



## *5 steps to better service from your pro shop*

As we embark on a new season of exciting league competition, please keep in mind the simple but important tips listed below as you visit your local pro shop.

As a shop operator, my primary objective is to promote the game and advance the levels at which it is played. Anything an operator can do to enhance your ability to perform on the lanes and increase the enjoyment you derive from bowling will make certain that he/she retains you as a long-term customer.

My experience in both the bowling business and competitive aspects of the game leads me to the conclusion that there are few absolutes in bowling. Any pro shop that you visit will have different philosophies about what will work for you and what fits best. The one absolute that I have determined in my 28 years as a player and six years as a shop operator is that the more information you have, the better decisions you make.

Try using the following five tips upon your next visit to your favorite pro shop. I know your chances of being completely satisfied will increase significantly.

- **Set one goal or multiple goals you wish to accomplish this season.**

Goals are very personal and unique to each individual competitor. There are no bad goals when it comes to improving your game. A goal can be as simple as a five-pin increase in average over last season.

If you have a problem picking up that pesky 10-pin, set as your goal a 20 percent increase in the amount of 10-pins that you convert.

Your shop operator can offer tips and insight on how to achieve your stated goals. Write down these goals and periodically review them alone and also with your shop operator. During the season, assess where you are in achieving these goals and discuss this as well with your shop operator.

- **Set a limit on what you are willing to spend for a ball.**

Your shop operator has a much easier job to do if you establish limits. Bowling ball prices vary with degrees of performance and function. The serious competitor may prefer a ball with a high coefficient of friction. The once-a-week "Rock & Bowler" may just want the ball with the brightest

colors. Both individuals would like to knock down pins, but the two individuals want completely different things out of their bowling balls. This just helps us to eliminate certain items and be more time effective.

- **Bring an existing ball from your arsenal with you.**

This helps your shop operator determine layouts that best suit your game. Vital track information, as well as custom fitting information, can be obtained from a ball that you currently use.

The ball does not have to be your favorite or best performer. Valuable information can still be obtained, and corrections can be made in your fit, layout, or ball surface. These are areas that can be changed with your next purchase or by experimenting with the ball that is not performing to your liking.

- **Make your shop operator aware of any physical problems.**

As we age, our bodies change and will not allow us to do some of the things we were able to do in our teen-age and early adult years. If you are having any sort of

pains or aches as a result of bowling activities, make certain that you inform your local shop operator.

Experienced shop operators may know how to relieve some of the strain that bowling places on the joints, tendons, and muscles in your hands, arms, and shoulders. Your shop operator may make suggestions on the mechanics of your physical game or change certain aspects of your fit to alleviate some aches and pains. There are many ways to still compete and derive great pleasure from bowling despite a few minor ailments.

- **Always provide honest feedback to your shop operator.**

The best way to get that perfect fit is to provide as much information as possible to your shop operator. There cannot be too much information given when it comes to a proper fit. There should be plenty of dialogue between you and the shop operator.

Please take advantage of this time to pick their brains on proper fit, lane conditions, ball surfaces, different drill layouts, best ways to attack certain lane conditions, and any other issues you are confronted with during competition. This is a really good time to discuss practice tips, any pointers that might help improve your level of play, or whether that shop offers any type of certified instructional programs.

*Chris Ward operates the Twelve In a Row Pro Shop, which now is located at 5412 Queens Chapel Road in Hyattsville.*