

INTERNATIONAL

BOWLING INDUSTRY

Vol. 23 | September 2015

THE WORLD'S ONLY MAGAZINE DEVOTED EXCLUSIVELY TO THE BUSINESS OF BOWLING

HeadPinz

BOWLING HISTORY IS CUTTING EDGE AT HEADPINZ

The Ciniellos showcase
their passion.

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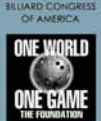
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QUBICAAMF

COVER STORY

BOWLING HISTORY MEETS CUTTING EDGE AT HEADPINZ FORT MYERS

The Ciniellos
showcase their
passion for
bowling history.

PinBoyz



■ By Jim Goodwin

After more than six years of planning, Pat and Lisa Ciniello's 50,000 square-foot dream center is a reality. The all new Headpinz Fort Myers FEC includes vintage circa 1908 Pinboyz Bowling Alleys, a futuristic VIP lounge with intelligent LED projection lighting and sound, traditional league and open play lanes, two restaurants, three lounge areas, an indoor/outdoor patio, a two story laser tag arena, a skywalker ropes course above the huge Game Zone redemption arcade, and more, all under one roof.

What do you do if you are a bowling center proprietor who loves history, respects the sport and its traditions, yet recognizes that the business must change its model to optimize chances for financial success in today's rapidly changing marketplace?

That was the dilemma facing Pat and Lisa Ciniello in recent years. For more than three decades, they had built their company, Bowland Centers of Southwest Florida, to include five very successful centers. They followed the traditional model with league based centers, great open play on weekends, tournaments, youth programs, award winning food and beverage operations, all run by top-notch service-oriented employees. And they did it all as well as it can be done.

Business and life in the Sunshine State, with signs of economic recovery, are good. But for a visionary like Pat Ciniello, good is simply not good enough. He has seen the trend toward FECs up close in his travels around the world as chairman of QubicaAMF. And, with his new centers, he may not have invented the new wheel, but his Bowland and Headpinz team have raised the bar a little higher for future FEC operations and development. The new centers are Headpinz Cape Coral (HPCC) and Headpinz Fort Myers (HPFM).

Headpinz Cape Coral is described by Ciniello as the "test case" for Bowland's entry into the FEC business. In 2014, they



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Overall our revenue increase has been fairly substantial since installing BES X. We initially saw a 13% revenue bump with BES X being the only change that we made to the center. In Q1 of this year our revenue was up again, 16% over last year, and BES X contributed to this significantly. The new Mad Games have been a great sales tool for our event planners. We now have a real and unique product to offer to group business. As a result, we've booked a ton more parties—corporate events and open play parties are both up. Not to mention, the BES X technology has been near-flawless—it's rock solid, and the training and technical support have been tremendous.

Glenn Gable, Game Entertainment Management



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THE GRANDEST OF OPENINGS

After more than six years of planning and construction, Pat Ciniello's dream of the Headpinz concept became a reality on August 10, 2015.

Pat and Lisa Ciniello invited more than 200 friends to see the ribbon cutting and the phenomenal new 50,000 square-foot family entertainment center for the first time. While the VIP crowd was enjoying the opening party in the Pinboyz Bowling Alleys and the VIP lounge, the rest of the center was already packed with paying customers.

It was the hottest ticket in Fort Myers that evening, and no one left disappointed. "I want to thank all of the great contractors and our staff for



everything. They did a phenomenal job," said Ciniello. "I don't want to forget anyone... and especially I want to thank my beautiful wife Lisa – thanks for being there all the way to make this special day happen. Now! We are going to party tonight and have fun because that is what this place is all about! Thank you all for being here."

completed a total remodel of the 28,000 square-foot 24-lane center they purchased, formerly known as Friendship Lanes. They bought the center in 2011, and while planning the all-new building in Fort Myers, they totally transformed the traditional Friendship



Lanes into a beautiful and dynamic FEC.

When the Cape Coral bowling community got word of what Friendship's new owners had planned, they were not thrilled, to say the least. But when Pat and Lisa made the commitment to bowl in a league in Cape Coral themselves, in spite of a 45 minute drive from their home, the association members and league bowlers learned that their interests really mattered to the Ciniellos. When revenues tripled after the remodel, everyone was happy.

Giving their son Marc Ciniello his first opportunity to be a general manager was another positive step taken in Cape Coral. When the



project was completed, they knew they had a winning formula, which meant they could go full speed ahead on the Fort Myers project.

Two years later, Pat and Lisa are still bowling in that league with all of their new friends in Cape Coral. It meant a lot to the locals that they made a commitment and stuck by it.

Laying the Groundwork

The entire time they were engaged in the Headpinz Cape Coral project, and even before, the Ciniello team had a much bigger project in mind. They knew it would be in Southwest Florida, but the exact location was not decided until a deal was made at the end of 2009 on the land and location. The year before, Ciniello had a chance to do a partnership deal for a boutique center and village shopping center in Estero, Florida. "I liked the concept, but I wasn't crazy about the location," said Ciniello. "I thought the place to build a new entertainment-type center should be near the Florida Gulf Coast University and the new mall being built east of highway 175."

After parting ways with the Estero project, word started spreading that Ciniello was looking for a location closer to the university. He found a great site adjacent to the new Gulf Coast Town Center just off highway 175, but the 11 acres was in the Cleveland Clinic Trust and required development. With a few other investors, he made an offer



for the land, but no deal could be reached.

Finally, on December 17, 2009, Ciniello purchased land one mile from the airport, two miles from the Gulf Coast Town Center, and only four miles from the university. But the project hit another roadblock. After starting the initial process by hiring civil engineers, an architect and designers in early 2010, Ciniello learned that the local county impact fees were over \$460,000. That, along with the fact that interest rates were still very high, put the project on hiatus again. "We decided to put the project on hold again after Lisa and I had a few glasses of wine," said Ciniello.

That tough decision had a silver lining. It gave them the opportunity to complete the Headpinz Cape Coral purchase and re-build. Ciniello was the original owner of Friendship Lanes, but sold it to the Pressinger family years ago. After the death of her father, Petra Pressinger sold it back to Ciniello. "Lisa and I thought it was the perfect fit to test our new concept, so in October 2011, we bought it." That move gave the Headpinz concept a starting place. Friendship Lanes' location right on Cape Coral's busiest street was good, but the old building didn't have the 'wow' look, and they had only 28,000 square feet to work with. The total renovation was completed in February 2014.

"We started with an all new Game Zone," said Ciniello. "That led us to take six of the 24 lanes to finish off a boutique that was not received with open arms by the local league bowlers. But when finished, we learned a lot and we ended up with an award winning entertainment remodel and tripled the center's

pre-construction revenues."

The Cape Coral project got the juices flowing again for the big project in Fort Myers. By then, the folks in Lee County (Fort Myers) were talking about ways to end the recession and stimulate the economy by reducing the impact fees on new construction. Hearing that, Ciniello attended some of their meetings and he made it clear he would build his new entertainment center and bring in jobs to Fort Myers if the impact fees were lowered. He did a couple of television interviews, and, a short time later, the county leaders voted to lower the fees by 80%. That coupled with lower interest rates and appreciation of the property value made the return on investment very attractive to the banks, and the deal was now unstoppable.

Making It Unique and Special

Borrowing pages from the Disney playbook, the Ciniellos teamed up with Dynamic Designs and Studio 41b to do something that had never been done in bowling before – building the all new Headpinz Fort Myers. They went back in time to create four vintage circa 1908 alleys within their new state-of-the-art building. They call this special area Pinboyz Bowling Alleys, and it comes complete with above ground ball returns, vintage ball racks, specially trained employees acting as cast members playing their 1908 parts in their 1908 costumes. Pinboyz is authentic in every visible way with everything custom made. No guests will be allowed to bring their own bowling balls into this area. They must use the special black balls with the Pinboyz logo, also custom made for the patrons who will have a chance to see and practice the game in a simpler, purer landscape all while learning about the game's rich history. Childrens and adult groups will be able to have fun in this area while enjoying a hands-on history lesson.

"We thought about getting wooden balls, but we just could not find a good source," said Ciniello. "I fell in love with the concept while working with Hank Harris to create the two Old Time Alleys in the International Bowling Museum and Hall of Fame in Arlington." Ciniello did find some authentic 1908 vintage wooden balls and many other artifacts for display in the new (old) section. He even purchased a 1908 billiard table and bar to complete the museum-like scene. "We will have rules

and regulations from that period. People can even put money in the thumbholes of their balls and roll them down the gutter to tip the pinboys. We will also have costumed employees to keep score on chalkboards."

As chairman of the International Bowling Museum and Hall of Fame for many years, Ciniello oversaw the move of bowling's Hall of Fame from St. Louis to Texas in 2010. "I think the old-time alleys in the new Texas museum are

HeadPinz and Bowland Centers of Southwest Florida donated \$10,000 to the Disabled Veterans Insurance Careers organization at the grand opening for HeadPinz in Fort Myers. DVIC helps vets enter a career in the insurance industry. This is a cause close to Pat's heart as he is a veteran himself.



great," he said, "but they are underutilized. By having the vintage attraction here in our new center, people can not only see it, they can touch it and become a part of it. We anticipate many theme parties where people come in costumes to bowl circa 1908. I think it is a wonderful way to teach and honor bowling's rich history. We think it will get a lot of attention from unique new customers and from the media."

From Old Time to Ultra Modern

Traveling through time in the new Headpinz Fort Myers center requires only a few steps and the contrast is like going from a horse and buggy to the Starship Enterprise. The Headpinz VIP lounge features elegant tuxedo colors – white bowling lanes with black gutters and caps, and ultra modern custom made furniture with plush seating. The white lanes are only white when the intelligent lighting and sound systems are off. When the system is on, which will be almost all of the time, the lanes transform into a myriad of colors, all possible with LED projection lighting. The incredible system was developed by BowlTech's Hans Krol in Europe. Headpinz Fort Myers will be the first USA installation. The intelligent lighting system is so versatile it can make the lanes look like projection screens with not only colorful but moving images - virtually anything you can imagine can be created in audio and video technology. Is unique, incredibly entertaining and limited only by imagination.

By contrast, lanes 13-28 will be very traditional, albeit the very best and most modern traditional imaginable with soft custom seating, the latest and greatest QubicaAMF scoring, top of the line masking projection screens, the best and newest QubicaAMF synthetic lanes along with pinspotters and pins.



"We are building the ultimate FEC, but we are not abandoning league and traditional sport bowling," said Lisa Ciniello. "We fully expect to see a lot of traditional bowling on lanes 13-28. While lanes 1-4 in the Pinboyz area and lanes 5-12 in the VIP lounge will be used primarily for parties and corporate groups, the rest

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- **Level One: Tuesday, September, 22**
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will be very much like the lanes in our other Bowland centers.”

Other amenities included will be a two story laser tag arena, an overhead ropes course, a huge redemption arcade, an indoor and outdoor patio, three bar/lounge areas, and two restaurants within Nemo’s Sports Bistro; one serving fancy fare, and the other more casual and New York style pizza and Italian entrees.

Hospitality Second to None

How many bowling centers have an executive chef, greeters, lane ambassadors, or a concierge area?

Headpinz and Bowland will have all of these in Fort Myers, along with a food & beverage manager, a director of marketing, a facilities manager and other key positions in the centrally located corporate office that serves all Bowland centers. Lisa Ciniello spends a lot of time on human resources and she works closely with Pat’s cousin Gary Ciniello, who runs the food & beverage operations for the seven centers.

“We hired an executive chef not just for the food, but for new and creative ideas,” said Lisa. “We hope to become a destination place where customers come for the entertainment, but we think the food will keep them in our building and make them come back.” “It also helps that we have a 36 year reputation for award winning food,” added Pat. “So our friends trust us.”

A glimpse at the new Nemo’s sports bistro menu inside Headpinz Fort Myers tells us that guests will find items that will rival any of the 40 or 50 restaurants in the newly developed area. Looking for a little delicious duck? How about New Zealand lamp chops, or signature shrimp, or bone-in ribeye steak, or Chicken Cordon Bleu? This is not your everyday bowling center menu.

And if the real fancy fare is not one’s cup of tea, simply step over to enjoy the NewYork-style pizzeria where chefs toss the dough and prepare the specialty pizzas in a fancy double brick oven.

Want Success? Hire Good People

“I work with Pat and Gary on all the centers, and I spend a lot of time on the HR side and with our marketing people,” said Lisa. “I am very involved in hiring key people because, at the end of the day, they will be working directly with Pat and me and we want to make sure they are people we want on our team.”

Lisa also oversees a team that develops new menu content and design, chooses décor for the new projects and remodeling, and works with outside contractors and consultants, like the people at Studio 41b and Dynamic Designs, who helped build the Headpinz centers. “Our management team sits around a table to share ideas about everything we are working on,” said Lisa. “We all have input, and we make decisions together.”

Former AMF executive Paul Barkley is another key consultant who now owns his own management company in Florida. “Paul helped us find the right top staff members to run both Headpinz locations,” said Lisa. “We got 700 applicants for jobs just for the Fort Myers center. He headhunted for a general manager, assistant general manager and executive chef. Paul brought in several good people for Pat and me to interview and hire. Then, we gave them the authority to hire their staffs.”

With the 140-member staff in place, Barkley then put them through his “Bowling 101” training. The Bowland standard requires all staff members to be well versed in the terminologies and nuances of the sport and the business. Many of them may not be bowlers themselves, but they must have a complete understanding of the game to be successful.

Location, Location, Location

Aside from the fact that Headpinz Fort Myers is an incredible entertainment destination, its location will get better and better. The newly developed area is filling up fast with housing developments, offices, restaurants, the new shopping mall, the university with 12,000 students and three exits providing easy access off the interstate. “This is the hottest spot in Southwest Florida,” said Ciniello. “When the banks look at an area, they always post the positives and negatives. For this area, there were no negatives.” “We just think this area and our new center [are] different and unique, and we can’t wait to meet all of our new friends and customers,” said Lisa.

“Amen,” said Pat. ❖



Jim Goodwin is the founder and president of the Bowling News Network and a former president and life member of the International Bowling Media Association.



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*Good luck and good bowling to everyone!
See you in Las Vegas.*

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The winners of the 50th QubicaAMF Bowling World Cup!

