BOOK REVIEW  •  LYNN ELMORE

Bowling: The Handbook of Bowling Psychology


Team USA coach Ken Yokobosky poses the following question at the start of Chapter 1: “Ask yourself, ‘Am I as committed to working on my mental game as I am to my physical game?’”

If your answer is yes, and you are serious and committed to taking your game to the next level, then Bowling: The Handbook of Bowling Psychology, a volume in the Sport Psychology Library series, is a must read and an excellent choice to add to your collection of bowling instructional books. The book provides a roadmap for success in the sport of bowling in five key areas—executing proper physical movements (the physical game), knowing the equipment, adjusting to the lane or playing surface, the mental game, and physical conditioning. The book’s approach is to teach bowling’s mental game in a sequence very much in the way you might prepare for competition.

I particularly liked the approach offered whereby before you begin your preparation, you develop a master plan for your skill development that focuses on the five key areas mentioned above. Make your practice/training a quality effort by setting up performance goals by which you can measure and monitor your progress.

The authors—sport psychologist Dr. Eric S. Lasser, Hall of Fame coach Fred Borden, and Team USA Head Coach Jeri Edwards—have made a great contribution to the sport by writing this book that is long overdue and will serve as a very relevant bowling resource. Throughout its 20 chapters, you will find helpful techniques, strategies, self-evaluations, and exercises to improve concentration and consistency and ways to make sure that mental training is incorporated in your practice sessions. From pre-shot routines to handling distractions and disappointments during competition, whether it’s tournaments, league play, or in everyday life, you will be saturated with useful and valuable information that certainly addresses all aspects of situations that affect mental preparation.

There also are illustrations and inspirational stories of various bowlers, including PBA titlists Patrick Healey Jr. and Chris Barnes, former U.S. National Amateur Champion and three-time Team USA member Debbie Kuhn, and Jeremy Sonnenfeld, who rolled the first certified 900 series, just to list a few, and how they were able to use these techniques to achieve their goals.

Kuhn, for instance, plays music in her lane, or in her room, or in a car, or even when she is working out. “I believe that music helps me focus on my game. It’s like I’m closed off to all distractions. I don’t hear or feel anything other than my heartbeat. It makes me feel like I can do anything.”

Regardless of your level of bowling experience, you will benefit greatly from having this book as a resource tool.

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Dealing with wood lanes, lofting, and the pocket 5-pin

Q. I am bowling on wood lanes for the first time and found it is much more difficult than bowling on synthetic surfaces because balls do not hook as much on wood surfaces. What can I do?

A. Bowling balls actually hook earlier on wood surfaces, and this makes the ball roll out, which gives the impression of less hook. You will have to experiment some, but I would first try a reactive ball polished and see if that will allow the ball to get through the heads. If this works for you, the ball should then be closer to your normal hook on the back-ends.

What you are trying to combat is early roll, so you want equipment that tends to go long. This should help.

There is the possibility that to keep the lanes from hooking too much, the house is laying down a ton of oil. If this is the case, you will need to go to more aggressive equipment to get the ball into a roll.

First, try option one if the ball goes straight, then try the second option.

You also could ask at the center pro shop; the folks there might just have your answer regarding the conditioning and save you some time.

Q. I have been lofting the ball lately, and this is a new problem. I want to quit this bad habit, but I don’t know how it started. Can you give me some reasons why I might be lofting?

A. Here are a few things that could cause lofting:

✓ Squeezing the ball.
✓ Early timing getting to the line ahead of the ball causing you to muscle the ball in the downswing to catch up.
✓ Aiming the ball or, as some say, steering the ball.
✓ If your confidence is down, sometimes we try too hard to hit our mark. This can cause hanging on too long trying to hit that mark.
✓ Too loose of a thumbhole can be a cause. This can cause squeezing, as can too short a span.
✓ Trying to turn the ball too hard or trying to make the ball hook more.

Some of these things are an easy cure, but guessing is never a good thing. Go see a coach and let him/her tell you. This will save a lot of time and not complicate your situation.

Q. Why do I always leave the 5-pin standing when hitting the pocket?

A. Your entry angle into the pocket is weak or perhaps your ball is too light—either one can cause the 5-pin to stand. A heavier ball won’t deflect as much as a light ball. Balls less than 14 pounds can lead to carry problems.

If your ball is 14 pounds or more, you need to create more angle toward the 5-pin at the pocket. If this is the case, I would suggest getting a coach to watch you and suggest a change in your game to help.

If the ball is lighter, you may still be able to help the problem by moving a board or two to the right (to the left for left-handers) to create more entry angle.

To ask a question, write askbob@clearwire.net.

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head to relax before every shot, while Sonnenfeld credits breathing for relaxation, pre-shot routine, self-talk, and self-acceptance and other psychological skills that helped him handle clutch circumstances during his 900 series.

The question and answers format in Part IV is an excellent resource of some very effective approaches for dealing with situations such as difficult lane conditions, distractions, and challenges that involve others. For the women and senior bowlers, I was particularly pleased at the special attention given to the bowling issues and concerns of these two groups. While the entire book addresses a wide range of considerations that affect both genders, it was good to see a distinct identification of the issues that specifically affect women.

Regardless of your level of bowling experience, you will benefit greatly from having this book as a resource tool. Read it, then read it again, but more importantly, refer to it often and start applying the techniques and see the improvements take shape.

Lynn Elmore is a member of the NCAUSBCA Hall of Fame.