



CHAMPIONSHIP TOURNAMENTS KEY UPDATES AND FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

October 2, 2024

KEY POINTS

- The USBC Open Championships has shown continued growth in participation, with the 2025 event trending toward the largest team count since 2012.
 - Growth stems from making changes based on data and participant feedback. For example, the addition of a third division in 2017.
 - Recent evaluations show adjusting average ranges will improve satisfaction.
- Based on data and feedback, USBC is adjusting the average ranges for each of the three divisions at the Open Championships starting in 2026 to provide better peer-to-peer competition:
 - Classified: 160 and below (**185 and below on a typical league condition**)
 - Standard: 161-181 (**186-210 on a typical league condition**)
 - Regular: 182 and above (**211 and above on a typical league condition**)
- While adjusting division size, it also allowed for an opportunity to continue to improve the prize fund ratio. To build the prize fund for all divisions, there will be an entry fee increase, with 100% of the increase going to the prize fund starting in 2026.
 - The entry fee will increase \$10 for each event (team, doubles and singles) and \$5 for all-events, bringing the overall cost for each participant to \$265 (including a \$5 processing fee).
 - Tournament expenses stay the same.
 - The prize fund-to-expense ratio improves to paying out nearly two-thirds of the entry fee back in prize money.
 - Each division will average higher payouts for cashing spots.
- With the percentage of bowlers in the Regular Division decreasing due to the average adjustments, USBC is reducing some of the restrictions for bowlers currently falling under Rule No. 21 to allow for additional combinations for teams and doubles pairings at the Open Championships starting in 2026.
 - Adult national team members will no longer fall under the Rule No. 21 designation after being out of the program for 10 consecutive years.
 - Junior national team members will no longer have restrictions.
 - All bowlers age 60 and older will have no restrictions.
 - Collegiate bowlers will be allowed to bowl team/doubles together. There still will be limitations for collegiate bowlers competing with professional bowlers, national tour titlists and adult national team members.
- For the USBC Women's Championships, competitors will have an additional opportunity to claim a title with the introduction of Team All-Events in 2025.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS – OPEN CHAMPIONSHIPS

1. Why did USBC make changes to the average ranges?

We are always looking for ways to improve the event. After the 2015 Open Championships, USBC put together a Tournaments Task Force to look at data and



bowler feedback. One of the additions to the tournament was a third average-based division (Standard) in 2017.

We continued to review trends in participation data to find areas of improvement. The numbers also supported the participant feedback USBC was receiving concerning peer-to-peer competition in the Regular Division.

2. What is the new divisional breakdown for each event in 2026?

Singles/All-Events		Doubles		Team	
Regular	182 and above	Regular	363 and above	Regular	906 and above
Standard	161-181	Standard	321-362	Standard	801-905
Classified	160 and below	Classified	320 and below	Classified	800 and below

Additional parameters for divisional placement still are in place:

- Bowlers in the Regular Division (182 and above) may not compete in Classified Team or Classified Doubles, regardless of the team’s composite average.
- Teams in the Standard Division may have no more than two bowlers with an average of 182 or higher.
- Teams in the Classified Division may have no more than two bowlers with an average between 161-181.

3. How many bowlers does USBC expect for each division?

Below is a breakdown from the 2024 event by percentage with the current division structure and new structure for 2026:

Division	Current Average	Percentage of Field	2026 Average	Percentage of Field
Regular	176 and above	37%	182 and above	26%
Standard	156-175	37%	161-181	40%
Classified	155 and below	26%	160 and below	34%

4. The Regular Division has gone from the largest division to the smallest division with these continued changes. Why?

The Regular Division still will provide the top level of competition at the Open Championships, but the biggest opportunity for continued growth at the tournament comes from the Classified and Standard Divisions.

The numbers below look at 2023 membership numbers in comparison to competitors at the 2023 Open Championships, based on the new average ranges for 2026. The Classified and Standard Divisions hold a large share of the market size, but the Regular Division has a much higher percentage of market penetration at the tournament.

Division	2026 Average	2023 Adult USBC Members	Market Size %	2023 OC Bowlers	Market Penetration %
Regular	182+	45,165	5%	12,335	27%
Standard	161 – 181	175,363	19%	19,603	11%
Classified	160 and under	712,469	76%	16,362	2%



5. Why wouldn't USBC create a division just for the professionals or remove them?

A division only for professionals would not be large enough to support itself compared to the Regular, Standard and Classified Divisions and would further shrink the Regular Division. For example, the Regular Division had 20,807 singles bowlers in 2024, and only 1,143 of them were professionals (5.5% of the division).

The ability to bowl in USBC-certified leagues and local, state and national association tournaments is a right of USBC membership, regardless of membership in a professional bowling organization.

6. Was anything else considered concerning averages at the Open Championships?

Yes. USBC also considered whether increasing the number of games for a Championships Average from 27 to 36 would be beneficial.

In 2024, 63% of the competitors at the Open Championships had 27 qualifying games for a Championships Average. By adjusting the number to 36, only 51% would qualify to use a Championships Average. The change would have caused approximately 6,600 additional bowlers to use a league/composite average, converted down to Sport.

At the Women's Championships in 2024, 70% of bowlers qualified for a Championships Average with 27 games. Only 60% would meet the requirement at 36 games.

From the data, USBC did not believe this change would improve the competition experience but will continue to monitor the numbers to see if any adjustments are necessary in the future.

7. Why did USBC raise the entry fee for the Open Championships?

The entry fee increase goes 100% to the prize fund. We felt this was a good time to grow the prize fund and continue to increase the prize fund-to-expense ratio for the event.

It has been a recent goal of USBC to improve the amount going into the prize fund. The current structure has just over 57% going to the prize fund and nearly 43% being used toward expenses, and looking back to 2012, the breakdown was 53% to prizes and 47% to expenses. The change in 2026 (with 100% of the new fees going to the prize fund) will allow for 62.5% to go to back to the bowlers through the prize fund, with expenses sitting at 37.5%. This is a favorable shift of nearly 10% for the bowlers looking at the prize fund-to-expense ratio since 2012.

8. How does the prize fund-to-expense ratio for the Open Championships compare over the years to the new ratio in 2026?

Event	2012 Prize Fee %	2012 Expense Fee %	2022 Prize Fee %	2022 Expense Fee %	2026 Prize Fee %	2026 Expense Fee %
Team Doubles Singes	53.4%	46.6%	57.1%	42.9%	62.5%	37.5%
All-Events	93.4%	6.6%	86.7%	13.3%	90%	10%

9. Will there be any changes to the payout ratio?



No. The payout ratio will continue to be 1:5 for team, doubles and singles, with all-events paying 1:8 in all divisions.

10. What's the last year a bowler could have been part of an Adult National Team and not fall under Rule (21-D) in 2026?
2015.

11. Why are all collegiate bowlers required to bowl in the Regular Division?
While collegiate bowlers do post averages throughout a collegiate season, those averages are not recognized for USBC competition. USBC does not allow partial games and games bowled through the efforts of more than one player to determine a bowler's average.

In addition, collegiate bowlers receive coaching/training throughout the season and often compete on Sport-compliant oil patterns or conditions tougher than a typical league condition.

12. What if I am part of a collegiate team but do not have a USBC Collegiate membership? What if I am injured and redshirting for a season?
Any bowler affiliated with a collegiate bowling program will fall under the collegiate bowler designation (21-C), regardless of collegiate eligibility, participation, injury, etc.

13. There are some restrictions to team/doubles composition for collegiate bowlers. What are those restrictions?

Five collegiate bowlers (21-C) can compete together for team (and two collegiate bowlers can compete together for doubles).

However, if one of those collegiate bowlers also is categorized as a professional bowler (21-A), national tour titlist (21-B) or adult national team member (21-D), then the team/doubles composition must adhere to the guidelines in place under Rule 21-E.

The guidelines in Rule 21-E takes precedence in any situation where a team/doubles lineup features a collegiate bowler (21-C) and a bowler categorized as a professional bowler (21-A), national tour titlist (21-B) or adult national team member (21-D).

14. Why did USBC adjust the rule for professional bowlers age 60 and older?
USBC already had a rule in place at the Open Championships for national tour titlists (21-B) and adult/junior national team members (21-D) to drop their designation at the age of 60. Rule 21-A still applied, however.

With the changes to the average ranges in 2026, USBC felt they could extend this rule for team/doubles composition to 21-A while still retaining a fair playing field for competition in the Regular Division.

If you have any additional questions, please visit BOWL.com or contact us with your comments or suggestions at usbccopenchampionships@bowl.com or call 888-910-2695.