

Chicago Tribune
**LIFE+
 STYLE**
 Sunday

REMARKABLE WOMAN

Let the good times roll

Pro bowler Diandra Asbaty
 hits the pocket balancing
 family and career

Balancing Act

Comic Pete
 Dominick talks
 to Heidi Stevens
 about his anti-
 violence initiative

Candid Candace

Kristin Chenoweth
 charms crowd
 at Goodman gala

PROUD TO BE THE FIRST CARPET CLEANING SERVICE CERTIFIED
asthma & allergy friendly™



BEYOND CARPET CLEANING
 CARPET | TILE & GROUT | HARDWOOD | UPHOLSTERY
1-800-STEEMER® | stanleysteemer.com

CERTIFIED
 asthma & allergy
 friendly



CARPET CLEANING SPECIAL
2 ROOMS \$99
& A HALL

Cleaning Completed By 6/30/14 Promo Code: **BEACH**

Minimum charges apply. Must present coupon at time of service. Not valid with any other offer or coupon. Residential only. Combined living areas, L-shaped rooms, and rooms over 300sq. ft. are considered 2 areas. Protector not included. Valid at participating locations only. Certain restrictions may apply. Call for details. Only Stanley Steemer Carpet Cleaning has been Certified asthma & allergy friendly™. ASTHMA & ALLERGY FRIENDLY and ASTHMA & ALLERGY FRIENDLY LOGO are Certification Marks and Trademarks of ALLERGY STANDARDS LIMITED. The ASTHMA AND ALLERGY FOUNDATION OF AMERICA is a Registered Trademark of AAFA.

remarkable woman

Diandra Asbaty

Pro bowler has learned to strike a winning balance between her professional and personal passions

By WILLIAM HAGEMAN
Tribune Newspapers

Walk around Diversey River Bowl in Chicago, and you'll know you're on Diandra Asbaty's turf.

On one wall is a larger-than-life mural, showing the Hall of Fame bowler on her follow-through. In the bar is a large photo of Asbaty after winning her first major title, the 2012 United States Bowling Congress Queens tournament. And if you walk around long enough, you may actually bump into Asbaty. Maybe four times a week she's there, working on her game.

"I coach here and give clinics here too," she says. "It's my second home."

Asbaty, 33, has an impressive resume. She was a member of the University of Nebraska's national champions in 1999 and 2001; a two-time U.S. amateur champion; a two-time All-America selection at Nebraska; a member of Team USA for 15 years; and a three-time World Bowler of the Year. She also has two bowling-related businesses: the International Art of Bowling (iabowling.com), a coaching enterprise co-owned with Jason Belmonte, winner of nine national PBA titles, and the Elite Youth Tour (eliteyouthtour.com), a nonprofit that combines instruction and competition.

Married to John Asbaty, executive chef at the White Oak Tavern & Inn, which opens this summer in Lincoln Park, Asbaty is also the mother of two children: a son, 3 1/2, and a daughter born in February.

She seems to have it all together, which she says was not the case shortly after her son was born.

"I was having trouble finding that balance again," she says. "My attention was so divided. I'm a mom, I want to bowl, I'm starting a business. And I was mediocre at everything. It was tough. I felt, 'Will I ever be a great competitor again? Will I be a great mother?' I doubted everything."

But she buckled down, got baby-sitting help from her parents



ABEL URIBE/TRIBUNE NEWSPAPERS PHOTOS

Drawing inspiration

Diandra Asbaty, the mother of two, finds inspiration in children. "I really feel everybody can find inspiration in children, even if they're not your own," she says. "If you just watch them looking around — it's so refreshing seeing how they see the world."

and in-laws, made the time to work on her game and charged back, culminating with the Queens title.

"That shows you don't have to give up your dreams when you're a mom," Asbaty says. "That's really a strong message to send to young people. Never stop dreaming."

Her bowling dream started when she was 5, growing up in Dyer, Ind. Her sister, Kassy ("my

role model"), who was three years older, was an excellent bowler.

This is an edited transcript of the conversation.

Q: Who got you started bowling?

A: My grandma. She gave me my first bowling ball. She'd take me to a Saturday morning league and keep score. That was when we had (to manually keep score),

it was so long ago. When you're 5 or 6, you don't want to throw gutter balls. So I'd cry. Every Saturday she'd say, "If you cry, we're going home." I'd throw a gutter ball, and I'd cry. But then I'd stop. That showed me about myself. I could have done something easier, but I stuck with it. I'm still like that today.

Q: How into bowling were you as a kid?

A: I had an interesting schedule. I thought it was normal, but looking back, my parents did so much for us. In middle school and high school, my sister and I would practice every night after the leagues finished, 9:30 till midnight. Then we'd go out for breakfast. We could do it as long as we kept our grades up. I learned early how important practice is. You get out what you put in. There are no shortcuts. You can't "hope" it.

Q: And you never drifted off to other things? School, a job, boys?

A: Never. I'm very committed. I'm all or nothing. I'm not going to work out two or three times a week for nothing.

Q: It sounds like your parents handled things right. But you always hear about parents pushing their kids.

A: I give lessons all the time and I see parents who want their kid to be better than the kid wants to be. I tell parents to encourage kids to find their passion. You can give them the opportunity to do many things.

Q: As someone who has pursued her passion for more than 25 years, what lesson can you give about competing in sports?

A: Any sport you're going to do, you're going to lose more than you win. People don't realize how hard it is to be an athlete. It's difficult. There are so many highs and lows for an athlete. But the highs outweigh the lows.

Q: What makes a good bowler?

A: Sound fundamentals, an understanding of the equipment, a very strong mental game and the desire never to stop learning.

Q: What has it taught you?

A: I can't tell you how many life lessons I've learned through bowling. Time management, finding balance in life, how to lose, how to win, how to bowl as a

team and deal with people. How to do something I love to do and inspire other people.

Q: And people can learn from defeat.

A: My worst loss was on national TV (the Queens in 2007). I had led all week, then it came down to the last match. The (broadcast) was running long, and they sort of rushed us. But I can't use that as an excuse. I made a lot of mental mistakes and I lost. It hurt a lot, for a long time. I write things down, and I wrote down everything I did wrong. The next time I was on live TV I didn't make any of those mistakes. And I won. You can't expect success. It's a process. Part of getting to success is failure. I bowled better than anybody that week, then I fell on my face.

Q: But you eventually made up for that, winning the Queens in 2012. Dramatically too.

A: In the 10th frame I needed a strike to win it. You can see it on (YouTube). I picked up my ball, I took a deep breath, I focused, took another deep breath and I saw my son's face in front of me. It made me much more relaxed.

Q: How much do you practice?

A: In college it was two hours a day. Now I try for four times a week. I work out with a trainer, and I'm always coaching, so that helps.

Q: What does the trainer help with? Weights?

A: Yes. He's not a bowler, but he created a plan for me specifically. You don't need to be all big and muscled. You're working on a pendulum. You're not throwing the ball; you're allowing it to be thrown.



Watch her bowl

See Diandra Asbaty in action at chicago.tribune.com/asbaty.

Q: What does a Hall of Famer have to work on?

A: You have to practice with a mission. You have to have a focus. My timing, ball speed, release.

Q: How many bowling balls does a pro have?

A: I'm sponsored by Storm — they make balls that have a scent — and they keep me supplied. I used to have 40 in my car. When I was pregnant, I decided that wasn't a good idea. So I store them here.

Q: Everybody likes bowling, don't they? What's the pull?

A: Everyone has a bowling story. I'm sure you have one. I love bowling because you can do it at (age) 2 — my son started when he learned to walk — or you can bowl at 102. It's great for families.

Q: The game doesn't seem to be in the public eye like it used to, especially women's bowling.

A: I'm hoping it comes back. More people bowl than (participate in) any other sport: 69 million

people bowl every year. It's big in high school; there are a lot of bowling centers. College bowling is growing. We just need to get women's bowling back.

Q: Your plate's full: as a mom, bowling, running two businesses. Do you have time for hobbies?

A: I love photography. I like to write (she has a blog at diandraasbaty.com). I like coaching. I've made jewelry. I'm very creative.

Q: What do you do to relax?

A: I don't. (Laughs)

Q: How much do you travel?

A: Every week is different; every month is different. I have enough miles to check three bags at 70 pounds, which is very important to bowlers.

Q: How many balls do you have to lug around?

A: I'll take six to 10 to a tournament. They're 15 pounds (each). A lot of times it's just me (traveling). Sometimes at the airport I wish I'd been a swimmer. Goggles and a cap, that's it.

bhageman@tribune.com



Nominate someone remarkable:

Know someone we should feature in this weekly column? Tell us about her at sunday@tribune.com. And check out our e-book, "Remarkable Women: Interviews with Inspiring Chicagoland Women," at chicago.tribune.com/ebooks.