

Okay, class. Listen up! Today's lesson is on perfection.

Bowlers, like any other group of people, come in all shapes and sizes. The one thing that is common to *all* of us is trying to knock down all ten pins on the first ball. From that point on, the goals vary. To some, doing it once a game is a treat. To others, being able to brag "I got two strikes in a row!" gets our adrenaline flowing. To most, a 200 game is equivalent to par golfing or the circle in the center of the dart board.

Before high scoring equipment and lane conditions invaded our sport, the men who averaged in the 180's and 190's were looked up to. A 200 average was awed. Today, an average in the 220's only raises *one* eye brow and a series under 750 hardly gets a mention.

Women weren't even *thought* of when it came to scoring on the lanes. Although that's been changing over the past ten years or so, someone forgot to tell Cathy Hildebrandt that women in Henry County just don't roll 300's.

If bowling's superior sex were keeping score, it would look something like this: Men's sanctioned league and local tournament 300 games—77. Women—0. Floyd Collier Sr. started it all back in 1967 with the county's first 300, with many memorable ones along the way. Alan Jarvis holds the record with 5, but who will ever forget 160-average Dan Wells and renting shoes as he always did, buying a ball off the dollar rack, and throwing 12 in a row? Or Tim Linville's back-to-back performance at the New Castle Lanes, finishing one night with a 300 and beginning the next week with another? Or Rual Vincent's 300 at the age of 72? Or Vincent and teammate Jim Brolin rolling 300's on the same night?

Again, if bowling's superior sex were keeping score it would look like this: Men's 800 series—16. Women—0. One of New Castle's all-time greats Jim Adams (and arguably one of the best clutch bowlers of *any* era) was the first to blast the almost unthinkable with an 803 back in 1970. Three have done it twice since then—Dick Simmons, Danny Cheshier, and Alan Jarvis—with Jarvis' 828 the mark to beat.

But like I said, someone forgot to tell Cathy Hildebrandt that the women of Henry County just don't score like the men. Sure, they've had some 700's in the last few years—19 to be exact. Cindy Cheshier and Sue Elkins have had three each, and Jane Shafer's record 757 is a great series by anyone's standard. But while adding up the number of men's 700's, my calculator's Energizer Bunny batteries just couldn't keep going and going.

Starting the night 25 pins under ones average normally isn't what big nights are made of, so Hildebrandt did what any other spunky redhead would do. She sat down to work her first crossword puzzle since being laid off from Chrysler a year ago. (Shouldn't it be the other way around?) And the strikes started to come. "I didn't think about a 300 until the eighth frame. When I got a strike in the eighth, I thought 'Hey, I've got a chance!'" As the cheering began to erupt and the crowd began to gather, including son James with folded hands, the last ball in the 10th started with a prayer. "This one's for you, Grandpa." As a stubborn six pin finally gave in, an explosion of celebration and hugs ignited. Cathy's mother, Carolyn Cooper, was the first to arrive on the approach. "Mom was right there on the lane to hug me. It's a good thing, because my legs were like spaghetti!"

Perfection had finally been reached—actually for the *second* time—by a local woman bowler. Over 10 years ago, Hildebrandt recorded the first-ever 300 game by a Henry County woman and received WIBC and state recognition, but not local. "It was a state tournament held in New Castle. I got my ring, but it didn't get into our association's records because it wasn't a locally sponsored tournament."

When asked about the thrill of the moment, the best part was having her family and friends witness it. “Before I got up to bowl in the tenth, still staring at the crossword puzzle, I reached over and put my hand on my mom’s leg and said ‘I love you, Mom.’ She said ‘I love you too, baby.’ When I shot my first 300, it was a Saturday afternoon squad. There was hardly anyone around. This time not only my mom and my son, but my best friend Dawn Eversole and most of the girls I regularly bowl with were there! I just wish my dad had been here to see it. He was the first person I called!”

The “Grandpa” in the 10th frame prayer was Kenneth “Shorty” Gard, 1985 inductee into the Henry County Bowling Hall of Fame. And anyone who’s bowled for any length of time knows that the name Gard and bowling go together like biscuits and gravy. Still glowing nearly 48 hours later, “It’s in our blood!”

Congratulations, Cathy, from everyone who’s ever picked up a bowling ball. This one is for the record books!

When the first-ever (for the local record books, anyway) women’s 300 game is bowled, everything else comes to a standstill. The presses stop right where they are. But any other column would have started out by talking about what Brittney Chesher did last week. Her 709 was special for several reasons. At 21, she is the youngest female to ever roll a 700 series in Henry County. It not only leads the women’s association, it’s also the only 700 so far this season. Brittney and her mother Cindy are also the only mother-daughter duo to ever accomplish the feat. And her 709 matched not only her mom’s first *two* 700’s but also Cathy Hildebrandt’s first one. Congratulations, Brittney. May you continue to follow in your mom and dad’s bowling footsteps for many years to come.

High series from the same period include Hildebrandt’s 666 (that’s right—666) and 614, Cindy Chesher 632 and 624, Jane Shafer 627, Deena Soliday 606, Karen Castle 603 and Carolyn Cooper 601. High games: Hildebrandt 300, Brittney Chesher 248, Deena Soliday 244, Cindy Chesher 237 and 233, Shafer 237, Hildebrandt 236, 223 and 220.

Kevin Plyley ran away with top honors for the men with a super 762 series. Alan Gard recorded the only other 700 with 727. High games: Joe Hedges 279, Plyler and Royce Matthews 278, Charlie Helderbrand 275, and Grant Becker, Alan Gard, Wade Truitt, Mel Tompkins, Robert Chesher, Dean Gard, Paul Helderbrand, and Tom Rutherford were all in the 260’s.

Thousands have been asking “What is that Convenience Connection everyone’s talking about?” USA Today reported not long ago that bowling is still the #1 participation sport in America. But commitment to league bowling has declined, primarily due to busy lifestyles. “Convenience Connection” is a short, 12-week program where 4-person teams come in and bowl whenever they want. To the usual adult division made up of family, friends and co-workers, we’ve added two new “family” categories—one for families with children 9 and up and a *Bumper* squad for those with little ones 8 and under. (Besides skating, it’s a great way to spend quality time with your kids!) Stop by or call the Rose Bowl for full details.

Last but not least: Men’s and Women’s Hall of Fame nomination deadlines are upon us. Official rules and forms are available at the Rose Bowl. Women’s deadline is February 1 and the Men’s deadline is February 6.