

Garcia credits Villages lifestyle for his return to bowling alley

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By Steve Day

Note: Bill Garcia is a member of the club and a member of our Hall of Fame, Class of 2011.

When Bill Garcia was a teenager, he was one hotshot of a bowler. Now after many years away from the sport, he is trying to regain the form he had in his youth.

Garcia ventured to the bowling lanes at an early age.

"I was 8 years old. My father bowled on a team and he took me with him," Garcia said. "My mom got mad because he had me throwing a 16-pound ball. She threw a fit."

Garcia began bowling in junior leagues in his native California that year. His bowling game progressed very well.

"I bowled in a junior league in Northern California. I was a pretty good bowler," Garcia recalled. "When I was 12 to 16, I bowled in the Junior Masters, which was the top bowlers of the houses. We traveled around. We won three or four championships in a row. When I was 18 and 19, I moved on to the Sierra Masters Traveling League. It was kind of like a semi-pro league. Most of the guys averaged 185-215. It was the same type of deal. We represented our home houses. There were 36 teams from Central California to Northern California."

While bowling on these teams, Garcia rolled a couple of 299 games and a 298 game. He also had a high series of 685. Garcia averaged 190 in the Junior Masters and 205 in the Sierra Masters.

Besides his bowling, Garcia was a baseball catcher at Sacramento High School and caught one year in junior college at Sacramento City College.

Soon after graduation, Garcia put away his bowling ball and took up automobile racing.

"Out of high school, I got into racing cars and I didn't bowl," Garcia said. "I was going to go back into bowling and I had a Brunswick Black Beauty ball. I bought my first Hammer. I broke my shoulder during a car race and I didn't get back to bowling."

Garcia, 63, had a long career racing cars.

"I raced for a long time. I started in 1970 with Modifieds in California," he said. "I went to sprint cars and went all over the country with the World of Outlaws Sprint Cars. In 1982, I was fifth in points on the All-Star Circuit Championships. I ran 80 to 100 races a year. In 2004-2005 we won back-to-back sprint car championships in Northern California."

Garcia suffered a couple of injuries in his racing career.

"I had a belt break when I went into a wall," Garcia said. "My head hit the front part of the roll cage. I cracked my skull and I had a little plate put into the front of my head. Another time, I fractured my shoulder."



Bill Mitchell / Daily Sun
Bill Garcia of the Village of Bonnybrook gets ready to bowl at Spanish Springs Lanes. Garcia credits the Villages for getting him back into a sport he loved as a teenager.

The resident of the Village of Bonnybrook decided to try bowling again once he moved to The Villages.

"When I got to The Villages, I went bowling a couple of times, just to do everything you can do in The Villages," Garcia said. "I began subbing about a year ago and it was so much fun and the people were so enjoyable, I decided I needed to try to get-back into bowling."

Garcia bought a new ball. The ball was a switch for him. Ironically, this time it is just a 14-pounder, not the 16-pound type his mother so disliked.

Soon, Garcia joined a league.

"My wife and I joined a couples league last year," he said. "I started subbing in another league; they had an opening and I joined it. I will probably never get back to where I was when I was young, but I have bowled games in the 220s, 230s, 240s and 250s and I'm having fun doing it."

Since coming back to the game, Garcia has had a high game of 254 and a series around the 620 mark. He's averaging somewhere in the 165-170 range.

Along the way, Garcia has had a couple of setbacks.

"I had a stent put in back in May and my gall bladder removed in September," he said. "I am trying to make a comeback and get in as many games as I can. I'm trying to get my rhythm and timing back. I'd like to do well. It is just going to take a little time. I work on different techniques and hope to get better and better."

Garcia is very happy to be living The Villages lifestyle.

"The people here are absolutely great. This is the best place to be," he said. "If I wasn't in The Villages, I wouldn't be doing this. It is something I had before and I've been given the opportunity to do it again."