



Lighten up, parents!

"Did you make the two-board adjustment like I said?"

"Did you square your shoulders to the target?"

Sound like a bowler talking to himself? Not exactly.

Try a parent imparting his wisdom or knowledge to his child during tournament play.

Throughout this year's Vir-Mar-District Invitational Tournament, I followed the bowlers from center to center, realizing that it was not only the youths competing, but oftentimes the parents competing through their youths as well.

The thought of competing in a singles, elimination-type tournament is pressure enough for most of the youths, whose ages ranged from 14 to 21. Adding to this enormous pressure were parents demanding that these youths perform flawlessly.

Lighten up, parents!

For those of you who have never been in these shoes, please realize that it is not as easy as it seems. And for those of you

who have, face the facts: You've had your turn.

The main criteria for participating in the Invitational is to average 150 or bet-



ter in an area YABA-sanctioned league. For most youths, this tournament is their first taste of self-imposed pressure—obtaining the average and then waiting for the invitation are real anxious moments for the young leglers.

The actual tournament moves the pressure element to another level. The youths are now faced with competing against peers with the same general average and performing at a level that will allow them to advance to the next round.

Then the pressure mounts again as the competition becomes more intense. Advancement to the next three rounds and the finals becomes the top priority.

Add to this self-imposed pressure the constant, "You've got to...!" from the parents, and you've set the stage for poor performance or, in some cases, no perfor-

mance from the pressured youths. The frustration that appears due to missed spares manifests itself in tears, kicked bowling bags, and the ultimate: elimination from the competition.

The thrill of victory and the agony of defeat are both measured not by whether you win or lose, but how the game was played. For these fantastic youths, it is beneficial—first and foremost—that they have a good time.

So, parents: At the next tournament or league session, try relieving some of the pressure on the youths by stressing the importance of having fun *first*.

Harry Ladson, a youth coach at Bowl America Silver Hill, is a past recipient of the Greater Washington Bowling Senate's James "Sonny" Steward Award for his numerous contributions to the sport of bowling.