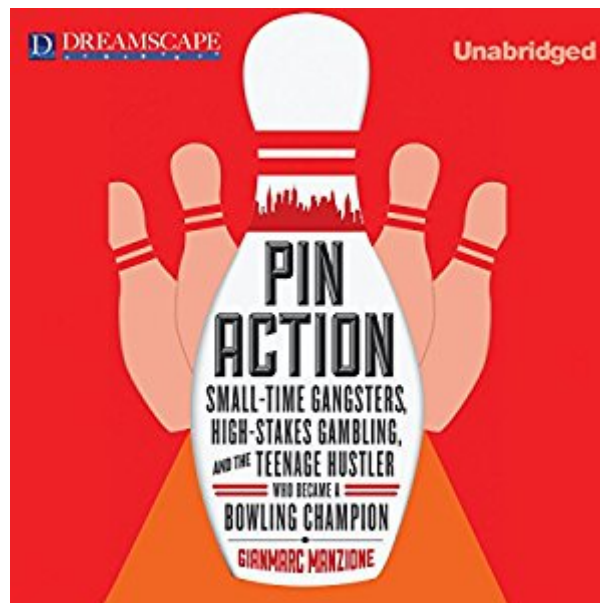




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# Pin Action: Small-Time Gangsters, High-Stakes Gambling, And The Teenage Hustler



## Synopsis

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 bona fide champion.

## Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 7 hours and 16 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: Dreamscape Media, LLC

Audible.com Release Date: December 16, 2014

Language: English

ASIN: B00R3JMGB2

Best Sellers Rank: #28 in Books > Sports & Outdoors > Individual Sports > Bowling #826 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Nonfiction > True Crime #1072 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Nonfiction > Sports & Recreation

## Customer Reviews

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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