

DAVID OZIO: Rising PBA Star

David Ozio of Vidor, Texas has become one of the most consistent performers on the PBA Tour. He is among the leaders in average, earnings, and cashing percentage, and he already has two titles to his credit in 1985.

Ozio, 31, and wife Lisa have a one-year-old daughter, Heather.

At this year's Firestone Tournament of Champions in Akron, Ohio, Ozio spoke at length with Editor Bob Cosgrove on a variety of subjects. What follows is the first part of their conversation.

When did you first start thinking about the PBA?

Ozio: When I was about 23. A bunch of guys were sitting in a restaurant shooting the breeze and we all just decided to go on tour. It was the thing to do at the time. We were just talking about it and it was just a deal where, 'Ah what the heck, let's go—let's try!'

Were you all top local bowlers?

Ozio: Yes. We won lots of amateur tournaments. We wanted to advance our abilities to see what we really had, so we decided to jump in feet first. We called (the PBA), filed our applications and went out the next month.

What happened to your three buddies?

Ozio: They all bowled a year and then dropped out. Most of them didn't even bowl the full year. That first year was brutal: I went the first ten tournaments I bowled in without getting a check in 1978.

Did you have an outside occupation?

Ozio: I've always worked construction. I've been a welder for ten years and I just always fell back on that.

What kind of guy is David Ozio?

Ozio: Easy, you might as well say. I let everybody get to me. I'm soft. I'll do anything for anybody else, and whether they stab me, I won't stab them back. I'm just always the give-in type, and always have been, and I'd just as soon always be that way. I'm real soft-hearted. It's kind of hard to bowl out here as a soft-hearted person because you have a tendency to have too much compassion for others and this is a game where you can have compassion for nobody! That's the way it is. I've been living like that for a long time and she (Lisa) gets on my case a lot for it—not being firm. Time merits being firm

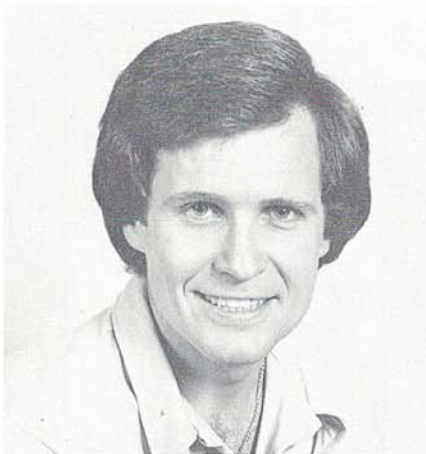
with somebody or in certain instances, but usually I'll turn the other cheek first in ninety percent of the cases.

What kind of people do you hang around with?

Ozio: Pretty much all mellow people: people who stay out of trouble, people who are basically the same type of nature, people who are good friends of ours and who do the same kinds of things in our off times.

Who are your closest friends out on tour?

Ozio: That's really hard to say. We're friends with a lot of people. I don't think we're really directly close with any one couple. Lately, we've been doing a lot of things with Steve and Cindy Wunderlich—he's my doubles partner this year at the Showboat. The Prittses—we do a few things with them. There's just a lot of people we go out with occasionally and they will come over. They're just people who basically live in trailers and travel the way we travel.



Do you read much?

Ozio: No. For some reason, I can't stand to read. I never did as a child. To sit down and read something, unless it just catches my attention and holds it, I won't read it. I'd just as soon overlook it. I'll skim it real quick and take out the beef and then throw it away. If it's really interesting and something that I'll want to know—like fishing articles—I'll read the whole thing and study it, but otherwise, I just can't sit down and read something for the fact of reading it.

My reading skills aren't as sharp as most peoples are for the simple fact that I lose interest too quick. That's probably the case with most things—except bowling. When you get decently good at something, you then just want to perfect on it and keep working hard at it to make it the best.

I've always had a fear out here—a phobia—of not really being good enough to be out here. Not really thinking that my game was good enough—I was always inferior to everybody else. Always afraid of what somebody would say. Now, forget it! I don't care what they say. As long as I'm making money, I don't care what they say. I don't care if I throw ten Brooklyns a game—well, I do care—but it's that type of attitude now.

I really feel bad a lot of times when I miss the pocket to the left or get a lucky break that carries, but then again, you put the shoe on the other foot and there are ten times as many bad breaks then there are good breaks. They never balance out, but they always made the famous statement that 'they'll all balance out.' Well, quote unquote, that's wrong!

Do you ever read any bowling publications or instruction manuals?

Ozio: I'm taking a course right now through Tom Kouros which I've fell back on a little bit. A haven't persued it as much. I really jumped into it when he first gave it to me. I did the first thirteen or fourteen chapters real quick and learned a lot from it. Lately I've been so bogged down with bowling good I haven't had time to study it. When I wasn't bowling quite as good, I had plenty of time.

Now, I try to spend what time I have relaxing. That's the big thing right now—just relaxing. The last few weeks have just been non-stop. You bowl 42 games a week and then travel time—the whole week is taken care of. You hardly have a minute to sit down and do anything. You have business to take care of. You're calling home taking care of stuff. I tell ya, this whole year has been hectic. But then again, I guess that's the price you've got to pay for making good money.