



Jono Goes To Potters: The King of wishful thinking

Jono Dalton will be representing the Stars and Stripes of the good old USA as he embarks on his first-ever appearance at the WBT World Indoor Championships, at Potters, after winning the PBA qualifying event in California last September.

There's one snag, though... Jono's from Sussex, in the south of England. He's about as American as fish and chips. He doesn't even live in the US. The eccentric 58-year-old decided to become a member of the US PBA and

make an 11,000-mile round trip to Cambria and back to try and, in effect, 'sneak in through the back door' over there rather than negotiate the devilishly tough UK qualifiers, in which only the very best tend to come through.

His wacky plan worked. He won the Open Singles qualifier and almost doubled up in the Open Pairs, only to lose in the final to American greats Anne Nunes and Bill Brault, after partnering a local bowler. He so nearly

qualified for the Scottish International Open, too, falling at the last hurdle to Tim Christie, an Aussie.

It wasn't Jono's first attempt across the pond either; he played in the PBA events last year, in San Jose, but the intense heat got the better of him and he failed to emerge victorious.

On the face of it, this bizarre, but cunning idea seems to be a rather expensive one, but being a former British Airways employee, he still gets some perks of his old job, namely free

air travel.

'My main logic in going out to play in America is the cost,' he explained. 'I used to work for BA so it barely costs me anything to go out there. I am semi-retired now and do a bit of patient driving a couple of days a week, but prior to that I was the operations manager for BA at Gatwick.

'I had 36 years at BA and I left because of Covid. The good thing for me was that you kept your staff travel perks, which for me was free air travel for the next 36 years.

'It was a fun idea and I fancied a little holiday over there anyway. I thought there might be fewer entries than there would be in the UK and sure enough, there was. And those that did enter were from all over America, some of the top bowlers from the country.

'I have tried doing the UK qualifiers, but they are mammoth events, with 64 players and many top-class bowlers. I've done the Bromley and Poole qualifiers and, with every respect, they are much more difficult than the US events.

'Last year was my first time at having a go at them. I got to the final and played Scottie Marzonie. I only played four or five games but had two main problems: jet lag and the weather. The event was played down in San Jose and the temperature was just ridiculous. I am used to playing in hot weather, but it really was scorching. The heat just got



• Fun-loving Jono Dalton will compete under the national flag of the USA at Potters this month.

to me.'

This time around it was played on the coast at Cambria, a seaside village equidistant from San Francisco and Los Angeles. It's cooler there than in San Jose.

'The organisation of the event, by Scottie, was fantastic,' he went on. 'I paid \$100 to be a USA PBA member, plus \$25 per event – and there were three events. I got into the World Pairs final with some local guy who had agreed to play with me, but we were just edged out.

'I didn't know what to expect last year and as it happened, it was just the heat that beat me as I reckon I could have won them all. It was cooler this time around and Tim actually beat me in the Scottish final... he did me with his straight woods.'

Jono even arranged some free accommodation while playing in the event, after cheekily requesting local Cambrian people to put him up.

'To save on costs – it's very expensive to stay out there – I joined the local Facebook group and posted a plea to anyone who would be happy to 'put up an eccentric 58-year-old Englishman', he said.

'I had loads of people getting in touch and among them there was a sweet 83-year-old lady, who was part of the local historic society – I love my history – and I agreed to stay there.

'I even took over some English food with me as 'payment' for her, including the likes of Ribena, custard, mince pies, Christmas cake, stuff they don't get out there, and she was over the moon. We had some fantastic chats after a day's bowling and we're great friends now.'

Jono realises he will very much be an underdog at Potters and must first come through the preliminary round, where he will face Ronald Lising, from the Philippines. Get past him and then it's either Israel's Daniel Alonim or Josh Cameron, from Canada. The prize that



• The show green at Potters where proud Sussex man Jono Dalton will represent USA in this month's WBT World Indoor Championships.