



• Dalton claims the trophy after his recent victory in the Mid Sussex Bowls League champion of champions competition.

then awaits is a fairy tale clash with reigning champion Stewart Anderson.

'My main target is to get to the first round, that's what I want,' he admitted. 'I just so hope I can get through the preliminaries.'

'I would have thought I am the second biggest underdog in the tournament. I barely know anything about my Filipino opponent, but he's won a lot of stuff out in the Far East, though.'

'I've had a little bit more success outdoors, but it's nothing on the scale of anybody else at Potters. My successes would be the Eastbourne Open Singles, the Hove Open, Southampton... it's quite good, but you're not getting the highest level of bowlers.'

'When they introduce me – and I think my game's the first one – everybody's

titles are reeled off and for me they are basically going to say, 'it's Jono Dalton from Sussex'. I've won absolutely bugger all indoors. I've won county pairs and triples, and got to the county singles final before, but I've done nothing at national level – I've never even reached the nationals before.'

'I feel like I am representing every bowler out there as I am just an average player, who has taken a chance, gone to the USA, played the best out there and who has got through.'

'I will be the oldest player there, I'm the one who has won nothing and I've only got one eye. It's a first for many, many things. But I will be playing on the portable rink which is what thousands of bowlers would dream of doing.'

He may not actually be American, but he has plenty of traits you'd expect

from someone who is from the USA and he wants to make a lasting impression on the tournament.

'My style of play is that I am unbelievably loud, I chase after my bowls, I do windmills, I shout a lot and may even get a warning,' he chuckled.

'If I can find my mojo and get through these two qualifiers then I am going to be absolutely buzzing against Stewart Anderson. I will have had two games to try and get used to the speed of the rink. I so want to cause an upset.. I don't want to see my bowls going three yards past and I am so worried about that.'

'I'm a giant as well, 6'5". Since coming back from America I have changed my delivery. I'm having a bit of coaching as I'm worried I won't give a good account of myself.'



• Eastbourne Open Singles champion 2023.

'I need to be getting two bowls around the jack, minimum, in this competition, so I have looked at my balance. My delivery is now more aligned to some of the top bowlers out there, but I am struggling with consistency.'

'I have been virtually living down at the club, practising every day. I am probably the most entertaining bowler in the county, but whether that comes out through the nerves, etc... I want to be entertaining, to attract more people to bowls.'

Like most bowlers in the UK, he was attracted to the sport via his grandparents, who emigrated to South Africa the year before he was born and who formed a club in their new homeland.

'I've been playing bowls for 20 years – my grandparents emigrated to Cape



• More symbols of success for Jono Dalton who will compete under the stars and stripes at Potters this month.

Town,' he said. 'They wanted to do something together, so they started up a bowls club down in Somerset West, in the Cape province.'

'They passed away 21 years ago, so I told my dad 'bring granddad's bowls back with you and I'll take it up when I'm an old man'. I just regarded it as an old man's sport.'

'I was telling this story to a friend of mine, who told me that he played and urged me to bring the bowls down with me and I thought 'I'm going to do that as I'm not getting anywhere with golf'. I got the bug and now I just live and breathe the bloody thing. I play both indoors and outdoors.'

'When my grandparents were alive, my dad used to record the World Indoors and send tapes down to them so that they could watch. It's a real buzz for me

to be there. Hopefully they will be looking down on me and I give them a proper performance.'

As well as the States, Jono has also played Down Under and in South Africa, adding: 'When I was working at BA, there was the World Airline Bowls Championships, down in New Zealand and Australia, and I took myself off down there for a week to play bowls, just to have the experience of travelling abroad and bowling.'

'I even played in South Africa, so I have seen a few bowls clubs around the world.'

And his walk-on music? 'King of Wishful Thinking', by Go West, his favourite band. 'That song is so apt, I am the king of wishful thinking,' he concluded with a laugh.

- Dom Picksley