



## "THE GURU" REVIEWS

Gary Parsons

### **Bowling: Knowledge Is the Key**

*Bowling: Knowledge Is the Key*, by Fred Borden with Jay Elias (Akron, Ohio: Bowling Concepts, Inc., 1986, paper).

This book is generally considered to be one of, if not the best, bowling instructional manuals on the market today. Fred Borden is considered to be one of the top three coaches in the world. He has coached over 200 of the finest professional bowlers and many more also have benefitted from his 30 years of experience, research, and teaching. He is the designer of the new Vector bowling balls and will serve as the coach for TEAM USA's bowling team. With *Knowledge Is the Key*, a wide range of serious bowlers can learn the hows and whys of the Borden approach to bowling.

"The Secret to Successful Bowling" is discussed in Chapter 1, an introduction. Here, Borden states *the truth* about bowling: "...there is no easy way. Improvement is the product of learning and practice [which] must be part of a total learning process" which includes learning from the masters of the sport and building on that learning through more practice, observation, and development.

By learning the game correctly in a total sense, the developing bowler will "do it right and the wrong will disappear," which in turn breeds competence which equals confidence.

"The Proper Stance" is the theme for Chapter 2. A correct stance is crucial for the avoidance of approach problems as well as the development of accuracy that comes from having a proper relation to the target and target line.

Under the section of proper stance posture, Borden discusses

the positioning of feet, knees, waist, shoulders, right elbow, left arm, right wrist, right hand. Also included is a valuable discussion of the target line and its relation to body position.

Next, Borden discusses ball placement and stance position in relation to target and lane. He concludes the chapter, as he does with every chapter, with a right- and left-handed bowler's check list—a summary in outline form of the major points discussed.

In Chapter 3, "Getting to the Foul Line," Borden discusses alignment, balance, synchronization, the four- and five-step approach in detail, ball release, types of ball roles, finishing position, the arm-swing in detail, and the necessity that all three movements be synchronized in one continuous, rhythmic, free-flowing exercise that only comes from focused practice sessions centered on learning and skill development.

"Taking Aim — The Beginning Approach" is the title of Chapter 4, which brings the discussion to the mental or "head knowledge" of bowling.

Remember, while a sufficient amount of knowledge is necessary to maximize the bowler's potential, knowledge itself is useful only if proficiency in the physical game has been achieved.

The lane and the components of the lane, such as "the heads," "pines," and "back-ends" (or corresponding skid, roll, and hook areas) are discussed. The purpose of oil and how it effects the rotation of the ball also is discussed along with the target arrows, locator dots, pins, and laydown points.

After a discussion of the impor-

tance of a consistent physical game, Borden moves into a discussion of the goal of every bowler: making strikes.

Three important questions—What is a perfect strike?, How does the bowler "dial in" to make the perfect strike?, and How does the bowler test the lane?—are answered in this chapter.

Borden continues with a discussion of the basic techniques of lane adjustment, understanding and reading correctly the language of standing pins, and understanding and utilizing the eye-to-arm coordination.

Spare-making also is discussed in this important chapter, in which a simple formula for converting spares is explained.

Borden opens Chapter 5, "Bowling Balls: Finding the Proper Match for You and the Lane," with a discussion of lanes, types of finishes, and the relationship of this information with the corresponding evolution of types of bowling balls. The contemporary polyurethane finishes made the need for porous bowling balls even greater for today's game.

Borden illustrates the difference between two-part and three-part bowling balls, discusses why the hardness and texture of shells are so important, the importance of the weight block and its function for determining top weight, finger or thumb weight, and side weight.

In the section "Matching the Ball to You and Your Game," Borden does an excellent job in discussing the four main factors which are considered: overall ball weight, fit of finger and thumb holes, span, and grip style, pitch.

The second factor in choosing a bowling ball is the matching of the ball to the lane conditions. This factor has a complete section in Chapter 5 devoted to it. Here, very important topics such as the shell of the ball (degree of porosity), thumb and finger weights, and side weight are discussed in conjunction with the art of reading lanes and adjusting equipment to (hopefully) the correct read.

In reading the lanes, the bowler needs to know the interface of the heads (the first 20 feet of the lane) with the surface of the ball, the interface of the pines (the next 20-25 feet of the lane), with the functional finger or thumb weight,

and the interface of the back end (or final 15-20 feet of the lane) with the side weight in the ball.

The final section of this fine chapter covers the topics of which bowling balls should you own at the corresponding stage of your development—from beginner to professional. The total package of understanding, choosing, and utilizing the function of particular bowling balls requires knowledge and experience and is an ongoing endeavor:

*Choosing a bowling ball should involve more than deciding which color you like and making sure your fingers fit in the holes. A bowling ball must be fitted perfectly to conform to both your hand and your game. Only a seasoned, professional ball driller who knows you and your game can fit you properly.*

*Matching a bowling ball to you and your personal game is one matter; matching a bowling ball to the lane is another. Ball weight, top weight, finger weight, thumb weight, side weight, pitch, grip, shell porosity, and shell hardness all affect the behavior of the ball on the lane. These factors can be adjusted to fit some lane conditions better than other lane conditions. For this reason, there are professional bowlers who take eight or more bowling balls to a tournament (p. 72).*

While this chapter is a first-rate piece of work, it was written before the off-label "exotic" weights became functionally popular. If you would like to know more about "barbell" weights, "pin" weights, "label shift leverage," "block" weight, etc., read past issues of *BOWL Magazine* in which Jerry Francomano, who is considered a leading expert of off-label equipment, discusses this technical topic in his "Shop Talk" column.

Chapter 6 is "Techniques for the Advanced Bowler." Since advanced bowling is primarily adjustments and the variations and combinations of adjustments are practically infinite, bowling on a "par" level becomes an ongoing process. As Borden so accurately writes:

*...varying lane conditions are what makes bowling such a challenging sport. Often the winner in a bowling tournament is not the most [talented] player, but the player who gets dialed into the particular lane conditions first and keeps himself or herself dialed in (p. 93).*

This chapter is Borden's attempt to conceptually aid the developing skilled player in dialing in and finding the winning "lane read" combination. In other words, this chapter covers the interrelationships of the player, the ball, and the lane and what is necessary to enhance striking capacities.

The general categories of advanced bowling are covered in this chapter: advanced math bowling, adjusting to blocked lane conditions, advanced lane reading; the four shot method, advanced physical game, and advanced bowling ball adjustments.

In the section on advanced math bowling, the focus is on discovering the laydown point, utilizing targets other than the second arrow, opening and closing angles, using the locator dots, and line bowling.

---

### **Simply put, Bowling: Knowledge Is the Key is a must book for the serious bowler.**

---

Borden, in the section on blocked lane conditions, discusses the general issue and distinguishes between various types of blocks, including the basic block, blended regular block, a wall, the tunnel block, the funnel block, the dreaded reverse block, and the flat or non-blocked condition.

Borden closes this chapter with a "good rule of thumb: *the tougher the conditions, the straighter the shot; the easier the conditions, the more room you have to let it out and hook it back.*"

The next section covers advanced lane reading; the four shot method of finding the strike line, and adjusting for spare conversions.

Advanced physical techniques is the next section of this chapter and Borden covers such topics as knee bend and loft, armswing tempo and lane conditions, the cupping or breaking of the wrist, advancing or retarding the release point, and the use of half-fingers.

In utilizing these advanced physical techniques, Borden reminds the reader that synchronization is necessary and vital in that everything must work simultaneously; all parts of the body must follow the same drumbeat. The power or thrust of the legs must be balanced with the

power or thrust in the armswing, the power positions of the wrist (cocked or uncocked, cupped or broken), the amount of lift power imparted on the bowling ball, and the finger power imparted in the release.

Borden closes this fine chapter with a section on advanced bowling ball adjustments and a discussion of top weight versus bottom weight, weight holes, and three-part versus two-part bowling ball construction.

The reader, in the final analysis, should remember that not all advanced techniques are functionally correct for all players. Each technical adjustment might be correct in a general sense, but it may be necessary to tailor it to the individual player's style and needs and then incorporated into his/her game with practice.

Chapter 7, "Evaluation to Find the Combination," which consists of three charts on three pages, is *worth the price of the book*. It is a capsule summary of physical adjustments, angle adjustments, and equipment adjustments to all possible non-blocked lane conditions. From conditions such as oily heads, pines, and back ends; to oily heads, dry pines, and dry back ends; to medium heads, oily pines, and oily back ends; to medium heads, dry pines, and dry back ends; to dry heads, oily pines, oily back ends; to dry heads, dry pines, and dry back ends, are covered in this readable chart. An amazing piece of work—just right for the developing and advanced player who needs the valuable information offered in this chapter.

In conclusion, I highly recommend this invaluable text with great enthusiasm. Simply put, *Bowling: Knowledge Is the Key* is a must book for the serious bowler and if you, the reader, have verbalized any seriousness for bowling and do not obtain this masterpiece, then one can only ask who is kidding who!

*Gary Parsons is a former college champion and college coach who has served as a mentor-coach-instructor to several PBA members. He currently teaches bowling classes at Fair Lanes Waldorf.*

**NEXT: Par Bowling, by Tom Kouros**