# CHRIS UIA OVERPOWERS B ELIMONTIT, TROUPR,  <br> by Nolan Hughes 

Chris Via ended his 2023 PBA Tour season on a high note, marching through three PBA superstars to win the PBA Strike Derby.
Via defeated Jason Belmonte, defending champion Kyle Troup, and EJ Tackett in successive rounds to claim the exhibition win and the $\$ 20,000$ top prize.

Each player had two minutes to throw as many strikes as possible on the 42-foot Mark Roth oil pattern. Any ties would be decided by a one-ball roll-off, where a
strike was needed to advance.
The two-handed Ohio native was able to cruise through the first round, as Belmonte posted just seven strikes. Via surpassed the 15 -time major champion with plenty of time to spare, finishing the opening round with 11 strikes.
"I got into a pretty good rhythm after like the first 20 or 30 seconds of the first round," Via said. "And from then on, I felt like I had a really good chance to win it all."
continued on page 6


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The So. Cal 2023 Junior Shootouts are this week at Santa Clarita Lanes on October 29th.
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by David Yamauchi


B Division 2nd Alexandra McCowan, Champion Jonathan Orozco and 3rd Stephanie Hong Cole (\$265) in the final. D Division was taken Bowl, the championship C Division champion by Gavin Wiecking for rolloffs were exciting with was Bailey Villegas con- $\$ 275$ with Lorenzo Rubio the top two divisions gotinuing his hot bowling (\$150) and Tyson Cline ing to the final frame to for a $\$ 330$ scholarship (\$130) rounding out the crown the winners. In defeating Nathan Del- cashers. the A Division, Daniel continued on page 6


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## 2024 PBA TOUR TO BEEIN IN JANUARY WITH PLAYERS CHAMPIONSHIP

## PBA's G6ith season to Degin with a major in Wichita

For the fourth consecutive season, the PBA Tour will begin with a major in 2024. The PBA's 66th season commences in January with the PBA Players Championship at Bowlero Northrock, formerly Northrock Lanes, in Wichita, Kan.

The stepladder finals will air Monday, Jan. 15, 2024 at 5 p.m. ET live on FOX. The champion will receive $\$ 100,000$.

The 2024 PBA Players Championship will include 24 games of qualifying and 24 games of round-robin match play to determine the five stepladder finalists.

The main field for the Players Championship will be limited to a maximum of 88 players. Entries for the Players Championship and additional 2024 PBA Tour events, including pre-tournament qualifiers (PTQ), will open on Nov. 20, 2023.

Priority entry for the Players Championship will be given in the following order: top 60 players on the 2023 PBA Tour points list, PBA Tour champions from 2014 to 2023 (not among the top 60 players from the 2023 points list), and up to four (4) commissioner exemptions.

All PBA members who are not currently classified as priority entrants will need to enter the PTQ for the Players Championship. An estimated 20-25 players from the PTQ will advance to the main field.

The schedule will be as follows:
Tuesday, Jan. 9: PTQ and official practice session Wednesday, Jan. 10: Qualifying Rounds 1-2 Thursday, Jan. 11: Qualifying Rounds 3-4 Friday, Jan. 12: Match Play Rounds 1-2 Saturday, Jan. 13: Match Play Round 3 Monday, Jan. 15: Stepladder finals

This marks the third time in the past four seasons that the PBA Tour season will begin with the Players Championship.

Kyle Troup won his first career major title at the season-opener in 2021, then Jason Belmonte captured his third Players Championship and 14th career major, both PBA records, in 2022.

Following their respective wins, Troup and Belmonte each went on to earn Chris Schenkel PBA Player of the Year honors that same season.

In last season's PBA Players Championship presented by Snickers, Kevin McCune defeated Jakob Butturff in the best-of-five finals to win his first career title.

Kevin's win solidified the McCunes as the first three-generation family of PBA Tour champions, following his father, Eugene, and grandfather, Don.

The history of the PBA and Wichita are inextricably linked. The city has hosted PBA Tour stops dating back more than 50 years, and dozens of past, present and future PBA stars harnessed their skills at Wichita State University.

Fifteen years ago this month, the PBA Tour's 50th season also began in Wichita. Norm Duke won the 2008 PBA World Championship, which marked his PBA-record third consecutive major championship victory.

The 2024 PBA Players Championship will etch a new chapter to bowling's rich history in Wichita.

More information on the 2024 PBA Tour season will be announced soon.


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# Mctrath Was A Fierce Compeciilor <br> by Dave Williams 

Not a lot is known about the private life of Mike McGrath. I remember when Lynn Matsubara of the California USBC contacted me following Mike's untimely death. Although we grew up in the same part of the country (Northern California), McGrath was already a PBA star when I had not yet started high school. I apologized to Lynn for not knowing more about Mike but gave her the information that I had at the time.

Mike was born in Berkeley, Calif., on May 13, 1946, and spent his early days in the nearby town of El Cerrito, home of the famous Golden Gate Lanes that was owned and operated by Quee Prentice. Golden Gate Lanes became an important part of my life, both in terms of bowling records and occupation. In my early years I was able to establish some bowling records at the 32 lane establishment, and later wound up defending the center for American Recreation Centers (ARC) in court action against Target Stores and the City of El Cerrito Redevelopment Agency.

As I wrote in an article posted in August of 2019 ("Where Have All The Bowling Leagues Gone?"), the fact that a new Target was to provide close to $\$ 500,000$ in annual sales tax revenue to the city, whereas bowling game prices were not even taxed because of the recreational aspect of the game, made any effort to save the bowling center futile. That was more than 30 years ago, and as we all know it is a theme that has continued in all the states, but especially in Southern California.

I'm sure that Mike must have participated in youth leagues at Golden Gate Lanes, although it was not known to favor lefties like McGrath. In fact, it was quite the opposite. Mike attended Chico State University, and in the summer of his sophomore year he entered the PBA Portland Open at Valley Lanes in Beaverton. In his very first professional event, he came away the winner against the very best bowlers in the nation. That's a record that can never be beaten, only tied.

In my recent conversations with Larry Lichstein, I learned that Larry was very close to Mike, and also Johnny Petraglia and Butch Gearhardt, the nucleus of a team that won three USBC Team titles. I reached out to Lichstein earlier this week, and this is what he had to say about McGrath, who won 10 PBA Tour titles in a shortened career that included three majors (two PBA Nationals at Garden City Bowl on Long Island, and a US Open victory at Madison Square Garden), and three Classic Team titles at the USBC annual tournament:
"McGrath was fierce," said Lichstein. "A lot of the bowlers didn't like that, but that was just his style. Many of the players, like Ritger or Soutar, would shrug off a loss, shook your hand, and moved on. But not Mike. If he lost, you knew it."
"The lefty-righty controversy was at its peak in those days. Seventeen percent of the field were lefties, and they were making $49 \%$ of the prize money," said Lichstein. "When all of the players in the field of 16 semi-finalists were left-handed (an event that Lichstein won at ARC Saratoga Lanes in San Jose), that was the final straw." Larry went on to say that it was the back-up balls by Dick Weber and Nelson Burton Jr. (who both cashed) that really paved the way for a traveling lane man on the tour the very next week.

 Mike McGrath (2000's)

## McGrath Didn't Need The Slots

"McGrath, Petraglia and Bill Allen didn't need slots to bowl well," said Lichstein. Bill threw a full roller and was able to tug the ball, while McGrath and Petraglia created their own area with a free swing and accuracy. I was on the committee to vote for the greatest bowler of all-time in 2009, and I voted for Earl Anthony over Walter Ray Williams Jr., a right-hander. Anthony was the best at tugging the ball like Bill Allen, but his real secret was the repetition in his approach, and speed control."
"If I had it to do over again, l'd certainly take a look at this bowler from 'Down Under.' If he continues the way he's going for another 3 to 4 years - no one will ever touch him in terms of records," said Lichstein.

McGrath joined the AMF Staff of Champions not long after Lichstein was signed. The two would continue their friendship, on and off the lanes, until McGrath's passing in 2017. But perhaps Mike's closest friend was fellow pro bowler Barry Asher, who roomed with McGrath while traveling on tour for many years.
"For those of you who didn't really know and understand him, you really missed something special," said Asher, in an article that appeared in the California Bowling News in 2017. "He was a Hall of Fame bowler as we all know. But in life he was a Hall of Fame person, friend and especially a father. I will miss him as long as I draw breath."

In the same article, Carol Mancini, longtime copublisher of the California Bowling News, stated:
"Although I haven't seen Mike McGrath for a few years, he has a special place in my heart. Mike received a red jacket for one of his PBA wins and he gave it to me. A couple of years later a Japanese friend who owned a center in Tokyo was visiting me at Del Rio Lanes. He mentioned that his association was putting together a bowling museum. I gave him Mike's jacket with the short history."

Mike McGrath action photo from the files of Henry Kaven, and provided by Dave Williams

Head and shoulders shot of Mike provided by bowl.com

WE GET EMAILS — Regarding last week's story on Bill Lillard, Craig Kisro writes: "Lillard had the first messenger to carry the ten pin on television. Had to be around 1953 on Championship Bowling with Whispering Joe Wilson calling the action from FaetzNiesen Recreation.


Mike McGrath (1970's)

## A "DEVIIISH" HALLOWEEN BOWLING TALE <br> by Frank Weiler

Our tale begins about a century ago around the time a tropical torm, some locals called "Hurricane Jezebel", hit the Clarksdale, Mississippi area. Sometime around Halloween of 1921 or 1922, when Warren Harding was President.
Clarksdale is a city in northwestern Mississippi bordering on the daddy of all North American rivers. It is famous as the birthplace of the "Blues"
At that time a young twelve or thirteen year old boy, named James, was growing up in this small community. He was a boyhood friend of another youngster who would become a famous Blues musician, Robert Johnson. Johnson was the most influenial Blues guitarist and singer of his time. His music was known to have been studied by the Beatles, the Rolling Stones and Eric Clapton to name a few. His story is interesting to many because f the "Faustian Bargain" he supposedly made and then wrote and sang about in his music. He is of interest to us because of his influence on James and his devilish bowling story.

James was born to children of former slaves and lived a life of poverty most of his existence. His Parents were sharecroppers on an old plantation just three miles from the center of Clarksdale. James attended local schools and did odd jobs to earn spending money. One of those jobs was pin setting in the area's only bowling alley. A building with four wood lanes in a back room behind a local tavern.
For a decade James set pins and studied the sport of Bowling from the backend. After closing time, he was allowed to bow with his fellow pin setters. The boys used wooden bowling balls and some bowled barefoot. Most of the bowling balls used in rural Mississippi at the time were made of wood. A 200 game was a big deal and the house's top bowler averaged 163! Most men averaged in the 140s. Women were not allowed in the local barroom nor the back room bowling alley.

As a boy and young man James was an average bowler and his friend Robert was an average musician. Some would go so far as o say that Robert was a bad musician. While Robert was adequate a a harmonica player, he was downright bad as a guitarist. He is known to have been thrown out of several local bars because his guitar playing was awful.
Robert was determined to make himself into a good musician. To become a success, to become famous. He shared his dreams with James and told James of rumors he had heard about strange happenings at the "Crossroads". That anyone going to the Crossroads at midnight might meet up with the devil! Might have a chance to bargain for a better life. James thought that if he rumors about the Crossroads were true, he might go along with Robert. Maybe he could fulfill his dream of becoming a great and famous bowler!

The "Crossroads" was a mysterious rural crossing of two dirt oads miles from town, rumored to have covered the grave of an ancient Native American warrior. While there was never any hard evidence of such a grave there were constant stories linking the Crossroads to strange happenings. Rumors that the Crossroad was some sort of portal to hell. Or a gate to LIMBO.
LIMBO is said to be a dwelling place for souls caught up be ween heaven and hell. Some of which bargained with the devil but then repented. Souls rejected by GOD and Satan. Souls willing o manifest themselves to humankind as GHOSTS. Shadowy figures in the form of mist, smoke, or clouds.
Journeying to the Crossroads at night was said to be frightening Standing in the center of this intersection had a chilling affect on body and soul. The Crossroads at midnight was said to cause the body to go cold, feeling numb and listless. Kneeling at the center of the Crossroads and imploring SATAN to manifest himself could result in temporary paralysis or even death! The appearance of Ghosts and Goblins dancing and carousing in the moonlight.
For centuries shaman have warned that bargaining with the devil can be dangerous. Why would anyone risk it.
In the cases of Robert and James it was about fame and fortune. Robert wanting to be a Rich and Famous guitarist and James a Rich and Famous bowler
The young men decided they would walk to the "Crossroads" on HALLOWEEN night and at midnight implore the devil to manifest himself and make a deal. Robert brought his guitar and ames brought a bowling ball. At midnight the young men each ook a turn imploring the devil. They each offered their eternal ouls in return for Fame and Fortune. It is rumored that the devil hen took the guitar from Robert and played like only a demon possessed could play. He played for an hour then handed the guitar back to Robert. Then Robert heard the demon say, "IT'S DONE, AMEN"
After that nothing happened for the next two hours. No devil ever took the bowling ball from James. At 3 AM the young men decided their time was up. It was time to return home
The rest is history. Real history documented in the local Clarksdale, Mississippi newspapers of the day. Somehow Robert Johnson was completely transformed. Suddenly he was an outstanding guitarist. Fans said he played the guitar as though hree men were plying the strings at once, not just one man. His ongs were soulful like no other. He became famous, influential and a celebrity. Fans came from yonder and near to see and hear Robert. Robert 's story became known when the lyrics of his songs escribed his transformation. Robert died young and rumors spread hat he was poisoned by the husband of his lover
The devil never accepted the deal tendered by James. THE DEVIL DIDN'T MAKE A BOWLING DEAL!

If you ever visit Clarksdale, Mississippi consider a midnight walk to the "Crossroads". You may want to make your own deal with the devil. You may want to be a Bowling Superstar. Guys, ou may want to be the next JASON BELMONTE, PETE WEBER or WALTER RAY WILLIAMS JR. Ladies you ma want to be the next LIZ JOHNSON, SHANNON O'KEEFE, DARIA PAJAK or SHANNON PLUHOWSKY.

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Left to right: Savannah Gonzalez \& Desiree Buell with Halloween Buddy

Strike Derby continued from page 1


Via poured it on in the semifinal against the topseeded Troup, who won the event in 2022 also at Bayside Bowl in Portland, Maine. Via tallied 15 strikes while Troup could muster just nine.
Via met the 2023 PBA Chris Schenkel Player of the Year favorite Tackett in the finals. Unfortunately for Tackett, he had emptied his figurative gas tank in a thrilling 16-14 semifinal victory over the 2022 runner-up Matt Ogle.
"I definitely didn't throw as good of shots as I did the match before. I'm gassed," Tackett said. "It seemed like every good shot I threw that time was either a ring-10 or stone-9. I tried to dig down deep and throw some good shots and I did, but it was Chris' day."
Tackett doubled to win two majors this season but said this is a whole different beast.
"My heart rate was probably about the same, though," he added.
Via, on the contrary, seemed to finish each round with energy to spare (pun intended). He said he practiced a modified version of the Strike Derby at home though noted his makeshift speed rounds were nothing like the real thing.
"I was just trying to find that happy medium of going insanely quick and making terrible shots, but also trying to get a good amount of shots off," Via said. "Because I felt like the lanes weren't terribly difficult, so if I can get more shots off I feel like my strike percentage is going to be in that $50-60 \%$ range more often than not.'
The rapid pace rendered typical adjustments moot. Players rotated through an assortment of equipment and barely spent any time setting their feet.

Instead of moving left, Via said he would try to throw the ball harder as each round progressed He said that helped combat any lane transition and helped balance out any lost ball speed caused by tired legs.
After clinching the win, Via hoisted the massive trophy then passed it to his mom, Angie.
"The only other (PBA) trophy I have is the U.S. Open, and unfortunately it was during COVID time, so no one was able to be there," Via said. "Obviously this isn't a title, but still it's fun to win and it was pretty cool that she was able to come in for it and be here."
Players were invited based on their 2023 season strike totals, provided by Lanetalk. Troup was awarded the top seed as the defending champion and Marshall Kent replaced an injured Jakob Butturff.
Anthony Simonsen, who led the PBA Tour with 2,799 strikes this season, fired 13 strikes in his open ing round, but was eliminated by Ogle.

## PBA STRIKE DERBY SCORES

## Quarterfinals

No. 1 Kyle Troup def. No. 8 Marshall Kent 11-11 (X-X, X-9)
No. 5 Chris Via def. No. 4 Jason Belmonte, 11-7 No. 3 EJ Tackett def. No. 6 Jesper Svensson, 12-12 X-X, X-8)
No. 7 Matt Ogle def. No. 2 Anthony Simonsen, 15-13 Semifinals
No. 5 Chris Via def. No. 1 Kyle Troup, 15-9 No. 3 EJ Tackett def. No. 7 Matt Ogle, 16-14 Finals
No. 5 Chris Via def. No. 3 EJ Tackett, 15-7
FINAL STANDINGS

1. Chris Via, $\$ 20,000$
2. EJ Tackett, $\$ 12,000$
3. Kyle Troup, $\$ 7,000$
4. Matt Ogle, \$7,000
5. Anthony Simonsen, $\$ 4,000$
6. Jason Belmonte, $\$ 4,000$
7. Jesper Svensson, $\$ 4,000$
8. Marshall Kent, \$4,000

## Shootout <br> continued from page 1

Hong took the title and $\$ 525$ as Brandon Rother needed a double but came up a strike short for $\$ 525$. Jeremy Morris cashed 3rd for $\$ 225$. In the B Division, Jonathan Orozco took the $\$ 485$ win when Alexandra McCowen (\$305) needed a double in the 10th and the second shot jumped high. A costly missed 10 pin left Stephanie Hong in third for $\$ 290$ with Jai Kankariya rounding out the cashers with $\$ 175$. Ezekiel DeGuzman went wire to wire in the C Division to take the title and $\$ 370$ with Bailey Villegas cashing for the second time in two days for $\$ 250$ and Chason Hou pocketing $\$ 160$ for third. D Division action saw 2ndseed Charlie Katz bowl a huge clean 210 game to take the title and \$280 over top-seed Percial Garcia who took home $\$ 275$.

We have added a date at Forest Lanes on Sunday, November 19th which will be the final event of the Shootouts. There are only 6 events left on the schedule with up to $\$ 6,000$ up for grabs at each event. With entry fees from \$30, these are fun, affordable events for Southern California junior bowlers to have a chance to earn SMART Scholarship funds for their future.

Bowlers entering at least three events in the series will be eligible to enter the Southern California Grand Championships in January of 2024. Over $\$ 100,000$ in scholarships will be available in the mega-event thanks to the Bowling Centers of Southern California. Hope to see you for this weekend's event Sunday, October 29th at Santa Clarita Lanes. Check-in will begin at 9:00 with bowling at 10:00.



C Division 2nd Bailey Villegas, Champion Ezekiel DeGuzman and 3rd Chason Hou


D Division Champion Charlie Katz and 2nd Percila Garcia


A Division Champion Daniel Hong and 2nd Brandon Rother


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 John Strickiman BlasisA Perfeci 300/Jonadhan Huero Shoois 299
by David Yamauchi

DOWNEY - The Brunswick Invitational took to the lanes for the last week of the house-shot round and the last chance for some huge scores for a few months. John Struckman wowed the crowd with a runaway perfect 300 game to start the night.

In the "A" match, Family Ties (Mikey Villarreal) bowled knowing they had the round locked up with Bowlium (Billy Myers Jr.) looking to bank some wins for the next round. Family Ties kept the momentum going with two big games, but Bowlium put up a 939 last game to sneak one out of the match. Michael Montano was huge for Family Ties with a 780 set while Billy Myers Jr. again led Bowlium with a 729 series. Family Ties finishes at $30-5$ to lead the league after one round.

In the "B" match, Junior Amateur Tour (Anthony Santos) was looking at the tough draw taking on ThreadWorks (Eric Snow) with both teams playing for position for next week. Junior Amateur Tour stole game one by two sticks, but it was all ThreadWorks after that for the 4-1 win. Paul Varela put up 668 and sub Jerry Cant 666 in the winning effort while the youngsters paced JAT with Kaven Massey's 651 and Kyler Orosco's 645 series

US Foods (Gabriel Martinez) and Cal Bowl (Leonard Ruiz Jr.) were both sitting at 16 wins looking to grab a few more points on the house pattern. US Foods took a lopsided match as they cruised to the 5-0 win. Paul Baracco was big for US Foods with a 709 set while Ramon Torres managed 615 to lead Cal Bowl.

Forever Hope Foundation (Ramsey Basurto) climbed all the way up to 7th after a rough start to try and lasso some wins from Professional Approach Keystone (William Morris). Forever Hope Foundation blasted a 2910 en route to a 5-0 sweep of Professional Approach Keystone. Ramsey Basurto blasted 781 to lead Forever Hope Foundation while Aaron Law put up 609 for the Keystone guys.

## 7502 Florence Ave., Downey CA 90240 • [562] 927-3351

| TOP 10 ROU | 1 WEEK 7 |
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| US Foods........... 21 | Dea Riol lanes.. |
| advors. | pva.............. 17 |
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| Boxium......... 20 |  |

TOP 10 THIS WEEK
798 Jonathan Huezo 745 John Struckman 781 Ramsey Basurto 780 Michael Montano 779 JT Diso
772 Eric Williams Jr. 742 Augie Labrado Jr. 740 Mikey Villarreal 729 Billy Myers Jr. 728 Daniel Hong

## SUPER SWEEPER POT

Sponsored by Dean Sanderson of
Transamerica Financial Advisors Inc.
Jonathan Huezo $299 \$ 160 \cdot$ 2nd Daniel Hong $280 \$ 70$
 ( 275 and 277 ) for $\$ 28$ each game. SuperPot went to Augie Labrado Jr. (290) for $\$ 168$ with 2nd to Mikey Villarreal (268) for \$84

Come on out and watch Southern California's Richest League shift patterns to the 30 -foot short-oil to kick-off Round 2 on Monday at 8:00!


## Weekly Scratch 5-Gamer Every Tuesday <br> $\mathbf{\$ 5 0}$ Entry Fee with Optional Pots and Brackets Check-in at 6pm • Bowl at 7pm • 1 in 5 Payout October 24: Marshall Holman Saturday HDCP No-Tan Tournament \$25 Entry Fee with Optional Pots and Brackets

 Check-in at 11 am • Bowl at Noon • 1 in 5 Payout 4 Games on Same Pair of Lanes on House Shot 22771 Centre Dr. Lake Forest, CA 92630 (949) 770-0055