

Practice, determination vital for pro bowlers

By Karen Forslund

It takes a great amount of practice and determination to become a professional bowler and once you become one, you must continue to practice and be determined to win.

Even though the number of games that each professional must bowl varies from tournament to tournament and from bowler to bowler, you can be sure it's more than most people bowl in a month. Most people who watch the Professional Bowlers Association (PBA) Tour don't realize the number of games bowled to get there.

Pro bowler Johnny Petraglia said, "The people who watch the show on Saturday and see a guy bowl one game and collect \$10,000 think it's easy. They just don't realize the 56 games that happened before the TV show to get there."

If it's hard for you to imagine bowling 56 games in one week, just figure it would be like bowling in nearly 19 leagues a week.

Many bowlers would be worn out physically, not to mention mentally. So, if you want to become a pro, you must condition yourself by bowling every day. You cannot bowl in a couple of leagues a week and expect to compete on tour. Petraglia said, "They'll bowl good in a regional tournament or an occasional tournament, but if you're going to be on tour and bowl week in and week out, physically, you're going to get tired and mentally, you'll get burned out. You've got to be able to concentrate for three solid days or five solid days,

depending on the format. If you want to bowl, you've got to be out there every day, and you also have to stay in shape."

Besides the many games of competition, most professionals also practice each week. Petraglia said, "I don't practice as much as I used to and I probably should. But that's a matter of desire, too, I guess. I guess I'm not as hungry as I used to be. I practice when I'm home, maybe 60-80 games a week and I probably should bowl 100. When I'm on tour, if I'm bowling good, I maybe practice 20 games."

Pro bowler Bill Spigner said, "Sometimes I practice an awful lot and sometimes I don't."

Spigner practices what he preaches. "I do a lot of teaching. I have a bowling camp in Connecticut and I do a lot of private teaching, too," he said. "Sometimes you lose track of yourself. You're teaching people what should be done and you don't do it yourself, at times. So I have to basically practice what I preach."

Petraglia and Spigner are true professionals. But they see many bowlers on tour who shouldn't be there. These bowlers are referred to as "amateur professionals." They think they are professionals because they meet the requirements of the PBA. But the competition on tour separates the professionals from the amateurs.

"They come out on tour and they don't know the first thing about bowling. There are guys that don't even know what top weight in a ball is and

they are PBA members. It's really sad to see that. These guys want to bowl with the best bowlers in the world and they're not even close to being the best bowlers in their area."

Like most veteran professionals, Petraglia agrees. "If they average 210 in their own house (bowling center) and they want to come on tour, it's nice if they are rich and want to have a good time." He added, "If you can't average 210 in a composite of the houses around the city and average 220 in your own house, don't even bother unless you bowl in a really tough house, and you've got to be honest with yourself and be the judge of that."

Johnny went on to explain the difference between averages in leagues and on tour. "A couple of years ago I bowled in leagues when I wasn't on tour. I bowled in a summer league and filled in during a winter league. In one league I averaged 236 and in the other one I averaged 241. That's how ridiculous lanes are now. I'm averaging about 212-215 on tour. That shows you the difference."

There hasn't always been such a drastic difference in tour averages and league averages. Spigner said, "When I joined the PBA, my highest average I ever held was 203. I averaged in the high 190s and low 200s for quite a few years. When I was 17, I averaged 198, but that 198 was worth 225 today. If I bowled on easy conditions, I could probably average 240 on similar conditions, as well as I bowled in that house averaging 198."

It definitely takes more than the 190 average required by the PBA if you expect to make money on tour. With today's lane conditions and the ever-improving equipment, a 220-230 average would be more realistic. But don't get discouraged. Remember, if you want to be become a professional, you must practice and be determined. Spigner said, "I know when I grew up, I bowled every day and I never got enough of it, no matter how much my hands cut and bled. I just kept bowling every day and that's what it takes to become a professional."

If you feel you need help with your bowling, Johnny Petraglia and Bill Spigner can

help. Spigner works for Professional Bowling Camps. They are in Connecticut and run the first three weeks of August, consisting of lectures on-the-lane assistance, and bowlers are also videotaped at least twice. Spigner said, "We've had nothing but favorable comments and it's growing every year."

Johnny Petraglia and Marshall Holman have made a videotape that they feel is unlike any other teaching method. They bowl nearly one hour of perfect shots from every angle. The tape sells for \$90, but is available, with coupons, for \$72.

Interested bowlers may contact Karen Forslund by writing the Southside Challenger.