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Program companion website:
www.pbs.org/independentlens/leagueofordinarygentlemen/

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[i]NDEPENDENTLENS

**A LEAGUE OF ORDINARY GENTLEMEN—THOUGH NEVER A SPORT OF KINGS,
BOWLING REACHES ROYAL HEIGHTS IN THIS FILM THAT TELLS THE STORY OF THE
PRO BOWLERS ASSOCIATION AND ITS RECENT RESURGENCE
WITH A COLORFUL CAST OF CHARACTERS**

**FILM TO PREMIERE ON PBS'S *INDEPENDENT LENS*,
THE EMMY AWARD—WINNING SERIES HOSTED BY EDIE FALCO,
ON TUESDAY, APRIL 25, 2006, AT 10 PM (CHECK LOCAL LISTINGS)**

(San Francisco)—Entertaining, witty, and downright suspenseful, *A LEAGUE OF ORDINARY GENTLEMEN* chronicles the resurgence of an unlikely sport—bowling—and what happens when three former Microsoft executives purchase the Professional Bowlers Association: lock stock, and bowling ball. The film focuses on their attempts to transform the league and bring it back to its former glory, while following four pro bowlers and their sometimes funny, sometimes sad adventures on tour as professional athletes. The four professionals—Walter Ray Williams, Jr., bad boy Pete Weber, Chris Barnes, and Wayne Webb—all at very different places in their careers, duke it out week after week on the lanes while their families struggle to keep lives together at home. *A LEAGUE OF ORDINARY GENTLEMEN* will be broadcast on *Independent Lens*, hosted by Edie Falco, on Tuesday, April 25 at 10 PM.

LEAGUE provides a glimpse at the men who are trying to save bowling from the brink of extinction and raise it to new heights. The heavy lifting for the mission falls onto the broad shoulders of a man named Steve Miller, a former Nike executive who had played for the Detroit Lions and rescued Kansas State football from the NCAA cellar.

At one point in time, bowling, one of the most popular participatory sports in America, occupied a perfectly respectable place in the pantheon of American sports. When Eddie Elias convinced the country's top 33 bowlers to kick 50 bucks into a communal pot in a banquet hall in Syracuse, NY, in 1958, the Professional Bowlers Association was born. ABC began televising PBA tournaments in 1962, and as the lead-in to *Wide World of Sports*, Chris Schenkel's Saturday afternoon bowling telecast was for many years one of the highest rated sports programs on television. But by 1997, when ABC-TV broadcast its final PBA tournament, America had ceased to embrace the portly, middlebrow image the PBA was selling and bowling got kicked to the curb.

As unlikely as it may seem, professional bowling is now making a comeback, with a 10% increase in ESPN coverage from the previous season, as well as a growth in corporate sponsors and prize money.

The companion website for *A LEAGUE OF ORDINARY GENTLEMEN* (www.pbs.org/independentlens/leagueofordinarygentlemen/) features detailed information on the film and an interview with the filmmaker as well as links and resources pertaining to the film's subject matter. The site also features a Talkback section for viewers to share their ideas and opinions, preview clips of the film, and more.



ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

CHRIS BROWNE (Director)

Chris Browne began his film career in New York City as a production assistant on laxative commercials. Artistically uninspired by the constipation racket, he leveraged the production skills he acquired on Fibercom sets into a job at the Checkerboard Film Foundation, where he helped produce several documentaries. Outraged when his local bowling alley became a day spa, he decided the only logical thing to do was to light out for the West and the lanes of the PBA tour. He convinced his college roommate (Bill Bryan) and his brother (Alex Browne) to join him in following the pro bowling tour with cameras for 20 weeks. A LEAGUE OF ORDINARY GENTLEMEN is the movie that emerged from that misadventure. It is his first attempt at feature film directing.

ALEX BROWNE (Producer)

Alex Browne followed his own path into the world of documentary film. In grade school he was a relatively uninspired student who was obsessed with action movies of the late 1980s. A decade later, he broadened his cinematic horizons, became intrigued by independent films such as *Sling Blade* and *Donnie Darko*, and was finally able to let go of his fixation on Jean Claude Van Damme movies. His first jobs were with investment firms and hedge funds, but he quickly realized that the business world stifled artistic drive and did not allow him to use his creative energy. At this point, independent film looked like a perfect fit, as it allowed Alex to combine his creativity and love of cinema with a long-standing desire to work hard for little or no pay. He graduated near the top of his class (graduation was in alphabetical order) and immediately joined older brother Chris, as well as Bill Bryan, in founding Dionysian Films. A LEAGUE OF ORDINARY GENTLEMEN is his first project, and he is actively writing a number of projects for future production.

BILL BRYAN (Producer)

Bill Bryan was born and raised in New York City where he was always infatuated with the vast array of cultural activities the big city had to offer. While in college, where he roomed with director Chris Browne, Bill's childhood love of movies and the visual arts gave way to the need to prepare for his future. After graduating, Bill took a job as a consultant with Mercer Management Consulting. However, he often found his mind wondering what his life would have been like had he followed his childhood passion of moviemaking. While working at Mercer, Bill explored his options and began researching the independent film industry in preparation for a pro bowling documentary. With the financial and managerial skills he acquired, as well as a comprehensive knowledge of Rob Schneider movies, Bill felt confident about making a major career change. In early 2002, he founded Dionysian Films with Chris and Alex. A LEAGUE OF ORDINARY GENTLEMEN is Bill's first independent film production.

The images found in this release are available to the press as high resolution downloadable photos with captions at www.itvs.org/pressroom/photos/

PAGE 1:

Left: A jubilant Pete Weber.
Photo: Magnolia Pictures/ITVS
Center: Walter Ray Williams, Jr
Photo: Magnolia Pictures/ITVS
Right: Pro bowler Chris Barnes with wife Lynda and twin sons.
Photo: Magnolia Pictures/ITVS

PAGE 2:

Left: PBA contender Wayne Webb
Photo: Magnolia Pictures/ITVS
Center: Pete Weber
Photo: Magnolia Pictures/ITVS
Right: Chris Browne Directors of A LEAGUE OF ORDINARY GENTLEMEN.
Photo: Courtesy of Chris Browne/ITVS

