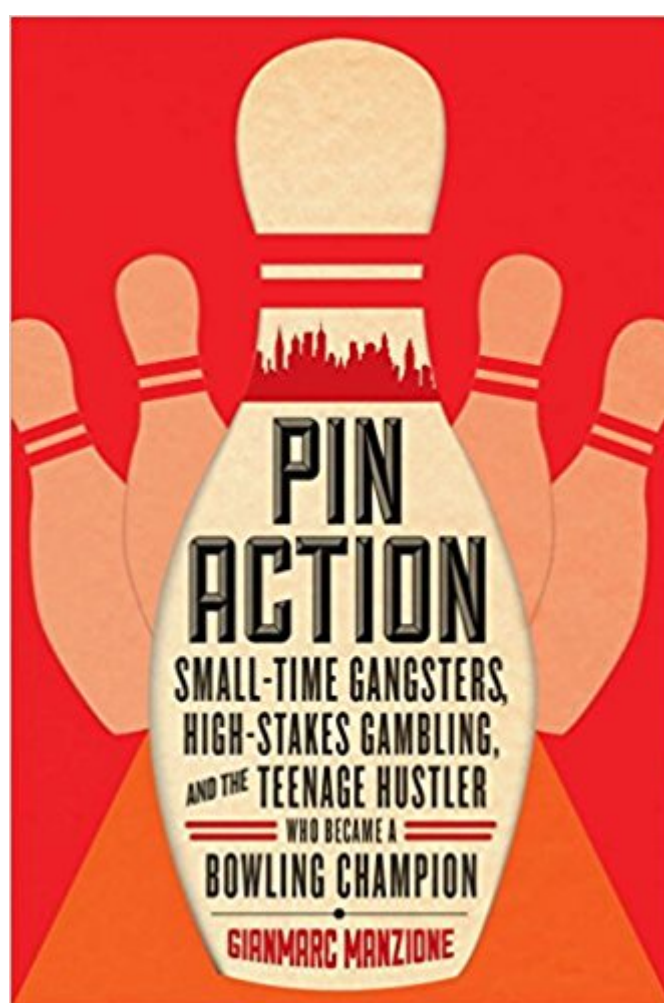


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Pin Action: Small-Time Gangsters, High-Stakes Gambling, And The Teenage Hustler Who Became A Bowling Champion



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. 8 page color insert

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Customer Reviews

"A thoroughly entertaining slice of twisted Americana, New York gangster style. Only in the Big Apple could something so pure and Middle America as bowling become so infused with most of

the seven deadly sins. Put it on the shelf with *The Big Lebowski* and *Jersey Boys*.
- Dary Matera, author of *QUITTING THE MOB* and *THE F.B.I.'s TEN MOST WANTED*
“A book about bowling? Zzzzzz, right? Nope. Manzione lays bare a world to which most readers will have had little exposure. But he brings that world alive with vivid prose and razor-sharp characterizations. A superb sports memoir.”
- Booklist (starred review)
“A hard-boiled and often funny look at the hustlers, thugs and characters of the 1960s New York bowling underworld. Who knew bowling alleys could tell such entertaining stories?”
- Kirkus
“This well-researched account is for those who remember the glory days of bowling. Others will be fascinated by the gritty side of the sport, which few knew existed.”
- Library Journal
“Manzione’s account of eccentric people, colorful places, and once-popular pro sport is a strike.”
- Publishers Weekly
“Every now and then, we’re fortunate enough to stumble across a story that transports us to places we never knew we wanted to go. *Pin Action* is just such a story—a rare, cultural gem of storytelling, both brilliantly researched and masterfully rendered. Prepare to be bowled over.”
- Tracy Crow, author of *EYES RIGHT*
“The biggest pleasure of *Pin Action* is those stories of glory days, which read as if you’re listening to a bunch of slightly shady old guys spinning yarns in some neighborhood club in the least hip reaches of Brooklyn. Manzione tells them with the colorful language and larger-than-life tone they deserve.”
- Tampa Bay Times
“In *Pin Action*, Gianmarc Manzione takes the reader on a fascinating journey into the murky world of high-stakes bowling. But this tribute to gangsters and gamblers is not just for bowlers. Anyone who appreciates top-notch storytelling will appreciate Manzione’s audacious new book. Lace up your bowling shoes and muster your courage. You won’t regret the ride.”
- R. A. Dyer, author of *HUSTLER DAYS: Minnesota Fats, Jersey Red and America’s Great Age of Pool* and *THE HUSTLER AND THE CHAMP: Willie Mosconi, Minnesota Fats and the Rivalry that Defined Pool*
“*Pin Action* took me on a wonderful trip back in time to the golden era of action bowling in the 1960s New York Tri-State area. Manzione’s words brought back vivid memories of the greatest time of my life bowling action at Ave M Bowl in Brooklyn which was one of the most famous action houses of all time. He goes into great depth capturing the smell, the feel, the characters of this great bowling alley and others with his own very unique writing style.”
- Clifford Nordquist Sr., "AC Butch," ActionBowlers.com

Gianmarc Manzione is the most recognized writer in the bowling industry today. He has written on the subject for the *New York Times* and all of the bowling industry’s highest-profile publications. Manzione fell in love with bowling as a kid growing up in Brooklyn, where he spent

so much of his childhood in local bowling alleys that he was virtually raised in them.Â Â Manzione currently teaches English and creative writing at the College of Central Florida, and lives with his wife near Tampa.

Manzione does a great job of telling the story in a way appropriate to the subject matter. I imagined myself in a smokey bowling alley, hearing these great, mostly unknown men tell their "back in the day" stories. I'm not a bowler, but the pages of the book have me planning my next outing to the lanes!

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 – all brought to life on the pages of Pin Action.

A friend of mine gave me this book to read. He actually gave it to me at the Bowling Center. A few days later I started looking for it and couldn't remember bringing it home. I went to the Bowling Center to see if anyone had turned it in. No luck! The only thing I could remember was what I thought the cover looked like. I went on and sure enough it was available. I did tell my friend that I had lost his book. Really felt bad about it since he's son gave it to him. A few day later, I received the replacement book from . However, before I could give him the replacement book, I saw a black bag leaning against the wall in my computer room. Sure enough, his book was inside. My friend now has his book back and I received a bonus one of my own from the folks. Everything worked out great!

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.

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.

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.

Growing up in the 50's bowling was a huge part of our entertainment. Like a trip down nostalgia lane reading about hustle that went on after hours

I grew up in Inwood in those days. Manhattan Lanes was my house and Ernie Schlegel was our character. He comes to life in this book just as I remembered him. He gave me some pointers one day when I was a 140s bowler and I immediately became a 170s bowler. We would find ourselves in Yonkers or The Bronx or Brooklyn early on a Sunday morning betting on Ernie. It was a very unique time that only existed for a short while in New York City. This book recreates it exactly as it was. Great job Gianmarc from another Jasper (EE '65). Ray McCormick

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