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April 7

## Steve Solloway: The stop in Maine was up his alley

PORTLAND - Eight pins scattered, leaving two standing on either side of the lane. It was a terrible, almost unmakeable split. You're going to need two balls, a voice shouted from the crowd.

The suggestion was a joke. Ten-pin bowling rules permit only one ball to be rolled down the lane at the same time. Parker Bohn III put the fingers of his left hand into two balls, settling them in his palm. He brought his arm back as someone else cried out "no way" and brought it forward, releasing the pair.

All eyes followed the balls as they spun down the lane. Surprised cheers rang out when both pins went down. The boyish Bohn tried not to listen.

Yes, there was a professional bowler in the house Saturday at Spare Time Lanes in Portland. Bohn is a 49-year-old Professional Bowlers Association champion. He's in the PBA Hall of Fame. Winner of 33 PBA titles, including two majors, the most recent coming in January at the PBA World Championships. He's rolled a perfect 300 on 89 occasions.

Not long ago he was invited to meet and greet the competitors in the annual Maine State Open that started Saturday and continues the next four weekends at Spare Time. After visiting the other 49 states at least once, Bohn couldn't say no. He drove north Friday from his home near the New Jersey shore.

This was like David Ortiz stopping by a men's baseball tournament at Deering Oaks to swing a bat. Or Paul Pierce walking onto the basketball court at Payson Park to shoot a few baskets. Or Tony Stewart taking some very hot laps at Beech Ridge Motor



One pin standing in one corner, another pin in the opposite corner? No problem for Parker Bohn III, who used two balls at the same time to knock them down and give a taste of the talent that put him in the PBA Hall of Fame.

John Ewing / Staff Photographer



Parker Bohn III dropping in to give a bowling demonstration at Spare Time Lanes in Portland



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Speedway. Bohn wasn't at Spare Time to play. He was there to show.

And if he showed off just a little, no one cared. Ten-pin bowling is one of those sports that needs a little love and attention, and Bohn was more than willing to give both. He answered questions for about 30 minutes before unzipping the travel bag containing his bowling balls, which were his product. He's a representative of Brunswick Bowling and this weekend was part business, part pleasure.

Although it was difficult to see how he separated the two, especially when he started bantering with his audience. He rolled strike after strike until another voice yelled out, asking Bohn to show his spare game.

That meant he had to intentionally leave pins standing. Easy to do for a pro. Not so easy to accept. He wants every pin to fall.

That attitude was important three months ago when he flew to Las Vegas for the PBA World Championship, the last stop on the GEICO World Series of Bowling. After he won 18 tournament titles between 1997-2002, championships had come less often. He had some winless years. He was divorced, remarried and started a second family. Those three children heard stories about their father but never witnessed his greatest games.

Until January. Three days after Super Storm Sandy hit his part of New Jersey with a vengeance, Bohn was supposed to fly to Las Vegas from Newark. But how? The airport was shut down for a couple days. His home in Jackson lost power for three days, but he had a generator. "We were the mini-diner to the neighborhood. But most people just wanted hot coffee."

He drove his three young children to Point Pleasant, just north of Asbury Park. The boardwalk there had been swept onto front lawns far from the beach. Snow plows were out in force. "The sand was a foot deep on roads."

When some normalcy returned, Bohn decided at the last minute to fly to Las Vegas. He missed practice sessions. With power out, he had been unable to practice in New Jersey. He started the tournament cold. He started bowling, not looking ahead. Maybe he could sneak into the Round of 24, which eventually would be whittled to five finalists. Bohn got the 24th spot by three pins.

He was the fifth of five finalists. He beat Dan MacLelland, a Canadian who Bohn believes will be one of the sport's superstars. He beat youngsters who had grown up watching him win. Finally he faced Jason Belmonte of Australia, 20 years younger. Bohn won.

"Age takes away agility. It adds to reaction time. I can't practice as long as I did when I was 20, but I practice smarter. I realize I'm still doing something a lot of people have no chance of doing."

With daddy on the verge of a startling victory, Bohn's wife and children joined him in Las Vegas. He has two adult sons from his first marriage. The oldest in his second family is not yet 10.

"They won't forget the excitement of what happened and if they do, they've got video."

The sound of balls crashing into pins punctuated his words as the Maine Open rolled through its first hour. During the opening ceremonies he met the Casco Bay Cyclones, winners of the recent high school state championship, offering encouragement and tips.

was like Paul Pierce dropping by to shoot baskets on a park court. The Hall of Famer showed his talent and the fans were appreciative.

John Ewing / Staff Photographer

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### MAINE STATE OPEN

**WHO:** April 6 through May 5 (weekends)

**WHERE:** Spare Time Family Fun Center, Riverside Street, Portland

**WHAT:** Tournament for teams and singles, sanctioned by the United States Bowling Congress



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Bowlers are good people, he said. Here and elsewhere. They know how to enjoy their success and help others. Somewhere there's another Earl Anthony or Walter Ray Williams Jr., said Bohn, evoking two of the sport's biggest stars.

Somewhere there's another Parker Bohn III.

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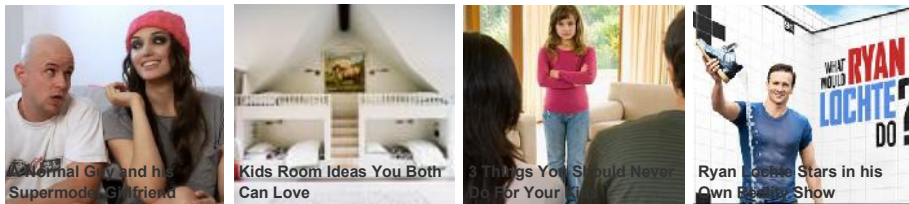
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