



Our next subject is Nancy Vestal, winner of 5 WCBC ladies championships. In this interview, Nancy discusses some comparisons of the game (men's vs. women's) as well as some nuances of bowling in Canada. Candlepin Gallery would like to thank Nancy for participating in the latest installment of this feature.

Let's start by telling the readers a bit about yourself...

My name is Nancy Vestal, most people know me better as Nance, my mother has never like the nickname but has learned to live with it. I am 47 years old and have been bowling since I was about three. My mom and dad were both bowlers, although neither bowls now, they are big fans of candlepin bowling. I used to accompany my dad to the lanes when I was very young, he was a pretty good bowler, he averaged about 117 back in the 60's and 70's but never threw a 400 series. I have three children, Sarah, Rebekah and Benjamin and one granddaughter, Abigail. Sarah and Benjamin are both bowlers, Rebekah used to bowl in kids leagues but work took her from those activities. I work for Verizon and have been in the company for almost 28 years now.

What's your high single/three/triple?

My high single is a 189, that was just thrown this past winter. My high three is a 454 and my high five a 735.

Where did you get your start in bowling?

I got started very young as I said at age three, my first league was at about age 6 I think. I used to bowl at the Kings Lynn Lanes in Lynn, that place is now a redemption store. That was the thing to do on a Saturday morning back in those days. I remember my sister and I used to ride our bikes to the lanes. I started bowling in regular adult leagues when I was 12, the youth league created a separate category for me because my average was so much higher than everyone else's at that age, so I moved on to adult leagues.

Tell us about your home center. What lanes do you bowl out of?

My home lanes are the Lucky Strike Lanes in Lynn owned by Jim Barber. There are 34 lanes there 18 downstairs and 16 upstairs. I consider them to be a bit tougher to score in these days but still one of the cleanest and well run houses around. I also bowl out of Park Place Lanes in NH. I drive to NH weekly for the competition, Park Place attracts some of the best candlepin bowlers in the world.

Many bowlers will say that bowling at Park Place is much different than anywhere else. What are your thoughts on that notion?

There is a big difference for me at Park Place Lanes from Lucky Strike, My average at Park Place last year was 123, at Lucky 109 but let me say this neither of those averages are true. I normally would average around 117-118. From personal experience at PPL there are more strikes and more splits can be made because of the side wall action. You can bowl well in either house or bad in either house because you still have to hit your shots. PPL is funny at first, the wood seems to play different, the ball reacts differently too so bowling can be a learning experience there. I know some very good bowlers who struggle at PPL but if you bowl there on a regular basis I believe for most there average would be about five pins higher.

Do you plan to get into the Comcast roll off this year?

Yes, I do intend to bowl in the Comcast roll-off this year. I would love to make television again. I have gotten a lot of grief for saying it but the women deserve a chance to bowl against women. However, I know this is just candlepin bowling but it is not exactly fair to have the women bowling against the men. If you just look at the averages on the pro tour you can see the difference between what men and women do in the same setting. I know I have been told that I have a real shot, I know that I can probably make it through the first round of roll-offs but when it comes to the finals it is different. I have throw my share of big 600's a few 700's but those are typically career days. I know that women have made the show and that is great but I am not at a place where I want to chase a roll-off and spend the money for a half-baked shot. No, I am not unsure of my ability I just realize my limitations, look what Zap did, yes I know any bowler can be another bowler on any given day but let's be realistic about it. And that isn't to say that I might not make it against the women, it is just more realistic to think I could.

You've won several state and WCBC titles. Do you prefer team bowling? Could you talk about the differences between how it feels as a single as opposed to within a team?

I like bowling singles okay but I do prefer team bowling. I like the camaraderie. When you are bowling singles it is all up to you, if you miss a shot then it only hurts you but when bowling on a team when you miss a shot, you feel like you've let your teammates down. I try to remember that I do not get angry at anyone when they miss, they didn't do it on purpose, so I know in the back of my head they aren't angry with me either but sometimes you feel the disappointment. It is great when you make a tough shot or you are bowling anchor and pull one out, that is where it is more fun because you have someone to celebrate with.

You just mentioned bowling anchor. Do you have a preference as to where you bowl in the lineup?

Anchor bowling can be a challenge but I just look at it as any other position on the team, they all matter. I've been a pretty good anchor over the years and I do enjoy the challenge that it offers. I used to hate the first two positions when I was younger, I was told that the end is what mattered so that was a pride thing but now it just doesn't matter. I think sometimes that I tend to stay a bit more focused if I am at the end because of the pressure but when you have bowled with Janet Poch, Cyndi Cawley, Debbie Scannell, Donna Banzi just to name a few does it matter who closes the game?

Do you see any differences in the way men's and women's tournaments are run? Or do you see any difference in the way the bowlers interact?

I honestly can't say that I see a difference in the way men's and women's tournaments are run but then again I have never bowled in a men's tourney. As far as interaction goes, I don't see any real difference. I think that when it comes to team tournaments that men change teams more frequently than the women do. I know some of the women's teams that have been together for years regardless of how well they fair in a tourney. I have had some of the women tell me they just go to have fun, I am not so sure that is true of the men. When I go into a tourney like the International it is because I believe we have a chance to win, I like to have fun too but I want to win.

Why is it, in your opinion, that men change teams more frequently than women?

Why do men change teams? Good question. I have never discussed that with any of the guys. Maybe they feel they have a better shot with another team. Maybe a guy is bowling lights out with a team that is just a so-so team and he gets a shot a team that has a real chance to win so he just moves on. Sometimes people just get into the tournament with a team just to get noticed and when a better offer comes along they jump.

Have you bowled in Canada? If so, do you see any differences in how the game is played between the two countries?

I have bowled in Canada many times, I have been going to Nova Scotia now in November for about 15 years. There are subtle differences in the way the game is played. A lot of Canadian lanes now have flat gutters, I am not a real fan of that. I think the wood tends to be more in the way. Some of the Canadian women ignore the "bowler on the right" rule which can be distracting but on the whole I enjoy the friendships we have forged. And although we have never done it in a tourney, the Canadians will remove double wood and they always bowl two frames at a time, where as in the USA we will use the five frame format. It all comes down to the same thing in the end though, whoever knocks down the most pins wins the game.

Which title do you look back on as your favorite or most satisfying victory?

My favorite victory for teams was the very first time my team won the Women's International at Park Place Lanes. We had some pretty good bowlers on the team but we were not really respected as a team that had a chance to win. When we won that tourney that was a thrill, put us on the map so to speak. I had a great tournament that weekend, I believe I averaged 129.

Do you have a favorite opponent or one who "has your number?" Who would you *not* enjoy facing in a one game match?

I do not have a favorite opponent, candlepin bowling is such a funny game by nature that when people say any bowler can beat any bowler on a given day it is true. Sometimes you may feel overmatched or feel like you should really lay a beating on somebody and it just does not happen. I certainly do not want to say I have another bowlers number that is just asking for trouble but there are a couple of bowlers out there that may have mine. I would say Joanne Ruzzano seems to have my number but she has a lot of peoples numbers I would guess.

In a one string match there are several bowlers that I would not enjoy facing. I think Kelly Stoyles or Glennis McKinley would top my list of those I would not care to face, they are both so good it is scary. Kelly is without a doubt one of the most accurate bowlers, male or female, I have ever seen and Glennis, well she can throw that double at you at any time and seems to have ice water in her veins when it really counts.

Do you have any advice for the youth bowlers out there?

My advice to youth bowlers is "hit the pocket." I see a lot of young bowlers that live off their quarter hits, try to find a way to get it to the pocket and try to stay with that. This may sound funny coming from me but also remember it is just bowling, not a life changing event, have fun.