



JOE TREMPER
*earns USBC Sport
 Series Crystal Pin
 at The Lanes
 Fort Meade*



**THE VALUE OF HAVING
 A PRE-SHOT ROUTINE**

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BOWL MAGAZINE

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FORFEIT, ANYONE?
*IS YOUR SUB, OPPONENT
 — OR TEAMMATE —
 AN UNPAID BOWLER?*

"THE CASE BOOK"
*TWO RECENT LOCAL
 LEAGUE SITUATIONS*

ED ROGERS
A head mechanic's life



INTERVIEW:

ED ROGERS

Ed Rogers, the head mechanic at Crofton Bowling Centre since November 1995, first thought about becoming a bowling center mechanic in 1964 while at Fair Lanes College Park, where his parents bowled. They knew the center manager, who one evening showed their six-year-old son an up-close view of the pinsetters. Young Ed told the manager that one day he was going to work on those machines. While it wasn't exactly a direct path to his current position—in fact, it really wasn't supposed to happen—there's no doubt of the vital role he now plays at the one of the area's most successful bowling centers.

Rogers, who grew up in Mount Ranier, Md., and graduated from DeMatha High School, recently spoke with editor Bob Cosgrove.

Describe your road to becoming head mechanic at Crofton Bowling Centre.

I came here from the center at Andrews Air Force Base. I worked at the old Fair Lanes centers before they converted to AMF. I was part-time for like 10 years, then full-time at Andrews for five years and then up here.

I received a call from Butch Gibson. He was the mechanic here at Crofton, and we worked together at [Fair Lanes] Capital Plaza in the early '80s. When Butch was ready to leave here, he called around to see if anybody was interested in the center. I met with the manager and the owners, and three days later I got a call from Butch who said, "You've got it." I owe him a debt of gratitude for that phone call.

I was Butch's Sunday-morning pin chaser at [Fair Lanes] University. He didn't have to worry about anything on Sunday.

My full-time job was at a bank, the Suburban Trust branch in Hyattsville, up by Eastern Avenue. I was a head teller for 20 years, and I worked in bowling centers on the weekends. I survived two bank mergers, but the Nation's Bank merger got me, and that is when I took this up full-time.

I went to Andrews; that was my first assignment. I was working part-time, and the manager asked if I wanted a full-time job since I didn't have one.

My part-time hobby became my full-time profession, so I guess there was an omen in learning everything that I knew.

I said, "Sure," and I've stuck with it ever since. My part-time hobby became my full-time profession, so I guess there was an omen in learning everything that I knew.

I've been doing this 35 years now. I didn't plan on it, but that's what fate had in store for me because I didn't want to leave the bank. But we were forced out in the merger, through attrition. It was a bad time.

What is a typical day for you?

I come in the morning about 7 or 7:30 and check my call sheet at the front desk from [the previous] night. I check with my lanes man to see if he has any issues with the lane machine. Then I'll head to the back to see if there are any notes on the board in my office. If there are no

notes, that's good, and then I jump on the machines and do some [preventative maintenance]. If there are notes, I jump on them before the leagues come.

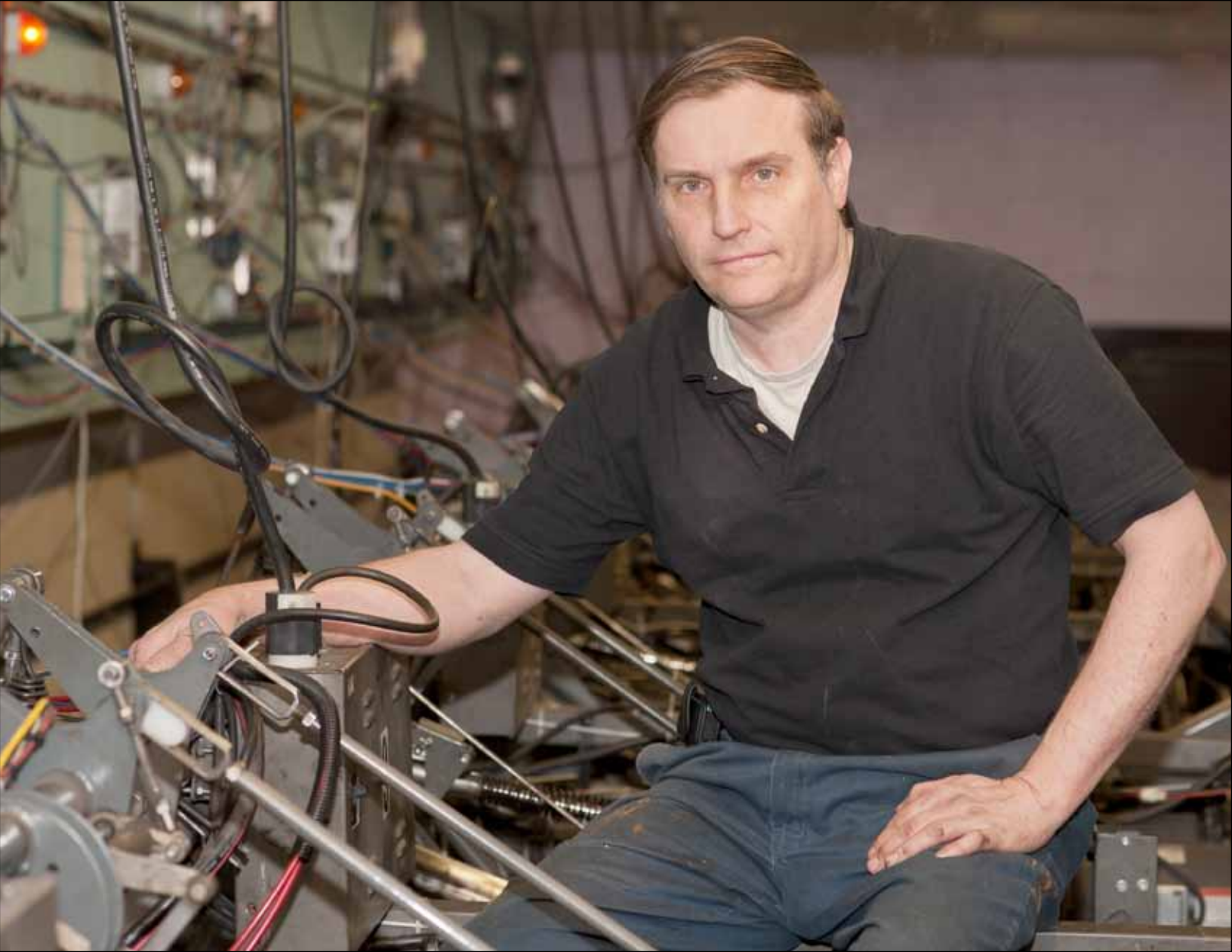
While the leagues are bowling, I try to do some lubrication and cleaning to a point where it's safe while the machine is running and also help my lanes man out on the lane machine if he needs anything done or adjusted. And then the two of us go in the back, and we start cleaning or just pin chasing. Once the machines are done, if there are any issues, we'll try to get them done before I leave.

Then we'll go ahead and leave and call it a day. I normally leave around 4 p.m.

I also service everything up front in the building. I have two ball cleaners, I service the candy machine, I have serviced the ATM machine, I have serviced the lottery machine.

If the owners have little jobs for me up front, they know my primary job is in the back. *Once you're done, you're caught up, you're comfortable, can you come up and take care of this? We have a short in this socket or this candy machine's not working right.*

So I'll spend the afternoon maybe up front doing a couple of things for the owners, but again, they know my priority is in the back. If I say I've got a lane down, they'll go, *Take care of that first.*



When 48 lanes are running on a Tuesday night, is there just one person working in the back?

I have two; it's a matter of safety. If one of my guys gets stuck in the machine, nobody's going to hear him.

That's been an issue in the past. I got caught in a machine at Andrews in the '90s, and there was nobody back there with me. I got my hand stuck. I wasn't paying attention. I had been doing it too long, and I took my mind off of what I was doing. I took it for granted, and I reached up to a moving machine, and I thought I had the frame. I didn't—I had the wheel.

It skinned me pretty deep all the way back across the top of my hand, but I was able to get my hand out. I had rags wrapped around me, and I

crawled to the walkway beside [lane] 24, and then a bowler saw the blood coming through the rags. I was pretty torn up. I said, "Just get me to the hospital. I don't want to take the rags off because I don't know what I got." So my manager rushed me over to Malcolm Grove [Medical Center] on the base, and I got a lot of stitches.

But had I passed out in the back, nobody would have noticed.

After I got hurt at Andrews, OSHA [The United States Occupational Safety and Health Administration] came in, and they made us wear walkie-talkies.

Here at Crofton, I broke my [right] shoulder about four years ago in the back in two places. I was walking across the floor, carrying a large

fluorescent light bulb to change above the machines. I tripped, fell, the light bulb broke, this arm got cut, and I landed on this shoulder because I didn't want my head to hit the glass. My shoulder hit the concrete, and I'm lying on the floor, and I can't move—I can't get up.

So I called [lanes man] Lance [Johnson] on my cell phone. I used my left hand, even though it was torn up. He was doing lanes, but I said, "I need you back here *now*."

He comes back and sees me on the floor, glass all over the place. He tried to pick me up. I say, "Don't pick me up—something's wrong." My arm is hanging.

[Manager] Sandy [Lewis] is in the office. Lance yells, "Ed's down, we

need help!” So two of the owners come back, and Sandy comes back. She leans over me and says, “If you wanted time off, all you had to do was ask for it.”

I said, “If I could get up off of this floor, I would smack the living ...” And the owner says, “Ed ... Ed, calm down, calm down!”

And I say, “I’m lying here torn apart, busted up, ready to pass out, and she’s cracking jokes about my vacation time!” And Lance is going, “Oh my God, he just said he was going to hit her if he could get up!”

Sandy then says, “You owe me for the light bulb—it’s \$2.75.”

A sense of humor ... I was hospitalized within an hour.

I said, “Sandy, I’ll never forgive you for that.”

Plus, every time I’m carrying a light bulb now, Lance says, “Let me get that—let me get that.”

But we have two mechanics on duty for the bowlers’ benefit, too. If a belt breaks or if a pin blocks the return of the ball, and time has to be spent on that, if there’s a ball return somewhere on the other end of the house, they have to wait.

You could be several minutes trying to fix something, so we do it to help the bowlers, especially if you have nowhere to move them. If you’re running the whole house, you’re stuck.

I’ve had lanes go down many a night, and I’ll rush in from home. *[Counterman] Clayton [Saltsman], tell the bowlers I’m on my way. Give ‘em a beer. And I’ll come down from Glen Burnie [Md., about 30 minutes away],*

and I’ll get their lane running. Done it many times.

If you had your own center, would you have a standby pair of lanes during a league?

If they’re open, you lose revenue. As handy as that would be, you lose revenue. You try not to have anything go wrong.

Would it be nice to keep a pair open? Sure, absolutely. But then, the bowlers would get the opinion, *Oh, you’re planning on something going wrong. It doesn’t look good.*

So I would say *no*; I would book the house and make sure that I’ve got a competent crew and that I’m nearby.

See **ROGERS**, page 12



ROGERS, from page 10

What skills are most handy for your job?

Troubleshooting ... being good with your hands and your mind ... being able to look at something and manipulate it, fix it ... create something, diagnose a problem.

Mechanics stick together; they're like ironworkers. If you mess with one, you mess with them all. If you have a problem, you've got 10 guys ready to help you.

What have been the biggest changes in your job from when you first started?

The automatic scoring. I started with hand scoring—plastic score sheets and burning your hands on a hot Telescore. Now you have computers that interface with the pinsetters.

Doing lanes—you go from a bug spray can to a machine that does the

lanes for you while you sit there and watch it. It's automatic.

As they come out with these new machines, it gets easier and easier to diagnose what may be wrong with the lane. If your pattern is not right, the machine pretty well will tell you, *I'm not working right.*

The whole system of bowling—lanes, friction, oil—has changed so

much. It's ongoing. Every two weeks, there's a new bowling ball out. Every six months, they're coming out with a new oil. It's almost impossible to keep up with it.

However, I'll read on bowltech.com where this mechanic had a problem, and this other mechanic has a fix for it. It's like a brotherhood. Mechanics stick together; they're like ironwork-

ers. If you mess with one, you mess with them all. If you have a problem, you've got 10 guys ready to help you.

So the internet has helped make bowling center mechanics a much closer-knit group than in the old days?

Absolutely. Again, take bowltech.com. If I put out a question about a problem I'm having, within two hours, I have about a dozen responses. *Have you tried this, this, this, and this?*

Locally, we hang together. I have several mechanics at other centers that call me, and if I have a question, I'll call them.

Between the two of us, we've got an answer because of the longevity of the mechanics I know and have been around as long as I have. There's nothing that can come up on those machines that we don't have a fix for. *I've seen this before ... I haven't ... Here's what you do!*

See **ROGERS, page 17**



ROGERS, from page 12

The machines are the same as when I started, except for the newer ones that are on the market now, which [The Lanes at] Fort Meade has. They're self-diagnostic; it tells you what's wrong. The little light comes on and says, *I have a jam.*

The machines here don't tell you that; you have to look and figure them out. It's like a '57 Chevy. So these are more challenging to work on because they don't tell you what's wrong.

What is the best aspect of your job?

The owners—they're very good to me. They give me anything that I ask for. And I don't ask for anything unreasonable. I have a lot of backup with them, so I have to give them a lot of credit—a lot of credit.

I've been in houses where they had to beg to get a \$20 part to keep a lane running. I don't have that problem here.

You don't abuse it, but if I go to them and say the bowlers would like to have *this*, and I think *this* would look good or *this* would be an asset, they take a look at it, and they'll vote on it as a group collectively, and they'll go, *No problem.*

Can you recall a suggestion or two you've made that's been accepted by the owners?

Some upgrades on the machines—power savers, energy savers that actually save them on their electric bill. You put them on the machine, and they shut off after three minutes of inactivity.

We have different types of light fixtures on the machines that I've recommended they get for Millennium Bowl or Rock 'N Bowl, and there's also the upgrade on the Brunswick ball cleaner.

Basically, anything that would aid the bowler or that the bowler would see as an improvement, they have no problem helping you with that. We

like to think of ourselves as having a very up-to-date house.

Does your job help you in any way better understand bowling?

Absolutely. You learn the game, you learn oil patterns, you learn how far apart the pins are, you learn your restrictions on the lane, you learn what happens when your ball hits the pins, you have a certain width of area to work with, you know how wide the gutters are.

If you look at a bowling alley from the back or take a walk down there, you get a completely different view of the game. You learn how long a lane really is. You can't tell from the foul line how far it is to the headpin, but when you're walking down the side, you go, *Oh my Lord, I didn't know it was this long.*

So when I take groups of youth bowlers or adults in the back, they

have a totally different perspective. *No wonder you chop the 6 [-pin] off of the 10—it's 12 inches away from it!*

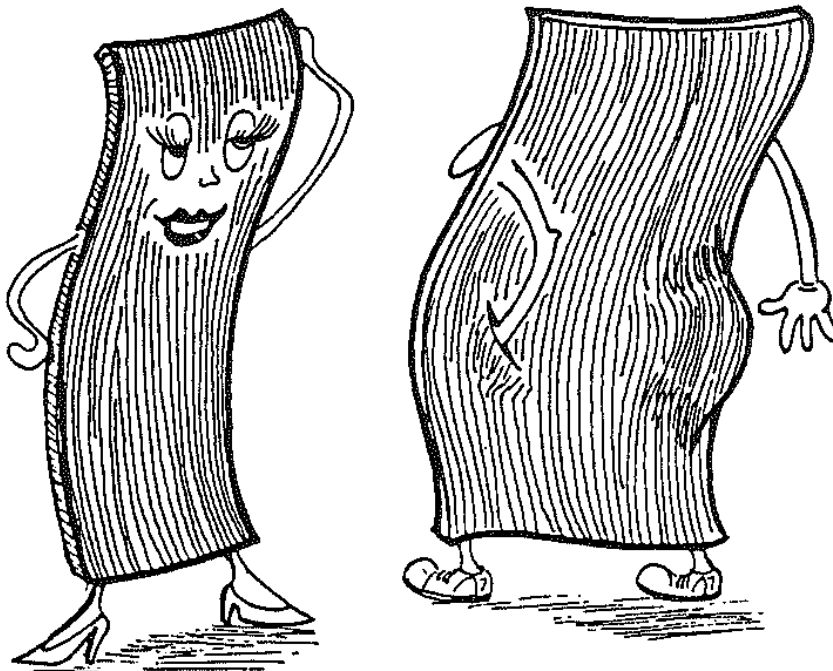
And then they go back out and have this in their mind, and it actually helps their game because they adjust, knowing now that's there's such a disparity between pins. I think the more they see that, the better off they are—especially the youth bowlers.

I'll hold a little class for the youth bowlers; I'll show them the lane machine, I'll run a pattern, and then we'll go out and look at it with the coaches. They have a lot of fun with this—see where the oil is, see where it tapers, see where it's not.

And when they go back to bowl, they've got this in their mind, and all of sudden, they're starting to adapt their game a little bit rather than bowling blind.

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STEINSIEK



“ HI THERE, MR. SYNTHETIC, I SEE YOU'VE PUT ON A FEW BOARDS! ”

Walt Steinsiek's "Cartoon of the Week" is featured [here](#).

ROGERS, from page 17

My son grew up here bowling, so I did it as a group for the kids. I still do it today.

You've got to give the bowlers a lot. The more you give them, the better they understand, and the easier it is for us.

How can a bowler make your job more difficult?

Not understanding the game and not understanding how things work in the back. A lot of bowlers that haven't been versed in the back think all you have to do is push a button if the machine acts up, and it's not that simple.

I used to get upset as a bowler when I was young, and now I see why things do what they do. And I've kinda taken a step back, like, *if I had known this before, I wouldn't have got so upset.*

What's the number one thing that the bowler doesn't understand?

The length of time it takes a mechanic to get from one lane to another safely, especially in a large center whereby if you go from lane 48 to lane 2, it does take a couple of minutes to respond in that we can't run back there. If the bowler would realize that it's dangerous back there, and you can't move rapidly....

What are the three or four calls you get most often?

Deadwood, ball return, blackout, and, *We need you up front; we have a leak in the bathroom.* I'm dead serious: For every three or four calls I get in the back, I'll have a call that something's wrong up front.

But basically ball returns and deadwood. You have a large guy throwing a powerful ball; he's gonna hit that pin so hard that my sweep doesn't have time to stop it.

What do you do in your spare time to get away from bowling?

I spend time with my family. I have a 21-year-old son and a loving wife, and we just spend time together. My wife grew up with me, she worked in a bowling alley for years, so she understands what I do; she understands I'm on call.

I get calls from here at 1 o'clock in the morning, 2 o'clock in the morning—I feel like a doctor. But I do it for the owners because they do a lot for me, so I take care of them here.

I just like to stay at home and spend time with them. I really don't go anywhere. I don't do a lot of outside activities. My son's into paintball, and he's into target practice. He has a couple of .22s he just got, and he goes out with his friends and he target practices. So I think I'll get into that with him. ●

*Hope Reynolds
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