

Face-Masked Crusader Wins Again

by Dave Williams

For those of you that remember, 2021 was the year that I dubbed Francois Lavoie the Face-Masked Crusader of Bowling. I compared Lavoie to Bruce Wayne, the alter ego of Batman, who was the more resigned, shy character portrayed in Bob Kane's famous comic strips.

"The quiet, unassuming professional bowler from Quebec City, QC, weighs in at a mere 128 pounds distributed on a chiseled 5'6" frame," I wrote in the column that appeared in March of that year. "But what Lavoie lacks in stature, he more than makes up for with his intense concentration."

Steve Mackie, propri-

etor of Ten Pins & More, host for the 20th New Mexico Open, has the same sort of portrayal for Lavoie's character: "He's as cool as ice when addressing the pins. He credits his early coaching at the University of Wichita for developing a strong mental game, evidenced by his two US Open wins alongside a Tournament of Champions title."

Once again over this past weekend, Francois put all of those attributes to good use in winning his second consecutive title at the New Mexico Open. The victory was good for a record \$13,500 first place prize. He joined John Young

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TWELVE PLAYERS EARN 2025 PBA TOUR EXEMPTIONS AT PBA TOUR TRIALS

Dozen players secure full-time status on 2025 PBA Tour

by Nolan Hughes

This year's PBA Tour Trials, returning for the first time in nearly 15 years, proved to be the ultimate test of ability, expertise and grit.

12 players emerged from the 48-game tournament, which featured four oil patterns and four different bowling centers in the Chicago area, with exempt status on the 2025 PBA Tour.

The dozen players join the top 43 play-

ers in 2024 PBA Tour points, earning priority entry for all 2025 PBA Tour events with no entry fee and eligibility for the PBA Elite League draft. Pennsylvania's Hayden Stippich, who also led the 12-game pre-tournament qualifier, won the event with a total pinfall of 10,917 (+1,317). The two-handed lefty battled with one-handed southpaw Brandon Runk, who

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Left to Right: Brian Markowitz and Norris Runnels (The Grip Doctors)

SUREFIRE PRO-SHOP – “IS OPEN” For Business

by Frank Weiler

BULLHEAD CITY, AZ. – Last week I traveled to “River City” on the banks of the Colorado River to visit a “New Concept” Pro-Shop recently opened by old friend Brian Markowitz. I wanted to see what a “New Concept” Pro-Shop looks like and how it operates. It was spectacular! A great experience.

The “New Concept” Pro-Shop is an “Open Concept” Pro-Shop where bowling balls and bowling equipment are prepared and rejuvenated in the presence of the bowling customer. As a new “Open Concept” Pro-Shop the SUREFIRE Pro-Shop has it’s drilling equipment in the center of the pro-shop where an expert ball driller and rejuvenator can interact with you the bowling customer.

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The “Grip Doctors” tell me that bowlers should focus on the lanes and not have to worry about their grip. Their philosophy: Attention to Detail. “The customer is the our Top Priority”.

Their 80 years experience have made them very attuned to their bowling customers and their needs. Both Brian and Norris made it clear that their Pro-Shop will promote a family environment where bowling customers will be able to relax, watch television and read their favorite Bowling Magazine. In addition to cable television, customers may watch bowling on the big screen.

My 230 mile drive to “River City” to experience a “New Concept” Pro-Shop was a success. I like new ideas and new concepts and originality is the driving force behind the “Open Concept” Pro-Shop. I like it. This new concept will make the sport of Bowling and the bowlers experience better. I like it!

By the way the SUREFIRE Pro-Shop is located just three blocks from the Colorado River at 1700 Lakeside Drive, Number 2, Bullhead City, Arizona. Give the “Grip Doctors” a call at 908-278-0906.



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Karl Kurtz: An Unassuming Star on the Rise

by Fred Eisenhammer

WINNETKA – “I’m having a super summer.”

So said Karl Kurtz, and the Northridge resident with the cannon for a right arm is definitely not kidding.

Karl just completed his Mixed Classic Handicap League’s summer session at Winnetka Bowl with a Paul Bunyanesque 236 average, his best-ever for a season. Just a year ago in the same ultra-competitive league, Karl averaged 19 pins less.

His 236 average projects to a 708 series, a blazing three-game set for most bowlers not named Justin Pluchino, Craig Kisro or Johnnie Englehart.

Additionally, Karl has raised his career total to 57 perfect games and 28 800 series so he definitely ranks among the game’s elite and his star just seems to be swinging higher.

In the past couple of years, Karl has made huge strides and there’s no telling where this momentum could carry him.

Still, one wonders if Karl’s powerful bowling has been running under the radar. Perhaps that’s due to his unassuming, matter-of-fact style. He mows down pins without fanfare. He delivers his 250, 260 games with consistency, not dramatics.

“You don’t need to be a loudmouth with a target on your back instead of being nice and friendly and having fun,” Karl explained

Karl’s Facebook page is the perfect illustration of his modesty and low-key nature.

Karl has posted just a handful of bowling references on his page. As for self-serving tributes to all his accomplishments, you’ll have to look far and wide on Facebook and you won’t find any. One has to wonder if he blasted a 900 or some ungodly score if he would even post that note.

“Probably not,” Karl said. “I’m not a big social media fan, I’ll be honest.”

The Halls of Fame haven’t been knocking at his door but that’s likely because Karl is too young despite having all the credentials. At 53, there’s still time for Karl to be discovered.

Those at Winnetka Bowl who aren’t aware of Karl’s prolific bowling certainly know of Karl, the pro-shop worker at Winnetka Bowl. He’s been working there for nine years, serving as Rusty Bryant’s trusty assistant. They’ve worked together overall for a remarkable 30 years.

Rusty just so happens to be a much-decorated bowling icon who has garnered Hall-of-Fame recognition for both his bowling and coaching prowess. It’s easy to be overshadowed by such a bright-light persona as Rusty.

On reflection, Karl seems as if he fits the part of Robin to Rusty’s Batman. Still, there is no jealousy there, just genuine warmth and support between the two.

“I tease him all the time,” Rusty said. “I’m pushing 77 [years old] and have 83 300s and I think he has 57 and he’s 53. I say, ‘As long as you’re ahead of your age, you’re in great shape.’”

Now, Karl seems to be ripping off his Robin mask as he’s ripping off honor scores and Rusty couldn’t be prouder. Rusty says the Hall of Fame awaits him.

Teammates also are recognizing that Karl is coming on strong. Chuck Hansen, who bowls with Karl on Wednesday’s Mixed Classic Handicap League, says he doesn’t expect Karl to bowl 700s every week. But he does expect Karl to show up and do his usual thing.

“I expect him to bowl well every night,” said Chuck, a virtuoso bowler himself for decades. “Some nights he carries and some nights he doesn’t. He’s a good bowler. He knows what he’s doing.”

What Karl is doing now is bowling much more than he ever has before, including competing in almost 30 tournaments a year. That’s definitely been helping his game.

Summed up Rusty: “He bowls and sleeps and he goes to Disneyland a lot.”

“Pretty much,” said Karl with a laugh.

There’s no doubt that after starting bowling when he was 8; rolling his first 700 (761!) when he was 16; and smashing his first 300 when he was 20 (at now-defunct Mission Hills Bowl), Karl Kurtz is thriving on the lanes –his Happiest Place on Earth.



Chuck Hansen, right, says Karl Kurtz “knows what he’s doing” when he’s out bowling. The two are teammates in Winnetka Bowl’s Mixed Classic Handicap League. Photo by Fred Eisenhammer

PBA continued from page 1

finished second, for the tournament lead throughout the majority of the event.

Tim Foy Jr., Nate Purches and Ryan Barnes rounded out the top five. Kim Bolleby, Cam Crowe, Bailey Mavrick, Nathan Bohr, Andrew Hall, Chase Nadeau and Chris Sloan were the remaining qualifiers.

After splitting in the seventh frame of the final game, Sloan threw five consecutive strikes to end his tournament at +897.

Frank Snodgrass could have struck out in his final frame to tie Sloan, but left a 10-pin on his second shot in the 10th. He ultimately finished 10 pins behind Sloan.

David Northouse, Pontus Andersson, Dean Vargo, Cody Shoemaker, Sam DeWitt III and Matt Kuba all entered the final game with a chance to crack the exempt field, but came up just short.

2025 PBA TOUR EXEMPT QUALIFIERS

Hayden Stippich - McKean, Pa.

Stippich is next in a long line of bowling greats from Erie, Pa., including Bob Learn Jr., Mike Machuga and Mike Shady. The 24-year-old was a two-time All-American at Tennessee Southern University, coached by Learn himself.

Brandon Runk - Milton, Pa.

Runk made his introduction to the PBA Tour by qualifying for the 2022 PBA Players Championship East Region Finals. The left-hander competed at William Paterson University before joining the PBA.

Runk, married to Alexis Runk (formerly Neuer) is the son-in-law of former PBA Tour champion Andy Neuer and brother-in-law of Anthony Neuer.

Tim Foy Jr. - Seaford, Del.

It's been a banner year for Foy. Back in March, in his home state, made the televised finals of the PBA Delaware Classic in dramatic fashion. This summer, he won an Eagle at the USBC Open Championships in the Regular Team event.

This week, the two-handed right secured full-time PBA Tour status for next season.

Nate Purches - Fond du Lac, Wis.

Purches made his PBA debut by making the 2021 PBA Junior Boys National Championship Finals. He joined the PBA Tour earlier this year, leading all rookies in points and earnings this season.

Ryan Barnes - Denton, Texas

The son of two Hall of Famers is quickly making a name for himself. As an amateur, Barnes made the PBA Players Championship presented by Snickers finals, finishing third, earlier this season. After finishing his college bowling career at Wichita State this spring, Barnes is set to embark on his professional career and aims to contend for 2025 Rookie of the Year.**Kim Bolleby - Sweden**

Bolleby finished 47th on the 2023 PBA Tour in points, but lost his exemption after finishing 61st this season. The savvy left-hander regained his exempt status after an impressive performance this week, particularly on the final day of PBA Tour Trials.

Cam Crowe - Orland Park, Ill.

The uber-powerful and charismatic left-hander will bring a new energy to the tour next season. Crowe, a former St. Ambrose University star, clinched exempt status for what will be his rookie season in his own backyard of Chicago.

Bailey Mavrick - Whitestown, Ind.

Mavrick also introduced himself to the bowling world in 2022, making the PBA Players Championship Midwest Region Finals. After a few seasons of bowling the tour part-time, the two-handed Indiana native now joins full-time.

Nathan Bohr - Austin, Texas

Bohr entered PBA Tour Trials as the odd man out, finishing 44th in points this season. With a gameplan true to himself on the final day, the 25-time PBA Regional Tour champion proved he belongs on the PBA Tour.

Andrew Hall - Westborough, Mass.

Hall finished second in 2023 PBA Rookie of the Year voting, earning a career-best finish of 18th in the PBA Kokomo Classic. The former Arizona State and St. John's collegiate player learned the game competing in the New England Bowlers Association.

Chase Nadeau - Las Vegas

Nadeau impressed in the USBC Masters earlier this season, finishing tied-seventh as an amateur. The 29-year-old decided to make a bid at a full-time role on the PBA Tour and succeeded.

Chris Sloan - Ireland

The 2019 USBC Masters finalist has had his share of struggles on the PBA Tour in recent seasons, but he earned his way back onto the tour with an incredible display of poise. Sloan's final five strikes could prove to be a career-altering moment.

FINAL STANDINGS

Hayden Stippich, +1,317	Frank Snodgrass, +887
Brandon Runk, +1,291	Pontus Andersson, +866
Tim Foy Jr., +1,237	Dean Vargo, +862
Nate Purches, +1,113	Cody Shoemaker, +855
Ryan Barnes, +1,078	Sam DeWitt III, +853
Kim Bolleby, +965	Matt Kuba, +846
Cam Crowe, +953	Ethan Fiore, +828
Bailey Mavrick, +944	Wesley Low Jr., +827
Nathan Bohr, +932	Rafiq Ismail, +819
Andrew Hall, +912	Ethan McDonald, +817
Chase Nadeau, +908	William Svensson, +804
Chris Sloan, +897	Cortez Schenck, +802
David Northouse, +888	Full standings are available here .

More information on PBA Tour Trials is available [here](#).



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New Mexico Open continued from page 1 of Albuquerque as the only two time winners of this event. Young also won his titles in consecutive years, in 2004 and 2005.

Lavoie had to win three matches in the championship round, live-streamed by the incomparable Emil Williams Jr. (Why doesn't the PBA hire this guy for their televised programs?). As Mackie reports, "Lavoie first beat Kevin Jenkins (Anthem, AZ), 201 to 182. Next up was top seed PBA star Jakob Butturff (Chandler, AZ), who lost to Lavoie by a 220 to 190 score, making the two even at one loss apiece."

With confidence riding high, the "Caped Crusader" never missed the pocket in the deciding game and defeated Butturff with a 238 to 199 victory, and the first place prize of \$13,500. This was actually Lavoie's third win a row, following victories in PBA events in Jonesboro, Arkansas, and Denver, Colorado, the previous two weeks.

Can you say, HOT, HOT, HOT!?

Current USBC Masters champion, DeeRonn Booker of Albuquerque, finished fourth after losing to Jenkins in the first game of the stepladder finals, 192 to 178. A list of all the finalists can be found on the Tenpins & More At Rio Rancho Facebook page.

In 2021, I used to wonder if Frenchy (an affectionate name given to Lavoie on the PBA Tour) would ever win without the face mask made necessary by the COVID-19 confusion. But within a couple of months, he won once again in the Super Slam... without a mask! In that event, Lavoie defeated Kyle Troup in the championship match, 247 to 202.

What's bizarre is that the announcers didn't even mention the fact that all of the finalists were competing without masks. I guess everyone was so happy that things were getting back to normal, they didn't want to jinx the moment by mentioning the lack of masks.

Through it all, Lavoie's approach to competition has remained the same. In an article posted on the PBA website by Jef Goodger back in 2021, Lavoie stated, "Coming here, I was thinking this (the Super Slam) was going to be a fun event and we're all going to have a good time. Once we started bowling, all of a sudden, I'm in competition mode and I really want to win."

Can you say, COOL AS ICE?!

What a tremendous tournament, reminiscent of the great televised events of the past, with famous announcers like Chris Schenkel and Nelson Burton Jr., Jack Buck and Whitey Harris, Denny Schreiner and Mike Durbin, and let's not forget Fred Wolf and Bill Bunetta. Filling in with color commentary for Emil Williams Jr. was Mike Miller, former PBA touring professional and brother to Dana Miller-Mackie, Steve's wife. The televised show was exceptional, with incredible commentary that focused on the players, and not useless gibberish. A very professional event — congrats to everyone involved.

Here's the finals, in case you missed it:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xs8XnhX_efQ

- Francois Lavoie photo provided by Tenpins & More
- Youtube video provided by Emil Williams Jr. at BowlStreamTV



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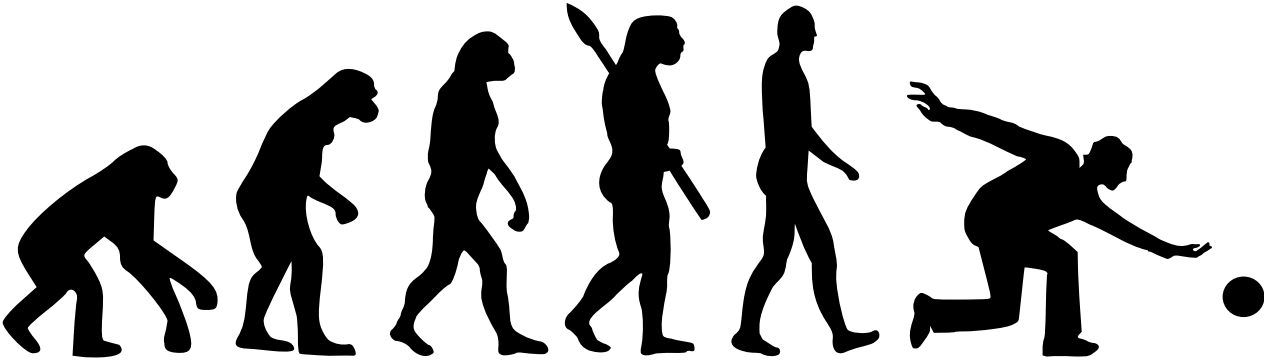
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CA State Singles Championships

Enter Brackets & Side Pots

4th STREET BOWL
1441 N 4th St, San Jose, CA 95112
(408) 453-5555

Youth Bowlers with 140+ average can enter!

- Five games total on the same pair of lanes
- Separate Open & Women's Divisions
- Enter Optional Scratch Division on-site
- Handicap: 90% of 220
- Re-Entry and Walk-in's welcome based on availability (enter no later than 1/2 hr prior to start)
- \$65 Entry Fee (\$80 after 10/12/24)
- NEW 2024-25 USBC Membership required

Sat., October 26, 2024
1:00pm (FULL)

Sun., October 27, 2024
9:00am

DOWNLOAD ENTRY FORM AT CALUSBC.COM • ENTER EARLY!!