

## Editor's Corner:

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Well, here it is guys. Print it out when you desire.

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### In this issue:

**The Top 10 Average Killers**

# The Coaching Eye



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A monthly e-mail newsletter designed for bowling coaches. . . . enjoy!

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# The Top 10 Average Killers

By

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These are not in any order. They are merely listed as ten possible average killers.

If you know more about this game, you'll perform better.

A 200+ average is only a matter of knowledge of the game, good health, the right equipment and practicing and practicing and practicing. . . .

## **The Top Ten Average Killers**

- 1. Lack of Knee Bend and Correct Upper Body Bend**
- 2. The 10 Pin Spare Shot**
- 3. Bad Timing**
- 4. Not Staying Behind the Ball with the Correct Release**
- 5. Not Utilizing the Practice Balls Correctly**
- 6. The Pointing Forearm**
- 7. Lack of a Good Plan of Attack**
- 8. Bad Fit of the Ball**
- 9. Not Looking at the Path of the Ball**
- 10. The Mental Game**

What are the top ten bowling style execution problems that promote a lower average?

Like any other list, the components of this list are probably about the same. It's the order that might be a little different.

## 1. Lack of Knee Bend and Correct Upper Body Bend

This was an easy pick. More bowlers get this wrong more than any component of their bowling style

The usual problem is not bending your sliding knee enough. Since your body posture is higher above the lane surface, the release is automatically higher above the surface. Releasing too high above the lane surface decreases accuracy.

When the sliding leg knee is not bent enough with respect to the upper body being bent forward, the shoulders get placed in a position forward of your sliding foot. Because of that, the pivot point that the bowling ball rotates around, at your shoulders, is the most forward component of your upper body other than your head and your release arm.

Visualize this excess forward bend at the waist from the top view. Remembering that the pivot at the shoulders allows movement left and right as well as motion forward and backward during the swing of the ball. If you bend too much at the waist and not enough at the sliding knee, the pivot point will be too forward and there will be too much freedom for the arm to be able to swing inward as well as outward from the intended launch angle. With today's usual lane conditions (drier on the outside than on the inside), it's that error to the inside that is a major problem. Missing to the outside is usually more forgiving than missing to the inside.

### Example:

**Go down to the foul line without your bowling ball and assume the release stance. First, bend very little with your knees but a lot with your waist. Swing your ball side arm forward and backward. Note that as you swing the ball forward, you have a lot of freedom to swing the ball to the inside.**

**Now bend your waist about the same angle as your knees. Now when you swing your arm forward and backward, you do not have so much freedom to swing inward.**

If there is more freedom to swing the ball to the left, it simply will happen more often than if there is less freedom to swing to the left. Again, swinging to the right a little of the intended target is a little more forgiving because of the drier outside lane conditions so I am assuming those outside drier lane conditions.

If the sliding knee is bent properly with respect to the waist bend, the pivot point is moved back to a position where the movement inward with the ball is simply blocked by your body. (For some of us that's a big obstacle). If bent properly, the knees and waist are bent in just about the same angle. That places the pivot point of your shoulder approximately in the same plane as your sliding foot. Because the pivot point is not forward of your sliding foot, the ball would have to swing through your body to get to a more left launch angle. And in fact that will happen ever so often when swinging the ball forward. Sometimes you will hit your sliding leg or ankle (ouch!).

One of the visible signals that your upper body is bent too much with respect to your sliding knee is the raising up of the opposite leg (the one on the side that the ball is carried). It is raised up from the approach surface as the release is being executed if you

bend too much at the waist with respect to the knee bend. Although there are some proponents of allowing the opposite leg to rise off the approach surface as much as you would like, it is the opinion of this coach that you lose balance, accuracy and consistency.

The better balanced, accurate and consistent shot is one that has the most stable platform on which to release the ball from at the intended launch angle. With the opposite leg down on the approach surface, you get a more stable platform.

Your sliding foot is the primary balance point for your ball release body posture. It mostly handles your balance forward and backward. The combination of the slightly bent forward upper body and the stability of your sliding foot stabilize the forward motion.

Your opposite leg and sliding side arm are the major components of the balance left and right. As the ball is swinging forward, the opposite leg swings under your body and to the inside (left for a right handed bowler). If that leg is kept on the approach surface, it provides an additional point for balancing. So the most balanced release will have the tip of the bowling shoe of the opposite leg sliding on the approach as the release is executed. The final position of the opposite leg should be at least a small amount to the same side of the body as the sliding foot. The more your body is lowered, the greater the shift of the opposite leg to the same side as the sliding foot.

So the sliding foot is balancing forward and backward and the opposite leg is balancing the left and right motion of your body.

But what about the arm opposite to the release side of the ball? Isn't it part of the balance?

The other component for the balance process, in fact it's the largest component, is the position of the opposite arm. The arm that is not releasing the ball is called the opposite arm. It's position provides that final balance for the release process.

I'm sure that everyone has walked a tightrope stretched between two buildings in downtown New York City. That rope (cable) is very tightly stretched but it does have a little looseness regardless of the efforts to get it tight. The tightrope walker carries a balancing pole with him (it could be a her also). He carries that pole (it's a very heavy pole by the way) for balance. Sometimes you can see the cable swinging left and right but the pole is almost stationary across the cable carried by the tightrope walker.

A bowler has a lot of balancing to perform during the approach and release execution process. First the ball is going forward, then to the rear, then upward, then downward, then forward and finally it is released.

When the ball is swinging on the side of the body, the weight of the ball needs to be balanced by something on the other side. The opposite arm is the primary balance for that task. As the ball is pushed forward the hand of the opposite arm is released from the ball. As the ball begins to swing to the rear of the body, the opposite arm is usually stays in that forward position while the ball is to the rear of the body. As the ball begins to move forward and to the side of the body, the opposite arm begins to move to a "beside the body" position. As the ball is released, the opposite arm is extended outward from the

body. The faster the bowler rolls the ball, the more to the rear the opposite swings to the rear.

## 2. The 10 Pin Spare Shot (A repeat from the preliminary issue)

### The Three Types of 10 Pin Shots:

There are primarily three ways that bowlers release the ball when rolling at the 10 pin and many other spares, a breaking ball, a killed breaking ball and a straight ball. Each has their own characteristics and methods of release.

#### The Breaking Ball 10 Pin Shot:

If you choose to roll a breaking ball at the 10 pin, you had better be very accurate in the alignment. The ball needs to end up rolling into the center of the pin, not clipping the pin as it curves away from the pin.

If you choose to roll a breaking ball at the 10 pin, try to choose a ball that breaks very little and is little effected by the drier outside boards near the 10 pin. Release the ball like you do with your normal strike shot and follow through normally. What you are counting on is that you have lined up properly and that the ball will not break left more than anticipated.

#### The Killed Breaking Ball 10 Pin Shot:

A little better shot is the killed breaking ball. You may be able to roll the ball that you are using for the strike shot if you kill the ball enough. If you notice in practice that the ball still breaks too much, try another less reactive ball.

You can kill the ball a little by using the handshake grip during the forward swing so that the fingers and thumb release at about the same time.

If that is not enough "kill", try opening up your wrist and hand so that your thumb is rotated to about the 3 o'clock position at the release of the ball. Generally, the more open your wrist is, the more you kill the left to right break of the ball.

#### The Straight Ball 10 Pin Shot:

This rolling path is the preferable one for the 10 pin. You need to open your wrist as much as possible and assure that your hand is directly behind the ball at the release and that it is maintained at that orientation throughout the follow through.

Along with the rotated wrist, you must also do everything else opposite to what you are trained to do to get the ball to break. One is not to follow through completely; chunk the ball.

Note: If you have a proper ten pin straight ball, it doesn't really matter how you release the ball unless the lanes are really dry. Because the ball is a hard, smooth surface, non-reactive resin, non-porous plastic ball, it's going to go straight. But, since drier lanes do occur, releasing the straight ball shot for the ball to go straight even on dry lanes is a good thing.

#### The Shots in Your Game:

In addition to a breaking ball strike shot, you must develop a spare shot that enhances your probability that you will convert the spare. As the lane surface dries out during a night of league bowling or in a tournament, it becomes more difficult to convert both the right and left side spares. And also in the opposite sense, when a lane surface is very wet, it may also be very difficult to convert the spares using a breaking ball spare shot.

### **The Decision on Whether or Not to Develop a “Second Shot” for Your Game**

Okay, let's be realistic, how much can that brain and bodily control system handle. And, are you willing to put out the effort that it will take to develop an entire new way to roll the ball after you have rolled it one way for many years.

The question really is “how much do you really want an increase in your average.” If you want it bad enough, you should make the effort and develop a second shot, the straight ball shot.

Note that this second shot is not a killed curving ball rolling path; it is a true straight ball. The path is straight.

### **Developing a Straight Ball Spare Shot:**

Patience, patience patience is what it takes when developing any shot that you have never had before. It doesn't seem to matter whether you have bowled for 30 or 40 years or just 2 years. It's difficult in all cases.

If you see the value of rolling a straight shot at many of the spares that come up often in the game of bowling, that may be the impetus that drives you to developing and sticking with a new spare shot.

First and foremost, trying to develop a straight ball shot after years of trying to make the ball break as much as possible under varying lane conditions is not going to be easy and it's not going to happen overnight. But, the reward is a higher average and the respect of your fellow bowlers for being willing to listen, learn and implement improvement to your game.

### **The Basic Difference Between a Breaking Ball and a Straight Ball:**

The fundamental difference between a breaking ball and a straight ball is that the straight ball has very little (ideally none) sideways torque applied.

When a breaking ball is rolled, your hand starts behind the ball and ends up beside the ball at least a little. It is that movement from behind to the side that applies most of the sideways torque on the ball and promotes the ability of the ball to curve to the left.

To get a bowling ball to go as straight as it can, your hand must start out behind the ball just as in the breaking ball release. But, all throughout the release and follow through, the hand must be kept behind the ball. It must never be allowed to rotate to the side. That action (restraining the rotation of your hand) is difficult at first, but it eventually will become easier. It takes lot's and lot's of practice.

### **Getting the Hand Rotation Correct:**

Hold out your right hand with the palm facing upward in a relaxed posture. It is most likely slightly cupped with your thumb pointing slightly to the right. Although that is a nice relaxed position, and it will work successfully for killing the ball, there is an even better release orientation of the hand for a good consistent straight ball release. Rotate your hand clockwise with your thumb extended outward until your palm is facing straight upward and your thumb is most likely pointing to the right at about the 3 o'clock position (this is called opening up your hand and wrist). Note that this is not a relaxed orientation of

your hand. Your forearm is under some strain to accomplish this position.

With your hand in that orientation, get the feel for open position for the forward swing of the ball by practicing the hand position for the entire armswing. Get in your normal approach stance and without a ball at first, open up your hand position. Practice your approach using the opened hand during the entire backward and forward swing of your hand. Make a point of extending your hand and arm a little more forward than you normally do with a breaking ball release. Also, end the follow through in the forward position in front and to the right side of your body instead of above and to the right of your head. Most importantly, make sure that your hand finishes the swing still in the “open” position.

### **Rolling the First Few Straight Ball Shots:**

Step onto the approach with your bowling ball. Grasp the ball and rotate your hand to the open position with your hand at the straight ball position. (This will probably feel very uncomfortable at first, but be patient, it’s going to work).

After getting into the proper stance position, start your approach and don’t think about anything but keeping your hand open during the entire forward pushaway, backward swing, forward swing, release and follow through. Depending upon how much you have cranked the ball in your breaking ball delivery, the backswing will feel very very different. It is important to remember to maintain that locked open position.

### **Reach Out with Your Hand Opened Up:**

As you release the ball, really concentrate on extending your opened hand out onto the lane. Get the feel for how that opened hand feels like after the ball has released from your hand and it is out there in front of you. It should look as if you were reaching out your hand to someone very tall with an open hand asking for a handout. In this case you’re asking for the ball to give you a little help and not to curve.

### **Trying to Roll Your Strike Ball for a Straight Ball 10 Pin Shot:**

Don’t do it. Yes, you can actually kill the ball a huge amount by keeping your hand open during the entire release and follow through, but if you make the slightest error it will be costly because of the surface characteristics of your strike ball. It is a far better idea to always use two bowling balls. Be prepared for the changing lane conditions and match those changing conditions by moving left as the oil begins to dry up on the outside boards. And, regardless of the lane conditions roll the straight ball at the those spares that don’t require the break of the ball.

### **Straight Ball Initial Alignment:**

Since you roll the straight ball a little bit differently than a regular breaking ball, it is necessary to use a different way of determining the proper alignment. Use the following procedure to determine how far to the left you should stand from the straight line alignment from the target at the pin deck through a chosen aiming mark to the chosen standing distance.

### **Practice, Practice, Practice:**

That’s actually an understatement. Practice the straight ball spare shot until your confidence is very very high. Only then should you use it in league play or in tournaments.

### **Why a Straight Ball for a 10 Pin Shot:**

That's a good question and the answer is very simple. Regardless of the lane conditions, you will have the same alignment for the same ball at all bowling centers . . . . forever.

The trick is to get the correct precise alignment for rolling the straight ball and becoming deadly accurate. You must practice the straight ball 10 pin shot until it is absolutely your most consistent shot.

The key word is practice. These paragraphs describe variations of hand position and swing styles, all of which work well for a successful 10 pin shot. You, as the delivery system, are required to tryout all of the variations and find out which works best for you. Once that decision is made, you need to practice it until the 10 pin shot becomes your favorite spare. You should get enough confidence such that if you don't get a strike, you hope the spare will be a 10 pin because it has become your most consistent shot and you have the best chance of converting the 10 pin spare regardless of the lane conditions or the bowling center.

### **The Ball:**

The idea behind rolling a straight ball at spares is so the lane conditions don't interfere with the consistent conversion of spares. The ideal bowling ball for a straight ball 10 pin shot has the following attributes:

1. Very hard surface.
2. Very smooth surface.
3. Nonporous surface.
4. Non-reactive surface.
5. Slightly lighter weight.
6. Drilled so that there is no static imbalance in any direction. That means no side weight, no finger weight and no thumb weight and as little top weight as possible.

### **Confidence in the Left Side of the Approach:**

There are several problems associated with the 10 pin shot related to the approach surface. If you go down to the approach near the foul line and rub your hand laterally across the approach surface, you will feel a slight valley in the middle of the approach surface. The middle of the approach surface is used much more and is therefore usually a lot smoother. That means that the far left side where you may end up with your 10 pin shot slide, may have a little different slide characteristics.

During practice, verify that the far left side of the approach is usable. If it is too sticky or too slick, fix it immediately. If it is too slick and cannot be fixed, back up on the approach during the alignment. If it is too sticky, slow down your overall approach stepping speed and timing.

### **The Alignment:**

You probably have a second ball for shooting spares. If you don't; get one. The spare a bowler leaves most often is the bowling side corner pin (the 10 pin for right handed bowlers). When you roll a bowling ball with no surface effects and very little core effects, it will by design tend to go straight down the lanes. Rolling a straight ball at those right side spares can have the greatest impact on raising your average.

### Why Roll a Straight Ball at those Ball Side Spares?

(Why Do You not Roll a Breaking Ball at those Ball Side Spares?)

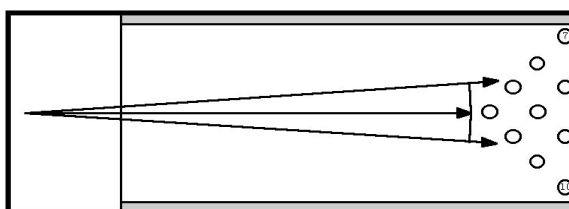
Most of the ball side spares are not converted because of the tendency of the ball to hook away from the pins. That leads to “chopping” the leads pin or pins away from the others in the set of pins.

A straight ball shot decreases the probability that you will chop pins away. The trick is to get aligned properly and from the right area of the approach.

### Converting the Ball Side Corner Pin is Easy If You Like Pie:

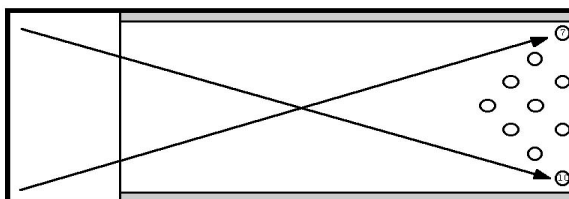
When you roll any ball straight ball curve ball whatever, you will sometimes miss left and sometimes miss right. That shape of probable rolling paths is like that of a piece of pie.

Shown in the figure below is a “slightly exaggerated” path pie for attempting to convert the one or the five pin spares. (Hopefully your path pie is a much smaller piece of pie).

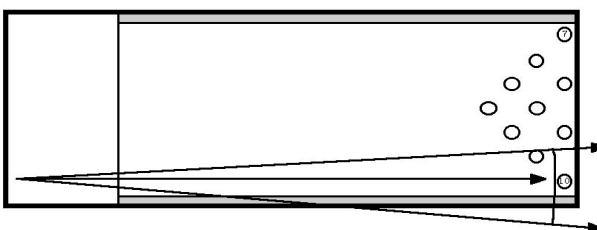


As you can see by the graphic, sometimes you will miss your intended path to the left or to the right.

The greatest impact to converting more corner pins is accepting the fact that the alignment for those corner pins is at the opposite side of the approach. For the 10 pin stand on the left side of the approach and for the 7 pin, stand on the right side of the approach.



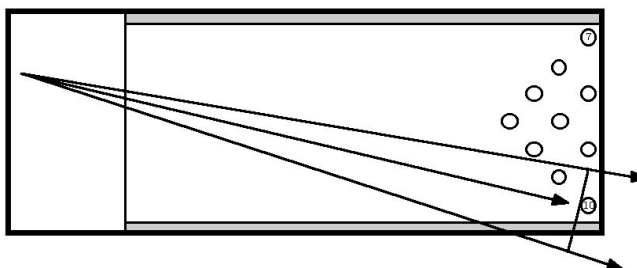
Let's suppose that you attempt to roll the ball straight down the right side of the lane to convert the 10 pin (right handed bowler). As you can see from the figure below a major portion of the piece of pie is in the gutter. You only get about half a piece of pie to work with.



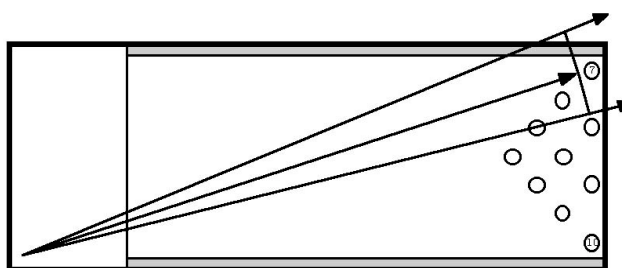
The more pie that hangs over the edge of the lane, the greater the probability is that you are going to miss the corner pin.

So you want to position that piece of pie so that most of the pie is on the lane surface. That means more lane to work with to convert the corner pin.

As you move the initial approach starting position to the left side of the lane, you get more pie.



The seven pin shot works the same way; stand on the opposite side of the approach.



So, if you want a bigger piece of pie, stand on the approach side opposite to the corner pin.

Okay, now you know where to stand to get the highest probability of converting the corner pins. The probability can be increased by choosing the correct ball and release for those corner pins.

### **Taking the Lane Conditions Out of the Equation:**

When the lane surface is very dry and the ball surface is very aggressive, any little miss to the left or right is amplified (the piece of pie is bigger) and the probability that you will miss the corner pin is increased. If however you choose a smooth hard surface, non-reactive ball with very little core effects, the ball will tend to go straight regardless of the type of release that you have. And if you choose to release the ball with decreased side ways rotation, the probability of converting the ball side corner pin is even greater.

The whole idea is to take the lane conditions out of the equation. Once you find the correct alignment for rolling a straight ball shot at the ball side corner pin with your specific style of bowling, you will most likely never need to change that alignment. Hence, regardless of whether you are at you "home" bowling center with very wet lanes or a bowling center 1000 miles away with very dry lanes, the alignment is the same. You are going to roll that straight ball shot with the ball designed to go straight and you know where to roll the ball.

### 3. Bad Timing

“Timing is everything.” That’s a statement that applies very well to the sport of bowling. The bowler that has the best timing usually wins. (The correct ball, alignment, speed, location of impact and the angle of attack into the pocket help a little bit also).

#### **Timing Points in the 4 and 5 Step Approach:**

If you consider the first step of a 5 step approach as a step without any ball movement, the two approach styles are the same for the last four steps. The four ball movement steps are exactly the same.

Rhythm is probably the biggest asset when developing an approach style. It must include a smooth transition between the timing points with no slowing down at or between those points.

#### **Ball Movement Steps**

Step 1 is completed	Ball is at the end of the pushaway (the farthest point forward).
Step 2 is completed	Ball is near the lowest point in the backswing.
Step 3 is completed	Ball is at the highest point in the backswing.
Step 4 (slide) is completed	Ball is released as the sliding foot stops sliding.

#### **Ball Movement Step 1:**

At the completion of step 1, the ball should be at the farthest extent of the pushaway. You will probably be slightly bent at the waist, bending forward. The more you bend forward and the further and quicker you extend the ball out in the push away, the more you will accelerate due to the imbalance. (Your approach will be faster). So, if you are tending to go too fast at this point, slow down the pushaway and take a smaller first step.

You now have a bowling ball forward of your body center of gravity and you “fall” forward toward it trying to get back into balance.

The bowling ball was pushed out at or to the right side of your body. The imbalance is at the right side of your body. When you begin to take this first ball movement step, you are stepping out on the same side that the ball is being pushed out.

You are raising your right foot off the surface of the approach and placing it in the air at the same instant that you are pushing the ball further out toward the side of your body that is not supported, the right side. While this is happening, the left foot is supporting your body with the weight of your body on the left foot sole. The left foot at this point is behind the center of gravity of your body.

At the end of the first ball movement step, the right foot should be flat on the approach and the ball should be fully extended forward and to the right side. So, the right foot is down when this maximum forward imbalance occurs. The left foot at this point is at the rear and is about to be lifted up for the next step.

#### **Ball Movement Step 2:**

At the end of the ball movement step 2, the ball should be near the lowest point of the backswing.

Since the ball is at the lowest point and at the right, it causes the least imbalance. You've got to step with that left foot sometime so this is the best time for that left foot to be in the sequence.

As this left foot step begins to be taken, the ball is dropping down from its extended push-away position and the left foot is off the surface of the approach and is swinging forward. The right foot is still supporting the imbalance of the ball during this period.

At the end of the step, the left foot is flat on the approach and the right foot is at the rear with its sole on the approach. The ball is down at its lowest point in the backswing.

The slight imbalance is compensated somewhat by having your left arm being extended forward on the left side. (Ball on right, arm extended on the left). If you are truly relaxed during the approach, your left arm will wander slightly to the left of the straight forward direction during this low point of the backswing. It's your own equilibrium system compensating for the slight imbalance at the right.

### **Ball Movement Step 3:**

At near the completion of ball step 3, the right foot should be flat on the approach again. The ball is at the maximum height of the backswing.

As this right foot step begins to be taken, the ball is swinging up from its lowest position and the right foot is off the surface of the approach and is swinging forward. The left foot is still supporting the imbalance of the ball during this period.

At the end of the step, the right foot is flat on the approach and the left foot is at the rear with its sole on the approach. The ball is up at its highest point in the backswing.

The ball is at the right side and is fully extended back and upward. Since this causes an imbalance on the right side, your right foot should be flat on the approach to stabilize the imbalance.

Your left arm also helps to stabilize by being fully extended forward. It may drift a little to the left but not much. Your equilibrium system unconsciously alarms you to get your left arm out as much as possible because of the large imbalance caused by the ball at the rear.

To compensate even more for the large imbalance, many bowlers bend at the waist during the time the ball is behind their body. The further the ball is behind you and the further the ball is vertically, the more you will tend to bend forward at the waist. The bending at the waist is another imbalance mechanism. Bending moves the center of gravity of your body forward to compensate for the ball moving to the rear.

Some bowlers kind'a stall during that third step. It may be because they aren't bent enough during the time that the ball is swing to the rear. Think about it. You are moving forward at a constant speed. The ball is moving to the rear. It weighs 16 pounds. If you don't do something to compensate, you're simply going to slow down. The ball will naturally be pulling you backward.

The solution is to relax and let your body bend where it naturally wants, to stay in a balanced position during the approach.

**Ball Movement Step 4:**

The greatest imbalance occurs during this last step, the slide. The solution is to get rid of the imbalance and release the ball.

At the end of the step (the slide), the left foot is flat on the approach and the right leg is under your body at the rear and to the left. The ball is at its lowest point in the forward swing.

As you begin to take this last step, the ball is behind you and to the right at the peak height. Your left arm is extended directly forward and your body is bent forward at the waist. You are about to step onto the left foot, the one that is opposite to the imbalance. Since it is the left foot that is next, several things must happen very quickly to remain in a balanced state.

As your left foot starts to move forward on the slide, the ball begins to move forward and accelerate downward. As this begins, your left arm begins to swing from the extended forward position to the left side position.

At near the completion of the slide, your left knee is bent to get to a lower position, your left foot is laterally near the center of your body and your right leg swings under your body and is extended to the left and behind you. Your left arm should be fully extended to the left. You should be bent forward at the waist but not as much as it took during the backswing.

The left arm extension to the left, the right leg extension behind you and to the left and the slight bending at the waist all are mechanisms for compensating for the left foot being flat on the approach and the ball (the imbalance) is at the right side.

So, this imbalance causes just about every appendage of your body to be used to remain balanced.

As the ball swings past your body, your upper torso may bend a little to the right. It's natural. But, like almost anything else, an exaggeration may be a problem. Bending too much at the waist either forward or to the right at this point may cause a real problem. A slight bend in both aspects is acceptable.

As you finish the slide, your right arm is beginning to extend forward and you start releasing the ball just beyond the lowest point of the forward swing of the ball.

During the release, as the ball begins to move forward, your left arm begins to swing backward to compensate.

When the ball is finally released, your right arm swings up following through with the swing. Some bowlers go over the top of their right shoulder, but a full extension provides the best balance.

Remember that your left arm is extended to the left and to the rear, your right leg is extended under and to the left of your body. Your right arm should be fully extended and slightly to the right for maximum balance of those two limbs.

You do not stay in the down position and you do not rise up too early either. Only after your right arm has been fully extended at the end of the follow through and you have watched your bowling ball roll over your mark (hopefully), do you raise up and check out the results. Do not stay in the fully extended position. It's a killer on your left leg.

So, when you have properly released the ball, relax and enjoy the results.

### **Timing Adjustment – The Ball Stance Height Rules:**

Probably the most sought after skill in bowling behind striking and sparing is timing adjustment. The ball stance height is still the simplest and best way to adjust a bowler's timing.

When you release a bowling ball, the path of your hand is most likely at a slight angle outward from your swing plane as your follow through is completed. Because of that natural slight swing outward, your timing is correct laterally when the release of the ball occurs at the right instant for the ball to roll over the intended aiming mark in the intended direction.

If you release the ball earlier than the intended timing, you were a little early with the ball. Usually, that means that the ball goes a little inside of the intended aiming mark. If you release the ball later than the intended timing, you were a little late with the ball. Usually, that means that the ball goes a little outside of the intended aiming mark.

To adjust for early release of the ball, you need to get the ball there a little later than before. The easiest way to do that is to make the ball swing path slightly longer so that the ball will arrive a little later. To accomplish that, you need to raise the ball in the initial ball stance. By making the ball stance higher, you automatically make the ball path a little longer and thereby arrive at the release point a little later.

To adjust for late release of the ball, you need to get the ball there a little earlier than before. The easiest way to do that is to make the ball swing path slightly shorter so that the ball will arrive a little sooner. To accomplish that, you need to lower the ball in the initial ball stance. By making the ball stance lower, you automatically make the ball path a little shorter and thereby arrive at the release point a little earlier.

### **Explaining the Rule to the Student:**

As detailed as possible, the ball stance height adjustment should be explained to the student. The student should understand why they are raising or lowering the ball and what the result will be. They should get a clear mental picture of what's happening to the timing when either adjustment is made. The emphasis should be on "under what circumstances this adjustment should be made." The adjustment should be made when everything else seems to be okay but you are missing your aiming mark to the inside or outside.

### **The Ball Stance Height Adjustment Rule**

Right Handed Bowlers – The LR-RL Rule:

For right handed bowlers just remember timing can be adjusted using the LR-RL adjustment. The LR-RL stands for Left/Raise - Right/Lower. If your timing causes you to miss your aiming mark to the Left, Raise the ball stance to correct it. If your timing is causing you to miss your aiming mark to the Right, Lowering the ball stance will help correct it. (LR-RL)

### **The Ball Stance Height Adjustment Rule**

Left Handed Bowlers – The LL-RR Rule:

For left handed bowlers just remember timing can be adjusted using the LL-RR adjustment. The LL-RR stands for Left/Lower - Right/Raise. If your timing causes you to miss your aiming mark to the Left, Lower the ball stance to correct it. If your timing is causing you to miss your aiming mark to the Right, Raising the ball stance will help correct it. (LL-RR)

### **The Rules:**

Note that the amount that you raise or lower the ball can be very small. It's mostly a mental thing. What happens is that you know that there is a problem and you consciously are making an effort to correct it. By doing so you are focusing and concentrating on viewing that aiming mark better. The Ball Stance Height Rules certainly help but what it really comes down to is focus and concentration.

Timing is so crucial to a bowler's performance. The Ball Stance Height Rules at least give a bowler something to do when things are not quite right and they want to make a small adjustment. It gives them confidence that they know one other thing to do when they detect a problem. They will most likely perform better simply because they know a little more about the game.

#### 4. Not Staying Behind the Ball with the Correct Release

When a bowler releases the ball with the thumb just about over the center of the top of the ball and the fingers at the side of the ball with respect to the launch angle, all of the rotation of the ball is about an axis pointing straight back at the bowler.

It is what's called sideways rotation because the instant enough friction is felt by the ball, it will start moving sideways across the lane surface from the outside to the inside toward the pocket. That "all sideways rotation release" is one of the most prevalent problems with bowler's in general. Said in another way, a majority of bowler's do not stay behind the ball enough at the release.

A bowling ball can be divided into 4 quadrants with respect to the launch angle at the instant the ball is released. The equator of the ball at release is parallel to the lane surface and splits the ball in half vertically. The direction that the ball is released defines a plane that also splits the ball in half. That plane is perpendicular to the equator plane. It splits the ball horizontally. Call the second plane the direction plane. The intersection of the two planes define a point that "points" in the direction of the release, the launch angle. So there are four quadrants as you view the ball from directly behind the ball as it is released.

The farther your hand is to the right at the instant the thumb starts to exit the ball defines the degree to which you are behind the ball. Most bowlers are too far to the right. Some bowlers are all the way to the side of the ball, 90 degrees from the intersection of the two planes.

When the thumb and fingers stay directly at the direction plane at the instant of release and they stay on that plane throughout the release, the ball release is totally forward rotation. The axis of rotation associated with that release points directly across the lane surface.

For most bowlers the release is too far to the right. A better position would be about half way to the side of the ball. That gives the ball about equal sideways and forward rotation on the ball as it is released.

A very good bowler can alter their release position on the surface of the ball. For very dry lanes, the release needs to be more behind the ball. That will get the ball farther down the lane before the ball breaks toward the pocket. For very wet lanes, the release should be more on the side of the ball. That gets the ball to move sideways across the lane as soon as possible.

It is not necessary to rotate your hand to the side of the ball to get good rotation on the ball at release.

If you are behind the ball at about 45 degrees to the right of the direction plane, and your thumb starts to release from the ball, it's difficult for the fingers to support the ball and stay totally behind the ball. After the thumb releases, the weight of the ball makes the ball drop slightly to the inside and guess what, your fingers are now in a more sideways position. But, those fingers are not totally on the side of the ball even at the final instant of the release of the fingers. The stronger your hand is, the less the ball increases the sideways

rotation after the thumb exits.

The farther your fingers are below the equator of the ball, the more the lift and consequently rotations you impart to the ball. And, with the same reasoning, the farther above the equator your fingers are, the weaker and less rotational energy you impart to the ball.

## 5. Not Utilizing the Practice Balls Correctly

The practice you take just before league is a little different than the practice just before a tournament starts in a bowling center you've never bowled in before. Practice just before league is not as critical because you bowl there every week. You know about what the shot is going to be and you are probably prepared to perform well.

Practice just before you start a tournament is a very anxious time. You can only estimate what the lane conditions are going to be from what you see that other bowlers are doing in the previous squad and what you have "heard" from previous bowlers. The practice balls you roll therefore are very important.

### League Practice Balls:

There is usually an opportunity to roll about 5 or 6 practice balls just before league play. I will list the top 6 practice balls that you should try to roll in the order of their importance. It is assumed that each of the practice balls is rolled well and that you hit your intended aiming mark and released the ball at the intended direction.

1. The Strike Shot
2. The 10 Pin
3. The 7 Pin
4. The 2 Pin
5. The Strike Shot
6. The Strike Shot

Each of these shots simply verifies that the lane conditions are about the same as they were the week before. They are truly practice balls. You are only looking for verification that the lanes are about the same or that they are a little drier or that they are a little wetter.

### Tournament or New Bowling Center Practice Balls: (Breaking Ball Spare Shooter)

You are about to start the tournament in a bowling center where you have never bowled before. You have heard rumors of terrible lane conditions and you don't really know what to expect. Each one of your practice balls needs to tell you some specific information. The combination of the practice balls should give you a picture of where the oil is located.

These practice balls also should be used when the bowling center where you bowl is hosting a tournament and has changed the lane conditions. (Right handed bowler).

**1. The 10 Pin** - This practice ball tells you what the condition is like on the outside boards. Line up like you do for a 10 pin shot at your home bowling center. Roll a breaking ball like you normally do for a 10 pin when you roll a breaking ball at a 10 pin in practice at your home bowling center. If the ball slides into the gutter well before the 10 pin, it indicates that the outside boards are very wet compared to the conditions at your home bowling center. If the ball breaks too hard and misses the 10 pin on the left side, it indicates that the outside boards are very dry compared to the conditions at your home bowling center.

**2. The 7 Pin** - This practice ball tells you what the condition is like in the middle part of the lane (assuming you roll the ball at the 7 pin from the right side of the lane across the

middle part of the lane to the 7 pin). Roll your strike ball like you normally do for a 7 pin at your home bowling center. If the ball breaks into the gutter well before the 7 pin, it indicates that the middle of the lane is very dry compared to the conditions at your home bowling center. If the ball misses the 7 pin on the right side, it indicates that the middle of the lane is very wet compared to the conditions at your home bowling center.

With these first two practice balls you should know the approximate conditions. The next ball needs to test out your best estimate at a strike shot. This is not an easy task. There are lots of "if's" that dictate where to roll that third practice shot. And, some tournaments only allow two practice shots. Regardless, the first two practice balls should be as described above.

### **3. The Best Estimate for a Strike Shot -**

If #1 - If the oil is a dry-wet-dry condition (crowned or blocked), your best strike shot is the transition between the dry area on the outside and the wet area in the middle of the lane. It's commonly called the edge of the oil. Usually you can see where that edge is by going down to the foul line, bending down so that the reflection of the lights enables you to see the difference in the reflectivity of the less dense and more dense oil on the lane surface. Many bowling centers have that edge at about the 10th board. If you don't have any other information and you can't detect where the edge of the oil is, roll the strike shot across the 10th board and make your final strike shot alignment decision based on what that practice ball does.

If #2 - If the oil is a wet-dry-wet condition (reversed blocked), you have two choices. You can try to roll the ball down the far outside or even point the ball toward the pocket staying completely out of the dry area. Or, you can try use the left edge of the oil and swing the ball to the right across that edge but being careful not to swing the ball so far that the ball gets near the other oily area.

### **Tournament or New Bowling Center Practice Balls : (Straight Ball Spare Shooter)**

Even if you roll a straight ball at most spares, the order of the spare shot is the same as above and you should roll a breaking ball for the pins specified even though you will roll a straight ball at the spares during the game. The reason for rolling a breaking ball at the corner spares is to find out the information pointed out above. So, roll the breaking ball at practice time the first time you practice for those spares. After that you can roll the practice straight balls. So, the order of the practice balls for a straight ball spare shooter is recommended to be as follows:

1. The 10 Pin (breaking ball). See above.
2. The 7 Pin (breaking ball). See above.
3. The Strike Shot (breaking ball). See above.
4. The Strike Shot (breaking ball).
5. The 10 Pin (straight ball).
6. The 7 Pin (straight ball).

## 6. The Pointing Forearm

One of the most important but most overlooked attributes of a bowler's style is the direction that the forearm initially points when in the stance position on the approach just before the beginning of the movement to the foul line. If a bowler can initially place the ball at their side so that it can be pushed directly forward, then be allowed to swing to the rear at that same sideways position, then swing forward at that same sideways position, the bowler has a greater chance to consistently roll the ball over the intended aiming mark in the intended direction down the lane. This is commonly called keeping the ball in the intended swing plane.

If a bowler starts the ball at the center of their body and then swings the ball outward to get to the intended swing plane, the ball is temporarily moving sideways. If the ball is moving sideways, the ball has sideways motion momentum. The ball will tend to keep going sideways and the bowler will need to impart some amount of energy to restrain that sideways motion to be able to get the ball to stop at the swing plane. Thus, any sideways motion of the ball during the pushaway of the ball will result in more work for the bowler, mentally and physically.

If the ball is positioned in the swing plane initially, then pushed forward in that swing plane, 50% of the swing plane alignment has been accomplished and even if the bowler really messes up after that, at least they are in better shape than swinging the ball wildly from side to side during the initial portion of the swing of the ball.

Keep the swing motion simple. Place the ball in the intended swing plane. Push the ball forward in that swing plane. Let the ball swing backward in that swing plane. Finish swinging the ball forward again in that swing plane and extending forward in the follow through still in that swing plane or slightly to the right.

One of the keys to a good initial ball position stance on the approach is the direction of the forearm. Ideally the ball should be placed at the bowler's side just above waist level vertically. The forearm should be pointed in the direction that the bowler will walk forward on the approach. So, for a "down and in" style rolling path, the bowler's body faces directly down the boards and the forearm points directly down the boards. For a "corner pin shot", the bowler faces that corner pin from the opposite side of the approach and correspondingly, the forearm points in the direction of that corner pin.

### **Explaining the Pointing Forearm Rule to the Student:**

The student should be told exactly why they should start the ball at their side. (As described above – to prevent sideways motion of the ball during the swing of the ball). Describe in an exaggerated manner what will most likely happen when the forearm points inward or outward initially and why it is best to keep the ball in the intended swing plane from the very beginning.

The best bad example is of course the forearm that points outward. Demonstrate how if they point the ball outward, their swing plane will bring the ball behind their back and probably result in the ball being propelled toward the "gutter." Demonstrate it by purposefully rolling a ball into the "gutter" using an exaggerated outward pointed forearm. Then point the forearm forward and roll the ball properly. (Try not to roll it into the gutter this

time).

**The Rule:**

Simply said, the rule is this, “always point the forearm in the direction that you will walk down the approach.”

Here’s a way to enforce that rule. Just before allowing a student to begin their approach walk, have them look down at their forearm. Ask them if it is pointed in the direction that they intend to walk. (You should already be aware whether it is straight forward of their body or not). Get them into a mode of always checking that forearm direction and encouraging them to push the ball forward in the direction that they will walk.

If we can begin the bowler’s swing motion properly, there is a greater chance that the rest of the swing will stay in the intended swing plane.

## 7. Lack of a Good Plan of Attack

The time to decide where and how to roll the next ball is while you are leaving the approach from the previous ball.

### What's Your Plan of Attack?

Before you ever get up to the approach, have a definite plan.

What standing spot and aiming mark will you use? What ball will you bowl with? Are you going to move left into the oil a little more to compensate for drier lanes?

All of these might be thoughts just before you get up onto the approach, but a better plan of attack starts long before that. Ideally, if you know where to stand and where to roll the ball for each different lane condition that you have encountered in the past, bowling would be a breeze, . . . . right?

Well, you don't, and it's not a breeze. It's more like being caught in a thunderstorm avoiding lightening bolts all the time.

### Being Ready to Bowl Your Turn

When the person that you bowl after gets up to bowl, you should start to get ready to bowl. Here's a mental checklist to go over and good habits to have just before you bowl:

1. Make sure that your bowling shoes are clean and free of any sticky stuff. If you have an extra towel, lightly wipe your shoes off to clear them of dust and to discover any moisture spots.
2. If you use rosin or one of the gripping substances, apply it now and make sure your fingers and thumb are clean and ready.
3. Locate your bowling towel so you can wipe your ball off when the bowler just ahead of you finishes.

### It's Your Turn

The bowler ahead of you has just finished.

Try to get as much of any "routine" completed as soon as possible after you get onto the approach. Other bowlers probably watch you bowl, but they don't like watching you just standing there. Some of your routine might be completed while standing just before the approach waiting to step onto the approach.

Do you have a full rack of pins? Take a quick look. Missing five, eight and nine pins are easily overlooked.

Also, look to see if the head pin or any other pin is not properly placed. The head pin and five pin seem to get positioned improperly most often but any of the pins positioned improperly will cause problems. If you notice that a pin is positioned improperly, let the opposing team captain know and ask for a rerack. It can be done very easily with the computer telescores. You simply press a couple of buttons and you have a new rack of pins. You do need to check that rack also. If the problem repeats itself, the best thing to do is not bowl and immediately call the desk and ask them to fix it.

### **Picking Up and Inspecting the Bowling Ball**

Pick up the bowling ball and wipe the rolling track to remove all of the oil as much as possible. It should take about three wipes of the track to get it off.

If you are a right handed bowler, pick up the ball so that the thumb hole is at the left and the finger holes are at the right. The rolling track will be at the top of the ball, above the thumb and finger holes. Once you have located that track one time it will be in approximately the same place.

Inspect the ball for damage along the rolling track area. Inspect the edges of the holes for chips and other kinds of damage.

If you use tape in the holes of your ball, make sure that the tape is flat and is not unraveled. No edges of the tape should be turned up exposing the sticky side. Basically the ball should feel comfortable.

### **Inspecting the Approach for Garbage**

If the approach has not been swept, there will be lots of garbage on them. Even if the approaches have been swept, inspect the approaches for miscellaneous stuff that seems to always be deposited in exactly your walking path. All it takes is a quick look along the path that you will walk.

If you see something that has been dropped or a "fur ball", simply walk out onto the approach and pick it up and return to the seating area to deposit it in a safe place.

### **Wiping Your Sliding Foot**

Just before you get up onto the approach, take your towel and make a quick very light wipe of your sliding foot. This will remove any garbage collected since you last inspected your sliding foot sole.

### **Testing Your Fingers and Thumb for Gripping**

Check to see that your fingers and thumb are still dry and somewhat tacky. Rub your fingers and thumb together several times to check their tackiness just before you put them into the ball. Only if your fingers feel slippery should they be placed over the air blower. Some bowlers have a gripping bag that they grip just before they get up onto the approach. That's okay to use but make sure that you don't get any of the powder that manages to come out of that bag onto the area just before the approach. Your own teammates might not appreciate that at all.

### **Positioning Your Feet on the Approach**

Walk onto the approach to the correct distance from the foul line and at the correct location laterally.

You should not need to use the entire approach even if you are 7 feet tall. A relaxed walk taking a small first step will only use about 2/3rds of the length of the approach.

You should try to finish the slide about 2 to 6 inches from the foul line.

### **Inserting Your Bowling Fingers and Thumb into the Ball**

Place your fingers in first. Make sure that you jam your fingertips in all the way to the crease at the first knuckle. Make sure that they feel snug.

Place your thumb in the ball as far into the hole as you can. Make sure that it feels snug.

### **Positioning Your Index Finger**

Your index finger can be used to position the ball during the swing of the ball and for tightening the grip on the ball.

Since your index finger is not in a hole in the bowling ball, it's just kind of laying on the surface of the bowling ball. Since it is exposed, it can be used for pointing or directing the orientation of the ball during the backswing and forward swing of the ball.

And, as you spread your index finger away from the bowling fingers, the grip is tightened by the stretching the muscle in your hand.

If you are satisfied with the feel of the ball as it is, just hold your index finger right next to your bowling fingers as usual.

### **Positioning Your Pinkie Finger**

Your index finger can be used to position the ball during the swing of the ball, but what can the pinkie finger be used for?

The answer is to add additional tightening of the grip. As you spread the pinkie finger away from the bowling fingers, it also tightens the grip by stretching the muscles in your hand.

Tucking the pinkie finger underneath your hand also tightens the grip.

If you are satisfied with the feel of the ball as it is, just hold your pinkie right next to your bowling fingers as usual.

### **Positioning the Ball Vertically and Horizontally**

Each bowler has his or her own starting position for the ball that is comfortable for them.

Some people start with the ball in the middle of the body (not recommended but can be used for some problem solving situations), some start with the ball to the right side. Generally the higher you hold the ball, the longer the swing timing will be.

If you have problems with swinging the ball behind your body and pushing the ball to the right, hold the ball more toward the middle of your body. If you have trouble with pulling the ball to the right across your body, hold the ball further away from the middle of your body. If you have neither of these problems, hold the ball in-line with the swing path that you intend for the ball. The pushaway, forward swing and backswing should only have about a 2 to 4 inch wide envelope.

### **Rotating the Ball and Positioning the Ball with Your Index Finger**

When at the correct horizontal and vertical position, rotate your hand under the ball until

at the desired position. Your index finger is a good indicator of the correct rotation. Try to maintain that position during the backswing and forward swing of the ball.

### **Looking at the Virtual Target down the Lane and Then the Aiming Mark**

When you roll the ball it goes straight and then breaks across the lane toward the pocket. The initial roll is down an imaginary straight line ending up usually somewhere at the pins but it can be to the outside of the pins. For me it's the six pin. That's my usual virtual target. My objective is to roll the ball over my aiming mark at the six pin because that's where my imaginary line ends.

Look at the virtual target, draw that imaginary line, repeat drawing the line, then physically lower your head just a tad and look down at the correct aiming mark, and never look back up at the pins until after the ball is released.

The image of that line in your mind will help you roll the ball in that direction.

Just don't raise your eyes away from the aiming mark.

You must focus on the aiming mark enough to be able to write down where the ball rolled in the vicinity of the aiming marks.

### **Placing Your Weight on the Foot That You Don't Take the First Step With.**

Depending on how many steps you take, place most of your weight on the one that you don't take the first step with.

For example, if you step out with your left foot, place your weight on the right foot. If you step out with your right foot, place the weight on your left foot.

### **Breathing and Relaxing Before You Start Your Approach**

Take a deep breath. Make sure you exhale through your mouth. Mentally picture yourself bowling, finishing with a low stance at the foul line and a smooth follow through; then completely blank your mind and relax.

## 8. Bad Fit of the Ball

The first thing that a good coach will check is the proper fit of the ball. If the ball does not fit well, that bowler will most likely never reach their full potential as a bowler.

### **The Span of Your Bowling Ball:**

Take a quick look at your bowling ball. Insert your thumb all the way into the thumb hole and lay your fingers across the finger tip grips. The crease of the first knuckle should be just past the edge of the gripping surface of the ball. That distance should be about  $3/16$ 's of an inch to no more than  $1/2$  way between the creases of the first two joints.

If the first knuckle crease is beyond the minimum  $3/16$ 's distance, the grip will probably feel loose and you will tend to physically grip the ball. And you will grip it inconsistently. Professional Bowling Pro Shops International (PBPSI), states that the span of a bowling ball, the distance between the gripping surface of the thumb and the gripping surface of the fingertip is the most influence in the ball fitting properly. So, if the span is wrong you've got a much lower chance for success.

When you measure the span and when the ball technician measures the span, make sure that you wear any bowling glove that you usually do when you bowl. If you don't, the span will feel tight once you wear the glove.

### **The Pitches of the Holes in a Bowling Ball**

Another 40% of a good fit (PBPSIA) is the proper pitches in the gripping holes. The pitch is the angle that a hole is drilled in a bowling ball. Toward the center of the ball is called forward pitch. Away from the center of the ball is called reverse pitch.

Angled to the left away from the center of the ball is called left pitch. And angled right away from the center of the ball is called right pitch.

### **The Size of the Holes**

A smaller influence to a good fit (PBPSI) is the size of the holes. And it's not just the thumb hole size, the fit of the fingertip grips are just as important as the fit of the thumb.

Both fingers and thumb should be as snug as possible without causing an errant roll of the ball. When the thumb is too tight, you will tend to pull the ball inside of the intended launch angle. A thumb hole that is too loose will result in dropping the ball and it will usually make a loud sound when it impacts the lane surface.

## 9. Not Looking at the Path of the Ball

Do You See the Intended Aiming Mark? Do you really see your aiming mark? When you get back to the seating area after the 1<sup>st</sup> ball, can you write down what board number the ball rolled over? Can you tell whether or not you missed your mark to the left, to the right or hit your mark? If you can't, you need to work on focusing on your aiming mark.

### Seeing Your Mark:

Once you are ready at your standing spot, look at the intended virtual target at the pin deck briefly, draw an imaginary line back to your aiming mark. Draw that imaginary line again. Physically lower your head just a little and from that instant never take your eyes off of that mark until you have released the ball and have seen it roll over the aiming mark area.

As you begin your step sequence, keep your eyes fixed on the aiming mark. As you get closer to the foul line remember that you are going to roll the ball over that mark. During follow through, you should still remain fixed on the mark. Watch your ball roll over the area in the vicinity of your aiming mark and judge whether or not you were accurate.

### Not Looking at the Pins:

This is probably the toughest thing to accomplish in the sport of bowling. We all want to quickly see results when we pursue any project. Bowling is no different. We have determined the strategy we want to use, picked the weapon from our arsenal and planned our attack on the enemy, the pins. We want to see as much of the battle as possible; we want the chosen weapon to destroy those pins. But . . . did you know that you have about 2 to 3 seconds from the release of the ball until it hits the pins?

Very frankly, you've got plenty of time to see those pins fall. After release of the ball there are two very important observations to make. The first is whether or not you hit the aiming mark you intended and the second is how the ball travels very near the end of its roll into the pocket. They are equally important and as before, they are about 2 to 3 seconds apart.

So, first things first. What can you do to prevent looking up from that aiming mark so quick? Here's a suggestion. After watching the ball roll over the area in the vicinity of the intended aiming mark and you really determine your accuracy, make an effort to keep your eyes fixed at that aiming mark and be able to say the words "right", "left" or "yes", indicating how accurate you were. You can say the word to yourself mentally. (i.e. don't actually speak them).

So, look at the virtual target. Draw that imaginary line to the aiming mark; draw the line again. Lower your head slightly, keep your eyes on your aiming mark. Begin the approach. Release the ball and watch the ball roll over the aiming mark, "say the word" and then continue to watch how the ball is rolling down the lane and into the pocket area.

### Seeing the Mark While You're Walking:

It's not that easy at first, but you can do it. While you're walking down the approach, keep your eyes on your aiming mark and imagine rolling the ball at that desired angle. As you get closer to the mark you should see it better and imagine that line better.

### **Seeing the Mark During the Slide:**

The view of your mark during the slide is the one you should remember the most. You simply need to get in the habit of seeing that view. It's the one you will see every 1st ball of every frame of every game. It's the picture that you should try to match each time you roll that 1st ball.

### **Seeing the Ball Go Over the Mark:**

As you are focusing on your aiming mark and the imaginary line down toward your virtual target at the intended launch angle, you roll the ball, extending your arm outward, along that line. You should see not only the mark, but the ball rolling over the mark at the angle desired.

Watch the ball as it crosses the aiming mark and beyond and check to see if you rolled it over the mark and at the proper angle along that line.

You can now raise up and relax your body, but keep watching the ball roll into the pocket.

### **Seeing the Mark for Spares**

It is even more important to "see" your aiming mark for spares. And just like for strikes, you need to have an imaginary line to visualize for the straight line path for the ball. But since there are about 220 "common" spares, it's almost impossible to have specific virtual targets for each one of them.

About all that you can do is make an estimate of how far to the side that the straight line path is and choose the virtual target that becomes the end point of the imaginary line. Once that is done, the procedure is exactly the same. Look at the intended virtual target at the pin deck briefly, draw an imaginary line back to your aiming mark. Draw that imaginary line again. Physically lower your head just a little and from that instant never take your eyes off of that mark until you have released the ball and have seen it roll over the aiming mark area.

### **But Wait, There's More !!**

Recently Rod Ross, one of the USA Bowling Gold coaches created the concept of the "exit angle" of the ball as an important parameter to view while watching the ball roll through the pin deck and off the rear of the pin deck "exiting" the pin deck. The direction of that line that the ball path makes as it travels through the pin deck measured with respect to the right side of the lane is defined as the exit angle.

The exit of the ball from the pin deck can reveal much about the correctness of the alignment you have for successful consecutive strikes.

Normally the ball takes out the 1, 3, 5 and 9 pins. That yields an exit angle as the ball travels through the pins at almost zero degrees measured with respect to the right side of the lanes. That's the angle to strive for.

If however, although you hit the pocket at the right location, the exit angle was pointing to the right side a little (a negative exit angle). That's a sign of a ball being deflected more than usual by those first couple of impacts. The result can be a wide range of possibilities including the 8 pin by itself or the 8 - 10 split. The solution is a higher angle of attack for

the ball you are using or another ball that adheres more at the end of the lane.

If the exit angle is pointed to the left, it's a sign that the ball is too aggressive through the pin deck or too high an angle of attack. The result here is usually the 9 pin by itself or the 4 - 9 split. The solution is to try a smaller angle of attack or a ball that is less aggressive at the pin deck.

## 10. The Mental Game

Focus, concentration, and a good attitude are the three major components of a good mental game.

### **Reaching Inward and Asking Yourself for a Little Bit More:**

Okay, you just got beat in a really close singles match. One thing is for certain, you have the ability to win the next match; it's just a matter of letting that win come out. Talk to yourself silently, you can reach down deep inside yourself and get just a little bit more of that adrenaline and make it happen.

This next game your intention is to really extend out and follow through well with every delivery. You're going to hit your aiming mark every time, you're going to roll the ball down that imaginary line every time, you're going to see that ball break into the pocket every time and you're going to have the very best game you've ever had. You're going to perform well. You're going to beat this guy. It's his turn to be afraid.

### **Adrenaline and Getting into the Game:**

Talking to yourself is one thing and actually getting more into the game is another. Sometimes it isn't easy to get those winning juices flowing, but you must do it nonetheless. With the very first ball the next game, convince yourself that you will really perform well and get a good result.

Then let it all out when you do. High five, yell like a son-of-a-gun, slap you hands, clinch your fists and give that winning "yes.....!" punch motion as you're returning to the seats, whatever you want to need to do to say to yourself, "Thanks, self . . . great job!"

Encourage your teammates to go for it. Talk it up. Build your confidence level up with each other so that each time you roll the ball from that point on, you're automatically doing the high five bit and you're more into the game every ball, every frame. Turn to one another if you need to and let each other know that this is the one. This time we're going to get it together and do the very best we've ever done.

You can't let up. This is a close match and you need to gel together as a team, compete well as a team, talk to one another as a team and win as a team.

### **The Magic of the Adrenaline Rush:**

You'll get a certain feeling just after you've performed well. It's called an adrenaline rush. It drives you to do even more the next time you roll the ball. As you get more into an adrenaline rush, the entire game becomes sort of a blur and every time you roll the ball becomes very easy and very natural.

Sounds great and so it is. Should you calm yourself down and start thinking more about the game? Hech no, this is exactly what you need every time you go out to compete. You need to almost be in a trance. Everything you're doing is right. You're performing well and you're getting results.

Savor it while you can and try to repeat it as often as you can.

**How Long Does an Adrenaline Rush Last?:**

If you don't allow negative thoughts and caution into the game, it can last a very long time. Apparently you have found the correct alignment, your timing and swing are working together to "fill the hole" properly so just let it continue to happen.

**Do You Continue to Adjust as the Lanes are Drying Out?:**

Heh, you may be having an adrenaline rush, but you're not stupid. One part of those natural actions you take when really into the game is that of still seeing how that ball is entering the pocket area and still making the right adjustments the next time you roll the ball. That's not taking away from the adrenaline rush; that's all part of performing well.

**That Good Feeling You Get When You're Bowling Well Regardless of the Score:**

Many times you will get a kind of a feeling that you are going to do well that night. You are physically rested. You are mentally alert and you are ready to bowl. And, something deep, down inside you says tonight's the night. You're going to perform well.

Note that you feel that you are going to perform well, not that you are going to score high. There's a big difference. That deeply imbedded desire is for a good performance, the need to have that well developed rhythm and rock hard solid finish at the foul line. For some reason you have all the feelings that everything will come together and you will consistently do what you have been trained and have worked so hard to do. You feel really good.

You do perform very well that night. It's one of your best performances ever. You hit the pocket on every first ball of every frame. You played a very good mental game and didn't make a single mental error. You adjusted correctly and didn't go very high into the pocket the entire night. You were steady at the line on every shot and you could have bet money on every shot that it would be successful.

You performed well. The score may not show it, but you performed well. And what you ask was the score. Well that particular night was German night. Nine, nine, nine, nine was all you could get the entire night. Don't get me wrong you did get some strikes but mostly you were speaking German. You left 14, count them as you did, 14 ten pins. There were seven left in one game. You scored 198 that game. It was one of your best performances ever. You picked every one of the 10 pins up the entire night including the 7 in that one game and you hit the pocket every single frame. It was fun. The total for the night was only 647. It was fun because you were feeling good and you were performing well.

**Losing it and Getting it back Again:**

Sometimes after lining up the initial shot correctly it seemed, and bowling a reasonably good game, something happens and you begin to make bad shots. You've lost the alignment. You try to adjust by moving left and moving right and nothing seems to work. You're completely lost. You are frustrated to say the least. As part of your overall mental game, you need to remember that you have made some kind of error (a mental error) in the positioning adjustment that has resulted in the incorrect alignment.

It's not going to be easy to get the alignment back but the first task to accomplish is to just settle down and remember the last good alignment that you had. That needs to be the

location to adjust from. The most common problem is moving too much when you decide to make a move.

Suppose that the last good alignment was 20/10, standing on the 20th board and rolling across the 10th board. When you had moved before, you had moved two boards left with the standing spot and one board left with the aiming mark. You had moved to 22/11. Instead of that magnitude move, try 21/10.5 as your alignment and see what result you get.

### **Not Being Intimidated:**

In some leagues there is a large difference in averages among the bowlers. In those leagues you are required to compete against bowlers whose average is much higher than yours. The question is whether or not that effects you psychologically. In scratch leagues especially, the averages may be very high and you may be just beginning to average above 200 while the other bowlers are averaging well above 200. In both cases you are bowling against bowlers that historically over a period of a season have had higher games than you have had in the past.

When you see that you are matched against one of their high average bowlers remember that your average is improving. Their average is already very high and may in fact be decreasing if they are not training properly.

If you play a good mental and physical game (don't make any mental or physical errors), you have a good chance to beat them.

One of the key factors in beating someone that has a higher average than you is your mental state. If you can get your adrenaline going and feel great about your bowling, no one can beat you. Prepare for the match both physically and mentally and do the very best you can. If you perform well and play a good mental game, it doesn't matter what the score is at the end of the game. If you happen to be behind at the end of the game, it's okay because you performed well and the score just wasn't there for that particular match. If, however you win the match, you can give yourself a "high five" by clinching your fist and giving the ole quick jab forward and say to yourself "yeah".

This entire exercise in being able to plan and compete against much higher average bowlers is a matter of not being intimidated by what those bowlers have been able to do in the past. All that's in the past. They have to bowl against you this time and you are very well prepared and don't really care what their average is because you are going to bowl well and very few people can beat you when you bowl well.

(Hopefully, they didn't get a copy of this issue).

### **Psychological Warfare:**

Ever once in a while an opponent will try to distract your rhythm by making some kind of statement or doing something physical that has the same effect. It's called psyching out you opponent. It can be a very subtle event and if you're lucky, you may not notice. But usually you will. The question is whether or not you will let it effect you psychologically. That's why they call it being psyched out.

The solution is to recognize when the psych out attempt occurs. If you do, you will be able to understand what to do. . . No, you do nothing to the bowler that tried to psych you out. You may make a quick glance at that bowler, straight into his eyes, and kind'a grin a little (that's called a return psych). A return psych get's the offender on the defensive. He will think to himself, "what the heck is that grin all about?" Psychologically now he's on the defensive.

When you get up to roll the next ball, put it out of your mind. The event never occurred. You have some business to attend to; you need to relax and do the very best job you can. There should be no difference in this next ball and all the other balls that you have rolled so far. Concentrate and get focused again. Prepare and execute what you've done so many times before.

**Next Frame, Next Game, Next Week, It's called an Average:**

If you have a 200 average, you aren't going to bowl exactly score 200 every single game. You may bowl 250 one game and 150 the next game. The average is still 200. Over a period of a season of about 34 weeks at 3 games per week, you will bowl as much as 102 games. Many will be below the average, many will be above the average.

Let's say that you've averaged no less than 200 for the past 3 years. That's about 300 games that you've averaged 200 or better.

You just completed the first game of league play that night and bowled a 129 game. Nothing seems to go your way. You played a good mental and physical game but you couldn't get a double and missed several spares by the width of a hair on your chinny chin chin. You bowled a 129. My gosh, what do your teammates think? Yuch!

Well, it could have been worse, you could have bowled a 119.

Do you remember that your average over the last 300 games is over 200? Do you remember that there's a reason why you average over 200? Do you remember that you have had some of your best games ever after some of your worse games ever?

Regardless of the score, are you prepared to perform well the next game? Is your equipment correct for the conditions and are you mentally willing to put that last game out of your mind and perform well this next game?

Even if you have another bad scoring game and even a bad scoring series, your average over the past 300 games is over 200.

It's called an average because it's your usual numerical scoring history over the past period of time. It's critical that you not lose sight of the fact that your scoring average is not necessarily the same as your performance potential.

**Performance Potential:**

Your performance potential needs to be there at every single game. It's the mental and physical capabilities of being able to perform well. Bowlers that are trained well have a higher performance potential. By reading this material you are raising your performance potential. Note the difference in scoring potential and performance potential. Bowlers

that know the game, are mentally prepared and have the correct equipment have a high performance potential. Bowlers that have a high average over a long period of time have a high scoring potential. Bowlers that have a high average and are well trained are hard to compete against; they have both a high scoring and performance potential.

Sometimes although a bowler has a very high scoring average and a very high performance potential, the score never arrives. Again, that's why they call it an average.

### **Patience Patience Patience:**

Patience is a key factor in having a high performance potential. If you understand that you are well trained, you have a high average, although you've just had a 129 game, there is a very high probability that the next game will be a lot better. Concentrate and get focused and be patient. The reason why you have a high average is because in the past you have bowled a very high scoring game after bowling a low scoring game.

That's why they call it an average.

Patience is the key. Be patient and let the high scoring game happen.

### **Mental Errors:**

Mental errors are categorized as really dumb things that you do during the course of a match. You have control over them but for some reason, usually a lack of concentration, they do occur more frequently than you would like for them to happen.

Here's a short list:

1. You pick up the wrong ball and end up rolling a very porous highly reactive ball on dry lanes at the 10 pin.
2. You bowl on the wrong lane.
3. You bowl out of order.
4. You go to the potty and forget to put your shoe covers on and "it" happens.
5. You line up precisely, but it's five boards to the right of the correct location.
6. You forget to test the thumb tightness of that second ball that you are about to roll.
7. You forget that your wife is blonde and tell a guy next to you a really bad blonde joke. (Your wife is right next to you also).
8. You forget to properly tie your shoes.
9. You forget to look for debris on the approach surface just before you start your approach.
10. It's very humid and you forget to dry your hands and brow properly to remove perspiration.

There are many many other instances that could be categorized as mental errors. Keep them to a minimum.

### **Physical Errors:**

You have little control over physical errors. They are going to happen. As you become a more experienced bowler, the number of physical errors will decrease. Here's a short list of physical errors.

1. You miss your aiming mark.
2. You pull the ball to the left or you push the ball to the right.

3. You drop the ball short of your usual lay down point on the lane surface.
4. You loft the ball more than normal.
5. You direct the ball behind your back more than normal.
6. You top the ball during your follow through.
7. You do not begin the release by being behind the ball with your palm facing forward.
8. You finish your follow through with your arm well left of your head.
9. You are too much on your toes during the slide step and you almost fall over the foul line.
10. You push the ball away too fast causing you to get slightly out of time.

There are many other physical errors that could occur. They are difficult to control, but you need to try nonetheless.

### **Speaking German All night:**

Nine, nine nine cap-e-tan, nine, that's all I seem to get the first ball. It will happen to you at the worst of times. You will have a hotly contested match and all you seem to get is a nine count.

Nine, nine, nine, yuch! You're sick and tired of it. It's mostly ten pins but there are some seven's and eight's mixed in there too. So, what are you going to do. Physically you could make a very minor adjustment to change the angle of attack into the pocket to check out if that makes a difference. Realistically, you are so close to getting a strike each time, it's very difficult to make even a small change. The problem becomes even worse when you are bowling in a late league when the lanes are usually drier than in an early league and any change may be magnified by the dry lane surface.

Even though you are getting nine counts you can still have a good game. What you have to be careful of is that you don't lose your focus and concentration. You must make every one of those single pin spares.

It is a true mental challenge to leave so many 10 pin spares, keep your composure and accept what task you now have at hand and convert the spare each time it occurs. You need to remember that you have a high average and that the next ball will most likely be a strike.

If you have trained properly for picking up those single pin spares, your game will not suffer. Other than a high scoring honor game where you have performed well for each strike, one of the most satisfying games is one where you have many many ten pins and have converted them all. Your attitude, when you begin to speak German a lot, is to perform well, the strikes and the score will eventually return.

### **Never Wasting a Single Roll of the Ball for Pinfall:**

It happens so many times. If you are watching the other bowlers who are not as focused and mentally prepared as you are, you can see it happen. For any number of reasons they roll a bad ball and get a low pin count and really get frustrated. They also lose their composure. The next ball they roll, they take out their frustrations on the pin by rolling the ball very fast, trying to destroy the pins. They miss the spare and lose at least 11 pins in count.

Besides having committed a mental error, they were not prepared to handle the situation, calm down and perform well. They wasted a roll of the ball.

Don't waste a single roll of the ball. Keep focused, concentrate and make every single roll of the ball count for score.

**In the Heat of the Battle, Do You Recognize the Problem?:**

The match is very close. Your adrenaline is flowing strong. You are rolling the ball well. You are performing well and the score is there. Are you still able to notice a problem when it occurs?

What about that little rawness on the top of your thumb that is something you don't usually have. Do you recognize the problem, or do you blow it off as just a slight rawness on the top of your thumb?

You had better recognize the problem. If you check the thumb hole in all the bowling balls that you are presently using, you may find that one of the pieces of tape on the back side of the thumb hole may be either curled up or is miss positioned, and is causing your thumb to become tender.

The thumb hole tape example is only one of many examples that could be cited. The question is whether in the heat of the battle, you can recognize a potential problem and analyze the problem quickly to solve the problem.

If you are alert to all the proper feels that your body should have when truly making a good roll of the ball, you should notice any change and tend to that change immediately. Any delay can cause less pinfall. If it ain't broke don't fix it is true, but a good monitoring with all of your body sensors will help prevent making the mental error of getting the indication that something is wrong and not tending to it.

In the heat of the battle, keep your swords bright and your intentions true. Be ready for the next frame.

**Winning the Last Frame Not the First Frame:**

You start off a match and all five of the bowlers on your team get strikes the first frame. Heh, this match is a piece of cake; we're destroying them. They don't have a chance. . . . or do they.

That team you are bowling against had a couple of misses, a strike and two spares. Well, that just reinforces the fact that you are going to win the match, right? You try some psychological warfare and make the comment that "this is our match and our night".

By the tenth frame, the other team has pulled ahead by 150 pins because they are striking now and your team is missing and sparing.

You win when your team is ahead after the last ball in the last frame is rolled, not at any point in the game before that. Never get overconfident and always remain focused on the fact that the last ball of the anchor bowler in the last frame wins the game. The first part

of the game is important but it's a long way to the end of the game.

Every bowler on your team needs to stay focused, concentrate and remember that each bowler on that opposing team can add 60 points to their score just by filling up the 9th and 10th frames. That's a 300 point team total points for those frames. Remember that during the first frames, and remember it during all of the succeeding frames.

### **The Competitive Desire:**

Do you want to win? Are you willing to put in the effort required to have a better chance of winning? Do you want to win enough to make sure that you know as much or more about the game than your opponents?

Do you have the desire to compete at a level that allows more winning?

If the answer to all of these questions is yes, then you have the competitive desire to win. Most bowlers that have a high average but still get beat competitively have less of a desire to win than their opponents.

The desire to win has to be coupled with knowledge of the game and focus and concentration during the match. You, as a competitive bowler, need to use that knowledge of the game in such a way that when you remain focused and are concentrating, you will perform well and the score will be there with you at the end of the match.

### **The Competitive Edge:**

If you know more about the game and have equipment that is more likely to score on the lane conditions that are present, you have a competitive edge. Getting to that situation is not easy and is not inexpensive either.

Let's say for example two bowlers are matched against one another. One has gone to a bowling school and has read a couple of bowling books and has watched some bowling videos. The other bowler simply bowls in league play on a regular basis. He does fairly well, but that's all he does with respect to growing in his bowling knowledge.

The bowler with the training has a competitive edge.

If that bowler also can afford an arsenal of bowling balls that allows him to choose a specific ball for the condition, he has an additional competitive edge.

A competitive edge is a mental condition. You have a little more confidence that you will perform well because you know that you are better trained and have a better choice of equipment than your opponent.

You are more likely to win the match because you have that competitive edge.

So, . . . spending the bucks and spending the time and effort it takes to be well trained and well equipped pays off. It may not be instantaneous, but it will pay off in the long run.

You will have that slight edge over the other guy, you will have a competitive edge.

### **Being a Member of the Team:**

One of the drawbacks of being focused and concentrating is the lack of participation with the other team members with what's going on during the match in back of the approach. Sometimes that's almost as important as what's happening on the approach.

There are different levels of participation and we all have different personalities but bowlers tend to fall somewhere between two extremes.

On one end of the spectrum is the talker, slapper bowler who is a full participant that joins in and talks a lot and is fully involved with the team.

On the opposite end of the spectrum is the bowler that sits in one of the locations at the settee area, says nothing to anyone, keeps to himself, is not involved with the events of the game at all, but does get up and bowl when it's his turn.

You should endeavor to be somewhere between the two types mentioned. In a tournament the focus and concentration is a little greater but still the team spirit should be a factor. In league play there is a little more of a need for the team members to talk and participate more.

A team needs to be able to be calm and collected and at ease even in the closest of matches. Sometimes it takes a little conversation and high fives to get the team into the game. True team spirit is closely related to the team having the team adrenaline flowing just as an individual does better when they have their individual adrenaline flowing.

### **Helping Your Teammates:**

The task of helping one of your teammates when you see something that they are doing differently than they usually do in their bowling style is not easy. Bowlers, especially high average bowlers tend to already know everything about the game and they never do anything wrong. They take criticism very cautiously.

If you try to tell your fellow bowler in the wrong way, he may take it very badly and you may lose a little friendliness during that night of bowling. Don't even try to tell that bowler unless you have an agreement with him that he wants you to inform him that you have noticed something different about his style. Even if you have such an agreement, have patience and don't jump in with a suggestion after every frame. First let the bowler try to stay focused and try to work out the problem himself. Give him a couple of frames at least. If he is still making the error, sit down beside him and start a conversation about the game and ask him if he wants you to make a suggestion. If you have been calm and collected when you perform this conversation, you will probably get a positive response.

Make the suggestion and encourage the bowler that the next frame is going to be better.

The key to this process is the agreement that one bowler has agreed to be helped by another. That agreement needs to be made as a team so that one another on the team can make those types of suggestions when necessary. The team is a better competitive group if each member knows that the other teammates are going to help them when needed.

If the team member that is having difficulty is already working hard to fix the problem, when he is approached about the possible problem, he may indicate that he is working on that very problem. But, if that bowler is not aware of the problem that you have detected, he may be very appreciative of the suggestion and he may be very willing to make the change.

If the team can work together to try to solve the small problems that come up in a timely manner, the team score will be enhanced and you will win more matches. Helping each other can be a big asset to the team.

### **Getting to Know the Pro Shop Professional:**

Other than your bowling coach, the one person that can help you the most is your Pro Shop Professional. He is usually an experienced bowler and ball driller. He can answer innumerable questions about both your bowling ball and your bowling style.

Frequent the pro shop and befriend the pro shop professional. He can be that extra source of knowledge that may help you transcend the 200 and above average barrier. Check out all of the accessories that he carries in stock. Keep abreast of the different bowling balls that have recently arrived at the pro shop and inquire as to their attributes.

Remember he is the person that drills your bowling ball. He has the most influence on your bowling capabilities with respect to the feel that the ball has and how the ball performs after you release it.

Get to know the pro shop professional, he can be an invaluable asset.

### **Your Bowling Coach:**

Bowling is not a recreation, it is a sport. One of the consistent qualities that define all sports is that of the role of the coach. You need to pick out someone to be your personal coach. The person should be well versed in the knowledge of the game and carry a reasonably high average.

He should be available during time periods when you need his advice and suggestions. But, most of all, he should have your confidence. He needs to be a bowler that you respect for their abilities as a bowler and their ability to place a picture in your mind of what he wants you to try to do to implement a change in your style and mannerisms.

He should probably, but not necessarily, be older than you. It may seem like a sexist statement but there are very few female coaches. Only if the woman is a well respected bowler and a very high average should she attempt to be a coach. Male bowlers tend to listen better to a male coach. Some women will listen to a female coach if that coach is well respected and has a very high average. But most women at a bowling center will listen only to a male coach that bowls at that bowling center.

Remember that qualified coaching does not come easy and is not free. The time on the lanes usually costs about \$25 to \$40 per hour.

Listen and try to do what they tell you. If you have a problem with some part of the instruction, tell them what you don't understand and why you can't seem to do what they

are recommending.

Results are not instantaneous. What a coach recommends is usually a slight change in some part of your bowling style that may be very difficult to implement. Have patience, practice the change, then practice it again. Your coach is there to look at what you are doing and how you are doing it. He is trained to observe bowlers and their styles and pick out small characteristics that may be limiting the bowler's average. It is a waste of his time and yours if you don't make an effort to slightly modify your style so that your average can increase.

The coach understands that you have been doing it that way for many years. You need to understand that the coach understands that. He makes the suggestion and will be very patient with you so that you can try to implement the change.

### **Don't Blame it on the Lanes:**

The alternate title for this section is bitching and moaning (BM). Regardless of the title, you probably get the picture.

The next question is whether or not you have some of those qualities as a bowler. Hopefully you do not.

Bowlers that BM on the lanes are generally frustrated because things are simply not going their way. Their outlet is to BM. "These lanes are terrible, they don't ever put enough oil on these lanes". "I hate these lanes, they're the worst lanes I've ever bowled on, I'm never going to bowl in league here again" (but they do because their average is even lower at the other bowling center where they bowl).

Any number of statements can be made. Most of them are directed at the bowling center and the lane conditions. The bowler is simply not getting his way. It's a little too difficult for him to handle.

The real problem is that the bowler is simply too quick with the words and not quick enough with the right adjustments and equipment for the conditions that are present. If that person is not a personal acquaintance, you had probably better say absolutely nothing. If that bowler is a good friend of yours, you should wait until the bowler is sitting down in the setee area and is relatively calm. Make your best estimate what adjustment he should make only if you think he will accept the advice as a positive comment. If he is truly your friend he will listen.

About the only other advice you might try is a rather pointed remark. It must be used with some caution. Have him look around at the other bowlers and notice that they are neither bowling bad nor are they criticizing the bowling center or the lane conditions. If you use that remark, it should be premised with the establishment that he is your friend. For example, "George, you know that I am your friend, don't you". (hopefully, he replies yes). "George, I want to tell you something and I don't want you to take it the wrong way. Is it okay if I tell you something George, I'm not going to criticize the way you bowl and I'm not going to give you advice, but I don't want you to take what I say wrong, because I am your friend. Can I ask you to do something. It'll take about a minute. (Hopefully he acknowledges positively). "George, look around at the other scores on this pair of lanes

and on the other lanes. There are many bowlers bowling very good games aren't there?" (He should notice the good games that are being rolled. If he doesn't, point them out to him). "George, it's not the bowling center and it's not the lane conditions. I'm your friend, you're a very good bowler and you simply need to use the skills you have to adjust to the lane conditions that you have and that everyone is bowling with. You can do it. I've seen you bowl there's a reason why your average is a high as it is. It's because you are a good bowler. It's not the lanes George, you just need to do what you have done so many times before and adjust and bowl the game you should and can bowl."

Now if he doesn't throw something at you, he may settle down and perform well after he gets lined up properly. You have tried as his friend to do the best you can to get him to calm down and to do the right thing. If he continues to BM that night, simply keep your mouth shut and only talk to him about his bowling when he asks you.

BM bowlers can be turned around. They need encouragement to do more work at analyzing the changing lane conditions and making the appropriate move in a timely manner. If that bowler can learn to line up correctly at the start and identify when to make a move and how much to move, he probably won't get frustrated.

### **Focus:**

When you are bowling competitively, that's where your mind should be, on the game and in the match. It's a matter of delaying the flow of all of those other things that are in your mind and doing the best job you can at what you have chosen to do, . . . bowl.

There may be a hundred projects you have going on at work. You may have just had a fight with your wife, you may have a relative that just had an accident and is in the hospital, you may have just grounded your son or daughter for something; it doesn't matter what is trying to come to the surface. Your mission, and you have already chosen to take it, is to do the very best job you can and leave those other things outside the front door of the bowling center. This tape does not self destruct in five seconds. It never self destructs. It is the tape that automatically begins playing the instant you walk through the front door of the bowling center.

(The same tape plays when you walk through the side door and the back door).

The "tape" of course is an imaginary one, but the event occurs nonetheless. As you are opening that door to the bowling center, that message begins to play.

### **The Volume of the Tape Player is Turned Down:**

Sometimes the tape player volume control is turned down and you don't get the message to get your head empty of that other stuff and into the game that's about to start. Don't close your eyes and think about that other stuff. Keep your eyes wide open, look at the pins, look around at where you are and what you came there for and get mad at yourself if you have to, but get into the game. It may take growling at yourself, clenching your fists, punching a clinched fist into the other opened hand or something as simple as looking at a teammate and slapping their hand saying "let's get'm tonight".

You've got to get that tape to play loud enough for you to hear it. You've got to hear that message, a little bit late maybe, but you finally hear it nonetheless.

**The Tape Breaks:**

For some reason, usually a personal event that has happened at home, you just can't get your head into the game. You've tried everything you can but nothing seems to work.

Go home. Tend to that problem, whatever it is, and return the next week free from that problem and ready to bowl and to be focused on the game.

**Concentration:**

If you're not in some adrenaline rush, you should be concentrating on the game. You should already know where you are going to roll the ball the next frame, you in fact know what frame it is, you know how close the game score is and you know and have the confidence that you are going to perform well.

If you are concentrating and thus are making the proper moves at the proper times, you will perform well simply because you are indeed concentrating and you do have your head in the game. It's like a circle. Proper concentration yields good performance and good performance can help keep good concentration.

The trick is to not let a distraction of some sort break that concentration. Note to yourself that it is a distraction and get out that imaginary tape player and play that tape again. You have been lined up, you have been rolling the ball well and you have the confidence that you are playing a good mental and physical game. That distraction is over; you're now back into the game continuing on with your plan of attack starting back exactly where you left off.

**Sticking to Business:**

You have the pair of lanes right in front of you. You brought your arsenal tonight ready to compete. You are in the middle of a very competitive game. It is the tenth frame and you are the anchor bowler. So what happens. The loudspeaker announces that you have a phone call on line #2. You take the call and listen to your 15 year old teenage daughter ask if it is okay for her to go to the mall with her much older long haired boy friend with that drives a Harley Davidson. Did I mention that he has a pierced tongue and probably carries an unregistered gun. You quickly explain to her that it's a little bit late to go to the mall and she really gets mad and tries to play the sympathy card by crying and you still say no. Now she plays the "mean ole dad" card and gets mad at you. You stick to your decision and still say no. She tells you that she's leaving and she's never coming back and hangs up the phone.

It's now your turn to bowl.

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What are you here for . . . to bowl.

Why do you bowl . . . to win.

How do win . . . perform well.

How do you perform well . . . concentrate and follow your plan of attack.

How do you concentrate . . . focus on the task at hand and do what comes naturally.

Remember where you left off last frame and continue on this frame depending on your plan of attack.

Later, after the match is over, stop by your neighborhood hardware store and pick up a few items like a hair trimmer, wire cutters and a bulletproof vest.

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### **Pop Quiz:**

**How many of the pins are directly in line with an arrow (aiming mark) on the lane surface?**

**Hint . . . 10 is not the answer.**