

# LAST PLACE CHAMP



NJO PRODUCTIONS & PHLOGISTON FILMS present an IT'S NOT JUST A GAME PRODUCTION: THE LAST PLACE CHAMP  
directed by NAJAH OWENS, produced by NORA LONG, executive producers MARVIN OWENS & DAVID DRAPER, featuring GAZMINE MASON



IT'S NOT JUST A GAME:

# THE LAST PLACE CHAMP

## SYNOPSIS

"It's Not Just a Game" examines the sport of women's bowling, bringing to light the unique experiences, opportunities, and adversities that accompany a game widely viewed by the public as a fun way to spend an evening with family and friends. Professionally and competitively, bowling is full of diversity and opportunities, but also immense challenges for the women seeking success within it.

Gazmine Mason, affectionally known by her community as "GG," who has made history as the first African-American to be a three-time Olympic gold medalist, a collegiate champion, and the only sponsored African American on the Professional Women's Bowling Association national tour. As she prepares for the upcoming PWBA tour, we will follow her journey as she navigates through the world of professional bowling, maintaining and growing a social media presence, as well as the pressure to demand and create change within a sport historically dominated by a much different demographic of athletes.

Younger than the other bowlers she's competing against, GG's still trying to make a name for herself within their ranks. The tournament's atmosphere is intense, but Gazmine smiles through it all - nervous but happy for the chance to compete at such an elite level despite the obstacles thrown in her way as a young woman of color in a sport that, even now, makes it difficult for anyone outside the status quo to gain a foothold. Regardless of the support that rallies around her online and in person, GG has to bear the immense stress of competition alone. That she must remain strong is not a question, it's a demand - and one that means she will either bend or break.

## DIRECTED BY NAJAH OWENS

Najah is a competitive bowler and filmmaker who attended North Carolina A&T (c/o '16), winning an intercollegiate national championship. Deeply connected to the bowling community and having experienced its challenges firsthand, she is determined to inspire change within the sport and share it with the world the way the bowling community sees it: as a sport requiring hard work and dedication, one with a diverse group of athletes who know it's more than just a game.

## PRODUCED BY NORA LONG

Nora Long is a producer, director, and cinematographer of narrative and documentary films, as well as episodic, branded, and commercial content. She strives to use moving imagery as a medium for positive social change, exploration, and advocacy. She holds an MFA in Film & Television from the Savannah College of Art and Design.

## FEATURING GAZMINE MASON

A Professional Women's Bowling Athlete from Rhode Island, she is the only sponsored African American on the PWBA since joining in 2019. GG is the first African American female to win the Olympic Singles and all events gold for the USA team and is a four-time gold medalist. She is also the first African American to compete for the University of Nebraska and the first to receive the All-American award.

In 2017 GG created a group called "Black Girls Can Bowl 2," highlighting and recognizing women of color who are underrepresented in the sport of bowling. And, in 2021, GG and her parents established the Gazmine Mason Foundation: a non-profit seeking to create opportunities for bowling athletes, especially youth lacking the needed resources to move forward in their bowling careers.

## THE FILM'S IMPACT

Bowling is estimated to be a \$10 billion industry, with over 67 million people bowling at least once per year. With about 3,400 bowling centers who are members of Bowling Proprietors Association of America and over 2 million people who belong to the United States Bowling Congress, this sport is much, much more than a birthday party pastime.

At the professional level, the lack of women involved, compared to the thousands of men that compete, led the Professional Women's Bowling Association (PWBA) to cease its tour for 12 years (2003- 2015) due to lack of funding and the number of women being able to compete. When it resumed in 2015, it was shortened to only 3 months, while the men still competed year-round, denying the female players equal opportunity to sponsorships and deterring new athletes from going pro. While men's bowling is aired on ESPN, women's bowling is aired on CBS or bowl.tv (both of which require subscriptions and are only shown during the summer). Bowlers like GG are fighting for long overdue equality and to change the game for other women in the sport.

# LAST PLACE CHAMP

Total runtime: 60 minutes, 56 seconds

## FILMING LOCATIONS

Providence & Cranston, RI

Raleigh, NC

Chicago, IL

St. Petersburg, FL

## DIRECTED BY

**Najah Owens**

## PRODUCED BY

**Nora Long**

## DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

**Nora Long**

## EDITED BY

**Najah Owens & Nora Long**

## EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS

**Marvin Owens & David Draper**

## FEATURING

**Gazmine Mason**

**George Mason**

**Danielle Mason**

**Kim Tyrell-Kearny**

**Jason Thomas**

**Denishya Waller**