprising to me that he’s got over 30 800 series and close to 60 to 70 300 games. It’s not surprising at all.

I never got into his game once he and my daughter got into competition. I give them what they need early and let them go out on their own and do what they feel like they need to do because you don’t have to make a young person competitive—they already are.

Who are the five best area bowlers you competed against?

Oh, man, easy: [Jim] Robinette would be one because I had to beat him in one of the two Invitationals that I won many, many years ago when there weren’t any blacks winning anything around here. I would definitely have to say Jim Robinette and Mike Hahn, and I would throw in Larry O’Neill.

I would have to throw in Joel Decker; he was very, very, *very* tough and was in a lot of the pot games.

Oh, man, can I think of another bowler that I competed against?

Did you ever bowl against Elmer Breeden?

Elmer Breeden would *definitely* be [on my list]. I forgot about him.

It would probably go Robinette, Elmer, Mike Hahn, Larry O’Neill, and Joel Decker.

Elmer was one of the few bowlers that would come out and play anywhere—*anywhere*. He came to [Bowl America] Silver Hill on many occasions and played the fellas. He *never* backed down, and I always admired him on that—*always*.