

Tony Walton: PBA Tournament Diary

Tony Walton, 17, of Washington, D.C. won a Pro Spot in this year's Fair Lanes Open. He agreed to meet with Editor Bob Cosgrove before the tournament and after each round give his thoughts on competing with the greatest bowlers in the world. What follows are edited excerpts.

Tony Walton's Scores

	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
1-	222	195	195	264	187	225	1288
2-	202	202	221	161	181	205	1172
3-	181	165	200	246	180	171	1143

TUESDAY—(After the practice session)

I just met with (Tournament Director) Harry Golden, and he went over the rules and regulations of the PBA with all of us who won spots and other non-members. He pointed out that we were responsible for the score sheet of the individual adjacent to us as well as our own. He also mentioned that if we're within the cashing spot, we have to have our bowling balls weighed no later than one-half hour after the last squad.

The dress code was discussed, including the fact that hair could not be below the collar. Somehow I just wasn't too concerned about this detail.

I plan to bring in two Black U-Dots, one with a half ounce positive side weight and another with a duller finish that has a half ounce thumb and a half ounce positive side. I'll also have on hand a buffed Red Hammer, and I'll probably have Pete Jackson (of Myers' Pro Shop) drill up a Purple Angle with leverage weight.

I watched other people—mostly crankers—and most of them were going pretty straight down the boards. Even though they were throwing the ball out there, they were always going straight. No matter where you go, no matter how much back end you have, you've still got to play it somehow straight.

The lanes are not really wide open compared to your usual house condition, say at University. There's not much margin for error.

All adjustments out here on Tour are reversed. Say you finish high on one shot, usually you would move left. Out here, you move right. It's strange! You have to discipline yourself to do that.

I'll be bowling B squad tomorrow at 12:15 p.m. and that's good because I'll get to watch how guys who throw the ball like me play the lanes. I'll be crossing with Gary Dickinson, Art Trask, and one another player.

I'll probably have some trouble getting to sleep tonight. It's not a matter of being nervous; it's more anxiety. Excitement. The adrenaline right now is really flowing!

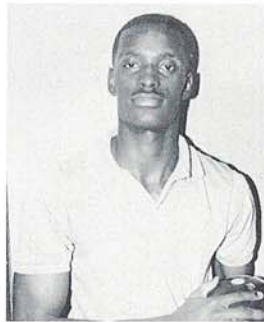
WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON

Right now, I'm a little disappointed in

what I have. I finished with 88 over, but I thought I should have had a plus-100. When I needed to throw that good shot, I didn't do it or the tap came. But as we all know, this is a game of angles and I didn't hit the pocket at the right angle and didn't carry, which ticks me off! But overall, I didn't think I did too bad for my first block. I think a lot of people would like to have plus-88 for their first block.

I had a chance to talk to George Branham and he said the lanes began to open up his last two games, and they began to open up on my pairs, too. The strokers were able to get to the pocket, but they weren't able to carry as well as the power players.

I've bowled in front of crowds before, so I was used to that. The most exciting moment was when I shot 264. The crowd was really live, and it made me feel good, too.



I did make a few reracks, but it was to respot the pins—not to calm me down. I settled myself down between shots.

Chuck Mogavero made me feel real good out there. He knew it was my first tournament. Brian Voss was pretty good, too.

Chuck gave me a few compliments and he was telling me about different conditions and how I had made a ball change a little too late, but when I did he said, I'm glad you changed.

My other mistake was not taking a rack when I should have—it cost me ten pins. I'll never forget that!

Crossing lanes I found the pairs to be a little different, but as far as reaction-wise on the back end, it varied enough to affect your carry. It wasn't a matter of me getting to the pocket; it was a matter of carrying.

I might have been a little slow getting up on the approach. I didn't want to run up on anybody.

My feet were getting too fast at times, which caused me to pull the ball. I have a saying that, there's less pain when you miss right. Next squad I really have to concentrate on keeping me feet slow.

Some may wonder if I believe that I'm in a can't lose situation. I think I have a lot to lose. I want to look good. This is my own personal evaluation. This is letting me know if I can play with these guys or not, and so far I don't think I'm doing too bad. But, we'll see at the end.

WEDNESDAY EVENING

Right now, I am feeling so bad... I bowled so bad this block. I'm still plus-60, but I'll have to have a real good block tomorrow, though. I'll come in with a different attitude.

My carry got a little bad and they were hooking a little early and I didn't adjust that fast. Really, I got caught without the right equipment.

I became very impatient like I did the first block. Once again, Chuck was there to calm me down. I tell ya—he's really a nice guy. I'm to the point that if I make a bad shot, I'm ready to commit suicide! He helped a lot.

My feet got a little fast again. I began to press a little but I made my spares and I think it's keeping me in the hunt. If I have a real good block tomorrow, I could be in the money.

On the gutter ball that I had, it hit my ankle—it really did! Not enough to make it hurt, but enough to go in the gutter.

I was really happy with my spare game.

I'm gonna have a lot of things on my mind tonight, but I'm going to try to relax and then come in and have a good block tomorrow morning.

THURSDAY AFTERNOON

It's the end of the tournament! I finished at plus-3—not bad for a rookie! I'm still disappointed, but the evaluation that I wanted to see is not so disappointing. I'm really not too disappointed. I really need to work hard on my game, and I need to

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strengthen myself physically. I have to make shots consistently. I didn't repeat shots that well today--not that well at all. The target really tightened up today.

As far as being precise, if I make the shots, I'm gonna hit my mark. I'm gonna have four or five boards anyway; I don't care what they want to do. The way I bowled today, it was like I had only one board.

The carry wasn't too bad either, but I saw a lot of 8-pins. A lot of 'em!

The adjustments surprised me. I'd heard that if you come high on the head-pin, you move right. Move right? Yup, it does work! I guess it's the way they do the lanes out here. I think it's more of a slotted shot out there. There are dry boards then heavy oil. And in the middle it tapers off; it gets heavy, lighter, lighter, lighter. Thus, the further left you move, the more it hooks.

This week will definitely push my level up as a league bowler a couple of notches. I think I'm little sharper than I was before. I have a better idea of my game. I'm learning my equipment a lot better. And as far as moving my feet, I'm getting a lot better at that. This will all benefit me in league play.

I have a lot of respect for these guys out here. I really do. Especially the top 53 players. They can come in here week after week and get a check. You have to admire that, considering the conditions they have to play with. And they make the moves fast-- a lot faster than me. They're really talented people.

I wish I had moved my feet much faster than I did. I really do. But that comes along with experience and experience you can't teach.

Just being here bowling was enjoyable. Many people can't say that they bowled. I did. And I finished in the black (200 or better average). I'm not too disappointed with myself.

I'm really going to strive hard to get my PBA card. I have to come back. I'm going to apply this summer. This is something I really want to do, but not full-time. This is challenging; it really is.

I think the lane conditions make you a better bowler. It makes you have a lot more respect for these guys as they come on the Tour. You really don't realize how spoiled you are until you come out here. It shows you what your game is, how far you've come and what you need to work on. That's why this tournament was an evaluation for me.