

by Nolan Hughes

A tree fell last month in Portland, Maine. The biggest and nastiest one of all.

Wes Malott said, barring a miracle, he will be retiring from the PBA Elite League.

The long-time Portland Lumberjack steps away as the most accomplished player in PBA Elite League history.

Malott won his first Elias Cup with the Silver Lake Atom Splitters in 2014. He joined the Pittsburgh Jack Rabbits in 2015, who were renamed the Portland Lumberjacks in 2016.

In Malott's eight seasons as a Lumberjack, Portland won more Elias Cup titles (three) than finished short of the Elias Cup Finals (two).

With exuberant manager Tim Mack running the show, Portland added Kyle Troup in the 2017 draft and tabbed Kris Prather with the first overall pick in 2019.



Thus ensued the Lumberjacks dynasty: Since selecting Prather in 2019, Portland has never finished shy of the Elias Cup Finals.

No matter the format of the League, no matter the location of the playoffs, no matter how their

players bowled on tour that season, the Lumberjacks found a way to win.

Malott's tenure in the green-and-black rivals that of Tom Brady. From 2011-2018, Brady's New England Patriots made five Super Bowl appearances, winning three, and lost three conference championship (semifinal) games.

If you ask Mack to explain his team's consistent excellence, he'll answer in a single word. "In this environment,

this place, this building, this crowd, it takes

consistent and as ac-

a special human to be (anchor)," Mack said in 2022. "That's why we call him Franchise."

There's a reason more bowling legends resemble Norm Duke than Malott in stature. Twoplus decades as one of the world's most powerful players has taken its toll on the 47-year-old.

Malott cannot fully extend his right arm. His back requires constant attention. His left knee has borne the brunt of hundreds of thousands of shots.

continued on page 2

## **GARY NAKANO "Bowler of The Week" - Tops Golden Agers League**



REDLANDS – Gary Nakano has been one of the most accurate senior bowlers in the Citrus Belt Association for years now. His game is all about accuracy. Rolling bowling ball after bowling ball into the pocket. That's Gary Nakano, consistently rolling accurate strike balls like a rolled a huge 691 scratch robot.

#### by Frank Weiler

Α

#### curate as a bowling robot. A bowler consistent enough to average over 200 for a decade now. bowler consistent enough to lead senior

20 pins higher than any other series rolled this season.

The TOP TEN bowlers of the Golden Agers League follow:

1. Gary Nakano 202.7 leagues in average. A 2 P.J. Buckner 202.1 3. Tom Collins 201

The League wishes to give a "SHOUTOUT" to Anthony Placentia for rolling the league high scratch game of 256 and Jim Sheppard for rolling a solid 674 scratch series a couple of weeks ago.

The exploits of these great bowlers prove again that **"CALIFORNIA BOWL-**ERS ARE THE BEST BOWLERS IN THE WORLD".

That's why I think of Gary Nakano as "Mr. Roboto". A bowler as is the league high, nearly 10. Jerry Kelly

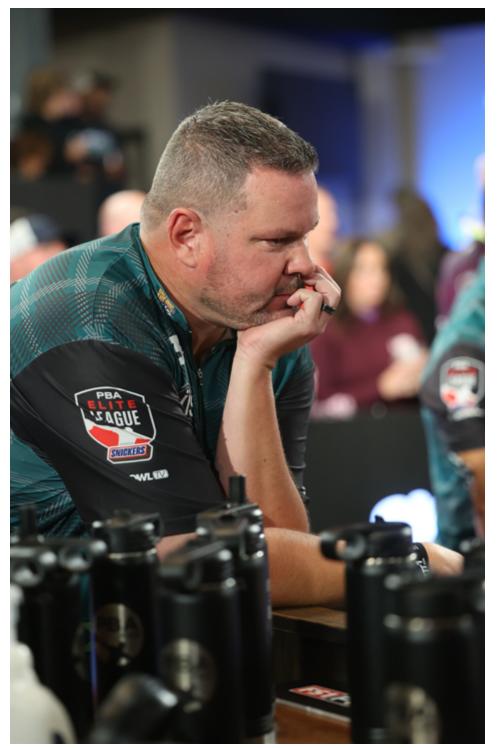
honor scores.

This past week Gary 5. Tom Smith series and 238 game 7. Frank Weiler 192 in the Golden Agers 8. Tracie Lucky 187 League. His 691 series 9. Bob Corrigan 183

bowler capable of rolling

4. Jim Sheppard 200 193.9 6. Bob Pedersen 193.6 181





#### WES MALOTT continued from page 1

"Between my back and elbow, (my body) just doesn't allow me to do my trick," Malott said. "It restricts me from being able to do what I can do. Mentally, that is very, very tough to deal with."

This season's PBA Elite League expansion featured matches at every tour stop. The more rigorous schedule rendered the Big Nasty to the Big Neutral.

Malott posted a middling strike percentage (51.02%; 32nd of 47 qualifying players) and a lackluster filled frame rate (82.61%; 41st of 47 qualifying players) this season.

With Malott's effectiveness dwindling, the team wanted to send him off into the sunset on a high note. That was also last year's plan, but former Lumberjack Ryan Ciminelli and the Waco Wonders spoiled Portland's bid for an unprecedented Elias Cup four-peat.

With Troup, Prather and an exemplary supporting cast — Graham Fach, Tom Smallwood and Portland's adopted son Arturo Quintero — the Lumberjacks looked as dominant as ever this season.

"It was a collective motivator between me and Kyle (Troup), where we just wanted to get the big fella back to the title match to give him one last ride," Prather said.

Entering the regular season finale, Portland sat one win away from earning the No. 2 seed for the playoffs. However, Troup and Smallwood suffered injuries during the preceding PBA Tournament of Champions.

Needing a win to secure a postseason bye, Portland called upon Malott to be Franchise.

Game 1 of the Race-to-Two match didn't go according to plan. Malott split twice as Portland fell behind Jason Belmonte's Lucky Strike L.A. X.

Mack's faith in Malott never wavered.

"He's doing it on guts right now," Mack said, referring to Malott's elbow, in a TV interview after Game 1. "I expect the Franchise to throw two really good shots this last game and put us in a good position. We're going to be just fine. We'll be in the hunt, don't you worry about that."

Malott paid off his manager's everlasting trust, delivering two strikes to help Portland force a roll-off.

Then, like the Ninja Turtles and Master Splint, the young Lumberjacks carried continued on page 3



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#### WES MALOTT continued from page 2

the team home.

Mack, somewhere deep in his soul, would probably admit Portland's best lineup in 2024 involves Malott on the bench. After all, the Fach-Quintero-Smallwood-Prather-Troup lineup is the one he utilized against Akron in the semifinals.

With an Elias Cup Finals matchup looming against the Las Vegas High Rollers — the league's best team that twice took down Portland in the regular season — Mack wrestled with perhaps the toughest managerial decision of his career.

Many people, including FOX Sports color analyst Randy Pedersen, expected Mack to keep Malott on the bench in favor of Quintero.

"In my opinion, the Lumberjacks are at a deficit," Pedersen said on TV prior to the Elias Cup Finals. "There are six players on each roster, but they are down to five because I don't believe their anchor, their franchise player, Wes Malott, is going to be able to go tonight."

Malott prefers to lead by example. He raises his voice only when necessary.

After hearing Pedersen's comment, and knowing Mack decided to start him, Malott chose to speak up.

The High Rollers slowly seized momentum of the match, and Mack pulled Malott for Quintero in Game 3. Malott, ever the team player, stood by his manager.

"I know he had to make some extremely hard decisions today to take me out, but I support those decisions 100%," Malott said. "I actually apologized to him for even having to be put in that position. I think Timmy would put me in there until I say it's done. He believes in me like no other. He wants nothing but the best for me, and I know that deep down, but he's also got to look out for the team to try to get another banner up there. The lanes got to where they were and Arturo is the better person to get the ball to do that with my restrictions. To me, that was an easy call."

Debating the merit of the decision would prove inconsequential. The High Rollers caught fire in Game 2 and their anchor Andrew Anderson seemed poised to strike at will until he delivered a championship.

Las Vegas' dominance in the closing Game 4, at least, offered a familiar consolation for Portland.

Two years ago, Malott put the finishing touches on Portland's three-peat with a spare in the final frame. He then stepped aside to allow Norm Duke to cap off his PBA career with a curtain call.

Few saw the latter stages of Duke's career closer than Malott. Though bitter rivals in the PBA Elite League, Malott and Duke were close friends and teamed up to win two Roth/Holman PBA Doubles Championship titles, including what may likely be Malott's last PBA Tour title in 2015.

"When I had the chance to pick Norm as a doubles partner, Del Ballard Jr. said to me, 'If you pick Norm, he's going to give you 110% every shot no matter what," Malott said. "That's something I've learned and taken myself is to never give up and give 110%, especially in these team environments."

This time, Troup stepped aside to give Malott his well-deserved sendoff. The new face of the Lumberjacks wouldn't have it any other way.

"When I first got on this team, I had barely spoken to Wes out on tour," Troup said. "He's a big guy, a little scary, but he's grown to be one of my really good friends. I've learned a lot from him and seen the compassionate side of him in the last couple years. He cares for us and gives us respect. To have a Hall of Famer treat you that way, like one of his own, it's very special to my heart.

"We're going to hate to see him go, but you best believe next year's for the big fella."

lifetime.

He thought of the BoPo faithful storming the approach in celebration. He thought of Mark Roth personally awarding him the MVP award. He thought of Mack dumping a champagne-filled Elias Cup on his own head.

That was five years ago. Malott first arrived in Portland nearly a decade ago.

"I'll never forget the first time we came here. I'm like, 'Why in the world are we going to Portland, Maine?" Malott said. "Once we got here, we knew exactly why we were here. I'm so grateful to be able to have had the time and memories that I have here at Bayside. This place has been incredible to me. For whatever reason, these guys pushed me to another level, and it's been an absolute blast to be a part of."

Malott also thought of what Andrew Anderson and AJ Johnson told him after the match, thanking him for giving them a role model to look up to.

He thought of his wife and his children, who gave him the strength to put himself in position to have this farewell.

"How am I even in this position? How am I at this age to where it's kind of already come and gone?" Malott said. "It feels like just a couple years ago, we started all this, and here we are in 2024. What a ride it's been. Hopefully, this isn't the complete end."





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Even at this stage of Malott's career — he hasn't won a PBA Tour singles title since 2013 — he is revered in Portland.

Bayside Bowl is where the former King of Bowling remains king. Where he feels like an MVP, not a liability. Where chants of "Nasty!" remind Malott of who he is, not who he once was.

As Malott walked off the approach for perhaps the final time, one look at his face, his manager's, his teammates' or his competitors' said more than any commentary could have.

"I'm not much of a crier, but I was tearing up as he threw his last shots," Prather said. "He never judged you. He never talked poorly of anybody. He was always supportive and trying to pick everybody up — I mean, he's a big guy. He probably could have literally done it. Emotionally, when we struggled, he was always there. Anytime we needed somebody to step up, he did.

"As great as he's been as a person and a bowler, he's irreplaceable," Prather added.

"It's the end of an era," said Mack, at a loss for words for perhaps the first time in his life.

As Malott reflected on his PBA Elite League career, he thought of Portland's first Elias Cup title in 2019, a triumph brimming with enough memories to last a



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# Brunswick B Brunswick B Love Laundry Jumps To The Round Lead; Nike Bogue Is Perfect

DOWNEY – The Brunswick Invitational took to the lanes for week five of the warmup round with Del Rio Lanes sitting atop the standings with three weeks to go. Scores remained high as the house shot put up little resistance to the bowlers. Mike Bogue wowed the crowd with a perfect 300 game en route to a nice 803 series to lead the league.

In the "A" match, **Del Rio Lanes** (Michael Barnett) was looking to extend their 1.5 game lead over **Love Laundry** (Ransey Basurto) with both teams coming off big wins in week four. Love Laundry took the first and third games, dropping only a close game two, for a 4-1 win over Del Rio Lanes. Love Laundry was paced by Vernon Adams' 706 and Marquan Rivers' 703 sets while Michael Barnett continues to destroy the round putting up 722 to lead Del Rio Lanes. Love Laundry remains in the "A" match next week.

The "B" match featured **Don Julio Tequila** (Gabe Garza) taking on a short-handed **Taco Bell** (Mike Zuck) crew who was an anchor short after a basketball injury. Don Julio came out huge, posting a big 1006 in the first game to set up the bookend wins and taking totals for the 4-1 over Taco Bell. Philip Sujo was huge for Don Julio Tequila putting up a 761 series while super-sub Kasey Uyesugi rolled to a 731 set for Taco Bell. Don Julio Tequila moves to the "A" match trailing Love Laundry by one game with 2 weeks to go.

**Touchstone Homes** (Christian Eichelkraut) rode four wins into the third match taking on **Family Ties** (Bobby Campagnale) who had cooled down after their 10-0 start. Family Ties took the first two by plenty to wrap up a 4-1 win over Touchstone Homes. Family Ties was paced by Bobby Campangale's 722 series while Christina Eichelkraut put up 728 to lead Touchstone Homes.

The new Junior Amateur Tour (Michael Marmolejo) was short-handed with their anchor in Vegas taking on DV8 (Tony Brunning) who was also three-and-a-sub for the match. Junior Amateur Tour took the bookend games

Saturday

#### by David Yamauchi

again big for Junior Amateur Tour with a 711 set while Adam Thomson came in a subbed to a 706 set to help DV8 get the wins.

**Bowlium** (Billy Myers Jr.) was looking to get back into the round taking on **Weaverbird** (Eric Williams Jr.) who was putting up big numbers but sitting at 9-11. Weaverbird came out with a strong 74 pin win in game one and never looked back as they swept through Bowlium 5-0. James Bael was huge for Weaverbird with a 778 set while Butch Jackson paced Bowlium with a 653 effort.

**Forest Lanes** (Jon Diso) matched up with **Threadworks** (Eric Snow) with both teams looking to get hot after luke-warm starts to the season. Threadworks were no average Joes as they swept through Forest Lanes 5-0. Ray Minter led a balanced attack by Threadworks with a 694 set while Marshall Degnan's 763 set was high for Forest Lanes.

**US Foods** (Gabe Martinez), **Pro Approach Oak Tree** (Leonard Ruiz Jr.), **Pro Approach Cal Bowl** (Austin Wasielewski) and **Pro Approach Del Rio** (Augie Labrado Jr.) rounded out Monday's action. US Foods swept past the Oak Tree bunch led by a huge 300-803 from Mike Bogue and a 771 effort from Paul Barraco. Bobby Hornacek put up 702 to pace Pro Approach Oak Tree. Pro Approach Cal Bowl took 4 from Pro Approach Del Rio with David Silva and three subs getting the job done. Andrew Svoren led Pro Approach Cal Bowl with a 714 set while Omar Ponce Jr. managed 641 to lead Pro Approach Del Rio.

**Financial Advisors Pot** went to Mike Bogue (300) for \$160 with 2nd to Marshall Degnan (298) for \$70. First game sidepot was a four-way split between Mike Bogue, Bobby Hornacek, Vernon Adams and Brandon Grant (279) for \$20 each. Second game pot went to Mike Bogue (300) for \$54 with 2nd to Marshall Degnan (298) for \$27. SuperPot went to Marshall Degnan (265) for \$168 with 2nd to Gabe Garza (253) for \$81

Junior Amateur Tour took the bookend games but a big 112-pin win in game two by DV8 gave them the 3-2 win. Brandon Grant was the lanes at Del Rio!

TO	P'	10	RO	UN	D	1	W	<b>EEK</b>	5

Love Laundry 19	Taco Bell 14
Don Julio Tequila 18	US Foods13
Del Rio Lanes 17.5	Threadworks 13
Family Ties 15	Touchstone Homes 13
Weaverbird 14	Junior Amateur Tour 13

#### TOP 10 THIS WEEK

731 Kasey Uyesugi
730 Charlie Kinstler
728 Christian Eichelkraut
727 Gabe Garza
722 Bobby Campagnale

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