

Balls, lots of balls. Balls of all weights and colors—that's what you're going to find at 3031 S.E. Powell Blvd. every Friday night.

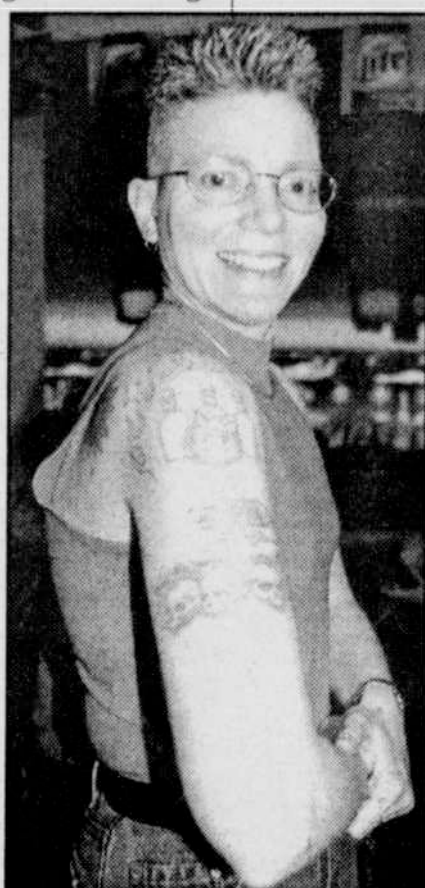
Now that I've got your mind in the gutter, keep it there. With 170 members, Portland's FITS is the city's largest gay bowling league. Containing 36 teams and a waiting list to play, it seems to be the hot ticket for bar-alternative homos.

Meeting at AMF Pro 300, the league takes up all of the alley's 36 lanes. "We've been growing over the years and have had a full house for four years now," gushes FITS president Mark Earley.

Robin Didarrio, who has been bowling for 10 of the league's 15-year history, attributes the popularity of the league to being a place where queers can congregate and feel like they belong without having to go to the bars.

"I love the camaraderie of the league; everyone here is like family," she says. "It's a great way to relax, have a strong sense of community, meet new people and have a good time."

Didarrio means business when it comes to bowling, too. When talking about the league it's evident she has a real passion for the game. She even has a tattoo of a bowling ball and three pins on her arm. (And I thought I was a nut for tattooing a shuttlecock and two badminton racquets on mine.)



Robin Didarrio takes her bowling very seriously

Just the two of us...

Portland has another gay bowling league

by Michael Wayne Keck

Belonging not only to the International Gay Bowling Organization (IGBO), FITS is also a registered member of the American Bowling Congress (ABC).

What, CBATA? (Confused By All The Acronyms?) Well, don't be. The league is a spinoff of the Portland Gay and Lesbian Community Bowling Association, with the main difference being that FITS also belongs to ABC, which essentially means they compete in more tournaments and are "a little more serious and competitive," explains Earley, adding, "We have a lot of continuous bowlers, and it's a little tough to get in."

But this isn't your grandparents' country club, and these bowlers aren't that serious or exclusive. The league's name stands for "Fuck it, tomorrow's Saturday."

Former FITS president Lauren Pike assures that even though the league is ABC sanctioned, "Everyone's welcome, and we have a diverse group of people and a large range of bowlers." Crappy bowlers need not worry—as with



Mark Earley (center) and other officers of FITS, Portland's largest bowling league

golf, league members get a handicap to make the competition a little fairy-er...excuse me...fairer.

James Hanley, who has been bowling in the league for five years, says, "We have all kinds of bowlers, some with 88 averages, others with over 200 averages."

He agrees that people shouldn't feel intimidated if they are bowling virgins or rookies. "It's something fun to do; I enjoy the community here and the friendly competition. Plus, it's a precursor to my Friday evening. I go out afterwards."

Most of the bowlers agree that the social aspect is what they like best. "It's something to do that involves skill and finesse," Pike articulates. "Every Friday from 7 to 10, this is our house! It's our own community, family and children. Even though it is competitive, it's still very social."

It is a big commitment, though, she notes,

and she isn't kidding. At \$12 a week for a 32-week season, you'd better be willing to try this longer than that ThighMaster under your bed. If you have commitment issues, you can always serve as a substitute for the league.

Like many queer organizations, this group is rather altruistic, donating 50 percent of its money to charity. Past recipients include Cas-

cade AIDS Project, Our House of Portland, the American Red Cross and the Oregon Humane Society. 

FITS bowls from 7 to 10 p.m. Fridays. If you'd like to get your bowling groove on, contact AMF Pro 300 Lanes manager and FITS bowler Cathi Terwilliger at 503-234-0237.

MICHAEL WAYNE KECK is a Portland free-lance writer who loves to bowl and boasts that he has his very own 16-pound blue ball.



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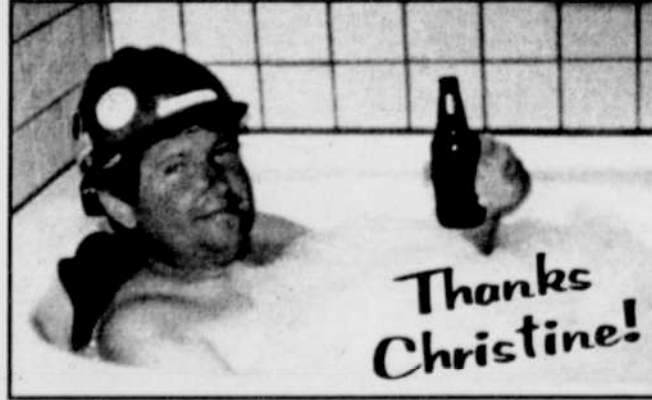
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