

PBA KICKS OFF SEASON'S SECOND SWING BY HONORING MIKE AULBY

by Nolan Hughes

After closing the first swing of the 2025 PBA Tour by honoring Pete Weber, the second swing starts with the celebration of another.

The PBA Mike Aulby Nevada Classic presented by Pilgrim's begins this week at Coconut Bowl at Wild Island in Reno, Nev.

The action gets underway on Tuesday, Feb. 25 with the pre-tournament qualifier and practice. Qualifying begins on Wednesday, Feb. 26. All qualifying rounds will be livestreamed on **BowTV**.

The championship round will air live Saturday, March 15 at 6 p.m. Eastern on FS1 at the National Bowling Stadium in Reno. **Tickets** for the championship round are free.

Storylines

If the PBA Playoffs started today, Kyle Troup, Jason Belmonte, AJ Johnson, Bill O'Neill, Sean Rash and Anthony Simonsen would all fail to qualify. None of the superstars rank among the **top 12 in points** through four events this season.

With four majors and the World Series of Bowling left to play, nobody is pressing the panic button... yet.

But a few players who may have inquired about the panic button's location are Marshall Kent (58th in points), Jesper Svensson (59th), Packy Hanrahan (61st) and Matt Russo (69th), who each qualified for last season's playoffs.

Motiv, largely on the backs of point-leader EJ Tackett, has opened up



a sizable lead in the **PBA Elite League: Battle of the Brands**.

Motiv ranks first with 27,488 points, followed by Brunswick and Storm.

Hammer sits sixth and leads the league with

more than 6,000 points left on the bench, nearly double that of any other team.

Players to Watch

In 1996, Mike Aulby became the first player to win all five majors;

only Jason Belmonte has since joined the Super Slam club. Belmonte, who did not bowl the PBA Pete Weber Missouri Classic, is back in the field this week.

The list of players who

have made four straight championship rounds is short, much shorter than the list of PBA Tour champions. Tim Foy Jr. would love to add his name to both.

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2025 PBA MIDSEASON SUPERLATIVES

Awarding very-real and definitely-not-made-up awards after the first swing of 2025

by Nolan Hughes



With four title events in the books, a fifth looming — the PBA Roth/Holman Doubles Championship finals air Sunday, March 2 at 1 p.m. Eastern on FS1 — and a sixth about to begin, it's time to doll out some hardware.

Think of the following superlatives like the ones in your high school yearbook: Most of the winners are either super popular or a friend of the editor,

one award is made up entirely to celebrate the weird kid, and everyone forgets about them within a month.

Most Outstanding Player: EJ Tackett

Who would've thought the early favorite for Player of the Year would be EJ Tackett, who has captured two of the season's first four titles? Why is everyone raising their hand?

First, Tackett won his **second career U.S. Open** and sixth career major title in a dramatic comeback, rising from 78th place after the second round of qualifying to the second seed for the stepladder finals.

Then he won his 25th career title in Missouri, becoming one of the youngest players to ever cross that threshold.

continued on page 5



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A Renaissance of Bowling Continues...

New Bowling Centers Popping Up Everywhere!

by Dave Williams

A few weeks ago, we talked about the resurgence of bowling in New Jersey, with no less than four announcements of new bowling properties in the Garden State. After an email that I received about yet another new facility, I decided to take a further look at what's going on with all these new bowling centers.

To be clear, most of the bowling centers, like Launch Entertainment or Monster Mini Golf, are not the typical bowling operations that we have experienced in our lifetime. They are not league oriented, and some even specify that they do not promote leagues, but it is nonetheless refreshing to see all of the excitement about bowling — no matter what the initial emphasis.

The most recent location that we discovered is called Pier Pins, less than a block from the Jersey Shore in the community of Long Branch. An article from njbiz.com says that the facility seeks to “strike” a chord for patrons with a unique new space featuring real and virtual activities along with a bar and lounge.

The venue includes full-sized bowling lanes, three sport simulator bays offering a chance to play golf, lacrosse or soccer, and also billiards, air hockey and even ping pong tables. “We knew that a high-end entertainment concept would be the ideal complement to the diverse slate of food and beverage, and shopping experiences available to visitors at Pier Village,” said Nicole Kushner Meyer of Kushner Companies, developers of the property.

California Joins The New Renaissance

Pinstripes, a publicly held company that we featured in an article appearing in November of 2023 (“Another Bowling Company Going Public”), will be adding to their San Mateo and Canoga Park locations, with the addition of Walnut Creek in Northern California this winter.

An announcement from kron4.com states that shoppers in downtown Walnut Creek will now have another option for fun as a new Pinstripes has opened. The space, formerly occupied by Crate & Barrel, will be located next to the heavily trafficked Apple Store.

The Walnut Creek Pinstripes will offer full size bowling lanes, two indoor bocce courts and a 100-seat bistro. There will also be expansive outdoor patios and spaces available for private events, to groups ranging from 20 to 1,500. This will be the 18th Pinstripes location nationwide, with other facilities in Illinois, Ohio, Maryland, Connecticut, Texas, Minnesota, Kansas, Georgetown (in Washington D.C.), and California.

Another announcement involving a new bowling center in West Sacramento was made by kcra.com. The BLVD! will take over the old Safeway supermarket store location on West Capitol Avenue that's been vacant for many years. The new owners told kcra.com they are set to close on the building soon and hope to open for business in May 2025.

The BLVD! will feature a range of amenities including bowling lanes, a laser tag arena, billiards, and also a restaurant and bar. This will be The BLVD!'s



Exterior view of the new Pinstripes in Walnut Creek

second site. Their original location is in Bakersfield. The opening is not without some controversy, as a traditional bowling center, Capitol Bowl, is located less than half a mile away on the same street.

David Bynum, CEO of The BLVD!, said that they plan to bring 100 to 130 new jobs to West Sacramento. In a statement to KCRA 3, he said, “The proposed lanes will not accommodate league play, which is currently happening at Capitol Bowl.”

And yet a third announcement was made regarding a new bowling center in Corona, when 810 Billiards and Bowling told Retail & Restaurant Facility Business (retailrestaurantfb.com) they plan to open their first location in the Golden State, at The Shops at Dos Lagos, in spring 2025.

“This will be our first location in California, which is a big step, but we are excited about our role in making Dos Lagos the entertainment destination for Corona,” said CEO Michael Siniscalchi. “We’ll have private upstairs bowling areas for events, dart lanes, axe throwing, a Mean Mugs Milkshake Bar and space for live music and other events.”

I also learned the origin of the 810 moniker from their website. It stands for 8 - the 8 ball in billiards, and 10 - the ten pins in bowling. Whether or not the owner is a lousy bowler (8-10 split) was not divulged.

Arizona Buzzing With New Activity

The Round1 Bowling & Arcade chain has announced a third Arizona location in Chandler (the others are in Tucson and Glendale). Their newest location opened this month, according to abc15.com. The new facility has bowling, party rooms, arcade games, karaoke, billiards and a ‘VIP Immersive Lane.’ The newest venue took over an abandoned Sears space at Chandler Fashion Center.

Another new development is taking shape in the Shops at Norterra. Scheduled for a March 2025 opening, the Harkins Theatres will combine a movie

studio inspired entertainment venue with bowling lanes, a video game arcade and a sports bar with multiple jumbo viewing screens. The concept will be known as Harkins BackLot, according to a news release at azcentral.com.

A second Harkins BackLot has already been announced at the Verrado Marketplace in Buckeye, with a scheduled opening in spring 2026. This venue will include the same amenities as the Norterra location (bowling, video games, sports bar with elevated bar food, and a ‘VR experience’). The Harkins BackLot idea is the Scottsdale-based company's first foray into more than just movies.

And still another release from abc15.com touts the O.H.S.O. Brewery's duckpin bowling concept that is planned to open in spring 2025. The downtown Gilbert location will include duckpin bowling, arcade games and a food menu that “is still under development.”

Bowlers Rejoice - New Bowling Centers in Texas

A news release from wcmessenger.com reports that a new bowling center will be opening just north of the Decatur city limits on U.S. Highway 287 (next to Cattfish O'Harlies). The community has been without a bowling center for more than 20 years, when Decatur Bowl closed its doors. At press time, the new bowling center was without a name.

Another news release from the Forney City Council announced the approval of a bowling and restaurant development known as Slicks Entertainment. It will be part of a concept that features apartments, townhomes, medical offices, a hotel, and several retail and restaurant pads north of U.S. Highway 80 (near Kohls).

The 30,000 square foot Slicks Entertainment will include bowling, an upscale restaurant, bar, games, and four pickleball courts, according to informey.com. The anticipated grand opening was scheduled for early spring 2025.

And still one more: A Pinstack bowling location will be coming to Westlake, centrally located between Dallas and Fort Worth, according to a release from pinstackbowl.com. In addition to bowling, the facility will include rock climbing, a ropes course, laser tag, and hundreds of video games, along with a full service restaurant and bar. This will be the seventh Pinstack in Texas. The others are located in Plano, Las Colinas, Allen, Austin, and two in San Antonio.

WOW! That's a lot of new development! Something has changed and it is now evident that the change is nationwide. Whether you love him, or hate him, the change has to be, in my opinion, attributed to the “Trump effect.”

• Portions of the preceding article adapted from all of the websites referenced
• Photos provided by pinstackbowl.com and pin-stripes.com



Interior view of a typical Pinstack location





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Superlatives continued from page 1

Tackett now sits on the precipice of more PBA history: One more title would tie him with Don Johnson for 10th all time.

Honorable mentions: Graham Fach, Chris Via, Andrew Anderson

Most Disappointing Player: Marshall Kent

Kent enjoyed a career-best season in 2024, ranking second in points and winning his first career major.

It has been an entirely different story in 2025: Kent ranks 58th in points and, outside of his 24th-place finish in Delaware, he has yet to make a cut or cash.

There is, of course, plenty of time for Kent to turn this thing around. His early-season results have been underwhelming, nonetheless.

Honorable mentions: Anthony Simonsen, Jesper Svensson

Most Surprising Player: Tim Foy Jr.

Here's how Foy finished in his nine PBA East Region events last season: eighth (yawn), first, second, third, second, first, second, first and first.

So, Foy tallying three straight top-five finishes on the PBA Tour isn't coming out of nowhere, but it's certainly not what anybody, including Foy himself, expected.

Perhaps it's time for all parties to recalibrate expectations.

Honorable mentions: Michael Davidson, Graham Fach, Timmy Tan

Best Comeback Player: Santtu Tahvanainen

The former Rookie of the Year missed all of last season with a knee injury. He said he didn't bowl more than 50 games between the end of the 2023 season and the start of the 2025 season.

And yet, in just his second event since the injury, Tahvanainen won the whole thing. That's the definition of "built different."

Honorable mentions: Jakob Butturff, François Lavoie, Shawn Maldonado

Most Consistent Player: Tom Smallwood

Smallwood is one of just five players to cash in all four singles events. He's finished 18th, 26th, 26th and 27th in those events.

He ranks — you guessed it — 26th overall in points.

Honorable mentions: Matt Sanders, Nathan Bohr

Most Unbelievable Moment: Kyle Troup's 5-10 Split

All Troup needed to make the PBA Pete Weber Missouri Classic finals was a mark. He made a quality shot and hit the pocket, but the 5-10 withstood his wrath. Troup failed to convert the split, allowing Timmy Tan to make his first career show.

The cruel irony of Timmy Tan later leaving a pocket 5-pin to ultimately lose to Dom Barrett in the stepladder finals is noted.

Honorable mentions: Chris Via's 3-2 frame, Tim Foy Jr.'s missed 9-pin, Dom Barrett's 0-3 comeback against Richie Teece

Best Offseason Change: Andrew Anderson

A handful of exempt players changed bowling ball manufacturing brands this season, but none have succeeded with their new equipment quicker than Anderson, who switched from Motiv to 900 Global.

It's not that Anderson wasn't successful with his previous company — in fact, he won a title and both PBA Elite League MVP awards last season — but leading the U.S. Open nearly wire to wire and adding another top 10 finish is a market improvement.

Thus far in 2025, Anderson has shown signs of returning to Player of the Year form.

Worst Offseason Change: Matt Russo

After finishing seventh in points a year ago, Matt Russo ranks 69th through four events in 2025. He has yet to cash, and his best finish thus far is 47th.

Is it because he changed from DV8 to Motiv? Maybe the learning curve is steeper than he would have liked, but there are numerous other factors to consider than equipment.

Some of you may have read the previous two superlatives and want to jump to a broader conclusion. Before you make that leap, consider a Motiv player has won three of the four titles so far this season, and, in the event not won by a Motiv player, a Motiv player set a PBA scoring record.

Best Story: Malotts' Doubles Run

Wes Malott won two of his 10 career titles at Bowlero Vernon Hills, including the most recent event in 2008. His first win in the Chicago suburb came in 2006.

His son Jordan, who was only three years old at the time, came down with a nasty viral infection that week. He spent three days in a nearby hospital while Wes competed.

Jordan recovered by the end of the week, just in time to watch his dad compete in the finals. Wes took down Mike Scroggins before taking down, of all people, Chris Barnes in the championship match. Jordan joined Wes on the lanes to help his dad hoist the trophy.

Nineteen years later, the two competed together on the very same lanes in the PBA Roth/Holman Doubles Championship.

Wes has largely **stepped away** from the tour as injuries have taken their toll and Jordan plays college baseball at Indiana Tech. So when the Malott boys laced up their shoes in Illinois, they were very much the *other* father-son duo in the field.

It didn't take long for the Malotts to steal the spotlight, turning a cool story into a legendary one during the third round of qualifying: Wes shot **back-to-back 300 games** and Jordan shot nearly 800 himself.

The Malotts made match play in the PBA Roth/Holman Doubles Championship and both made the singles cut in the PBA Owen's Illinois Classic. While they came up 80 pins shy of making the championship round in doubles, their performance left few dry eyes and represented an emotional, full-circle moment for their family.

Honorable Mentions: Hall of Fame surprises, Landin Jordan makes U.S. Open prelims show

Biggest Butterfly Effect: Nick Pate's Big Break

In the final frame of the PBA Delaware Classic pre-tournament qualifier, Pate almost left a 7-10. Instead, only the 10-pin remained, he made the spare and made the cut by a single pin.

If that split stood, Pate would have missed the cut to the main field, never made the PBA Delaware Classic finals, and lost 2,300 of his 2,865 points. He'd plummet from 24th in points to the mid-70s.

That could have been career-changing pin action when we look back at the end of the season.

Honorable mentions: François Lavoie almost shows up late to U.S. Open match play, Sean Rash makes the 2-8-10 against Kris Prather in PBA Owen's Illinois Classic match play, the entire tour doesn't get the flu in early February

The 2025 PBA Tour continues with the [PBA Mike Aulby Nevada Classic presented by Pilgrim's](#) on Tuesday, Feb. 25.

Aulby continued from page 1

After starting the season with three straight top 10 finishes, Graham Fach finished 74th in Missouri. The Canadian-born lefty will look to get back on track this week.

Dom Barrett found his stride during match play in Springfield, climbing all the way from the 23rd qualifier to the title match. The Triple Crown winner looks to carry that momentum across the country this week.

When EJ Tackett is on his game, he has been almost unbeatable. Through four events this season, Tackett has finished 14th, first, 29th and first.

Tackett notched his 25th career title in the PBA Pete Weber Missouri Classic, a trophy that Tackett said he will cherish for the rest of his life.

A 26th career title would tie Tackett with Don Johnson for 10th all time. The chance to achieve that feat in the PBA Mike Aulby Nevada Classic, **named after a fellow Indiana legend**, is undoubtedly on Tackett's mind.

Format

All players will bowl 18 games of qualifying on the eponymous 39-foot Mike Aulby oil pattern, beginning on Wednesday morning.

Instead of the elimination match play format used in Delaware, Illinois and Missouri, this event will feature the eliminator qualifying rounds.

The top 32 players after 18 games of qualifying will bowl an additional six games on Thursday evening.

The top 16 players after that round will compete in the second elimination round, in which six more games will determine the five players advancing to the championship round.

The PBA Mike Aulby Nevada Classic stepladder finals will air live Saturday, March 15 at 6 p.m. ET (3 p.m. local time) on FS1.

Tournament Schedule

Qualifying: Coconut Bowl at Wild Island | Reno, Nev.

Finals: National Bowling Stadium | Reno, Nev.

All times Pacific/local

Tuesday, Feb. 25 | BowITV

11:30 a.m. — Pre-Tournament Qualifier (seven games)

6 p.m. — Official practice session

Wednesday, Feb. 26 | BowITV

11 a.m. — Qualifying Round 1 (six games)

6 p.m. — Qualifying Round 2 (six games)

Thursday, Feb. 27 | BowITV

11 a.m. — Qualifying Round 3 (six games)

Top 32 qualifiers advance

6 p.m. — Elimination Round 1 (six games)

Top 16 qualifiers advance

Friday, Feb. 28 | BowITV

11 a.m. — Elimination Round 2 (six games)





Top five qualifiers advance to championship round

Saturday, March 15 | FS1

3 p.m. — Championship Round (stepladder finals)

More information on the PBA Mike Aulby Nevada Classic presented by Pilgrim's is available [here](#).

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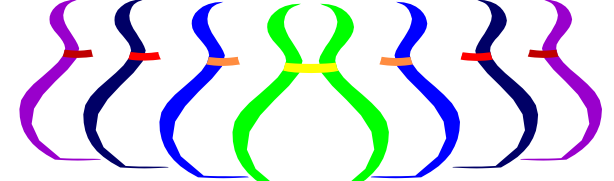
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38th Year! Brunswick® INVITATIONAL

Love Laundry Sweeps To The Fourth Round Lead

by David Yamauchi

DOWNEY - The Brunswick Invitational took the lanes for the third week of the 4th round. Teams were moving for position as all the three round-winners were at the top of the league race with the exception of Weaverbird who was riding a hot 9-1 start.

In the "A" match, **Weaverbird** (Eric Williams Jr.) matched up with 2nd round winner **Pro Approach Oak Tree** (Leonard Ruiz Jr.) with both teams starting the round at 9-1. Pro Approach Oak Tree took the opener, but Weaverbird found their groove as they took a huge game two, but Pro Approach Oak Tree came back to take game three and salvage a 2-3 result. Eric Williams Jr. led Weaverbird with a 629 set while Bobby Hornacek paced Oak Tree with a 605 series. Weaverbird will remain in the "A" match next week.

In the "B" match, the other two round-winners **Bowlium** (Billy Myers Jr.) and **Love Laundry** (Ramsey Basurto) paired up. Love Laundry took the 5-0 sweep at Bowlium ended up short handed losing their anchor in the first game. Birthday boy Marquan Rivers was big for Love Laundry with a 642 series while Kevin Jones posted 627 to lead Bowlium. Love Laundry moves to 13-2 and will be in the "A" match next week taking on Weaverbird.

Taco Bell (Mike Zuck) and **Junior Amateur Tour** (Kevin Valmonte) were the 5th vs 6th battle with both teams looking to get closer to a shot at the round. Taco Bell came out hot, taking games one and two by a bunch, but Junior Amateur Tour took advantage of a hiccup by Taco Bell and took game three for a 4-1 win for Taco Bell. Jared Eusebio led Taco Bell with a 595 set while Michael Marmolejo was high for J.A.T. with a big 681 series.

DV8 (Matthew Zweig) took on **Don Julio Tequila** (Gabe Garza) in the battle of the high 5-5 teams. The night was all Don Julio Tequila as they swept through DV8. Jason Carrillo was huge for Don Julio Tequila with a 682 series while Matt Zweig managed 605 to lead DV8.

US Foods (Gabe Martinez) and **Del Rio Lanes** (Michael Barnett) were the other teams sitting at .500 for the round. Del Rio Lanes took a low scoring game one, but it was all US Foods from there as they rolled to a 4-1 win. Paul Barraco led US Foods with a 597 set while Ricky Arellano Jr. managed 553 to lead Del Rio Lanes.

Threadworks (Eric Snow) were taking on **Pro Approach Cal Bowl** (David Silva) in a matchup of teams sitting at 4-6. Threadworks was back to being a tough draw as they swept through Pro Approach Cal Bowl 5-0. Eric Snow bumped his legend status with a big 663 set for Threadworks while sub Stephanie Zavala put up 549 to pace Cal Bowl.

Forest Lanes (Jon Diso), **Touchstone Homes** (Christian Eichelkraut), **Family Ties** (Bobby Campagnale) and **Pro Approach Del Rio** (Augie Labrado Jr.) rounded out Monday's action. Forest Lanes swept through Touchstone Homes led by JT Diso's 618 set. Christian Eichelkraut led Touchstone Homes with a 512 series. Pro Approach Del Rio took the first game, but Family Ties came back with a huge 863 to win game two and edged out a 7-pin win in game three for a 4-1 result. Scott Smith led Family Ties with a 601 set while Augie Labrado Jr. paced Pro Approach Del Rio with a 574 set.

Financial Advisors Pot went to Scott

TOP 10 ROUND 4 WEEK 3

Love Laundry \$ 13	Threadworks 9
Weaverbird 12	Bowlium \$\$\$ 9
Pro Approach Oak Tree \$. 11	US Foods 9
Taco Bell 10	Forest Lanes 7
Don Julio Tequila . . 10	Junior Amateur Tour. 6

TOP 10 THIS WEEK

682 Jason Carrillo	639 Gabe Garza
681 Michael Marmolejo	629 Eric Williams Jr.
663 Eric Snow	628 AJ Garcia
647 Paul Varela	627 Kevin Jones
642 Marquan Rivers	681 JT Diso

SUPER SWEEPER POT

Sponsored by Dean Sanderson of Transamerica Financial Advisors Inc.
1st Scott Smith 252 \$160 • 2nd Vernon Adams 234 \$70



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Smith (252) for \$160 with 2nd to Vernon Adams (234). Sidepots went to Jeff Hickenbottom/Eric Snow (229) for \$46.50 each and Vernon Adams (234) for \$62 with 2nd to Paul Varela (231) for \$31. SuperPot went to JT Diso (261) for \$186 with 2nd to Eric Williams Jr. (255) for \$93.

Round 4 on the USBC 2024 Nationals Team Event pattern continues next week. Come out and watch Southern California's Richest League take the lanes at Del Rio every Monday night at 7:30!

Del Rio Lanes 7502 Florence Ave., Downey CA 90240 • (562) 927-3351

Saturday WEEKLY **NO TAP** Tournament

Check in 11:00am • Bowl at 12:00pm • \$30 Entry Fee

Optional Pots & PLENTY of \$5 Brackets

Handicap is 90% of 230 • Call to Reserve a Spot (562)927-3351  At Del Rio Lanes: 7502 Florence Ave. Downey, CA. 90240