

A Positive Outlook

South Point Bowling Plaza: They built it and they came



Jeremy Aguero, Consultant



Lately there's been a lot of excitement about major new entertainment venues in southern Nevada. Whether it's the T-Mobile Arena and its slate of top musical acts, UFC fights and Vegas Golden Knights hockey games, or the potential NFL-ready stadium that would host the Raiders football team, Super Bowls and other mega events, these venues carry the potential to transform both the Las Vegas entertainment scene and the regional economy. Yet while these venues and their developments garner mentions on ESPN, there's another major sporting venue in town that is already hosting a Super Bowl of sorts, and you probably haven't heard much about it.

The South Point Bowling Plaza is in the midst of hosting the U.S. Bowling Congress Open Championships, considered the largest participatory sporting event in the world. The tournament started last month and will continue through mid-July. During the tournament's 149-day run, more than 50,000 bowlers on 10,000 teams will take their turns on the Bowling Plaza's lanes while spending an estimated \$120 million on hotel rooms, restaurants, shopping and other local amenities during their multi-day trips.

The Open Championships are just the type of major event that South Point owner Michael Gaughan envisioned when he built the \$35 million Bowling Plaza. In fact, before a shovel went in the ground on the 60-lane, 90,000-square-foot facility, the South Point, Las Vegas Events and the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority already had an agreement with the USBC to host more than 40 tournaments over a dozen years. Last year, the Bowling Plaza hosted its first USBC major event, the Women's Championships, which welcomed nearly 25,000 bowlers over the 94-day tournament. The Bowling Plaza will host the Women's Championships again in 2020, 2023 and 2026, and the Open Championships return for 2019, 2021, 2024 and 2027.

The Bowling Plaza continues Michael Gaughan's strategy of carving out a niche in smaller-scale sporting venues in southern Nevada. The South Point Arena and Equestrian Center, a 4,600-seat facility, has hosted some of the most prestigious equestrian and bull riding events in the nation since it opened in 2006. Together, the world-class bowling and equestrian venues draw hundreds of thousands of participants, families and fans to southern Nevada. These events obviously help the bottom line for the South Point, but their impact extends even further. For example, an estimated 60 percent of bowling event participants stay at the South Point, meaning thousands more will sleep, eat and spend at other area resorts, spreading their economic impact throughout southern Nevada.

Decade after decade, Las Vegas has succeeded in large part because it has continued to evolve and offer so much to so many different people. That evolution continues today with large-scale venues like T-Mobile Arena and a potential NFL stadium, as well as smaller niche venues like the South Point Bowling Plaza, all of which are playing roles in the ongoing transformation of Las Vegas from a gambling-centric destination into a multi-faceted tourism mecca where visitors can experience the world's best in accommodations, dining, shopping and entertainment.

