

2017 USBC OPEN CHAMPIONSHIPS FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

The 2017 USBC Open Championships will have a new division and a new way to determine entering averages for the event. Please review the following FAQ to learn more.

1. Q: What improvements to the format will take place for the 2017 USBC Open Championships?

A: A quick look at previous events and what will take place in 2017:

Previous Tournaments	2017 Tournament
Two Divisions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular: 181 average and above • Classified: 180 average and below 	Three Divisions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular: 210 average and above • Standard: 181-209 average • Classified: 180 average and below
Bowling balls checked in scale room prior to team squad	Bowling balls checked in scale room prior to team and doubles/singles squads
Lane pattern published prior to event	Lane pattern not published until after event
USBC provided video of complete team games and lane play strategy analysis	USBC will not show video of complete team games or provide any lane play information
Certain professional bowlers ineligible	Professional bowlers eligible with restrictions
USBC national headquarters employees and tournament employees who operate the event permitted to win prize money, brackets, side pots and awards without limitation.	USBC national headquarters employees and tournament employees will not be eligible for, or have their scores contribute to winning prize money, brackets, side pots or awards. (This rule is effective starting in 2016).

2. Q: What is the new divisional breakdown for each event?

A: Divisions for team and doubles events will be based on a composite of the competitors' averages, with some parameters for Standard and Classified teams:

Team	Doubles	Singles/All-Events
Regular – 1,046 and above	Regular – 419 and above	Regular – 210 and above
Standard – 901-1,045	Standard – 361-418	Standard – 181-209
Classified – 900 and below	Classified – 360 and below	Classified – 180 and below

Additional parameters for divisional placement:

1. Regular Division bowlers (entering averages of 210 and above) may not compete in Classified Team or Classified Doubles, regardless of team composite average.

2. Teams in the Standard Division may have no more than one bowler with an average of 210 or higher.
3. Teams in the Classified Division may have no more one bowler with an average between 181-209.

3. Q: What is the reason for the additional parameters for the divisions and the reason for changing the way entering averages are determined?

A: The simple answer is to try to address average manipulation at the Open Championships. While there is no perfect solution to this issue due to many factors, USBC is committed to taking steps to level the playing field. Limiting the ability for groups of participants to “bowl down” a division will help. With three divisions, bowlers should be competing against competitors of similar skill. We believe that, in fairness to all bowlers, average integrity must be a top priority. We believe the changes in determining entering averages is the best option to create stronger average integrity.

4. Q: Why did USBC wait until now to release the new requirements for entering average instead of releasing that information when the divisions were announced?

A: When we announced the third division, we also said USBC would implement some additional policy changes. Creating the technology, such as the “Championship Average” tab in Find A Member, was one piece that needed to be in place before we could announce the policy on entering averages.

5. Q: How can I find out what average I will have to use to bowl in the Open Championships?

A: The Find A Member function on BOWL.com will provide bowlers with their league and tournament history. We will require participants use the highest average from the following sources:

- Open Championships tournament average based on most recent 27 games since 2008 adjusted utilizing the USBC Sport Average Adjustment Scale
- Past three seasons of USBC-certified league play
- Any league average the past three seasons reported as a Sport or Challenge league adjusted utilizing the USBC Sport Average Adjustment Scale

Find a Member results include a section for Championships Average. This section reports the bowler’s average based on most recent 27 games – scratch and Sport-adjusted – at the Open Championships.

6. Q: Why are you going back three years on averages?

A: USBC averages are based on a minimum of 21 games to provide a proper sample size. Most participants in the Open Championships will bowl singles, doubles and team events for a total of nine games. To reach the minimum standard for an average, at least three years of tournament competition is needed. Looking at a bowler’s highest certified league average over three years decreases the chances of average manipulation.

7. Q. What happens if a bowler is found to have submitted an incorrect average so they could compete in a lower division?

A: Any bowler found using an average below the player's ability will be disqualified from the competition and subject to suspension charges initiated through USBC. USBC Rule 17a – Grounds for Disciplinary Action, Unfair Tactics – addresses average manipulation. The rule:

Rule 17 – Grounds for Disciplinary Action

17a. Unfair Tactics

An individual can be charged with attempting to gain an unfair advantage in league or tournament play for the following reasons:

1. Directly or indirectly tampering with lanes, pins or bowling balls so they no longer meet USBC specifications.
2. Misrepresenting an average to gain a greater handicap, or qualify for a lower classification in an event.
3. Establishing an average below the player's ability to gain an unfair advantage in handicap or classified competition.

Penalty: Loss of games, prize winnings, league removal (see Rule 115a or Rule 115c), and subject to suspension from or denial of USBC membership.

8. Q: If I average over 210, does that mean I can't bowl with my friends and family who have lower averages?

A: All teams still can bowl together, but they may not be eligible for the Classified or Standard Division prize funds and might be moved to a higher division.

9. Q: What was the process and who was involved in making improvements to the 2017 USBC Open Championships?

A: USBC believes in hearing from individuals representing all stakeholders who have a vested interest in the tournament. As part of this belief, we have worked with an external Tournament Task Force on potential improvements. The task force was comprised of tournament bowlers, volunteer leaders, industry experts and USBC staff.

In order to provide this task force with input from the participants, a survey was sent to all Open Championships participants who provided USBC an email address. Based on the data supplied in the survey, feedback from participants and historical data, the task force made specific recommendations to the USBC Board and staff. Based on those recommendations, the revisions to the tournament were made based on what was in the best interest of the event.

10. Q: What prompted having a task force review the tournament?

A: Bowling has evolved, and it was time for the tournament to evolve as well. There are many opinions about how best to enhance the event. USBC sought to bring together an objective task force to look at the data and make recommendations about how to improve the tournament.

11. Q: Why did the task force recommend a third division?

A: The data indicates that 181-209 league-average bowlers are not competitive in the current Regular Division. Bowlers want to compete against peers of similar skill, and the task force felt the new division would provide a better experience.

12. Q: How did the new Standard Division end up being 181-209?

A: When looking at historical data, there is a significant gap when comparing how 181-209 league-average bowlers score at the Open Championships to how 210 and above score. The data indicates most bowlers between 181-209 averages are in a different skill group from those above and below.

13. Q: Why name the new division the Standard Division?

A: The Regular Division has long history as the most competitive in the USBC Open Championships, and the Classified Division also has a great tradition for bowlers with 180 averages and below. We wanted to preserve those traditions and make sure future champions in those divisions continue to win titles under those division names. The Standard Division name fits well in the middle.

14. Q: What will champions in the Standard Division receive as an award?

A: Moving forward, all champions in all divisions will receive USBC Open Championships eagle trophies. USBC will award Regular Division eagles, Standard Division eagles and Classified eagles.

15. Q: How many bowlers does USBC expect for each division?

A: We expect the Classified Division to remain consistent with recent numbers. The intent is for the Regular and Standard Divisions to be relatively balanced. A look at the reported entering averages from 2015 and how they would fit in the new structure:

Bowler Average	Percentage of Field
210 and above – Regular Division	42%
181-209 – Standard Division	40%
180 and below – Classified Division	18%

16. Q: Will brackets be based on the new divisions, too?

A: Yes, participants will be able to compete in brackets against peers in their division. Participants also will have the option to compete in higher division brackets, if they so choose. We anticipate bracket limits will be similar to previous years.

17. Q: What are the prize ratios for 2017?

A: The prize ratio will be 1:5 for every event in all divisions.

18. Q: What is the reason for no longer revealing the lane conditions for the Open Championships during the event?

USBC, as the National Governing Body for the sport, believes the outcome of competitions should be determined by a bowler's skill. Providing the pattern in advance creates an unquestionable advantage for those with the resources and ability to replicate the pattern and lane surface.

For example, someone with access to the same modern lane machine, conditioner and lane surface used at the Open Championships can create a tremendous advantage. The player can learn how the pattern transitions and build an arsenal accordingly. If the player has the resources to purchase specific equipment to better match up, the advantage is even greater.

Conversely, the typical USBC member, who has no choice about the lane machine, conditioner or lane surface in his or her center, faces a disadvantage. The pattern will not play the same in practice.

By not revealing the pattern, the playing field is more level. The focus of the event will become more about skill and shot-making, rather than pattern analysis and manipulation strategy.

19. Q: Will the Open Championships team pattern still be used for practice sessions on the Showcase Lanes and the doubles/singles pattern used for the Bowlers Journal Championships?

A: Yes, but the number of sessions/entries is limited. Team practice and the Bowlers Journal are an important part of the Open Championships experience. Both are options available to everyone when they arrive in the venue. The number of practice sessions will be limited to two per bowler. Bowlers Journal entries will continue to be limited to eight per event.

20. Q: How will USBC protect the pattern information and address the conspiracy fears that someone bowling the event will have the information?

A: Only USBC executive staff and those directly responsible for the development of the lane conditions will know the oil patterns. This will be limited to Executive Director Chad Murphy; Senior Director of Tournament Programming Greg Moore; Open Championships Tournament Director Duane Hagen and a pattern development consultant to be named later. Even those running the lanes in the venue will not know the patterns.

21. Q: Will the patterns be posted after the event?

A: Yes, the patterns will be available on BOWL.com at the conclusion of the event. We welcome use of previous patterns for leagues, tournaments and practice.

22. Q: Why is USBC discontinuing video coverage (live streaming and webcams) of complete squads in 2017?

A: Watching video of an elite team's ball reaction and lane-play strategy can provide valuable information. This can be an advantage for teams that bowl later in the tournament. As the National Governing Body and operator of the event, USBC no longer is going to provide this informational advantage.

We realize the USBC Open Championships is an open venue, but USBC is not going to participate in distributing video that provides information about lane play.

23. Q: Not revealing the patterns and discontinuing video coverage puts USBC employees at an information advantage. How will this be addressed?

A: As the National Governing Body, USBC staff must be held to the highest standard of integrity and perceived conflict of interest. Therefore, beginning in 2016 USBC national headquarters

employees, tournament employees managed by USBC, and any contractor playing any role in the development or maintenance of the lane conditions at the USBC Open Championships, Women's Championships or Bowlers Journal Championships, their teams and/or doubles partners are not permitted to participate in the prize funds, brackets or awards programs at the Open Championships or Bowlers Journal Championships. Employees are eligible to bowl for purpose of participation records and pinfall.

24. Q: Specifically, who is affected by the new employee policy?

A: Only those employed by USBC, IBC Youth Development or the ITRC at national headquarters or as USBC employees through its staffing agency. The policy does NOT apply to USBC state and local associations nor the volunteers who serve on the USBC Board of Directors.

25. Q: Can you explain the reason for the professional rules?

Elite professional bowlers were not appropriate competition peers for many of the current Regular Division bowlers. However, in recent years, the structure of professional bowling made it difficult to define this elite group based on performance-based measurements. The creation of the new division structure solved this concern as professional bowlers are more appropriate competition peers for those with averages above 210.

Additionally, feedback indicates some tournament bowlers welcome the idea of sharing the lanes with professional stars they see on television. They say allowing the big names enhances the experience and prestige of the event.

The additional restrictions are designed to protect the field against elite professionals creating a stacked team, while still allowing most regional professionals and professionals over 60 years-old to participate with their current teammates. Here is the language of the new rule:

A. For the purpose of participation in the Open Championships, PROFESSIONAL BOWLERS are defined as:

- 1) Any bowler under the age of 60 who has won any of the following:
 - a. A PBA or PWBA national title regardless of professional status at the time of the win*
 - b. A USBC Masters title*
 - c. A USBC Queens or U.S. Women's Open title from 2003 to 2014**
- 2) Any bowler having applied for membership or held membership in ANY professional bowling organization during the calendar year (Jan. 1 – Dec. 31, 2016) preceding the event, and up through their dates of their competition in 2017.*

B. Professional bowlers will be eligible to compete only in the REGULAR DIVISION subject to the following guidelines:

1) TEAM EVENT

- a. A team may only have one professional bowler if the player meets the criteria defined in item A. 1) above. A team may have a second professional who meets*

the criteria in item A. 2) provided the player is not a member of any professional bowling organization as of August 1, 2016 through their dates of competition.

- b. If a team has no national event winner as defined in item A. 1) above, the team may have no more the TWO players who meet the criteria defined in item A. 2) above.*
- 2) Not more than ONE bowler identified as a professional in paragraph A. above per doubles team.*
- 3) Each such player shall be eligible to enter SINGLES and ALL-EVENTS only in the Regular Division.*
- 4) Professionals and past champions (as defined in paragraph A above) are eligible for daily and yearlong brackets products in the Regular Division only, regardless of whether they fit the average criteria for another division. They also are eligible for any age-based products for which they qualify.*

**Clarification – A doubles pairing with a bowler under the age of 60, who has won a PBA or PWBA national event, regardless of professional status at the time of the win may NOT have any additional bowlers identified as professionals (see description of professional above, except as permitted in paragraph B. 1) a).*

Teams may have ONE past national-event champion OR up to two bowlers identified as professionals, but not one past national event champion and one professional organization member. Doubles pairings may have one national event champion or one professional organization member, but not both.

26. Q: Why does the rule allow professionals over 60 to be on the same team?

A: There is not a competition justification to restrict the team composition for professionals over 60.

27. Q: Did USBC consider bringing back the Classic Division to keep all professionals in a separate category?

A: (The original Classic Division was introduced in 1961 to separate the professional and non-professional entrants, only to be eliminated in 1979 due to lack of entries).

Even today, the pool of competitors for a Classic Division would be very small, and with the addition of the new third division in 2017, separating the field even further to four divisions did not make sense. Also, as noted in a previous question, all members of professional bowling organizations, or those with national titles, will be in the Regular Division, regardless of average.

28. Q: Was there an incident that led to bringing back the scale room for doubles and singles?

A: No. The task force was charged with improving the experience and integrity of the event and recommended the scale room return for all squads as part of that.

29. Q: Will the tournament entry fees increase in 2017?

No, entry fees will not increase in 2017.

30. Q: How can I provide feedback to USBC?

A: We are open to your ideas. Please send comments and suggestions to usbcopenchampionships@bowl.com.