**HALL OF FAME SPEECH**

**FOR**

**RANDY ROWLSON**

Hello everyone... it’s a real privilege to be here tonight and to be honored by all of you... my friends... peers... supporters... and challengers... When it comes to bowling, there are many reasons I can think of that are cause for celebration... this evening represents more than the presentation of this really special recognition. To me, that’s the icing on the cake.... being inducted into the Greater Kalamazoo Bowling Association Hall of Fame reminds me of all of the milestones this sport represents in my life. I think of all of the gifts bowling has brought... we’ve developed lasting friendships, we’ve all found some great common ground and kinship.... we get to do what we love.... and let’s not forget... bowling has its advantages.... while everyone might compare their favorite sport and weigh the pros and cons... remember **this**... for instance, for all of you that might have friends that think golf is the superior sport... we **rarely** lose a bowling ball.... (**Wait for the laugh)**.

I can barely remember a time in my life in which I wasn’t involved in this sport. I started bowling when I was around three years old. I think the bowling balls must have been heavier than I was and the pins were probably taller than me! I was fascinated... transfixed... hooked from the beginning.... the feel of staring down that alley.... eyeing the set up... aiming at my targeted ten pins.... the release of the ball.... the follow through.... the sound as it rolled down the alley.... the crack of the pins as they fell in submission.... I couldn’t get enough.... however, I must say, I had **PLENTY** of experience hearing the ball thud into the gutter in those early days!! I learned early on to focus on the actions and sounds that produced success!!

Over the years, I discovered that practice, while not necessarily leading to perfect, makes for a more focused game and hopefully, higher scores. From almost the beginning, I committed to that.... practice, practice, practice. Not much stopped me.... especially in those formative years.... when I was thirteen... fourteen.... fifteen... people knew where to find me. I have so many fond memories of bowling with my friends, especially the late Adam Worrell and his brother, Jason. I also remember, vividly, one point, I had to have surgery on my leg....so... **naturally**.... I bowled in an orthopedic boot... I mean... **WHO WOULDN’T**???? And some people think bowling shoes are weird!!! (**Wait for the laugh**). Like I said, not much stopped me.

When I think back on those times and the thousands of games I must have played, I think of the friendships and bonds strengthened because of this sport. While we may stand alone, toe behind the line, staring down the lane at those ominous upright pins, make no mistake.... bowling is a **team** sport. The energy that’s generated... the suspense as we wonder “Will it... won’t it... take down those ten soldiers daring us to miss...??? We wonder about that together... whether it’s our turn or not.... and because of that, I am blessed to have several people to acknowledge and thank... To Charlie Tapp, five time PGA champion, and huge influence on my life and participation.... thank you for allowing a kid from Kalamazoo to dream... (**Did you ever meet him? If so, you can say**).... watching his finesse and skills.... making it all look so easy... encouraged me to seek that sweet spot... the elegance of technique.... the confidence to dominate the lane. To Dean Cardella, who had the vision, respect, and appreciation to even consider nominating me for this honor.... I really owe you... that doesn’t mean I’m gonna go easy on you the next time we face off.... (**Wait for the laugh**).... but just know that my gratitude runs deep. To all those who created and made up the GKBA Hall Of Fame, this honor was formed **OVER SIXTY** years ago. For all that time, young bowlers had the opportunity to admire and learn from, the best in the community. For young kids like me, it gave us a road map... one that guided us and set standards of excellence, and now, I am humbled to be a part of that history.

To Dawson Slack, owner of Continental Lanes, thank you for allowing me to learn and grow while in this environment, and of course, to Dave Farley, my long time boss, and more importantly, **friend**, I owe you both tremendous expressions of gratitude.... I’ve heard it said, “Do what you love and you’ll never have to work a day in your life,” I have to say it’s true... it’s a pleasure and a privilege to be able to do what I love.

And, of course, to my family.... although my wife, Shelley and my daughter Aubrey couldn’t be here tonight.... as I pursued my dreams, Aubrey is pursuing one of hers... she has an away game in Ohio, I want to thank both of them for their love, encouragement, and patience as I continue to “bowl my way through life.” To my son, Adam, who recently began college at Kellogg Community College, I see so much of myself in him (**If he is there, say you).** While you committed to being on the bowling team at college, the pandemic kind of got in the way of participating.... hopefully only temporarily... still, I want to thank you for sharing that part of my DNA, for your passion and interest in the sport, and for always making me proud.

Some people believe the sport of bowling goes back thousands of years, to Ancient Egyptian times. Some place it’s origins in the 13th century. As I said earlier, for me, it’s been part of my life since I can remember. My parents were recreational bowlers, my older sister was a collegiate bowler. And as all of you obviously know, I am a **BOWLER**... and proud of it. I am thankful to join the ranks of those that preceded me, and I want to use this honor to encourage those young people that watch us... waiting in the wings to top our achievements, advance our understanding and enjoyment of the sport, and to continue the tradition and legacy of bowling for many, many years to come!!! Thank you all!!