

20/23 VISION

An Imperfect Look at Youth Bowling's Future



Presented by:

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20/23 VISION: Introduction

If you are reading this document, it is likely you love bowling and unlikely you will be surprised to hear that the sport we love is in trouble. What might surprise you is the depth of the trouble and intensity of the crisis.

20/23 Vision was written, not to assign blame or point fingers, but to bring the crisis to light and begin the quest for a solution. The simple goal: reverse the decline and increase the number of kids who participate in bowling as a sport!

Overcoming the myriad of challenges facing bowling will require the efforts of many people and many different tactics. We have determined we can be most effective in working to bring about change at the youth level. Though youth represent an inappropriately small segment of the bowling population, they are the most receptive to change.

How will you respond to the crisis? How will you answer the call to action? Regardless of your answer, it is imperative that you act now! As you will soon see, without significant and immediate intervention, the end of organized youth bowling is closer than it seems.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gary Beck". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "G".

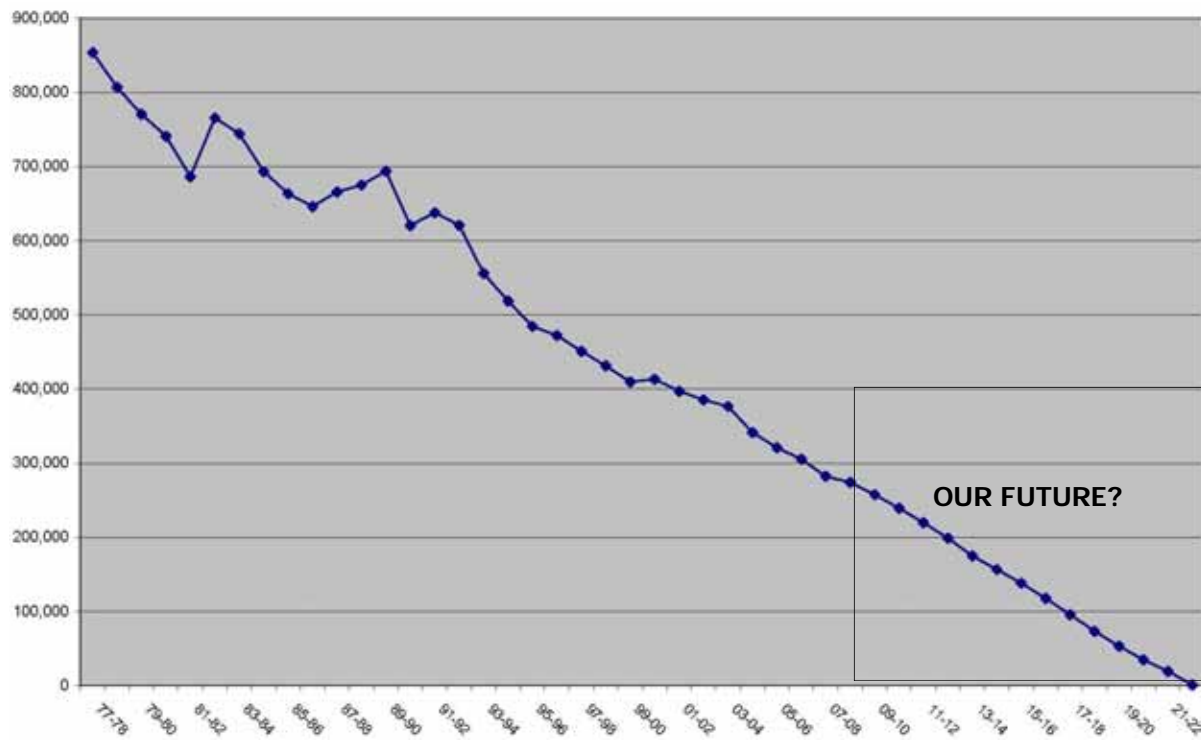
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20/23 VISION: Overview

"Turn out the lights, the party's over."

~ DON MEREDITH

It does not take 20/20 vision to see that the end of certified youth bowling is within sight. If we continue on our current path, certified youth bowlers will become **EXTINCT** in the year **2023**! Unbelievable? Not when you look at the graph below which plots USBC Youth (formerly YABA) membership numbers for the past 3.4 decades and follows the data to its logical conclusion. Can there be any doubt as to where we are headed?



Thirty-plus years of data pointing in the same direction cannot be shrugged off as simply a trend. It's a crisis! Competitive youth bowling is dying, and unless drastic, meaningful steps are immediately taken, its demise will happen sooner rather than later.

Is it possible to change what appears to be a certain outcome? Yes! But, as Jim Collins wrote in his bestselling book, *Good To Great*, "All good-to-great organizations began the process of finding a path to greatness by confronting the brutal facts of their current reality without giving up faith."

On the next page are several BRUTAL facts we must confront to change the sport's path and prevent **2023** from being the year that organized youth bowling dies.

20/23 VISION: Bowling's Myths & Brutal Facts

"The great enemy of the truth is very often not the lie—deliberate, contrived and dishonest—but the myth—persistent, persuasive, and unrealistic. Belief in myths allows the comfort of opinion without the discomfort of thought."

~ JOHN F. KENNEDY

Myth #1. Overall participation in bowling is increasing, so the problems must belong to USBC.

Fact #1. According to a special study of data from the SGMA (Sporting Goods Manufacturers Association) prepared for Killer 'B' Promotions this summer, in 2008 bowling experienced an increase of 0.38 million participants who bowled between 1 and 14 times each, but simultaneously experienced a net loss of 1.9 million participants who had bowled between 15 and 100+ times the prior year.

Myth #2. Youth bowling is thriving.

Fact #2. According to the SGMA data, bowling lost 2.7 million participants between the ages of 6 and 24 who had bowled in 2007 but did not bowl in 2008.

Myth #3. Bowling's decline was and is unpreventable. Bowling participation is a victim of the Internet, 500 cable TV channels, video games and everything else that places time demands on participants.

Fact #3: While bowling has lost millions of frequent participants, there are other sports that have experienced significant growth during the same time period in spite of the distractions of modern life. A few examples are:

Sport	Participants		Average Days Played
	1974	2008	
Outdoor Soccer	100,000	14.2 million	39.8
Little League Baseball	1.7 million	2.6 million	38.7
Lacrosse	unknown	1.1 million	31.2

Prediction: Lacrosse will replace bowling as the fastest growing high school varsity sport within 1 year. Though currently only played in 1/3 of the US, lacrosse has doubled from 518,000 to over 1.1 million participants in just the past 8 years!

20/23 VISION: Questions & Opinions

"The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results."

~ ALBERT EINSTEIN

Questions

- ☒ If bowling continues to be America's most popular activity, and...
- ☒ If bowling continues to be America's fastest growing high school sport, and...
- ☒ If the NCAA has adopted bowling as a championship event, and...
- ☒ If the US population continues to get bigger, not smaller, then...
- ☒ Why is the sport of bowling disappearing?

Opinions

- ☒ Through attempts to appeal to everyone by making everyone equal (handicap, easy lane conditions, and even bumpers), bowling's relationship between effort and reward has been destroyed.
- ☒ The modern game places too much emphasis on technology and too little on technique, further weakening the relationship between effort and reward.
- ☒ The modern game is too expensive.
- ☒ The modern game is too complex, both to teach and to learn.
- ☒ The factors determining who wins in bowling have too much in common with the factors determining who wins in bingo.
- ☒ Unless bowling quickly establishes a direct relationship between effort and reward, the end will arrive sooner than **2023!**

20/23 VISION: Recommended Actions

"We should strive to be the parents of our future rather than the offspring of our past."

~ UNKNOWN

Recommended Actions

- ☒ Stop the rush to enroll kids in leagues and competition and instead focus on skill development. Try imagining a little league coach telling a young player arriving at the ball field for the first time, "Okay Johnny, get your glove and hurry out to third base — your first game starts in five minutes." There are progressive centers like Fox Bowl in Wheaton, IL that spend months teaching the fundamentals before even letting kids keep score, but most kids are introduced to organized bowling via league play.
- ☒ Enable, encourage and reward skills practice under the watchful eye of a coach.
- ☒ When the kids do move into competition, allow their talent to determine the outcome, not handicap. Kids accept defeat when it comes fairly, but there is nothing fair about handicap.
- ☒ Offer more age-based rewards and opportunities. You might not have enough kids to segregate by age, but you can still offer recognition within every age such as "High Series by a 9-year-old," and "High Game by a 11-year-old," and "High Average by a 14-year-old."
- ☒ Resist the urge to make lane conditions easy just because they are kids. Kids love a challenge and will respond to whatever level of expectations are placed on them.

Overcoming the myriad of challenges facing bowling will require the efforts of many people and many different tactics. Whatever action you take, please take it NOW. **2023** is much closer than it seems!

20/23 VISION: Contact Information

*"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful,
committed citizens can change the world.
Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."*

~ MARGARET MEAD

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