

I had started another blog last week, but things started to rapidly change and so I decided to wait and see how things played out a bit before continuing on with the blog entry. With the announcement that Georgia would be allowing bowling centers to re-open, I had to revisit what I was originally writing as I had thought bowling centers would be one of the last types of business to re-open. Now I'm watching, waiting and wondering.

I'm wondering how this is all going to play out. What will bowling be like once centers are allowed to be back up and running? How will adhering to social distancing guidelines affect competitions? Will bowlers wholeheartedly jump back into the bowling world despite ongoing concerns?

Whichever side of the argument you're on as to the severity and seriousness of this pandemic, the reality is that things will be different. Whether this is all a conspiracy to fill a political, economic or social agenda, or whether this is a serious threat to our collective health, enough people are scared that the re-opening of bowling centers is not an immediate given even with the relaxation of government restrictions. According to an article I found regarding bowling in Georgia from TMZ posted on April 29th, there were only 25 of 103 bowling centers in Georgia that were confirmed up and running as of the date of the article, and business was slow. Clearly, adjustments will have to be made as we go forward.

I know there's a very vocal presence on social media exclaiming the desire and need to return to bowling and will be the first ones to line up once bowling centers open their doors, but as a person tuned into both youth bowling and senior bowling, I'm hearing another tune out there as well. From many parents of youths as well as those in the higher-risk older age group, there is the thought that it is better to be safe than sorry at this point. Without getting into an existential debate over what it means to face death or the responsibilities of freedom of choice, the point is, these people will be cautious and any kind of wholesale return to bowling will be tempered with those cautions, not just government restrictions. In my capacity as an event official, I need to respect that caution despite the proclamations of those on social media platforms rejoicing at the re-opening of bowling centers and a return to bowling.

What does that mean? For me as an event official going forward with future events (Senior Mixed, Jamboree and Annual Meeting, Senior Qualifying, Queens, High School and Youth events, even possibly into next year's State Open and Women's Championships), it means I and the OSUSBC Board may need to be creative with potential alternative formats to long-established events if restrictive guidelines are still in place. We may need to factor in social distancing not just for the sake of meeting government guidelines but for the ease of mind for the participants. Yes, there will be some, perhaps more than a few, that will take a skeptical eye towards such measures, but it is something that needs to be considered. The rationale is simple though: those eager to attend are going to attend regardless of any alternative formats, but those that have concerns will not attend if concerns are not addressed. Are we catering to the lowest common denominator? Unapologetically, yes! And for no other reason than to responsibly serve the bowlers, all of the bowlers, that we have been charged to serve.

With all that said, I had a conversation expressing these ideas with a respected member of the bowling community and the conversation began to steer towards the actual cancellation of events. Are cancellations really serving all of the bowlers? At the time, with what limited knowledge we had at our disposal, I believe cancellation was the correct decision for the recently cancelled events. Is that changing now? We will have to continue to keep an eye on the Georgia situation as well as our own local

area's ability to meet health official's re-opening guidelines to get a better idea on how to move forward, and whether or not further cancellations will be necessary.

So, for those you also watching, waiting, and wondering – stay tuned, stay safe, and hope for the best.

Gary Yamasaki, OSUSBC Association Manager