

Omaha Bowlers Cut Some Figure in National Affairs of the Sport

WHEN historians of the future tell of the popular games of the American people, they will record the fact that Omaha was a seat of bowling, a game played with heavy balls and wooden pins, on an "alley" maintained by associations and certain calculators of chance, who depended on the popularity of the game when they invested large sums in the equipment necessary.

Historians have already recorded that Athens was the city of the old world in which athletic games were the most popular, some 2,000 years ago, when the Olympic, Pythian, Nemean and Isthmian games flourished under good Scion of Aed. But it has been left for Americans to perfect all the old world games, and historians of the future must record that "As the pan-Hellenic games were the chief visible evidence of peace between communities of southern Europe, so bowling and base ball were the visible evidence of good feeling between the wonderful cities of America, and a demonstration of the energetic, persistent and animated young manhood of the twentieth century."

Almost a hundred years after the first bowling tournament in America, Omaha heard of the game, but that has not hindered Omahans from assisting to make the game what it is today, from holding some records which have not been equaled in the United States, and from having the largest league in the world. While Omaha marches under the pennant of the Western Base Ball league in the summer, its bowlers have been equally awake and have carried off honors equal or more to the credit of the athletes of the city than those won on the "diamond."

As far as known the first tournament of the old German game of bowling was held in the Katakil mountains, when King George still was the recognized ruler of the American colonies. One day the foolish R. V. Winkle, he of the oily disposition, took an extended trip up the Hudson river, and though he did not intend to witness the first tournament of the American Bowling congress, he chanced to look down into a deep mountain glen, wild, lonely and jagged, and scarcely lighted by the reflected rays of the setting sun.

But Mr. Winkle was attracted by one of the competitors for the prize offered that year, and he entered the amphitheater. The bowling alleys of 1790 or thereabouts were not of the polished maple of today, but in the center of the outdoor "bowling alleys" the players were playing at ninepins, and rolling balls over an alley which had one narrow plank, less than eighteen inches in width, tamped into a roadbed of rock and sand.

According to the romantic record, the players were silent and maintained the gravest faces. It was the most melancholy

company of sportsmen which ever came together in America, according to R. V. Winkle, who is the only one who is known to have attended. There was nothing to interrupt the stillness but the noise of the balls, which, when they were rolled, echoed along the mountain like the rumbling peals of thunder.

As Mr. Winkle was the first to take an interest in bowling, after its introduction to the colonies, so Herman Beselen, an Omaha cigar manufacturer, was the first to take an interest in the game in Omaha, and twenty-eight years ago rolled the first game which he played in this city. He is playing yet, two or three times a day, and in St. Louis last year won second money in the single event at the national meet of the American Bowling congress, bowling against the best in the country and winning distinction as well as a cash prize which made it worth his time to go to the congress. Though Mr. Beselen is 52 years of age, he went to the alleys of the Commercial league when requested to tell something about the game, and after reciting the history of the game in Omaha, took up the composition ball with which he knocks down the sticks, and played two games, scoring 213 and 231 just to show that he was in practice.

"When I first played in Omaha it was at the German picnic some thirty years ago," said Mr. Beselen. "The game was quite different then and organized bowling is but four or five years old in Omaha. But the old game was a good one, and we had some skilled players. The alleys were narrow and short, something like the alley in the Katakil mountains. I should judge, they had a plank down the center about twenty inches in width and cinders pounded down on each side. The balls were small and we only had nine pins. One of them was known as the king pin, and was always set up in the center. "I was fresh from Rock Island and Davenport, where bowling was a popular game, and I had also played the game as a youngster in Germany. Across the water I understand, the game has not improved much. It takes Americans to improve the games. In Germany the students and the lazzero or wealthy farmers, play the game. When they get the habit, they don't do much of anything else. Saturday nights the mechanics come in and have a round at the game, but bowling is the game of the better classes in Germany and is played very skillfully by some of the students and farmers."

To demonstrate Mr. Beselen picked up the heavy balls, and taking careful aim "slid" the first ball over the alley. He struck the front pin just off the center on the right side. Every pin went down. This was repeated by the veteran several times, and four times in succession he swept the boards clean, demonstrating that having the "eye" and knowing just where to hit the first pin, has something to do with the game. Then he demonstrated the effect of sending the ball straight for the front pin, leaving two standing on opposite sides, and then made a "splash" or two by landing into the pins from various directions, and knocking down all or many of the pins, as they tumbled over each other to get off the alley.

It was during the early days of bowling in Omaha that some puritanical legislators passed the laws against playing nine pins. The law makers forgot that athletic games were, in ancient days, religious festivals, given special sanction by the gods and frequently named after them, and they declared the innocent game of nine pins to be an unholy gambling device, by which men lost their worldly goods in this life and endangered chances of life in the hereafter. It was considered as much of a gambling game to roll balls at pins as to open jackpots with cards or place the coins on red and black spots to the whir-whir-r



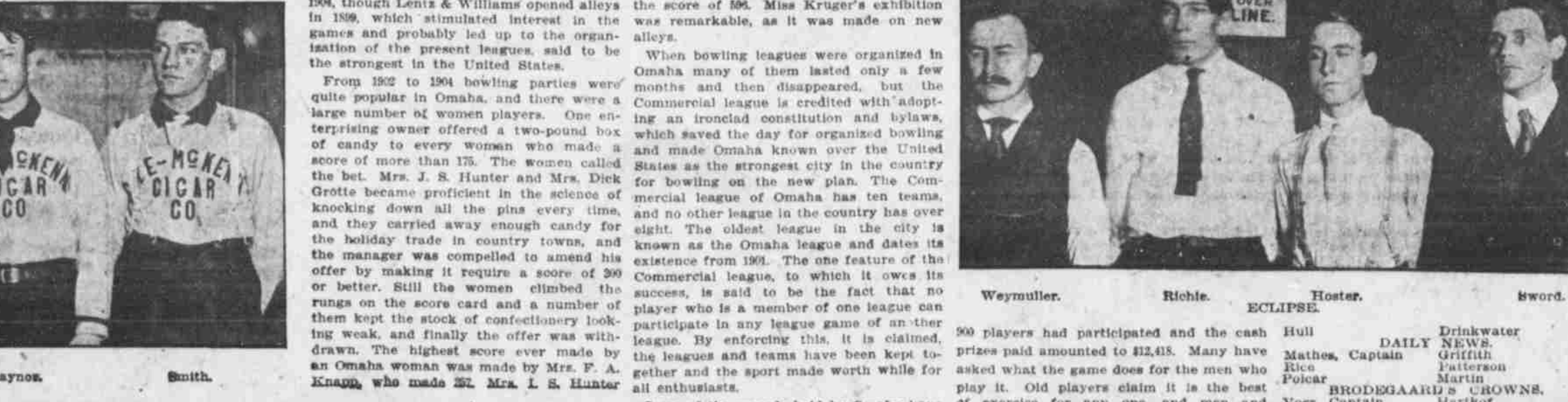
Beselin, Bruggeman, Bengale, McCague, Zimmerman, OMAHA TEAM THAT WON THE BIG PRIZE AT SIOUX CITY.



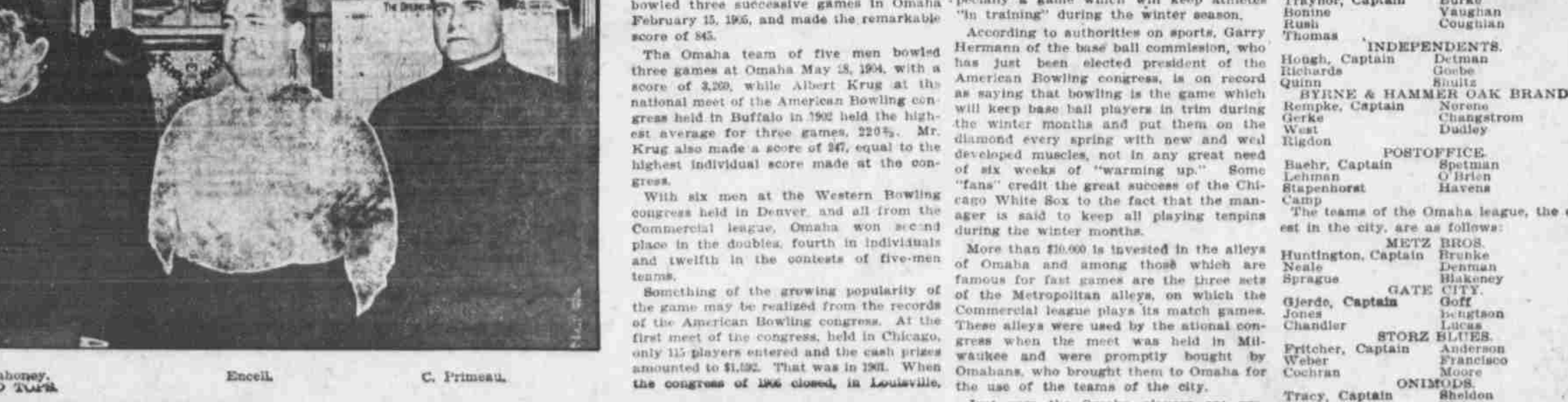
Francisco, Gjerde, Fretz, Cochran, Weber, Anderson, STORZ BLUE RIBBON.



Sprague, Denman, Huntington, Metz Brothers, Blakeney, Neale.



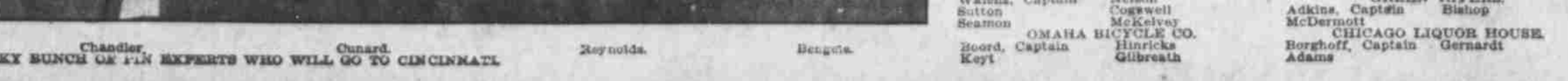
Weymuller, Richie, Hoster, Sward, ECLIPSE.



Thomas, Coughlan, Wiley, Traynor, Smith, JETTER'S GOLD TOPS.



H. Frideau, Grotta, Foley, Eccell, C. Primeau, HUBBY BUNCH OF PIN EXPERTS WHO WILL GO TO CINCINNATI.



Zimmerman, Marble, Johnson, Chandler, Cunard, Reynolds, Bengale, OMAHA BOWLERS' CLUB.

balls are heavy, and to play the game properly a man or woman must be athletic. There is no place for awkward people on a modern bowling alley, but playing the game will make most any constant player graceful as well as strong. With strength, a successful bowler must have a "good eye," that is good judgment, as the ball must be placed and slid along the alley with the precision of a gunner aiming at a target.

"To get all the pins on the alley I aim to enter the bunch slightly to the right of the front pin, which must be hit on the side. If the ball is aimed carefully and strikes the first pin in just the right place, every pin will fall. There is such a thing as a perfect shot which will tumble the pins every time. To hit the pins square in the face, the ball goes through, leaving a pin standing on each side, which can be rarely knocked down in the other shot. In the modern game but two shots are allowed. In the old German game we had three shots."

When bowling became popular during the "eighties" it was under the name of ten pins, the law being strict against playing the sinful game of nine pins. The "king pin" disappeared and when the next set of pins was set up, the number in the bunch was ten. This evaded the law, and the athletes looked around for heavier balls. The small balls disappeared and are seldom used on the Omaha alleys. The favorite ball at present is made of a composition and weighs twelve to sixteen pounds. One set of alleys has thirty of these balls, which cost \$15 each.

On the old alleys at the Vienna hotel, which have been in operation for over twenty years, some big improvements have been made, but the old alleys are still popular with many players. Some great games between individual players have been played on the old alleys, and they are said to have made the present luxurious places possible by keeping an unyielding interest in the game, when it was close to death many times.

When bowling leagues were organized in Omaha many of them lasted only a few months and then disappeared, but the Commercial league is credited with "adopting" an ironclad constitution and bylaws, which saved the day for organized bowling and made Omaha known over the United States as the strongest city in the country for bowling on the new plan. The Commercial league of Omaha has ten teams, and no other league in the country has over eight. The oldest league in the city is known as the Omaha league and dates its existence from 1901. The one feature of the Commercial league, to which it owes its success, is said to be the fact that no player who is a member of one league can participate in any league game of another league. By enforcing this, it is claimed, the leagues and teams have been kept together and the sport made worth while for all enthusiasts.

Some of the records held by Omaha have never been reached in all the games played in the United States. Harry D. Reed bowled three successive games in Omaha February 15, 1905, and made the remarkable score of 945.

The Omaha team of five men bowled three games at Omaha May 3, 1904, with a score of 3,200, while Albert Krug at the national meet of the American Bowling congress held in Buffalo in 1902 held the highest average for three games, 220.5. Mr. Krug also made a score of 267, equal to the highest individual score made at the congress.

With six men at the Western Bowling congress held in Denver, and all from the Commercial league, Omaha won second place in the doubles, fourth in individuals and twelfth in the contests of five-men teams.

Something of the growing popularity of the game may be realized from the records of the American Bowling congress. At the first meet of the congress, held in Chicago, only 115 players entered and the cash prizes amounted to \$1,500. That was in 1901. When the congress of 1906 closed, in Louisville,

holds the record of 256 and the best three successive games are recorded to the credit of Miss Elizabeth Kruger, who made the score of 305. Miss Kruger's exhibition was remarkable, as it was made on new alleys.

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900 players participated and the cash prizes paid amounted to \$12,418. Many have asked what the game does for the men who play it. Old players claim it is the best of exercise for any one, and men and women in all walks of life indulge in the game in Omaha at present, but it is especially a game which will keep athletes "in training" during the winter season.

According to authorities on sports, Garry Hermann of the base ball commission, who has just been elected president of the American Bowling congress, is on record as saying that bowling is the game which will keep base ball players in trim during the winter months and put them on the diamond every spring with new and well developed muscles, not in any great need of six weeks of "warming up." Some "fans" credit the great success of the Chicago White Sox to the fact that the manager is said to keep all playing tenpins during the winter months.

More than \$1,000 is invested in the alleys of Omaha and among those which are famous for fast games are the three sets of the Metropolitan alleys, on which the Commercial league plays its match games. These alleys were used by the national congress when the meet was held in Milwaukee every spring with new and well developed muscles, not in any great need of six weeks of "warming up." Some "fans" credit the great success of the Chicago White Sox to the fact that the manager is said to keep all playing tenpins during the winter months.

The teams of the Omaha league, the oldest in the city, are as follows:

METZ BROS. Drinkwater, Captain; DAILY NEWS, Captain; Griffin, Captain; Dutton, Captain; HARTKOT, Captain; FUGELBERG, Captain; LAMPROOK, Captain; BURKE, Captain; VAUGHAN, Captain; COUGHLAN, Captain; MOORE, Captain; INDEPENDENTS, Captain; DENMAN, Captain; GOBLE, Captain; RYLINE & HAMMER OAK BRAND, Captain; NERON, Captain; CHANGSTROM, Captain; DUDLEY, Captain; POSTOFFICE, Captain; SPOTMAN, Captain; LEHMAN, Captain; HAVENA, Captain; CAMP, Captain; THE TEAMS OF THE OMAHA LEAGUE, the oldest in the city, are as follows:

METZ BROS. Drinkwater, Captain; DENMAN, Captain; BLAKENEY, Captain; GATE CITY, Captain; BOSTON, Captain; LUCAS, Captain; STORZ BLUE RIBBON, Captain; ANDERSON, Captain; FRANCISCO, Captain; COCHRAN, Captain; ONIMIDS, Captain; SHEDDEN, Captain; MCCAGUE, Captain; MAGILL, Captain; HEON, Captain; REED BROS., Captain; GRIFFITH, Captain; HUNTER, Captain; REYNOLDS, Captain; INDIANS, Captain; BENGLE, Captain; FRENCH, Captain; HARTLEY, Captain; HENOS, Captain; CHANGSTROM, Captain; LAMMIE, Captain; GARDNER, Captain; OMAHAS, Captain; MAURER, Captain; ROSECRANS, Captain; REA, Captain; TEAMS OF THE NEW METROPOLITAN LEAGUE, now making their first year's record, are:

BUNGALOS. Remington, Captain; KAINES, Captain; EDMONDS, Captain; TIGERS, Captain; DICK, Captain; BESELIN'S MIXERS, Captain; WILSON, Captain; F. W. SCHNEIDER, Captain; HASTER, Captain; RITCHIE, Captain; WEYMULLER, Captain; ORTHMAN'S STARRA, Captain; MORGAN, Captain; GRIFITH, Captain; CUBS, Captain; GUSTAFSON, Captain; LOR, Captain; ROSECRANS, Captain; JERRY, Captain; ADKINS, Captain; GREEN RIVERS, Captain; MCDERMOTT, Captain; KAINES, Captain; EDMONDS, Captain; CHICAGO LIQUOR HOUSE, Captain; BORCHOFF, Captain; GERNARDT, Captain; ADAMS, Captain.

JETTER'S GOLD TOPS. Grotta, Captain; COLLINS, Captain; H. PRIMEAU, Captain; C. PRIMEAU, Captain; FALSTAFFS. Klink, Captain; CHASLAIN, Captain; LA VIGNE, Captain; WALTON, Captain; COGSWELL, Captain; MCKELVEY, Captain; WALTER G. CLARKE CO. REED, Captain; HINRICKS, Captain; GIBREATH, Captain.

OMAHA BOWLERS' CLUB. Zimmerman, Captain; Bengale, Captain; Johnson, Captain; French, Captain; Hartley, Captain; Henos, Captain; Changstrom, Captain; Lammie, Captain; Gardner, Captain; Marble, Captain; Maurer, Captain; Rosecrans, Captain; Rea, Captain; Teams of the new Metropolitan league, now making their first year's record, are: BUNGALOS. Remington, Captain; Kaines, Captain; Edmonds, Captain; TIGERS. Dick, Captain; BESELIN'S MIXERS. Wilson, Captain; F. W. Schneider, Captain; Haster, Captain; Ritchie, Captain; Weymuller, Captain; Orthman's Starra, Captain; Moran, Captain; Griffith, Captain; CUBS. Gustafson, Captain; Lor, Captain; Rosecrans, Captain; Jerry, Captain; Adkins, Captain; Green Rivers, Captain; McDermott, Captain; Kaines, Captain; Edmonds, Captain; CHICAGO LIQUOR HOUSE. Borchoff, Captain; Gernardt, Captain; Adams, Captain.

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