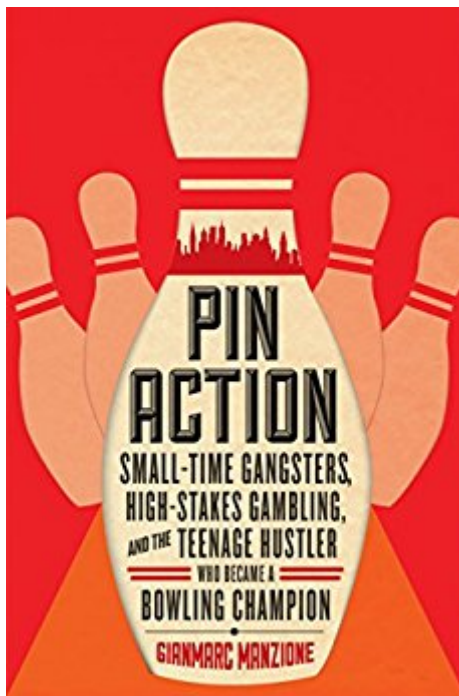


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# Pin Action: Small-Time Gangsters, High-Stakes Gambling, And The Teenage Hustler Who Became A Bowling Champion



## Synopsis

"The Color of Money" meets "The Big Lebowski." *Pin Action* is an inspiring and improbable story of transcendence, redemption, survival and one of the greatest, forgotten sports legends in New York City sports history. Most of us think of bowling as a "sport" in quotation marks, and bowling alleys are places with disco balls, matching shirts, and funny shoes. But in the 1960s, New York City was the center of "action bowling", a form of high-stakes gambling in which bowlers often teenagers faced off for thousands of dollars every night. When money like that is changing hands, you can bet the pressure is on (and the balls are rigged), and losses come with dire consequences. But for a few kids, the world of action bowling would turn out to be a ticket off the mean streets and onto the Professional Bowlers Association Tour. For Ernie Schlegel, it would be a chance to shed his hustler ways and become a bonafide champion. For the more than 100 million bowlers worldwide and for fans of timeless sports histories, *Pin Action* captures the underbelly of 1960s and '70s New York and tells the true story of how the most notorious action bowler of all time became a Hall of Famer. Set in the gritty, flashy, lost world of action bowling, Gianmarc Manzione tells an epic tale filled with seedy characters, uproarious eccentricities, improbable twists of fate, and a rags-to-riches narrative so crazy it has to be true.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I am of Brooklyn: body, soul and bone marrow. For that reason I was anxious to read Gianmarc's book not merely as a bowling book, but as a picture of a time and place that I cannot return to. The book doesn't disappoint with its characters, which some people may find fictionalized, but are not. It is colorful when describing the characters on the corners, whether they are singing in harmony or hustling, or both. But in addition to the comedy of the book, Gianmarc's poet's soul shines through as when he talks of Kenny Barber who, after sharing his memories with Gianmarc, committed suicide. I highly recommend this book. If you want to know about bowling's history: read this book. If you want to go back to a time and place that exists in your heart and mind: read this book. If you just want a good time with a book: read this book.

This book gives a glimpse of a time and place that was magical with an edginess and gritty reality. Sounds like fiction but was oh so real for me in the summers of 1966-69 between college at Okla. St. Univ.. The bowling characters & the bettors in the crowd at Central Lanes were truly "Runyonesque" as described in the book and of which Ernie Schlegel was certainly one of the largest. On the score sheets I was always listed as 'Oklahoma Bill', although when bettors lost money on me I would hear 'Farmer Bill'. Made a lot of money from being an unknown and underestimated but the memories of this Action world are truly priceless. Came back one last time before settling down only to find Central Lanes had been burned down. There were other action houses but Central lanes was the best and got bigger crowds betting on the games. Thanks for this book.

This is not as much a book as it is an experience. Manzione takes your mind places so vividly that you can actually smell the smoke and grease as you read. From start to finish this book puts you in a booming time period in NYC when hustlers and gamblers were throwing around thousands of dollars as opposed to the nickel and dime action we have grown accustomed to today. While someone's mortgage payment or college tuition might be on the line on Sundays and in casinos, Pin Action takes us to moments where lives were actually on the line. Ernie Schlegel, one of bowling's most colorful characters comes to life in this book and shows us that the American Dream can be accomplished with almost anything, including a bowling ball.

Anyone who is addicted to bowling, as I am will enjoy this book. It begins in the early sixties, and tells of the young kids, who would bowl all night, if they could hustle another bowler. It talks of the oil

on the lanes, the methods that the bowlers went to cause the ball to hook, because this was before weight blocks were added to balls. The subtle methods they used to get inside their opponents head before the match started. A very enjoyable read.

In "Pin Action", Gianmarc Manzione paints a vivid picture of a bygone era and follows the sport of bowling from the 1960s to the present. The colorful cast of characters stars Ernie Schlegel, "The Bicentennial Kid" who began as a pin action legend in New York and through many personal trials turned his life around and achieved national recognition on the PBA Tour during the 1980s with the support of his loving wife, Catherine. It is a story of triumph. Couldn't put it down.

The book chronicles an era and a hustler. This is a subject not often treated. The author brings it to life awfully well. Anyone who as a kid hung around a bowling alley will recognize some of the characters and the atmosphere of the time. I am not much of a bowler but I enjoyed the slice of life and the Damyonesque characters of the book. Nice work.

Quite simply, this is the best "bowling book" ever written. But it is much more than that. Pin Action captures a slice of American life from a bygone era populated by hustlers, gamblers, athletes, wanna-be athletes and countless other colorful characters. One can imagine similar individuals in pool halls or on golf courses, but in this case bowling alleys provided the backdrop for Gianmarc Manzione's masterful storytelling. The book is brimming with detail and shading that makes it virtually impossible to put down. If you love bowling, you must read this book. If you are a sports fan, you will love this book. If you are a student of the human condition, you will be amazed by how both strengths and foibles play out on shiny wooden lanes, housed in dens of inequity that have faded to foggy but fascinating memories â" all brought to life on the pages of Pin Action.

I bought the book for my mother for her birthday because she loved bowling so much in the 70s and 80s that we watched it on Saturday afternoon TV. It never occurred to me that my father, with his love of True Crime, would be interested in the book, too. As soon as my mother opened it, my father grabbed it and started reading random passages aloud to the family at the dining room table -- interrupting with his own "neighborhood" stories from his youth in Brooklyn and Queens, saying things like "That's what these guys used to do! They used to . . ." and giving us a history lesson of crime in the 70s and 80s. The next morning my mother told me that reading just the first chapter was like taking a walk down memory lane for her; she's excited to read the rest. I hope they fight

over it and then share it with the rest of the family.

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