

# Pin-point accuracy

Bowling continues to entertain and fascinate even after many years in the spotlight. **Lee Wild** finds out how QubicaAMF is helping more FECs than ever add this attraction to their line-up

**S**ET 'em up, knock 'em down. Bowling is one of the most traditional forms of entertainment still popular in the modern age. Thought to date back to the ancient Egyptians, with wall drawings depicting a pin and ball game being played back in 5200 BC, it's fair to say this game has stood the test of time. Despite advancements in technology and playstyles, there is still a definitive lineage that runs through to the modern game.

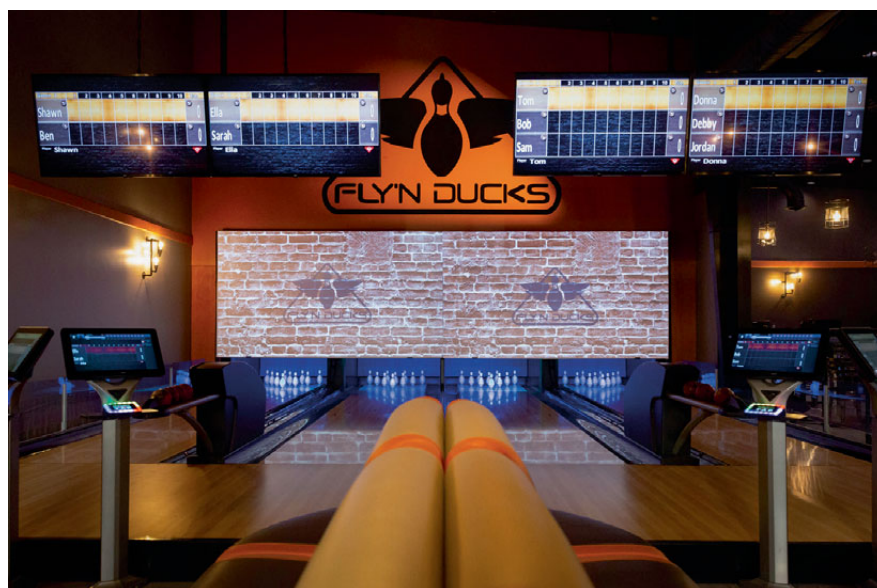
A big name in the bowling sector is QubicaAMF, with the company active in markets around the world. Jim Krogsund, product manager, capital equipment, states that these innovations have been necessary for bowling to continue to exist in a crowded amusement space. "Nowadays, customers expect more from visiting a hospitality venue," he said.

"This is no different for bowling. The traditional centres still have their place in the market, but customers are now looking for their bowling centres to offer different activities and services, from boutique-style centres offering drinks and restaurant food, to venues offering a multi-activity location where the family can stay and enjoy activities from bowling to karting."

Like other manufacturers, QubicaAMF offers its own small-ball game: Fly'n Ducks. Krogsund says that the game often tends to be more popular with families over other demographics. He said: "Small-ball variants of bowling have been around for decades, positioned as scaled down arcade versions of full-size lanes. Many of these small-ball games had whimsical themes and therefore tended to cater more toward family groups with younger players.

"While these games are still popular, and do quite well in select markets, what has really been booming in recent years is the demand for shorter length variants of duckpin bowling. Duckpin is arguably more challenging than traditional tenpin bowling so decreasing the length hardly effects the game play and excitement. And since duckpin lanes are the same width as tenpin lanes, groups of four to six bowlers can still gather and socialise comfortably in the space of a single lane.

"QubicaAMF has seen tremendous interest from new customers that would never have considered putting in bowling in the past because of the space requirement and complexity of running a traditional bowling operation. About 25 per cent of new projects in the US are now small-ball oriented, up significantly from previous years. Bars, restaurants, breweries, resorts, movie theatres, amenity centres and interest from the home entertainment markets have contributed to this



incremental investment in small-ball bowling attractions. The primary reason for this growth is the ability for locations to offer real bowling entertainment in a reduced footprint."

Another shift in the industry in recent years has been to string pinsetters. This technology, which utilises strings over the more complicated freefall design, reduces maintenance, cost and space required, opening these games up to more FECs than ever before.

Krogsund explained: "The Fly'n Ducks package is powered by the Edge String Pinspotter, which makes operating bowling extremely simple and cost effective for any business. Unlike with traditional tenpin bowling, there is no need to condition and oil the lanes, just basic cleaning is all that is ever required."

The changes have been a hit with guests. "Guests love the short lane duckpin bowling for many reasons," he said. "The lane's shorter length creates the perfect level of fun with just enough challenge to keep it competitive for players of all skill levels. Many guests enjoy the added perk of not needing to wear any bowling rental shoes. They can bowl in any shoes they wander into the facility in.

"The single size small ball makes for a faster start to gameplay. There is no need to hunt around looking for the right weight and ball size for each bowler. Guests can just walk up to an open lane and start bowling."

Once again, while the rising popularity of the small-ball game has been a bright spot for companies, tenpin is still firmly entrenched in the playing public's consciousness, with Krogsund referring to it as the "cornerstone" of

a family entertainment centre. "Where small-ball games fit and blend perfectly into a facilities environment, tenpin bowling really helps to define a location's identity," he explained.

"People will visit an entertainment spot just to go bowling; it's great for parties, leagues and family gatherings. Bowling is one of the few activities in these centres that everyone can do together."

While the combination of pin, ball and lane has persisted for many years, in this modern age guests want technology to be integrated into the games that they play, with enhanced scoring, mini-games and virtual overlays all adding to the overall experience. QubicaAMF's HyperBowling is one such product that gets straight to the heart of what those guests want, blending bowling and gaming together to create something greater than the sum of its parts. Krogsund says: "It is the ideal way to tap into the huge gaming audience of millennials and it provides a great platform that everyone can enjoy so operators can reach beyond their existing bowling base."

As well as the aforementioned millennials, Krogsund says that the allure of bowling is that everyone can have a go. He said: "Grandma may not want to zoom around the track in a state-of-the-art go-kart or chase the kiddos around a smoke-filled laser tag arena, but she will happily show her grandkids who is boss on the bowling lanes of an entertainment centre.

"Tenpin bowling is the world's most popular participator sport because it is social and fun. That is precisely why people visit a family entertainment centre in the first place!"