



KENI LOWE JR.
*PBA regional
 champion answers
 "14 Questions"*



MIKE SINEK:
Bowling ball rejuvenation

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14 QUESTIONS

Keni Lowe Jr.

Keni Lowe Jr. won his first Professional Bowlers Association East Region tournament and second pro title November 5 when he defeated Bradley Hose 218-183 in the championship match of the PBA East Region Ebonite Fort Meade Open at The Lanes Fort Meade.

In July, Lowe, a 32-year-old right-hander from Oxon Hill, captured the PBA South Region Southern Air Florence, S.C. Open.

Moments after receiving his \$3,000 check and champion's trophy at Fort Meade, Lowe answered 14 questions posed by editor Bob Cosgrove.

Four days ago, you bowled poorly in a PBA Tour Qualifying Round in Michigan. What were your thoughts entering this event?

I prayed that I didn't bowl as bad as I did out there! I wanted to win. I really wanted to win so bad because I wanted to bowl in the RPI, the Resident Pro [Invitational] Championship [Dec. 5-7 in Reno, Nev.]. That was like the goal for

this year—to bowl in the east, to be tops in points, and make the Pro Championship and be a part of the team.

How did you deal with the challenging lane conditions at Fort Meade?

Once we started bowling the practice session, I was lost, really. I really didn't have a shot. Then I kept throwing it up the ditch thinking that was the shot. Got an idea to just basically grind and bowl all weekend long.

Yesterday was awful, but today was worse, and that's the funny part: I hit it a lot better than I did yesterday. The shot was ... it was difficult.

The Resident Pro shot is difficult, but you can play it so many different ways. The only thing you gotta do is make sure you execute good shots.

Yesterday, I grinded two 170 games the first two trying to play inside, and then I said, *You know what? I can probably do a lot better playing right up the gut and try to find some friction and get the reaction.* I kept playing up seven, and I kept getting just enough reaction to hit the pocket,

tickling it, and the next thing you know, I started getting a better reaction after I went through the qualifying.

I grinded out to barely get to plus-five, and I was, like, fifteenth—they had me working hard!

Is it still your ultimate goal to become a PBA Tour player?

Yes. The prime goal is to win a national tour stop.

What talents or qualities do Tour players have that you don't?

The ability to be out there on the patterns 24/7 and seeing the shots. If you bowl a league pattern, you're going to learn the shot. Same thing with them—they're basically out there bowling league. They see all the patterns, and they bowl on them all the time, so they get a general idea about how to play 'em.

Once you find that *Ah ha!*—that epiphany of *there's the shot for me*—it becomes easy. It becomes easy to average 230 out there.

Do you find it frustrating bowling on league conditions knowing that many of the adjustments you make there will in many cases be just the opposite of what you would do in PBA competition?

Basically, my league bowling is practice. If I have a *kink*, as I would call it, and I'm having a problem coming through a shot or I'm having a problem releasing the ball a certain way, I'll use my league play to [work on] that because I already know what the pattern is going to be. I'll just sit there and work on delivering the shot or staying balanced at the line.

As you can see, I didn't foul that much this week! I think I fouled that one time. Trying not to keep the bad things in my game and work 'em out.

Somebody told me that I have a lot of movement in my game—unnecessary movement—that if I got out would help. And my goal in this tournament was to do a lot less excessive moving and try to throw really great shots.

Do you turn to anyone for help with your game?

I do, I try, but I would guess that the general knowledge for my game comes from what I see—my exposure. I talk to Guru—Gary Parsons [operator of World



PBA East Region Ebonite Fort Meade Open champion Keni Lowe Jr. (right) accepts trophy from Dean Ryan, general manager of The Lanes Fort Meade.

Fort Meade's Banister cashes in PBA debut

Rickie Banister credited lane conditions in a Sport Bowling league at The Lanes Fort Meade for his performance in the recent PBA East Region Ebonite Fort Meade Open.

Banister, a 35-year-old Air Force captain who serves as a missilier at Fort Meade and came to Maryland from Wyoming three months ago, qualified for match play in his first PBA regional event. He ultimately placed 13th and earned \$600 after dropping his opening round contest 3-2 to fellow Bud Light Sport Trios league member Joy Esterson of Annapolis.

The 5'11", 175-pound left-hander only began bowling in 1995, while stationed at Langley Air Force Base in Virginia.

"Everybody bowled," recalled Banister, "and I said, *Hey, let me try this bowling*. Some guy saw me and said I could be a natural if I would just listen, so I listened to him, and it built up."

So much so that he won the DoD (Department of Defense) Championship three consecutive years (2002-04) as well as the 2004 Wyoming All Events Championship, the same year he was the state's Bowler of the Year.

He currently is on the amateur staff of Dynothane, which sponsors the Air Force team. As a result, he receives at discounted rates the company's latest equipment and gets to consult with company insiders.

He bowled well upon his arrival at Fort Meade, and some suggested that he needed to try the next level of competition. He got that opportunity after winning a qualifier for the PBA regional scheduled for November 3-5 at his new home center. And he was confident because of the "tremendous" help he received from competing on Sport Bowling conditions.

"On a normal house shot, you've got area, you can play it, and you don't have to do everything right," he said. "You come to a Sport shot, and you have to be more precise. You have to come out of the ball correctly, you have to hit your mark, you have to stay down. That's exactly what you need to do when you go to the PBA regionals—you have to do the exact same thing. Without the Sport shot, I probably wouldn't have made the cut this year."

Banister bowls in three other non-Sport leagues at Fort Meade and admittedly does so with a different mindset.

"Really, you don't think as much," he said of those leagues. "You just go out there and throw the ball. Most of the time, you're on a walled-up shot where you throw it out and let it come back. On the PBA or Sport conditions, you can't do that;

you have to concentrate on every single ball. In league, you may concentrate on three balls and then start laughing and joking with your friends and throw the ball. But in [PBA competition], you have to stay focused."

Banister clearly was not as focused—or as angry—as he wanted to be in his first attempt at PBA match play.

"I didn't like it," he said upon making the Top 16 and learning that Joy Esterson would be his opponent. "That was the only person I didn't want to bowl because I like Joy; I think she's a nice person and a really, really good bowler.

"For me, it's kind of corny, but I like to be angry with the person I'm bowling against. And here we were, smacking hands, saying 'Good job,' 'Bad break,' and all that. In bowling, when you're out there, you need to be really aggressive, and I wasn't aggressive until later on, and it was too late then. And I think she was more relaxed bowling against me."

Despite his frustration at the finish, Banister said that the tournament was a good experience and a lot of fun. In fact, he admitted being "pretty impressed" with himself, realizing that he is still learning what most of his competitors already know.

"Right now, as everybody says, I do a lot off of just talent and not knowing the exact things," he said. "And that's the advantage that Joy has—everybody's been bowling since they were little kids. I didn't start until I was 23. I'm 35 now."

As for the future, Banister was to bowl for the Air Force at the end of November, compete in the All-Military Tournament in early December, and then the military will send him to Reno in January to take one more shot at making Team USA. If that doesn't work out, he'll continue to experience the PBA regional program.

Banister's military obligations have on occasion forced him to skip an important bowling event, but he understands his priorities.

"The military's been good to me," he said. "They don't call me a lot when they know I'm bowling in tournaments, but we both understand—myself and the military—that *military* comes first. Most of the time, I'm bowling on my own, but the military knows if I do well, the first thing I say is, 'Thanks to the military.'"

— Bob Cosgrove



Class Pro Shops]—about helping me with the drilling, learning the layout; that way I can be able to drill up my own equipment for myself. Actually, he gives me my most help—he's like my mental instructor. He helps me understand; he tells me about certain things.

He doesn't bowl anymore, and he's really not in the bowling center at all, so

my training comes from me and what I see, what I need to work on, and then what I learn as I struggle.

Do you identify with anyone now on Tour?

Bill O'Neill. Even though his game is a little more concrete than mine, those guys like him, even Jim Tomek [Jr.]—

actually the guys that got a lot of hand that really come through the ball, I watch them. But the majority of the time, I'm never able to get right behind them and watch because I'm out there competing with them at the same time.

I try to watch them just to see how because the best thing that I've learned as far as bowling is you watch who's strik-

ing. And then you try to mimic it the best way your game allows you to. Truthfully, I lined up off of Brad [Hose] this week.

On some weekends, you are the only area player to bowl in the PBA South Region—even in Florida—while every other local player bowls in the East Region. What determines where you bowl?

It's just how I feel. I don't mind driving; I love to drive. Going to Florida, I have family down there, so if we don't have a regional in the east, and there's one down south, boom, I'm going down to Florida. It becomes past the money and more into getting a win and joining—joining the sport of bowling.

And then, with all the guys we know like Buddy Blackmore—[fellow RPI qualifier] Christopher Blackmore—and Supachai Papee, and all those guys, sometimes when there's a regional down south, we'll all just get together and go. Bobby [Hall II] will come down there.

It will be an either-or; the tossup is

his ying, he's my yang. We're almost like brothers. With every tournament, I want to beat him, but I want him to win—no matter what.

Do you think he feels that way about you?

Basically, if he do or if he don't, to me, it wouldn't even matter. Me, I'm like this: With everyone that I bowl, my first goal is to bowl my best, and if I happen to beat you, then....

Well, my girl tells me that I have a problem not wanting to beat the people I know. Now, I don't want to beat the people I know, but I still want to beat 'em now. I feel bad that I beat 'em....

I don't know. I guess it's just my personality or something.

Me, I just want everybody to do great. It's never to the point where I wish bad on anybody, but when it comes down to throwing the ball, bowling, I can't do anything to you. I can't go up there and hit your arm and make you drop the ball.

Basically, everyone is rolling their own ball and game, and the part of the game I'm working on now is learning how to understand that. I'm my own enemy, I throw my own ball bad, and I bowl the worst when I do worst. Whatever is in my mind is what I'm going to do. If I'm thinking bad thoughts, I'm gonna bowl bad.

Do you still enjoy bowling, or is it only about winning and the money?

Omigod, I love bowling more than anything. Right now, the sport is in a money crisis. Basically, these guys are only out for the money.

I love bowling. When I say I love it, I grew up in a bowling alley, I can't remember a time that I wasn't in a bowling alley. In my pastime, if I have nothing to do, guess what? I'm going to the bowling alley to see all the people that I know. There's not one bowling alley that I can go into and there's not someone who knows who I am. Now, I might have forgotten who they were because they saw me when I was like seven, but I know everybody, recognize faces. So me being a name person, it's often like, *Hey!*

Was there any special meaning for you in winning this particular tournament?

It has a ton of meaning. For me, the biggest goal was making the Resident Pro Championship team.

The second goal of the victory was showing Ebonite that I want to be very valuable to them as a staff member. Right now, I'm on their pro shop staff. I was on their regional staff last year, and I think they were having a little internal corporation problem they're working out, but I'm on the pro shop staff, and I'm thankful for that.

Last year, my performance was good but not great. This year basically was my coming out year for me. No matter what happens, their help in anything—if it's one bowling ball or just a bowling bag—all of that helps.

How does Ebonite help you?

Being on their pro shop staff, they help me with equipment—cost, shirts, able to wear the logos representing the company. Everything from accessories to the bowling balls, bags, everything. All of those are the little things that you need to just get through the tournament.

Instead of spending \$500 or \$600 for three bowling balls or maybe even in my case, \$700 or \$800 down for three balls I need for the tournament and come here and pressure bowl to get that money back, now I'm spending \$150, \$200, or \$300 for bowling balls. So I'm saving \$500, still able to bowl the tournament—I'm not really grinding it—and then I'm able to get the tape or accessories and all that to do what I need to do.

It really makes it a wonderful thing to actually have—sponsorship through a company like Ebonite.

What's next on your agenda?

I'm going out there to get some experience on the [PBA Tour] rabbit squad. I said I wanted to do the first eight. If I do the first eight, it will expose me to all the patterns, and it will give me a better idea once I go back through the process of hitting the patterns again of seeing if I'm actually ready and capable.

And if not, then I've got to come back here and grind out in regionals until I can get everything developed and together. Working kinks out, basically, because I've got a few of 'em!



Low defeated friend Bradley Hose in the title match.

which one do I think will be more beneficial for me personally.

Me going down south has helped me because of conditioning. They've actually caused me to get away from the guys I know that I joke with to getting down there with people I have no clue of knowing who now I know great—now I joke with them more. It allowed me to focus and get to the point where if you're going to compete with these guys, you gotta have a level no matter what because these guys have their level.

You can't get there while you're not out there, you know?

Do you see Bobby Hall II as your arch-rival?

That is my partner. He's my yang—I'm