



## **A PBA Hall of Famer's Fight to Remain Exempt**

*by Dennis Hacker*

Looking ahead to the second half of the Lumber Liquidators PBA Tour schedule, Parker Bohn III has some work to do.

Last week, an article posted on the PBA Website regarding the "[Bubble Boys](#)" referenced the unexpected position some of the tour elite find themselves in after the first half of the season. Parker was highlighted as one of the two bigger surprises (along with Robert Smith), citing his poor performance as a whole at the World Series of Bowling, held at Taylor Lanes and Thunderbowl in Detroit, Michigan in August of 2009.

The article contained some speculation on whether Parker was able to match up with Thunderbowl, and questioned why "a guy with so much experience on tour and an entire month at one bowling center wouldn't be able to find a way to compete."

The truth is the PBA's Andy Morton wasn't far off the mark. This week, Parker recapped what happened in Detroit, in the last few tournaments since then, and what is ahead of him if he's going to be bowling next year as an exempt player.

"I bowled pretty decent the first week, at Taylor," remembered Parker to start off the conversation. "Rhino (Page) was the only lefty to make the top 24, and the rest of us were bunched in the 30's and below." (He finished 39<sup>th</sup>, with just over 3,500 points.) Then, when they made the move to Thunderbowl, the first tournament was the Cheetah Championship. Parker typically loves the Cheetah, which was the pattern that yielded his 32<sup>nd</sup> national title. He couldn't figure out a way to make anything work that week, and Parker wondered aloud if that tournament was the start of his problems in August.

"It's possible I developed a bad habit trying to make things work on Cheetah. I saw the same reaction problems the following tournament on the Viper, and it was downhill from there. On Chameleon I was totally lost. Ironically, on Shark, which is typically not a favorite oil pattern of mine at all, I made match play." However, finishing positions of 69<sup>th</sup> in Cheetah, 54<sup>th</sup> on Viper, and 42<sup>nd</sup> on Chameleon don't lend themselves to racking up many points. He managed an 18<sup>th</sup> place on Shark, and received 6,622.50 points, his largest single point award in the WSOB. Scorpion yielded a 45<sup>th</sup> place berth, and that left the PBA World Championship, where his 95<sup>th</sup> place finish was a virtual disaster.

"In the Worlds, I crossed with Rhino Page, and he made the show. I watched what he did, and I just couldn't figure out how to get my ball to do the same thing," admitted Parker in retrospect. "After it was over, I had to take a step back, and just try to figure out what went wrong. Luckily or not, I had some time to think."

After Detroit, he was in 59<sup>th</sup> place in the point standings, at that point looking up at 40<sup>th</sup> to maintain his exempt status for next year. He had a better showing in the Pepsi Red, White and Blue tournament in Wichita, his best of the year thus far, where he finished 11<sup>th</sup>. That single performance propelled him 13 spots upward to 46<sup>th</sup>. A bad game in each of the two qualifying sets at the Earl Anthony Memorial tournament barely cost him match play there, and he dropped to 48<sup>th</sup>. Although it gained him no points, he made match play last week at the Tournament of Champions in Las Vegas, gaining a little confidence along the way.

So what does a 25-year veteran of the PBA Tour do when he finds himself in this situation? Parker described his game plan in detail for the weeks ahead. “You have to evaluate what’s in front of you, and keep doing what you know how to do. Things can’t be different than they’ve ever been. You can’t throw your first ball of the week worrying about where you are in the point standings.”

He described what happened in Detroit as “running into a trap,” and admitted that he probably did this to himself. Now, he has to fix it—with experience. “It took some digging to get out of it, and it feels much better now. Feeling better is one thing, but I still have to perform better. The little confidence that I have gained at this point will go up a lot with just one better showing.”

Truly, that’s all it will take. One decent week can make up the current 6,291 point deficit that he faces, and then one more can give him a five or six spot and/or 5,000 point cushion. With two majors ahead, which are both open field events at elevated point values, anything can happen. Whereas in the exempt events, all of the players fighting for the cut line get comparable points relative to each other, there will be some players during the open events that will finish further down, as Parker did in the World Championship. When it happens, he has to capitalize on that.

Parker realizes, however, that the players in close proximity to him in the point standings are all very capable, and are facing the same quandary he is. “All that has to happen is that one of the guys in the area that I’m in gets hot and makes a few cuts. You capitalize on one or two of them and all of a sudden, you’re well in the cut. Look at Amleto (Monacelli). He’s right behind me right now. He’s a two-time PBA Player of the Year, having some troubles with his arm. If that gets solved, and his arm is better, who knows what can happen for him?”

Complicating the situation are three players that currently hold multi-year exemptions who are also either struggling this year, or haven’t had the opportunity to gain enough points to be above the cut line. Doug Kent is currently 59<sup>th</sup>, and John Nolen is 54<sup>th</sup>, both of whom already have an exemption for next year. With her victory this past week in the Tournament of Champions, Kelly Kulick has reduced that number by yet another spot, so now the line is at the 37<sup>th</sup> position.

“As much as Kelly Kulick winning just made the spots one less, I have to say I’m absolutely ecstatic at the fact that she won the PBA Tournament of Champions. She worked on her game so hard, and it paid off for her big. There are a lot of the ladies who work very hard—a couple of them have attempted to bowl the regular tour stops via the TQRs. I’m talking about Liz Johnson, Lindsay Baker, and Carolyn Dorin-Ballard. I know that everyone is happy and excited for Kelly, with the possible exception of Chris Barnes

(and understandably so). He won 19 matches and lost five this week. He outperformed all of the players during the week, but ran into Kelly on the show.”

This week in California is an old school event, where pins carry over to the finals. Parker has a history of good performances in these formats, and he’s looking forward to having a chance at making up some ground. “I’ve got to keep things under control. I can’t let myself get super excited, or super down. There are lots of games left in the year.”

He found himself in this same situation a few years ago, with only a handful of tournaments left in the season. “There’s no added pressure. I’ve been doing this for twenty-five years. I haven’t forgotten how to bowl. I just have to put it together, and do what I know how to do best,” he said late Monday evening. “Obviously to win would take away any pressure, and if you’re the one collecting the hardware at the end of the week, you don’t have to worry about points anymore. I remember what it feels like to turn that switch on, and win. I’m looking for the right switch.”

Whether he can flip that switch in the tournaments that are left remains to be seen. To answer any of those who are wondering about his state of mind, fighting for his exemption, he had this to say: “I DO want to remain out here. I will fight hard to keep what is mine. I wouldn’t bet against me.”

Editor’s Note: Parker will talk about each week’s event after he’s finished bowling, and his fight to climb up the point standings to remain an exempt player on the Lumber Liquidators PBA Tour.

---