

PRESSURE

Top Area Bowlers Tell How They Handle It

Every bowler faces pressure situations—a time when you just have to get that strike or convert that difficult spare in order for you or your team to be victorious in a league or tournament or pot game or Saturday night outing with friends. Or maybe you get that rare opportunity when things are going just right and you discover you've started off your third game with nine strikes. You suddenly realize that you're feeling a lot different than you did earlier that night when you struck out in the tenth each time for a couple of buck-eighties. And it's not just your attitude; your whole body feels different.

Whether you know it or not, Mr. Pressure is paying you a visit at the most inopportune time. Yes, I know, you're the kind of person who always gets flustered when unexpected guests pop in. What *are* you going to do?

How do you cope with pressure on the lanes and between frames? Do you begin to perspire heavily? Do your legs wobble? Do your hands shake? Do you wish the scorekeeper would turn off the telescore so that people wouldn't know you're *three strikes* away from a perfect game?

In the first part of a continuing series on pressure in bowling, a few of the top area bowlers were asked to explain how they deal with pressure—on the lanes and/or between frames—to keep it from interfering with their performance. There are several different answers; read them carefully and see how they attempt to do it—maybe one will work for you!

MIKE LADD: In a league match, I usually try to bowl before the opposing anchorman does to lessen the pressure on myself and hopefully to put more pressure on him.

BOB STOKES: I just try to keep the pressure from building up. I just worry about what I have to do and how I'm going to execute the shot.

KENNY MANGUM: I try to heighten my concentration by focusing on the task at hand, while still going through the normal routines between frames.

BUTCH LUTHER: An anchorman in a competitive league can be faced with many do-or-die situations—times when you just have to have nerves of steel. I believe that I've come up with a solution that helped alleviate much of the pressure that I often had to face, and it's something that other anchormen may want to consider: Become the team captain and make yourself the lead-off bowler!

STEVE SIPE: I try to make myself aware of the surroundings and the current situation. I think about what I am doing and what my tendencies have been in similar pressure situations. Bowlers tend to rush in a pressure situation just to get it over with. The result is usually a pretty bad shot.

JOHN SUDDUTH: I think positively of getting a strike before I bowl. Then, I think about my delivery from the start to the finish, and I think of it in terms of slow motion. I go ahead and roll the ball, and I usually stay pretty slow with my feet. The results are normally pretty good.

RICHIE WOLFE: I always try to start over right from the beginning, like it's a new game, and I always tell myself to stay slow. I go over the basics because that's what I usually mess up. Often my problem is to swing the ball out too far—I never tug the ball—so I tell myself to keep my feet slow and just try to roll my normal shot.

LARRY WALLACE: Every ball means the same to me, whether it's a "pressure" shot or a "fill" ball in the tenth frame when the game's already won or lost. I use the same mental idea towards each shot, and I don't change anything. I try to use this same philosophy between frames, too. I find that it's nice to talk with someone about a football game or something to keep my mind relaxed. You try to keep the pressure the same by rolling the ball the same each time, using the same thought processes.

RAY BOTTS: I try to treat each frame like it's no more important than any other frame. It also helps if you don't look at the scoreboard.

GREG GOETZ: Be prepared. That's a very general statement, but it can be broken down into a few "golden" rules. Among them: (1) Be in a hurry to win, but don't be in a hurry to lose. Throw pressure shots when *you* are ready. (2) Practice, and you'll develop confidence that you will carry onto the lanes, so you'll be able to do what **you** decide to do. (3) Anchormen: pay close attention to the lane you finish on, so that you'll know what to do when the money is on the line. (4) Make up your mind what you're going to do and then do it, so that the worst you'll do is make a mistake and not choke. (5) Don't make the same mistake twice. Know your tendencies under pressure, and adjust accordingly. (6) You can't afford to be too careful.