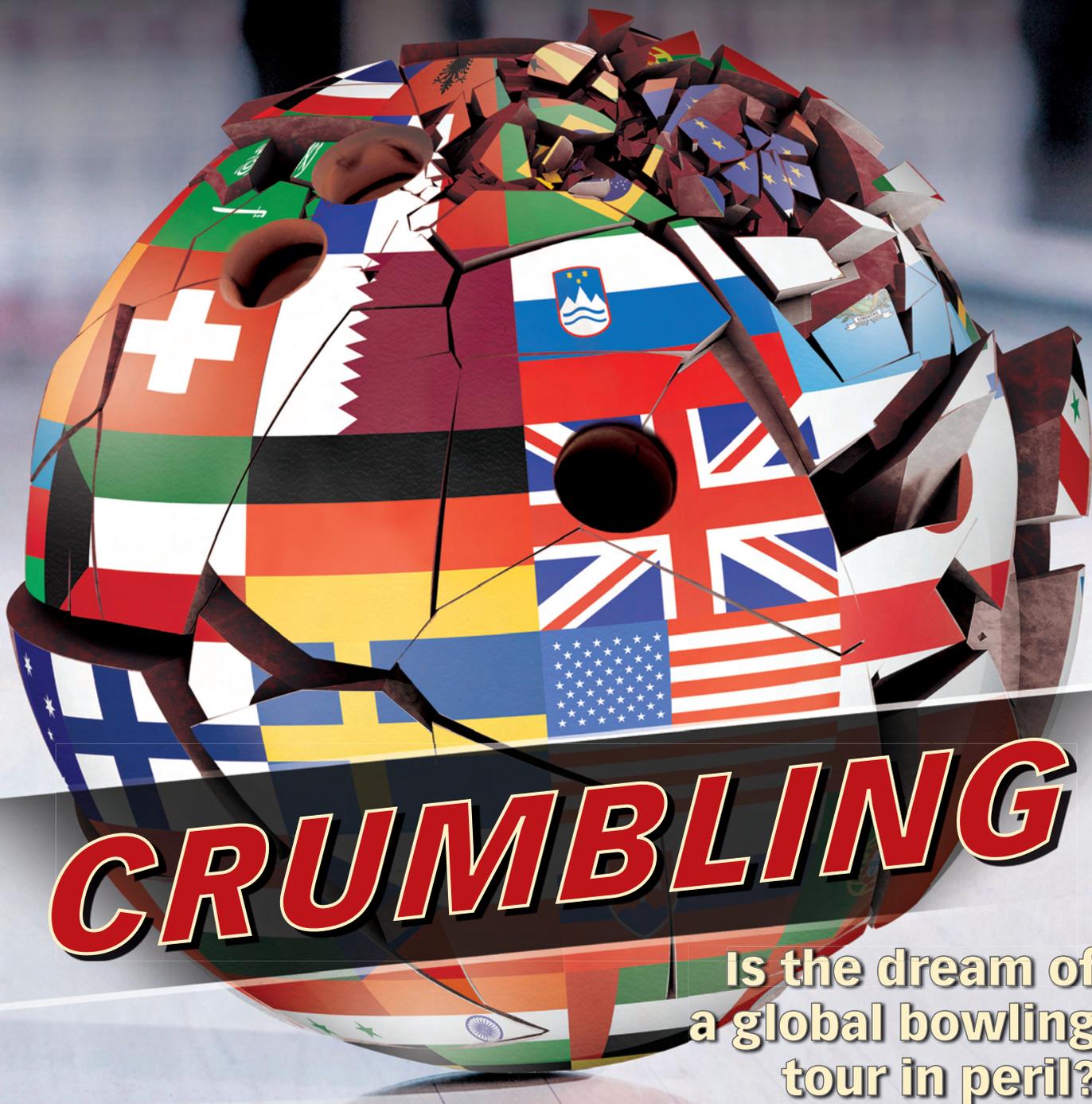


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Is the dream of  
a global bowling  
tour in peril?

# GRIND OUT

Sweden's Wegner, China's Hongbo tough it out in grueling QubicaAMF World Cup in Shanghai.



**BY GIANMARC MANZIONE**

**S**avor this fact: The men's half of the 52nd QubicaAMF World Cup was won by a guy throwing an 11-pound ball. Pat Ciniello, the Chairman of the Board at QubicaAMF who had a front-row seat at the finals at Hao's Bowling in Downtown Shanghai, China's Luwan Sports Complex, had to think back a long way to recall ever seeing anything like China's Wang Hongbo.

"I hadn't seen a spinner in a long time," he said. "I recalled in my hustling days bowling against an older gentleman who threw a spinner, but he was a right-hander throwing it from the right side into the pocket. Hongbo was far to the left and the ball would be fading

to the right and the pin action, well, I would be thinking, 'He's never going to carry the 5-pin,' and yet he would carry it and get an unbelievable amount of pin action."

Team USA Head Coach, Rod Ross, has witnessed the extreme spinner style that historically is unique to players from Asian countries such as Chinese Taipei and says the unorthodox approach emerged in an era during which lane maintenance was poor in that part of the world.

"Lane maintenance has improved substantially in the Asian countries but there was a time when they would have a lot of recreational bowling and they would not dress the lanes every day or even every week, so the spinner style

was developed to combat that," he said.

Calling the action on BowlTV with USBC's Matt Cannizzaro, Chris Barnes, who coached Danielle McEwan in the women's final, explained that Hongbo's thumb twists to the right of his fingers as he releases the ball. "His track is about as wide as an ashtray and he wants the ball to go a little left of the headpin. The 5-pin lays over in front of the 8, and the 2-pin traps it and knocks it over.

"They maximize deflection," Barnes said of the spinners. "They don't leave a lot of splits because of the amount of deflection. He really wants to be around the 19 board when he hits with that 11-pound ball."

Ross explains that Hongbo's style may seem unorthodox but everything else

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**Scenic Route:** Beautiful Yuyuan Gardens is one site that made Shanghai a uniquely scenic host for the 52nd QubicaAMF World Cup.

about his game is “textbook.”

“They have great timing when they are using the form,” he said, “what we would call ‘textbook timing.’ They have great arm swings. They have to have really straight arm swings to be able to do this and be very accurate.”

In the championship round on both sides, men’s and women’s, the fourth seeds bowled the top seeds while second and third seeds faced off, with the winners of each match battling it out for the title. No. 2 Hongbo rarely missed a spare and left splits just as infrequently.

He blasted the front five strikes against No. 3 Slovenian Anze Grabrijan, a big-hooking left-hander, then left a pocket 5-pin on what Barnes described as “kind of a flat-10, half-pocket hit.” Hongbo won handily, 234-200, setting up a championship match against Irish two-hander Christopher Sloan, the No. 4 seed who defeated Sweden’s Martin Larsen, 188-165, to advance to the title match.

Both Hongbo and Sloan opened the match with doubles but Sloan left and converted the 3-6-10 in the 3rd, while Hongbo went through the nose and left and converted a 7-pin spare. Barnes described Sloan as having “massive entry angle” as the Irishman blasted several bone-crunching strikes. The dramatic contrast in styles was not lost on Barnes, who said, “Whether it is a 15-pound ball going 21 miles per hour with 500 RPMs or an 11-pound ball at 17 miles per hour with 200 RPMs, they all count the same.”

Hongbo, who flashed the eccentricity of a showman all week, began shielding his eyes with a wide, Chinese fan so he could not see his opponent’s shots, and had a tendency to jump around and flail his arms after strikes like a Chinese Buzz Fazio. In the end, he defeated Sloan, 225-180, then later jumped from the floor to the top of the medal stand in a single lunge. Cannizzaro called him “a great entertainer this week, very animated and energetic.”

Hongbo’s victory made him just the second World Cup player to win the event on home soil, and the first since American Bob Worrall did so in 1981 in New York City. Hongbo also was the first Chinese player to advance to the cham-

pionship round in World Cup history.

For Sloan, a baffling moment late in the game in which he left a Greek Church split, then went for the 4-7 only to see the ball fall in the gutter for a five-pin frame, ultimately ensured his demise.

Scores were low throughout the week, uncharacteristically so for an event Barnes said “usually is very high-scoring.” Such an environment can tend to

PHOTO BY HERO NODA



**Spinster:** China’s Wang Hongbo dazzled World Cup competitors and spectators alike throughout the week with his unorthodox “spinner” style and his charismatic eccentricity.

favor the spinners, whose ball motion takes the lane out of play and ensures makeable spares they rarely miss. Top-seeded Martin Larsen, for instance, was one of only two men in the field to average better than 210.

On the women’s side, Sweden’s Jenny Wegner leaned on her ability to stay left of the competition throughout the week with a swooping hook that covers many boards.

“That is always my game plan,” said Wegner. “I always look at where the others are bowling and I always find the one who is furthest left and I try to play a few boards left of there.”

In the title match, however, No. 2 McEwan played at least as deep as Wegner, if not deeper, but difficulty carrying the corner pins dogged her several times, with a pocket 7-pin in her fourth and a pocket 10-pin the following frame.

PHOTO BY HERO NODA



**Deceiving Looks:** Sweden’s Jenny Wegner may seem slight of frame but her big-hook ball packs plenty of power.

McEwan had finished fourth at the World Cup in both 2012 and 2013 and this year advanced to the title match after defeating Malaysia’s Syaidatul Afifah, 248-236, while Wegner dispatched reigning USBC Queens champion, Bernice Lim of Singapore, 224-207.

In the early going, Wegner benefited from high, trip-4 strikes in her opening frame and again in her 6th, and she actually slapped out a crossover strike in her 2nd and returned to her seat with a beaming but sheepish smile. She left the bucket in her third, then a baby split and knocked over only the 3-pin on the spare attempt in her 4th for an open. Wegner’s four-bagger from the 5th through 8th frames proved the deciding factor as McEwan left a pocket 10-pin in her 8th, then the 6-10 in her 9th on a shot

that checked up high. Wegner prevailed, 234-201.

In all, 83 countries were represented at the tournament, with 81 men and 63 women competing. The championship round was held in a special arena setting upstairs from Hao’s Bowling at the Luwan Sports Complex.

The 52nd QubicaAMF World Cup was the first to be held in China since 1991, when it was held in Beijing. For Ciniello, hosting the event in China was a big step for bowling in the Asian continent, and for bowling’s Olympic hopes.

“I think this was really good for bowling in China,” he said. “The finals were televised nationally by Alibaba Sports; they were a sponsor and they put money into the Chinese Bowling Association. A number of the CBA members were there as well as a gentleman from the Chinese Olympic advisory board, so the exposure was great, there is a lot of optimism in China, and the win will create more interest in the sport itself there.”

## BOB WORRALL LOOKS BACK

**THIS YEAR** has not been a kind one to Bob Worrall. On May 4, he had open-heart surgery to remove a half-pound tumor from his heart. In September, he underwent colon surgery. He says “both situations were benign” and, like a tried and true bowler, lists among his priorities in recovery from those very serious procedures, “retooling my game.”

But 2016 has rewarded Worrall in a way no physical ailment can snatch from him: It has invited him to revisit a memory he ranks among the proudest moments of his life. Worrall became the first bowler to win the QubicaAMF World Cup on home soil when the Colorado Springs resident won it at the famed but long-gone bowling center inside Madison Square Garden in New York City in 1981.

He stood as the only bowler, man or woman, to win it on home soil until China’s Wang Hongbo won it this year in Shanghai.

Worrall’s World Cup memories extend further back than that. “I actually was a witness to the first-ever World Cup in Ireland. My dad was in the military; he

was stationed at the embassy in Dublin where the tournament was held,” he says. “There are some archival pictures of me on the concourse talking to Tom Hathaway, the first American to bowl the World Cup. He was kind of like my hero — I followed him around the entire week — because as a kid in Dublin I was always the American kid in Ireland, but when I got to America I had an Irish accent so I was the Irish kid in America. Until I won the World Cup, then they both claimed me, for sure,” he laughs.

But Worrall’s memory of winning the World Cup himself years later always will be tinged with sadness. He says Mort Luby Jr., *BJJ*’s publisher from 1956 to 1994, wrote a story after the 9/11 attacks about the significance of the World Trade Center in World Cup history “because our victory banquet was on the 107th floor at the Windows on the World restaurant. There were a bunch of young guys about my age waiting tables in tuxes and white gloves. They knew I had won, so they would say, ‘Hey, man, do you want some caviar?’ I would say, ‘No, actually I don’t care for it. I’ll have the shrimp.’ They said, ‘Yeah, that’s a better choice. We don’t like it either.’ They kept serving me first. They would say, ‘You’re our guy. You have whatever you want and we’ll make sure you get it.’

After the 9/11 attacks, I read in a magazine that 75 percent of the people who worked there when the towers opened in 1975 still were working there on 9/11 because it was such a good job. I remember thinking, ‘What a horrible deal,’ because the people that served me that day paid with their lives on 9/11. I’ll never forget how reverent they were in their treatment of me, as though I was one of their own.”

