

Okay, class. Today's lesson is on perfection—Part 2.

As we talked about last time, the goal of every bowler on every frame is to knock down every pin. The total number of strikes hoped for is what varies from bowler to bowler.

Just as no two people are alike, neither are any two bowlers. Men are different from women—*very* different—but we'll save most of that discussion for the marriage experts. A single strike is very common, but 12 in a row are rare. And even though a 700 series is nothing unusual nowadays among high average bowlers, 800's are still few and far between. We've not seen one here since Tim Dale's 803 in August of 2003. If only a small percentage of bowlers ever roll a 300, and an even smaller percentage achieve an 800 series, what are the chances of a 900? Would Jeopardy's King of Kings Ken Jennings even know?

According to Mark Miller at the new U.S. Bowling Congress, thirteen men have stepped on the approach and delivered 36 strikes in a row. The first six—three in the 1930's and three in the 80's—were disallowed by the American Bowling Congress. Five of those were bowled in a non-sanctioned event; the other one was thrown out because of lane conditioning violations.

Picture bowling in the 30's. I wasn't even a gleam in my dad's eye back then. He was still in diapers. Everyone wore black and white. Telephones were hooked to the wall, and an operator with a clothes pin clamped to her nose was your only way of reaching Raleigh or Mt. Pilot on a Saturday night. Two-hole bowling balls were as hard as a rock, and pins were set up by "boys." Before the invention of lane conditioning equipment (and all the nifty things we've learned to do with them), lane oil was applied with a fly sprayer. Owners and employees of bowling "alleys" were put into a special category with certain restrictions (officially called the "Alley Man Rule") to reduce the possibility of cheating.

Fast forward to the present. It's 7:30. The category is "Bowling Trivia" for \$1,000, and Alex Trebek asks: Who rolled the first-ever *approved* 900 series? The fact that you subscribe to the Courier and are reading this article proves that your intelligence is above average, but would you know? The answer is Jeremy Sonnenfeld, on February 2, 1997 in Lincoln, Nebraska. Was he more deserving than the others? Probably not. After all, it wasn't the bowler's fault that five others weren't sanctioned. And Glenn Allison's disallowed 900 in 1982 was due to illegal lane conditions, which probably weren't much different than what we see 365 days a year now. But Sonnenfeld's was the first one that counted, and that's all that counts! He'll be known as "Mr. 900" for the rest of his life. A 900 was to become an annual thing for the next four years, with a three year gap until 2004 welcomed two.

Last year, ABC recognized 49,000 perfect games and 14,000 eight hundred series. Whether the words "perfect" and "series" should even go in the same sentence is debatable, but the fact remains, Americans bowled two 900's in 2004. Will there ever be one in New Castle? No one's ever even thrown two perfect games in the same night, much less *three*. I rolled many a 300 as a kid, but it was in my basement. The pins were plastic and touching each other so if one fell, they all fell. And I wrote down only the strikes.

May I go on record as saying there will never be a 900 bowled in New Castle, Indiana. We'll probably never even see *two* perfect games in the same set. It requires more skill and nerves in one body than what walks through our doors. And may the Michael

Hutchens' of our county who represent a new young crop of loaded guns who think the sky's the limit prove me wrong!

Did someone mention pin boys earlier? It's a subject I've wanted to write about for a long time, and now that I've said it out loud, I'll probably have to. But I need your favorite pin boy stories. If you *were* one, that's even better. Stop by or e-mail me ([tom@rosecitybowl.com](mailto:tom@rosecitybowl.com)) with your memories for an upcoming article.

What are the two things all good bowlers have in common? Lots of practice (unless you're left-handed and it just comes naturally) and lots of good coaching. At 75, my dad is a bona fide Living Legend—and there's not a bowler around who'd call me biased for saying it. There have been a lot of great men and women who have influenced our sport since the association was formed back in the mid-thirties, but probably none more than the names of John Rutherford, Salem Shively, Lum Edwards, and Ernie Newhouse. To the same extent that Salem, Lum and Ernie are missed, we are still enjoying the benefits of John's coaching. Regardless of your age, skill level, or the kind of rut your game is stuck in, he's still dedicated to helping you improve. Simply call the Rose Bowl at 529-8970 and set up an appointment. Your scores will be glad you did. Guaranteed.

Bowling means something different to different people. Thanks in part to the "sight and sound" evolution of our industry including cosmic events, coupled with things like bumpers and Cartoon Network and Disney merchandising, bowling has become the "in" thing to do among the youth across the nation. To the more competitive at heart, driven partly by the reinvention of the Pro Bowler's Tour on ESPN (Sundays at 12:30 p.m.), it's all about making the pins explode. There's a new breed of crankers that do things with bowling balls the rest of us only thought about.

But to those of us with graying hair, bowling is more about relationships and camaraderie than anything else. It's a fun way to spend time with others. Many can relate to the question: What would my life be like if it wasn't for the people I've met and the friends I've made while bowling? Would you trade the money saved if you'd just stayed on the couch? Or watched more TV? Or rented more video games? Or spent more time on the internet? Something to think about as we ride out the rest of the winter.

I wish I had a dollar for every time someone has said to me they had to quit bowling because of some kind of ailment in their bowling hand/arm/shoulder. My standard response has always been "You've got two hands. Use the other one!" It wasn't because of my advice, but about two years ago right-handed Brent Becker did just that. "Because of the tendonitis, I finally came to a point where I either had to quit bowling or switch hands, and I didn't want to quit, so I switched. But the one advantage I had over a new bowler is that I already knew how to bowl." In the beginning, having the best equipment isn't critical because there are the fundamentals of the game and timing of your delivery to learn before you can really begin to improve. Once you've reached that point, then the right shoes and the right ball become important. "It wasn't until the last few months that I didn't have to think about what I was doing, which foot to start off with, etc. Everything's starting to feel natural again." Yeah, I guess you could say that. Averaging a respectable 166 in the Thursday morning Early Birds league, Becker started off with a whopping 267, followed by 174 and 227 for an outrageous 668 series. That's what I call a pretty good day by anyone's standards, but an outstanding day for someone who switched hands, earning the USBC's 100 pins over average game and 150 pins over average series

awards. Only twelve 100 pins over average awards and twenty 150 pins over series average awards have been earned so far this season by the men.

Before I *like totally* run out of space....High games for the men: Chad Dale, Ron Hamilton, and Kevin Plyley 279, Michael Hutchens 278, Jeff McClurg 275, and Mark Batt 270. High series: Kevin Plyley blasted the high set of the year for the men of 782, followed by Jeff McClurg 741, Michael Hutchens 710, Chad Dale 705, and Rick Taylor 700.

Carmen Orr rolled her highest game ever and high for the week for the ladies of 279 (darn that 5 pin!) followed by Sue Elkins 246, Brittney Chesher 246, 243 and 233, Jane Shafer 244, Sue Moore 243 and Karen Howell 236. High series: Brittney Chesher 673, 649, and 608, Cindy Chesher 622 and 619, Cathy Hildebrandt 620 and Karen Castle 601.