



Our next subject is Rob Henderson. Rob is a Canadian bowler who has bowled in 15 world championship events in his career, winning five world titles. In this interview, Rob talks about the differences between US and Canadian competition. Candlepin Gallery would like to thank Rob Henderson for participating in the latest installment of this feature.

**Why not start off by telling the readers a little bit about yourself?**

*I am 34 yrs old, married, and a correctional officer in a federal pen. I am a sports nut, playing a lot of slow pitch softball in the summer. I am from Springhill NS. Canada, a small town of about 3,500 and bowl at a 10 lane house, Fundy Lanes. I have been bowling since I was 5 but started bowling competitively when I was about 16. I bounced around a lot of teams for a long time because of where I am from. I participated in my first worlds when I was 19. Did not make the playoffs until 99, our first title. I have five world team titles, all with McLaughlin Truck and Trailer.*

*[ed. note: Rob's teammates are Tim Carrigan, Sean O'Flaherty, Chris Hollett, Dave Somerton, Pat Birchill and Tony McLaughlin.]*

**You mentioned you "bounced around a lot of teams...because of where [you're] from." Tell us more about your hometown...many of our American readers don't know much about Canadian geography or lifestyles.**

*My town is small and has had a bowling lanes since 1976. My brother, my sister and I all worked there at some point in time and my parents bowled a lot so it was easier taking us there than getting a babysitter. The town is about a half hour from the New Brunswick border, so I bowled a lot in both provinces. Coal mining was the main employer through the '60's, but now we have a couple of plants and the pen which employ most people.*

*I bounced around a lot because I don't live in one of the big bowling centers.... Halifax, Sydney, Moncton, so it was hard to get on a steady team. A lot of the better teams are set, so they didn't pick up young guys all the time. I lost a lot of money getting from tournament to tournament to get experience. but thankfully I eventually got to start bowling for a team on a regular basis that was one of the better teams.*

**What's your high single/triple/five?**

*High single: 205  
High triple: 490  
High five: 753*

**There's been a lot of debate here "south of the border" about juicing lanes. For those that don't know, it's the practice of spraying some sort of a silicone spray on the pin decks to make pins slide around a bit. Do you see that in houses in Canada? How are the houses thought of in terms of pinfall ("fast houses" or "slow houses" or "you get what you hit...", etc.)?**

*Oh yes, we have silicone. It's great if the operator knows what he is doing, but when pins slide across the plate without falling and there is a lot of action from outside 2 and 3 pin, I am not a fan. There is a good variety of houses that have different pinfall here in Canada. Actually the number of tough houses is getting smaller. A fast house would be "sloppy," while a slow house is just a "tough house."*

**You're a correctional officer? Wow...tough work. Does your schedule vary enough to make it difficult for you to stay on a team? Tell the readers about your job...what's it like working in such a difficult line of work?**

*I have to a lot of schedule juggling to get to tournament, bowling with McLaughlin's only twice this year (once at the worlds and 2 weeks after that in Moncton). We have a rule in Nova Scotia that you have to bowl in your zone; where I live is not in the Halifax zone. New Brunswick does not have that rule, so we can go to tournaments there, but it is a harder travel commitment to go to NB so it does not always work out. All I can say about my job is it's an eye opener. If you ever do an interview with Dave or Chris ask them [ed note: those interviews are coming soon!] I took them on a tour. Let's say it was a good team builder.*

**Team builder? Okay, tell us about your teammates.**

*What can I say about the guys?!? At times we are tight and at times we get on each others nerves. But when we are on the lanes, we pull in one direction and are not selfish towards each other, we protect each other and make each other laugh, although they are usually making fun of me--but that's okay. We all have our differences, but we click when the time is right and they all have heaps of talent. What is surprising about that is that I only bowl in maybe one other tournament with them besides the worlds all year.*

**You've been bowling in the World Championships for several years. Tell us how the tournament has evolved and changed over the years.**

*I have been going to the worlds since 1991. The biggest change I have seen is how the countries dominate the tournament. When I started, it was almost like giving your money to the American teams, only one or two Canadian teams ever really competed at their level. But what a great experience as a young bowler to compete against guys like Flynn, Olstza, Berger, Jack Ray, Bob Kelly, Tim Lipke and many others.*

*Now the Canadians are winning a bit more so the worm has turned a bit. The tournament itself is like no other I have ever been in. The competition is intense, but since you are together with everyone for a week you develop a lot of good friendships just by talking to the guys in the next pit. I am usually sick for about 2 weeks after the tournament because it's so draining. I think my best experience at the worlds outside of winning the tournament is just seeing all the talent that I have over the last 15 years and all the friendships I have made.*

**You mentioned Flynn, Olstza, Berger, Jack Ray, Bob Kelly, Tim Lipke...do you have a favorite bowler that you try to emulate? Who was the one guy you enjoyed watching and/or competing against the most?**

*Man those guys were good. I wish I could bowl like Jack Ray, but I liked watching everybody. If you have ever seen me bowl I don't have a classic style. I just found what I liked and kept trying to modify my style to make it more consistent.*

**What do you consider your greatest accomplishment in the sport?**

*I consider my greatest accomplishment coming from a small town with no men's teams, working my way on to teams that have had so much success. I never dreamed when I was just starting that I would reach the level of success I have.*

**How did you go about getting onto teams?**

*What I meant by that was that I stuck with my game and worked hard to achieve what I have. I don't think I have as much talent as a lot of guys and I am not from a bowling hotbed; so being a part of a*

*team that has won five world titles when I started out not being able to get on a team at all is what I am most proud of.*

### **How often do you bowl in the US?**

*The only time I bowl in the US is the World Tournament.. I have thought about the Easter classic, but it has not worked out. The biggest difference I see is the emphasis on team tournaments vs singles tournaments. It's all singles in the US but all team in Canada.*

### **What are the differences between the American singles style of play and the Canadian team concept?**

**Obviously the number of bowlers is different, but are there any other changes to the game that become evident with the two types of play?**

*Bowling games 2 frames at a time for teams as compared to 5 frames for singles is a huge difference. It's much easier to get on a good or bad roll in singles. 2 frames at a time is much slower and the pace of your team is based on different factors like the team your bowling against, are you both bowling bad or are both teams scoring high, etc. In singles that really isn't a factor. Also in the world team tournament you can replace a bowler 5 frames into a game to finish the game (6 frames in Canadian team tournaments). That adds a lot of strategy to the game as some guys have a knack for coming of the bench and some don't. It's a real asset to have a guy like that on your team. He can change the game.*