

# TOURNAMENTS

## A DREAM DEFERRED NO LONGER

The long, winding road to the creation of high school bowling's first national championship.

**MIKE NYITRAY** wondered for years why high school bowling had no national championship. The day he stopped wondering and started working to make it happen was the day his dream took a giant step toward becoming a reality. After years of toil, networking, research and promotion, that dream finally will become a reality July 30-31, when the inaugural U.S. High School Bowling National Championship will take place at Sawgrass Lanes in Tamarac, Fla.

"I thought about this ever since I was in high school because I grew up in Miami, which has had high school bowling since the 1960s," says Nyitray, a Gold coach whom the United States Olympic Committee honored as the 2012 Developmental Coach of the Year. "I found it strange, even as a kid, why high school had nothing more than state championships. By the time I was in my

early 20s, I was actively wondering about the possibility of a national championship for high school bowling. But I didn't have the skills to do anything at that time; it was just a thought."

Nyitray, who has coached around the world and has spent considerable time coaching in his own backyard of Florida, began working the connections he established along the way and "learning about processes, seeing who does what, looking behind the curtain, so to speak."

Nyitray says he discovered how broad a desire there was for a national championship for high school bowling when he founded the High School Bowling Foundation in 2010, which primarily he has used as a vehicle through which high school scoring records are compiled.

"That's when I started to realize there was more of a call for this from coaches all around the country," Nyitray said. "Even some administrators were interested."

Nyitray started dreaming. What would the format look like? What would he have to do to ensure his tournament did not compete with other existing events such as USBC's Junior Gold Championships? How could such an event help promote and grow high school bowling?

"Last summer, I had everything in place; I had designed the



tournament, and then in January this year I got the go-ahead from the Florida High School Athletic Association telling me that Florida could participate in such a tournament," Nyitray explains. "I have been promoting it in earnest since then, so it was created last year but its creation was only part of the challenge. There are all sorts of administrative challenges that have to be satisfied."

"There is so much that goes into the production of a big tournament. Bowlers just think, 'I want to bowl a tournament,' and they walk in and everything is there. There is so little appreciation for the work that goes into a quality event," he adds.

The lion's share of Nyitray's work consisted of navigating those "administrative challenges" he speaks of, one of which gets at the core of why it has taken so long for a national high school bowling championship to emerge.

"High school bowling falls under the jurisdiction of the National Federation of High School Associations [known as the NFHS]. Since that organization's creation in the 1920s, it has never sanctioned a national championship event," Nyitray explains. "So, the polite answer



**Long Time Coming:** Mike Nyitray, a Gold coach and 2012 USOC developmental Coach of the Year, says he had been thinking about a national championship for high school bowling since he himself was in high school.

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I got from state and local administrators as to why no national championship existed for high school bowling was, "That is how it always has been; there has not been a challenge to the status quo."

What he learned, however, was that the failure to challenge that status quo derived from a crucial misinterpretation of NFHS policy.

"I went through the process of applying for a sanction by the NFHS, which of course was denied," Nyitray says. "I was told they don't sanction national championships per their policy. I looked at that policy and discovered that there is nothing in it that prohibits a national championship. The policy simply states that they do not sanction them."

That discovery emboldened Nyitray to create the tournament he envisioned. As that ball got rolling in earnest, he reached out to the NFHS again, who emboldened him further on May 26, when the NFHS told him that they can "neither grant nor refuse permission for any high school to attend any event." They further stated that, "The NFHS is not affiliated in any way with the 2016 U.S. High School Bowling Champion-

ship, nor does it sanction or support this competition in any way."

Between those lines was the tacit support Nyitray was hoping for. Though the NFHS would neither sanction nor support the event, they also would do nothing actively to prohibit it. Nyitray was free to conduct the first-ever national championship for high school bowling.

At the time of this writing, teams from seven states had entered the tournament, including Florida, Indiana, Kentucky, Maine, New Mexico, Texas and Wisconsin.

"I've been contacted by teams from three additional states expressing their intention to participate," Nyitray said on June 11. "There is no entry deadline, so

teams can enter as late as July 29.

"The Florida bowling associations — state, men's, women's, and youth — all have pledged their support," Nyitray adds. "There will be people at Sawgrass helping get score sheets from every pair, data entry tables, scores compiled each game so everyone will know quickly

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



HARRY DRESSLER  
MAYOR

April 13, 2016

Mr. Michael Nyitray, President  
c/o U.S. High School Bowling Foundation  
6687 NW 110th Way  
Parkland, FL 33076

Dear Mr. Nyitray:

The City of Tamarac is proud and honored to host the U.S. High School Bowling National Championship July 30 – 31, 2016.

We support activities surrounding high school bowling and applaud the opportunity for high school children to participate in this sport. Tamarac is looking forward to the bowlers and their families from all around the country coming to Sawgrass Lanes in Tamarac. The City is delighted to promote the importance and growth of high school bowling across the United States.

The Mayor and City Commission look forward to attending this Championship Event.

Sincerely,

Harry Dressler  
Mayor

**Mayor on Board:** Tamarac Mayor, Harry Dressler, expressed his delight that his city will host the 2016 U.S. High School Bowling National Championship in this April 13 letter and plans to attend the event.



who will make the cut.”

Also expressing support was Harry Dressler, Mayor of Tamarac, Fla. Dressler plans to attend the event and stated in an April 13 letter to Nyitray that, “The city is delighted to promote the importance and growth of high school bowling across the United States.”

Nyitray addresses one of the elephants that inhabits the room as any new tournament is conceived, particularly at a national level: lane conditions.

“I get asked this by half the people who call about this tournament: What lane conditions will be put down? The answer is that it will be a house shot. Only a handful of people have said, ‘Wait, I thought this was a national championship. These are high-performance bowlers thinking of going to Junior Gold.’ And I say, ‘Junior Gold is Junior Gold. In no way do I want to interfere with that.’ Ninety-nine percent of all high school bowling is on a house shot. I think it is unfair to have these kids qualify over the course of an entire season and then come to the national title event for the lanes to be different.”

The tournament is USBC-certified and will feature both singles and team competition. Individual bowlers from schools whose teams did not qualify for the tournament still can be eligible to compete in its singles division.

Nyitray says the aspect of the tournament’s design that took the most work is the tiered system it will enact.

“High school state finals range from the end of October in Hawaii to the beginning of April in Louisiana and Texas. It would not be fair for the tournament to fill up prior to any state hosting their own state finals,” Nyitray explains. “So I created a tiered entry timeline. Only champions and runners-up can enter before March 31.”

Ultimately, Nyitray envisions the tournament featuring four tiers of competition.

“Tier one will include teams that finished first and second in their state finals. Tier two will include teams that finished in the top four. Tier three will have teams that finished in the top 10. Then spots will be available in a fourth tier on a first-come, first-served basis.”

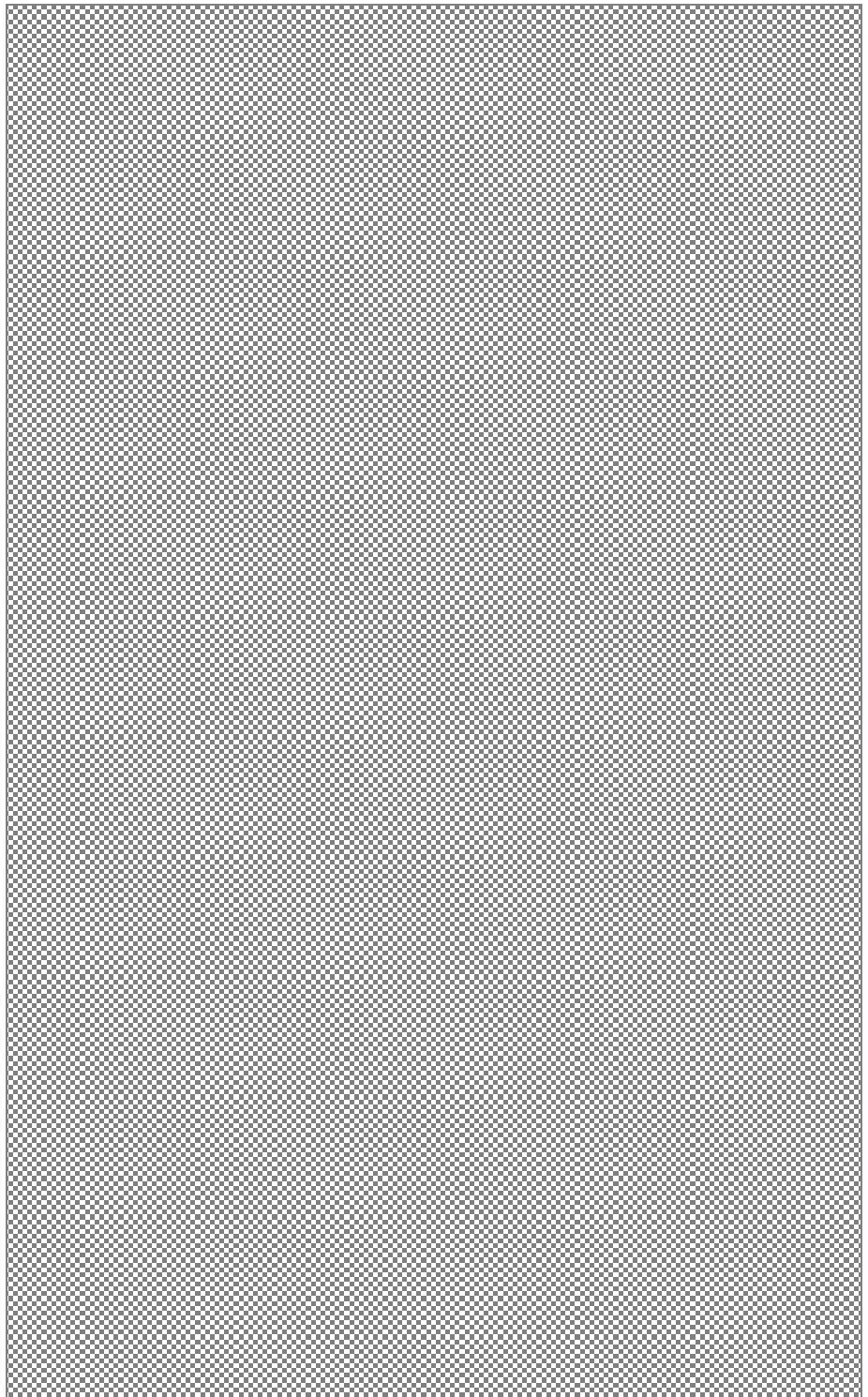
For entry forms or further information about the tournament’s format, eligibility rules and more, go to: <http://ushsbf.org/2016hsbnationalchampionship.html>.

Beyond all the mechanics of the tournament’s format or the administrative technicalities Nyitray had to grapple

with to make it possible, there is one simple bottom line he wants all participants, and all teams thinking about participating, to bear in mind.

“I promise they will have a really good time,” Nyitray says.

— Gianmarc Manzione



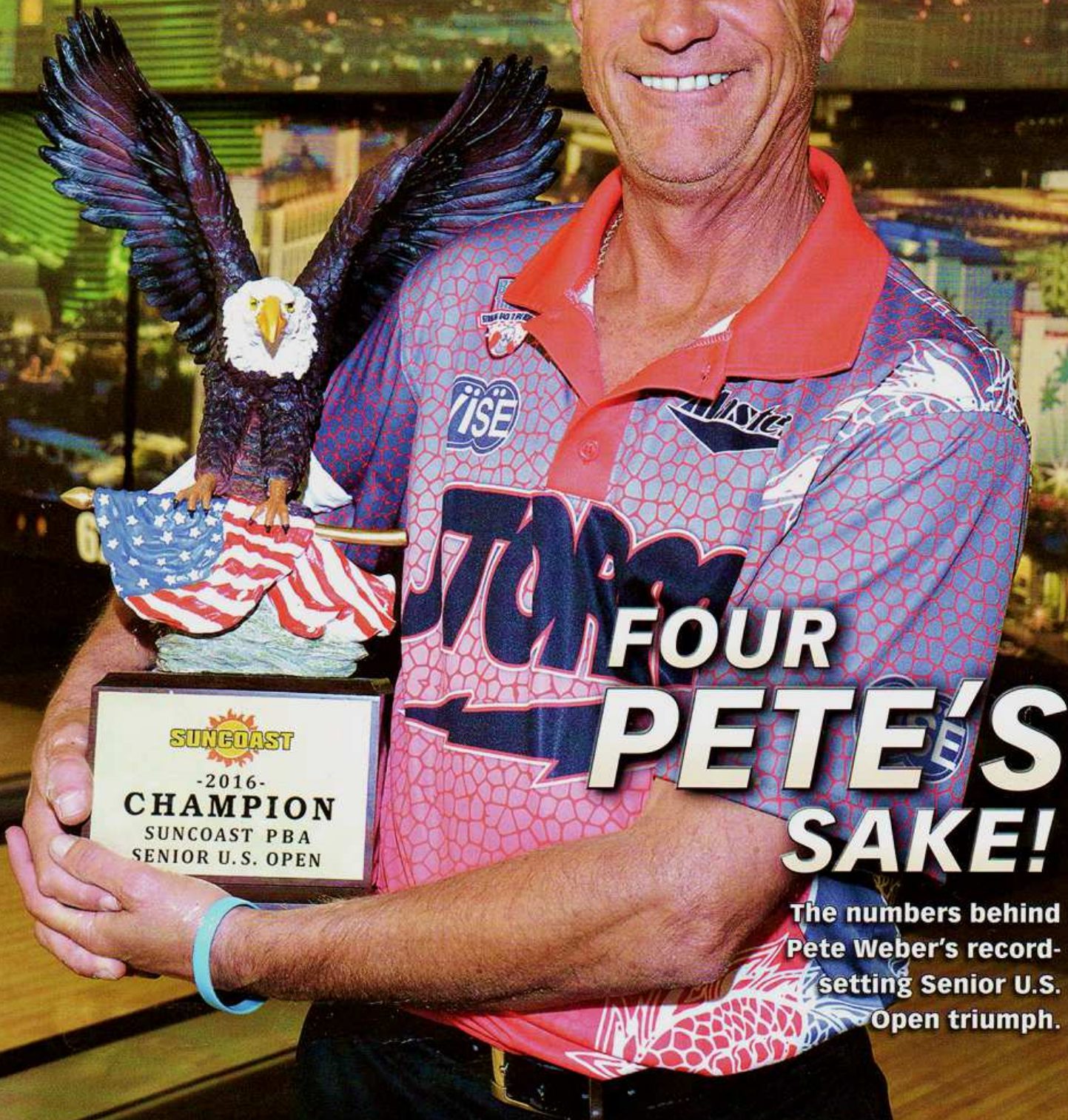


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