

I'm a little behind with the latest blog. We've had a busy week with the cancellation of the Open and Women's Championships, and I've been tied up with that. I suppose this blog should address the cancellations then, so I will speak to that, but I would also like to speak to the spirit of bowlers.

This is a scary time, a time that most of us have not seen in our lifetime. While that sounds like hyperbole and overblown concern to some, to my recollection, I cannot recall ever witnessing anything like the quick and extended shutdown of our social norms that has come about with COVID-19. I was not around for the Great Depression, nor lived in the war-torn countries during World War II so I cannot speak to those events. But for me, this has been a scary and unique time.

I usually refrain from any kind of political discussion when I'm in the bowling world. I get it that politics affects all of us, but for me, bowling is just bowling. . . and I prefer to keep it that way. However, to speak to where I really want to go with this blog, I need reference points to help put into perspective my thoughts regarding the cancellation of the Open and Women's events.

So....

We've become very divisive as a society, and the views with the handling of COVID-19 have been no different. The far right has great concerns regarding the effects of the shutdown on the economy. The thought is that the cure can't be worse than the cause. A recession or even depression caused by the shuttering in of everybody would have a dramatic effect on our lives that would possibly be worse than what is now being experienced. The far left counters with an argument that essentially boils down to if we don't shutter down now, there will be no one around to spend money. So, if you think the economy is tanking now, wait until there's nobody around to stoke the economy because they're either sick or scared of getting sick. There seems to be no middle ground to these extreme arguments if you look on social media. Right versus Left, Conservatives versus Liberals, Us versus Them, etc., where does it end? How do we take out the "versus" and act together as one to work together towards a common goal?

In the process of cancelling the tournaments, we held an emergency OSUSBC Board video-conference meeting and invited the host proprietors of the respective tournaments. As a Board, we wanted to hear the perspectives of all concerned – the bowlers, the proprietors, as well as the staff running the tournaments. There was considerable discussion, I mean considerable discussion, regarding the pros and cons of our actions. I took two main points away from the meeting: the first point was all about the safety of the bowlers as the number one concern with all the parties involved; the second point was that we just really want to bowl. After about 45 minutes of discussion between Board members and the proprietors, it came time for the Board to vote on whether or not to cancel. The Board excused the proprietors from the video meeting for further discussion and to hold a vote on what to do. I told the proprietors to give us about 15 minutes and then I would pop them back into the meeting (administrating video meetings is actually kind of cool with what you can do with conferencing applications nowadays). Another *45 minutes* later, we finally had a decision. Much of the discussion was centered around the health and safety of the bowlers, but giving bowlers an outlet as something to help get back to a feel of normalcy was also a consideration. Ultimately it was decided to cancel.

I wasn't sure what to expect when I started sending out notices of the cancellations the next day. I had heard some pretty passionate responses from both sides of the argument leading up to the meeting. I was expecting that I might get hammered with a backlash saying we're overreacting? Or maybe I would get high praise for doing the right thing? The thing I was least expecting was something in the middle...and for the most part, that's what I actually got.

The two examples below are pretty much representative of the majority of comments I've received:

From an e-mail dated April 7th –

Gary and Staff,

I would like to take this time to thank you for your time and the email you sent to inform us of the cancellation of the tournament this year. It is with deepest regret that you had to make this decision but is very understandable.

We look forward to working with you next year and seeing you at State Tournament in Roseburg.

Thank you and the staff for all your hard work it is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely, Annette Ashton

From another e-mail dated April 4th –

. . . We are really bummed but know this was a tough decision.

Thank you, Natalie Cardoza

As these two responses indicate, there wasn't a backlash nor was there real high praise either. What came through with these and many of the responses I received was respect for a tough decision the Board had to make despite the desire to just bowl – in other words, the middle ground. With as diverse as our political spectrum is in this state and with the divisiveness of our current society in general, this was the last thing I was expecting. And yet here we are, a bunch of bowlers, coming together in a common response to a difficult decision brought about by difficult circumstances. Now the cynics out there could point out that I'm just not hearing from the extremes on either side and they're keeping their opinions to themselves, and I'll concede that point. However, the sheer number of responses I'm seeing like those above gives me hope that bowlers are really willing to put aside differences to come together and simply move forward.

It just makes me wonder though, if our little microcosm of a community understands and appreciates the difficulty of the times, why is it so difficult elsewhere to come together to move forward towards a common goal?