

Ohio State WBA Workshop Questions

February 26, 2011

Great Wolf Lodge

Barbara Armstead, USBC Regional Manager

1) Why will the USBC Women's Championship Tournament be held in Reno, NV for the next three years?

There are many factors that go in to the decision making process when deciding where to host the Championship tournament. The event should be accorded all the prestigious treatment it deserves.

There is a misconception that many cities want to host this tournament. The tournament requires that a convention center site be available for the tournament's duration in addition to time for building and de-constructing the lanes. This is quite a time commitment that cities with existing contracts might be hesitant to give. In addition to the event location, we need adequate hotel accommodations, restaurants and nearby transportation capability. As many of you have noted, Reno is a city that welcomes bowlers and works with USBC to offer the best deals to our bowlers.

During the next several years you will see upgrades to the National Bowling Stadium efforts being made to improve your overall experience while visiting Reno.

2) Proposed Amendment: Association Merger

During the Q&A period, I touched on cost effectiveness issues related to monitoring activities of so many (3,000 overall) and different types (WBA, BA, Youth, USBC Merged, Merged BA/WBA only) of associations. In Ohio, there are 187 local associations. On the state level there are three association types.

The point of USBC supporting the legislation is that it is costing USBC, and ultimately our members, more money to support a large number of associations. In addition to the administrative component, many are "single center" associations. These associations must comply with requirements of their charters which include running annual championship tournaments. Merged associations have more people participating; tournaments can be held in various locations and competition would increase. This is particularly important to our youth. With regard to State dues where women sometimes are required to pay a dollar for each un-merged association, merging would bring about a cost savings. Additional benefits include: women not being disqualified from a state tournament for filling out a wrong membership application; leagues would only send one type of membership application to a central location, league applications, awards, averages would go to one place; and finally, USBC would not need to have the materials (membership and league applications, association policy manual) to support different associations. Funds saved could be used to promote the game.

3) Is it possible to put a space on our membership cards to write in averages?

Membership cards do not have this information pre-printed because there are too many bowlers with multiple averages. Some are also through different associations.

The idea of leaving a space where the bowler can write in their average on the card has been passed to our Membership Department for consideration.

4) Many bowlers do not have or use computers. The ability to communicate with non-computer users is being lost.

USBC is not unique in moving towards electronic communication. Many companies are changing the way they communicate for many reasons. We see evidence of this with the number of magazines and newspapers that now have on-line editions. Email communication moves faster than regular mail. One of the biggest reasons for moving towards electronic communication is the cost associated with producing paper editions (materials, printing, and mailing). Each quarterly run of the USBC Bowler Magazine costs approximately \$500,000. We now have the ability to communicate with our members monthly with information presented in a timelier manner.

We hope that associations will look at this change as an opportunity to provide another service to members who do not have access to computers. Perhaps increasing stories in your newsletters or conducting educational in-services (libraries/offices/bowling centers) could provide an opportunity for greater interaction with your bowlers.

5) Tiered memberships were tried before. Why try again.

The current products in development differ from the tiered concept as they are separate rather than one membership with different price points. We know that “one size does not fit all” so there is an effort underway to create and test different membership “products” that will appeal to each type of bowler we see today.

USBC is open to any ideas you might have regarding what appeals to bowlers. While we may not know what product (s) will necessarily be the answer, we do know that given the rate of membership decline, we must try something.

6) Best tournament practices, are any available?

Many associations have commented about seeing poor tournament participation rates. Some are changing the way they communicate to bowlers; passing out flyers just does not get the message out. Several are using Facebook pages to communicate information and then build excitement by encouraging people to “connect” by writing about their experiences.

State associations are starting to request special reports from USBC which include member email addresses. They are forwarding tournament information to big numbers this way in a relatively cheap manner.

During my visits to Buffalo and Rochester to encourage Women’s Championship tournament participation, I learned that bowlers want someone to ask them. The personal touch helps. While walking up and down the lanes with tournament information, I found that there was interest because 1) someone was talking to them about the tournament (many had not participated in one before) and 2) if we put them in touch with an organizer/coordinator, they would consider it. Putting teams or individuals together is a big help.

One association reported that tournaments which combine adults and youth get good responses.

At this time, I am collecting ideas from local association Managers who participate in my conference calls. I will provide a list upon completion.

7) On bowl.com is there a place where a bowler can find a team to go to the nationals?

Yes, there is a “Friendship Squad” where individuals looking for teams and partners can register. The squads take place in April on a Sunday and Monday. Although the notice has been removed from bowl.com for this year’s tournament, the sign-up page will be active when 2012 tournament information appears. If you have trouble locating it, contact the Regional Manger who will put you in touch with tournament registration staff. We do not anyone to miss out just because they don’t have a partner.