

Expert bowlers reveal practice techniques

Southside Challenger, Greenwood, IN 46142

Wed., Nov. 23, 1983

By Karen Forslund

In the game of bowling, practice may not make perfect but it will certainly help you and give you a better chance at a perfect game. You cannot bowl one league a week and expect to improve. If you want to improve your bowling average, practice is a must. But you must know what to practice.

Bill Spigner is a member of the Professional Bowlers Association (PBA) and has been on tour for 10 years. He teaches bowling at a bowling camp in Connecticut and also gives private lessons. Bill said, "You can't learn how to bowl by bowling once a week. You're obviously bowling for score, first of all. That's foremost in your mind when you're bowling in your league session. So if somebody tells you that you should do this to try and get better, and it doesn't work immediately and you don't get the immediate better score, you're not going to do it."

"Practice is of utmost importance," he said. But you have to practice the right things. If you just keep practicing the same mistakes over and over, you'll get better with practice but you won't get to where you want to be. That's the hardest part about practicing and also teaching."

If you are a beginner, start with a bowling class offered at most centers. Then practice to maintain what you have learned in the "Learn to Bowl" classes. Bowl in at least one league a week and practice at least once a week.

When the winter leagues end in the spring, enroll in a "Learn to Bowl Better" class. By this time, you have started to develop your own style and an instructor can spot any problems you may have developed and help you correct them before they become a habit.

Average bowlers should also contact a bowling center and get lessons designed for them. An instructor can find something for you to work on that will improve your game. If you have not taken the "Learn to Bowl" classes, it might be beneficial to get back to the basics of bowling. You can follow this with the advanced class. It is best to take these classes in the summer, so you aren't concerned about your winter league average. The average bowler tends to get discouraged when he doesn't see results right away. Remember, it is very difficult to correct bad habits. You didn't develop them overnight, so don't expect to get rid of them right away. The only way to correct a problem with your bowling is to bowl one game after another, working on one or two areas.

You cannot do this in a league for two reasons. Your concentration will drift as you sit through several teammates taking their turns, and when you are in a league you are bowling for score. Expect your average to drop about 10 pins at first. But you'll find determination will pay off. The average bowler gets discouraged easily and is not as patient as the beginners or the better bowlers.

The beginners are willing to work on new things and are

excited to learn. They are just starting and anything is an improvement. The better bowlers just need fine tuning and they know when they throw a good or bad ball. The average bowler gets worse for a time while he is working on his game. He doesn't like to see his average drop, even knowing it will end higher if he stays with it.

It might help to realize that most good bowlers went through the same situation before becoming good bowlers. So when you practice, don't worry about your score. You are out there to work on a defect—concentrate on correcting that defect.

Work on your game all summer. Take a class and practice at least three times a week. In the fall, join at least two leagues and continue to practice. You will need to see an instructor periodically.

To stay consistent, two to three leagues a week are a must for the good bowler. If you are striving to improve, you must also practice. If you know what your problems are and how to correct them, practice by yourself so you can roll one ball after another and concentrate.

Johnny Petraglia is in his 18th year on the PBA tour. He agrees that the good bowler needs practice to improve. He said, "They've got to bowl at least five days a week and a minimum of five games a day, at least. This sport is no different than any other sport. A boxer trains 1,000 minutes for every minute he's in the ring. Football, baseball and basketball players train all year. Golfers hit 100-200 golf balls a day, every day, and tennis players practice six hours a day. It's no different than in bowling. If you want to bowl you've got to be out there every day."

If you need help, practice with a coach. A coach can help you fine-tune your game. Many good bowlers feel they don't need a coach because they know all there is to know about the game.

If you are a good bowler and want to become a professional or at least bowl like one, and you think you have nothing to learn—you obviously have a lot to learn.

Next week we'll look at the determination it takes to become a professional.