

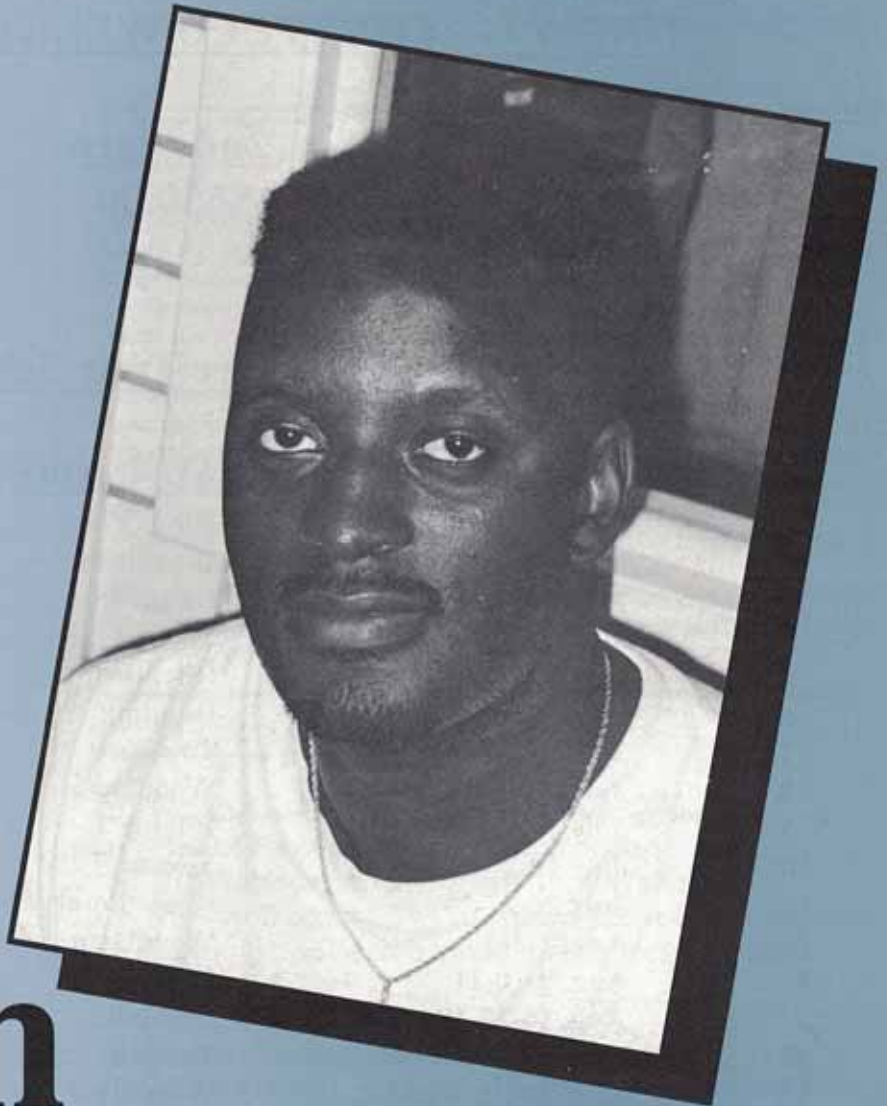
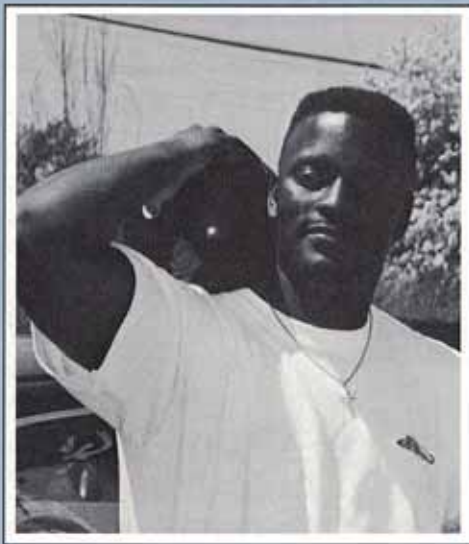
The banning of bowling

NCABA to conduct
700 Club Tournament

BOWL MAGAZINE

MAY 1996

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE NATION'S CAPITAL AREA BOWLING ASSOCIATION



Tony Walton

“Bowling is my life.”

Tony Walton's parents got their son involved in bowling at age 3 at Riggs Plaza Bowl (now Jackson Family Bowl). He first participated in a youth league at Bowl America Kent at age 7. Two years later, he moved to Fair Lanes University, which has been his home center ever since.

While growing up, he always watched ABC-TV's "Pro Bowlers Tour" on Saturday afternoons, dreaming of becoming a professional bowler and throwing three strikes in the final frame to wrestle a title away from the likes of an Earl Anthony.

After graduating from Montgomery Blair High School in Silver Spring, Walton planned on going into business for himself after obtaining a two-year degree in business administration at Montgomery College in Takoma Park, but that plan was cut short after only one year of college when the PBA Tour called—or so Walton thought.

While he has yet to make a name for himself on the national tour, where he has bowled infrequently, the 27-year-old Laurel righthander's best moments on the lanes nonetheless have taken place in PBA competition: He has captured three regional titles—in June and August of 1991 in Rock Hill, S.C., and Syracuse, N.Y., respectively, and last October in Rehoboth Beach, Del.

On March 21, 1996, Walton and four partners opened the Twelve In A Row Pro Shop inside University, where recently the Tournament Concepts' 1995 Bowler of the Year closed the doors for brief time to discuss his new business, his bowling, and other topics with BOWL Magazine editor Bob Cosgrove.

Did you regret leaving college—then and now?

Yes—yes and no, I'll say. Going on tour was a dream I'd been chasing ever since I was a little kid. That was one dream that I always wanted to do. That part I don't feel sorry about, but the other part, yes, I do—I do wish I'd stayed. But I intend on going back, though. You're never too old to learn.

What adjectives best describe yourself?

I would say *personable*. *Confident*—some people may use *cocky*, depending on their opinion. *Jovial*. I can be a practical joker at times.

How much of your life revolves around bowling?

Without getting in trouble with my girlfriend [Lisa Simon, whom he will wed this summer], I'd say 75 to 80 percent.

Do you like that high of a percentage?

Yes. In fact, she'd probably say it's more than that. Bowling is my life.

What do you like to do when you're not bowling?

Think about bowling. Think about different ways to improve my game, ideas I have for the industry, for the pro shop—that's what I do. I love basketball at any level—watching, I haven't played in two years, but I love the sport. I also love video games.

What's the one thing that people don't know about you?

That I'm not as arrogant as people think—I'm more down-to-earth. A lot of people get that impression of me because they really don't take the time to get to know me. If they knew me, they wouldn't feel that way.

***I'm very competitive.
I'm almost at the brink of
choking my opponent,
more or less.
If I could, I would.
I want to win that bad.***

Why would they think that you're arrogant?

A lot of people only see me [in the bowling center]. They don't see me at home or at Bennigan's or Friday's. Most of the time, they see me at the bowling center and I'm competing. The competitive side of me is much different than the non-competitive side.

I'm very competitive. I'm almost at the brink of choking my opponent, more or less. If I could, I would. I want to win that bad.

Losing is not acceptable. I can take losing, but I don't like it.

Are you happy, surprised, or disappointed in how your life has turned out thus far?

I'm very happy. Just opened this pro shop. Just had another baby—a baby girl [Cydney, five months (son Antoine is age 6)]. I feel like I have a woman in my life who's about helping

me get the better things in life and have a better life for our family. I have a great group of guys here who own the pro shop—we're partners. I'm very pleased with my life, very pleased.

When did you first work in a pro shop?

At the age of 14, Pete Jackson got me started. He was more or less tired of me bugging him about my bowling balls and my grip, and one day he told me, "You're going to drill your own ball." I didn't believe him, but he made me drill my own ball. He held my hand throughout the whole procedure, but I did it, and that's what got me started.

What's been the biggest challenge of opening/operating your pro shop?

Trying to keep the hottest product in the store, which is of course the [Brunswick] Danger Zone—that's the hardest part. Trying to get things that aren't available to us locally—trying to get it in from out of town as fast as possible. You don't want to keep your customer waiting.

What's been your biggest surprise?

We're doing better than I anticipated—we're doing better than a lot of people anticipated. With us being open only a month and doing very little advertising, I think our business is going pretty good. We got off to a pretty good start.

Who has taught you the most about the pro shop business?

I would say I was self-taught, learning from other people's mistakes.

What questions do your customers ask most frequently?

What's the best ball in here? What is the best ball? There are so many balls on the market now. There are some bad balls out there, but what may be bad for me may be good for someone else.

Is bowling instruction one of your strong points?

I would say no. I think I'm one of those bowlers who are just gifted—I'll say athletic. If there is something in my game that I need to work on and I have to get it done, I can get it done because I want to get it done.

I find that in trying to instruct, a lot of people say, "I can't do this." or "I can't do that." My father told me at an early age to never say I can't do anything because you can. If you put your mind to it, you can do anything you want.

I can't more or less deal with people who say they can't do something when they can. That's part of the reason why I probably would not make a good instructor.

Is it hard dealing with friends and friends

of friends who expect to receive pro shop discounts?

Actually no. It hasn't been that bad at all. My friends who know me know that business is much different than friendship. The two just don't mix. They understand.

What's been your strangest ball drilling request?

I would say Bo Burton's recent "Tip of the Week" for the people who have arthritis—the bridgeless grip. In fact, I wouldn't even try it. I refused to do it because I had no idea how to do it. That had to be the strangest one.

Sometimes I wish Bo Burton wouldn't do that. A lot of people are thinking that his tip is going to be the be-all answer to their game—the problem-solver. And it's not.

Does being so close to the latest equipment give you an advantage against other scratch bowlers?

I would say yes, from the technological standpoint because a lot of people who bowl in the local scratch tournaments are usually throwing the hottest ball on the market or what everybody else is throwing.

I'm going to throw what's working for me. Working in a pro shop gives you that insight.

For example, the Danger Zone or any of the Zones are great balls, but I can't throw it. It just rolls too much for me. That's just one of the pieces I can't use. But it's the hottest ball out—Brunswick can't make 'em fast enough.

What's the best ball for you?

I'm a Columbia products person. Any ball that they have, I pretty much throw. From the polyester ball to the hookingest reactive ball, they have more variety of pieces and different constructions. That's why I go with their products.

Will the trend of several new bowling balls being introduced each month continue?

Yes. The technology behind these balls is incredible. I thought that the Piranha/C was the mothership, but they've improved on that. The Cuda/C, the Tremor—they're coming out with balls that out-hook their predecessors. They just seem to hook more and more and more. The hook chart started at 10—now I hear it's at 20 or 25.

I don't know—I don't know when it will end. I don't think it will.

Is this constant flow of new equipment good or bad for the game?

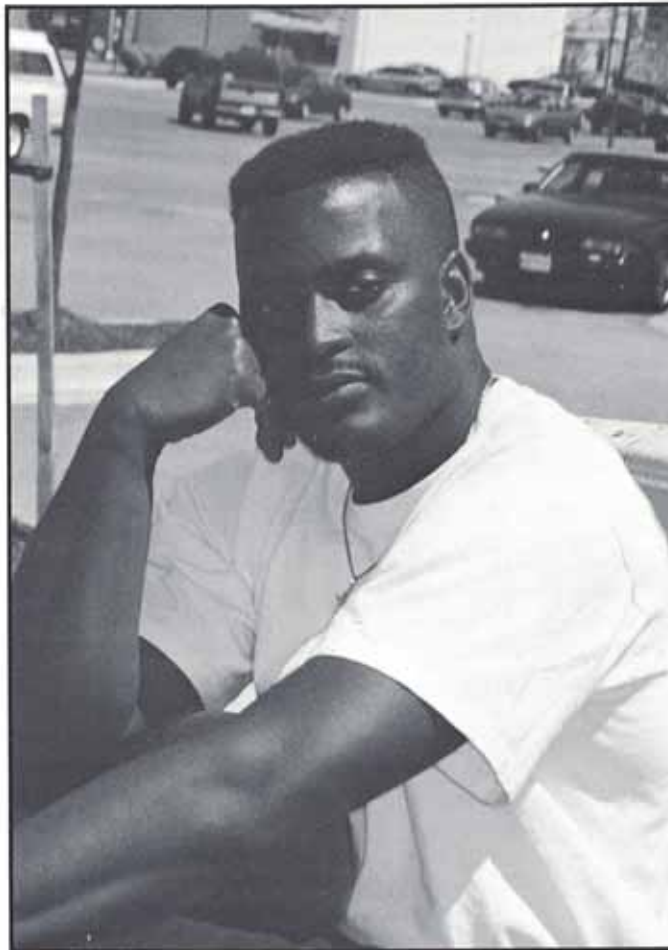
I think it's good—it's what people want. If

it's going to improve their scores, they're going to buy it.

It's just like a car: Who's going to stick with the crank car when you have a fuel-injected car on the market? That's how I would compare it.

Are you concerned about the cost of today's equipment?

Yes, because a lot of people can't afford the high-tech equipment. I hope they don't price themselves out of business—the manufacturers. I really hope they don't because they have a good thing here, but the more technol-



ogy they put behind it, the more it's going to cost the consumer.

For instance, the [Brunswick] Quantums. If you ask me, there's really no difference between those and the Zones except for \$40 in price.

Has today's equipment been a positive or a negative for Tony Walton?

I'd say it's been a positive. There was a period when it was a tough transition for me. Having learned to bowl in the late '70s and early '80s, it was a tough transition because your hand has to do something totally different now. Instead of rolling through the back of the ball, now you have to get around the side of it with the reactives because you get

so much over-reaction on the back that the earlier you roll it, the worse off you are.

I've found that with the reactive balls, I've had to lower my track. I've had to get a little more on the side of it. It was a tough thing to do.

With the manufacturers making the balls as fast as they are, it's hard to decipher which ball is good for you. That's why I've narrowed it down to just one ball company. It makes things simpler for me.

We've gone from rubber to the soaker to polyester to urethane and now to the reactive stock. Reactive is another world, it really is.

I've seen these balls add five to 10 boards more hook to people who had to point it back in the urethane era. These people are able to open up the lane now. It's incredible—it really is incredible.

For me, who could automatically generate his own back-end, it's been tough. It's been a tough adjustment.

Is it frustrating for someone like yourself to see many of these former "pointers" now getting a helpful push at the back-end?

Yes, it does bother me because from a physics standpoint, I can't understand how a person can throw with a softer or bigger piece and play closer to the dry or in the dry, while I'm playing 10 boards left of them with a harder piece, and my piece is over-reacting. It's hard to comprehend; it's mindboggling.

Not taking away anything from them, but it's phenomenal what they can do. They're at the advantage because they have the bigger piece and they have the better angle. So they are definitely at an advantage.

Do the balls and the lane conditions help bring them closer to your level as far as hitting the pocket?

These balls have levelled the playing field. Eight years ago, the 210-average bowler had an advantage over the 190 bowler. But the 190 bowlers are now 220 bowlers, and the 210 bowlers have stayed the same. So who's benefitting here? I certainly haven't—not yet, anyway.

So you're saying that people you could "look down" on in the past are now people you're seeing on an even basis or even having to look up at?

Oh, yes. Definitely. They've done so much for a lot of people. I just wish the balls would hook less for me or the proprietors would put down a little more oil.

These balls, along with the conditions, have spoiled the bowlers around here. Here at University, if there's a day where they strip the

lane and there's a little bit of film, the bowlers will swear that they flooded them.

These balls are made to hook. You have the biggest pieces on the market, and you're telling me that just because they can't play between five and 10 today, and they have to move their feet a couple of boards right, they're going to complain. How much more do they want?

I guess that's what separates the higher-average bowler from the lower-average bowler—they're willing to adjust. There's no norm for them, I'll say.

Do you prefer high- or low-scoring conditions?

It doesn't matter to me. I would say that I really don't care for the higher-scoring tournaments because it's just a question of getting the right ball in your hand and carrying. Anybody can do that.

But when it comes to choosing the right piece, with the right surface, and the right pin placement, and playing the right area of the lane, I think that's when I fare a lot better, although some people may differ on that.

I like the grind-outs. I prefer the grind-outs—shoot some spares. Nowadays, it's nine-miss and that's OK because I'm going to throw the next four [strikes]. That's the mentality.

I wasn't taught to bowl that way.

What role does money play in your bowling?

When I look at a tournament flyer, I only look at first place. I don't care what second's paying; I don't care what last check is—I'm looking at first place.

If you focus on the money, you won't get it. If you focus on winning, the money comes along with it. That's the way I look at it.

If you bowl to win the tournament instead of winning the money, you'll be all right. That's the best way to approach a tournament.

A lot of people are there for the money. I don't know if it's just this area, but a lot of people are concerned with what the last check is paying.

Why did you even pay your entry fee if you're planning on getting the last check? Do you even care what first place is? I just think that they set their goals too low. I can't understand that. And they focus in on just getting the check. Well, how about the top prize? That's still available.

A lot of people probably feel that way depending on who's at the tournament. So what? He's a man—or woman—just like I am who puts his pants on the same way I do. We have to bowl on the same lanes; we have to knock down the same pins. It doesn't matter. Anybody can be beaten on any given day.

What are the differences in the games of the touring pros and your game?

Experience on their conditions. They're able to go through more equipment, see various types of conditions, and know when to go to certain pieces and what surface.

I've always felt that given the right amount of time on the tour, I could be a force—I really do. But unfortunately, the opportunity hasn't been afforded to me yet.

I even think I could win out there. In fact, I know I could—if given the opportunity.

I would like to have the opportunity to tour for two straight years, and after the second year, see how I feel or how my game has progressed and then go from there.

Maybe I can't make it out there. But right now, you can't tell me that I couldn't because I have the desire and the talent. I just don't have the finances.

Is that a frustration that haunts you?

Yes. It's always been the question. Before, I've gone out for three or four weeks at a time, and after a couple of weeks, I get acclimated to the conditions and what's going on, and now it's time to come home. That's the most frustrating thing.

I've always felt that given the right amount of time on the tour, I could be a force—I really do. But unfortunately, the opportunity hasn't been afforded to me yet.

Bo Burton or someone once said that what you learn bowling one week on tour is equivalent to a whole league season. I believe that. You're able to go through so many different pieces of equipment, watching the lanes break down and do different things, and you're watching the greatest bowlers in the world. You see the way different people with different games play the condition. It's phenomenal. It really is. You can't help but get better.

What pros do you admire the most?

There are quite a few, actually. I admire George Branham, of course. Parker Bohn's game, Brian Voss', and David Ozio's—purest arm swing in the world. If I had to teach someone to bowl, Ozio would be my model. Everything is like water. It doesn't get any better than that.

What are the best and worst aspects of your game?

The best part of my game is my ability to go straight when I have to. I read lanes pretty good.

The worst part of my game sometimes is ball speed control when I have to get slower—a lot slower.

And I'd say sometimes my attitude gets the best of me. Not to the point of me kicking ball returns or breaking things, but I'm my own worst critic.

I feel I've seen enough conditions to where I can at least be competitive and/or at least cash. It frustrates me when I don't get something right.

A lot of people, I'm gonna say, have a misconception if they see that I'm upset because I'm not bowling good or I'm not striking. Yeah, I'm upset that I'm not striking, but I'm upset at *me*—I'm not upset at the lanes, I'm not upset at the pins or my ball, it's *me*. That's just the way I am.

Who has been instrumental in the development of your game?

Three people: Tony Brooks, because when I was a young teen-ager, he took me under his wing, and he taught me a lot—about conditions and releases—and he didn't have to. I was like his little brother, almost. Wherever he went, I was there. I really appreciate what he did for me. I really respect him a lot, as a bowler and as a person.

Dave Ferguson, the same way. A great instructor.

Chris Ward, it seems that he's been my friend forever. I've known him almost my whole life. We throw around different ideas about my game. He won't lie to me; he tells it like it is. If I stink, I stink. If I'm throwing it good, he'll tell me that. That's what I appreciate the most about him.

Are you a good pressure bowler?

Yes. I love [pressure].

How do you deal with pressure?

Believe it or not, through breathing. A friend of mine is a karate instructor, and he always teaches breathing. That is the best way to relieve any kind of pressure or stress that you're feeling. You can't throw a key shot when you're tense.

I usually take maybe two or three deep breaths before any key shot, and it always seems to relax me. You've gotta breathe.

What have been your worst moments as a bowler?

I'd say missing the rabbit in Miami in January 1989 when I had to stay down there all week and watch Tony Brooks, my roommate, bowl.

Also, losing to Haw Sok Yang in the 1994 Tournament Concepts [Players Scratch Classic] event at Annandale because my friends wouldn't let me live it down! That would have to be the worst. But she bowled super; she really did.

What is your view of scratch bowling in this market?

It's real good. The Masters tournament has been good. Tournament Concepts runs a very well-organized tournament. The different formats that [John Parks] has have been excellent for the area.

Is there anything you'd do to change local scratch bowling?

I would have more scratch tournaments with longer formats if the houses would permit it. For instance, like the Masters, you really don't get to see—I don't want to take anything away from the guys who have previously won—the better bowlers come out because it's such a short format, and you really don't get to see the transition that the lanes go through, more or less.

Ten games just aren't enough. If you had 10 games of qualifying on one day and then you came back the second day for match play and then a stepladder.... Even if they did it once a month, I think you would see your better bowlers because the better bowlers know how to adjust.

How do you rank yourself among area players?

I would put myself in the top five.

Who else would you put in that elite group?

I'd say Dave Hart ... and of course John Tragert and Tony Chapman ... and Jim Lewis—he's a very knowledgeable player.

Is there any one local player whom you'd say is clearly better than yourself?

Can't say that there is. That's just the way I feel about it.

Name a bowler who has surprised you as far as his/her success on the lanes.

I would say Bobby Hall Jr. There was a stretch I can remember when he went like 0 for many tournaments. He was even struggling to make plus sometimes, but he's really improved.

What are your bowling goals?

To win 10 national titles and 20 regional titles. To have the best pro shop in the area.

If I were to interview you again in the year 2006, who would I be talking to—Tony Walton the ...?

You'd be talking to Tony Walton the father of a college student, Tony Walton the father of a high school daughter ... and Tony Walton the bowling proprietor. ●

BOWL MAGAZINE **OUR BACK PAGES**

MAY 1991

● "Shop Talk" columnist Jerry Francomano receives an Honorable Mention award in *Bowling Magazine's* 39th annual Writing Competition for his piece entitled "The 'Hole' Truth."

- Sylvia Sneed converts the 7-10 split in the Shades of Soul league at Silver Hill.
- Andrea and Stanley Carter of the District win Bowl America's 30th annual Mr. N' Mrs. Tournament, and Maria and Gerry Cartegena of Annandale won the He N' She event at Falls Church.

MAY 1986

- Mark Glover of Woodbridge, who placed 46th and earned \$890, is the only local player to cash in the Fair Lanes Open.
- Gene Mays of University is one of the national winners in the Fair Lanes League Officers Tournament.
- Preston Hollis and cover subject Tony Walton are featured in the "Up Close and Personal" and "The Best Bowling Tip I've Ever Had" sections, respectively.

MAY 1981

- "Sizzling" Steve Sipe of Falls Church finishes fourth and collects \$4,500 in the Fair Lanes Open, while Mike Hahn of Sterling ties for 31st (\$915) and Greenbelt's David Stutzman ties for 46th (\$765).
- Elayne Shickle and Dorothy Spriggs are divisional winners in the WDCA Women's 600 Club Tournament at St. Charles.
- Tena Boone averages 193.125 for 16 games to win the Virginia Bowling Queens Tournament in Leesburg.

MAY 1976

- NCABA Hall of Famer Jim Robinette tallies 278-235-299/812 in the Bowlers Journal Tournament in Oklahoma City.
- Bill Kaelin tosses a 230 game and 595 series in the Chantilly High School league at Fairfax.
- A bill to impose a 10 percent tax on bowling is given an unfavorable report by the Ways and Means Committee of the Maryland legislature.

MAY 1971

- V.A. "Chief" Wapensky, president of the Washington City Tenpin Bowling Association and executive vice president of the National Bowling Council, resigns both positions to become executive director of the Bowling Proprietors' Association of America.
- Larry O'Neill shoots 231-246-246-246-226/1,195 to win the "Tournament of the Month" at Ten Pin Coliseum.
- Peggy Tinney's 288 game is the top WDCAWBA Gold Pin score.

