
Tsunami Lanes Owner Responds to Concerns Over New String Pinsetter System

By Linda Sutter August 13, 2026

CRESCENT CITY — Changes coming to Tsunami Lanes have generated concern among some local bowlers, but owner John Kirk says the investment in new bowling technology is intended to preserve—not diminish—the future of bowling in Crescent City.

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Kirk responded to concerns raised by a community member named David regarding Tsunami Lanes' decision to install modern string pinsetters, a system that uses strings attached to the pins to reset them rather than the traditional mechanical free-fall pinsetting equipment familiar to generations of bowlers.

While acknowledging that serious bowlers may have legitimate reservations about the technology, Kirk said some of the information being circulated about modern string pinsetters does not reflect more recent testing and improvements.

“There were legitimate concerns about early string-pinsetter technology, and USBC’s early testing found differences from traditional free-fall machines,” Kirk explained. “That’s part of the reason USBC spent several years developing specifications and studying the equipment.”

According to Kirk, subsequent testing by the United States Bowling Congress involved more than 500 bowlers participating in more than 3,500 games. He said the research found no statistically significant difference in scoring pace between USBC-certified string pinsetters and traditional free-fall equipment.

Kirk said the USBC now permits certified string-pinsetter equipment for league and tournament competition and treats averages obtained on certified string equipment as interchangeable with those from traditional equipment.

The 24-volt string-pinsetter equipment being installed at Tsunami Lanes is manufactured by US Bowling and, according to Kirk, is USBC approved.

But Kirk said the decision involves more than simply adopting new technology.

For a bowling center operating in a small, rural community such as Crescent City, maintaining aging traditional pinsetting machinery can become increasingly difficult and expensive. Replacement parts, access to specialized repair technicians, equipment reliability and downtime all factor into the long-term ability of a bowling center to remain operational.

Kirk pushed back strongly against suggestions that Tsunami Lanes' decision represents a disregard for the local bowling community.

“A tremendous amount of money is being invested in Tsunami because we want Crescent City to continue to have a bowling center for decades to come,” Kirk said.

He argues that continuing to depend upon aging equipment without considering the costs and difficulties associated with maintaining it could ultimately pose a greater threat to the bowling alley's future.

For longtime and competitive bowlers accustomed to traditional pinsetters, however, Kirk recognizes that statistics alone may not settle the debate.

Instead, he is asking bowlers to give the new system a chance.

“I completely understand that serious bowlers can be skeptical of string equipment,” Kirk said. “Rather than asking anyone to take our word for it, I’d much rather have people actually bowl on the new equipment and judge it themselves.”

Kirk also invited bowlers to provide feedback regarding other aspects of the facility, including lane conditions, league play and tournaments.

The disagreement ultimately highlights a challenge faced by many longtime recreational businesses: how to modernize and control operating costs while maintaining the traditions and experiences that loyal customers value.

For Tsunami Lanes, Kirk says the goal behind the investment is straightforward.

“We aren’t trying to eliminate bowling culture in Crescent City,” Kirk said. “We’re investing in keeping it here.”

Once the new equipment is operational and local bowlers have had an opportunity to put it to the test, the community may ultimately be able to decide for itself whether the changes at Tsunami Lanes represent a departure from traditional bowling—or an investment that helps ensure Crescent City continues to have a place to bowl for years to come.