

20 QUESTIONS

Willie Jelks

NCAUSBCA Hall of Famer Willie Jelks remains active at age 73 in association activities on and off of the lanes. Last season, the steady right-hander finished with league averages of 213, 208, 206, 202, and 194, and he recorded an 802 series. This clearly was not a fluke: He scored his latest perfect game September 29 in the Stan Soaper Men's Commercial league at Bowl America Shirley. Jelks recently checked-in and responded to 20 questions posed by editor Bob Cosgrove.

What number 300 game was this?

When I came to this area, I had seven, so I've probably had 11 or 12.

What ball did you use?

It was a [Brunswick] Anaconda ball that weighs 15 pounds.

How was this one different than earlier ones?

One thing: When I first came here, I shot a 300 at the same bowling center, and most of the people were kids then. You're

not going to believe it, but they were all there when I shot this latest one, and they remembered what lanes I shot that first 300 on—33 and 34. I couldn't believe that. That made it special, you know.

When did you come to this area?

I was first here in 1968; I was in the Marine Corps, I got discharged at Quantico, and I went home. I went back to work, and I didn't like it there anymore. I worked for General Motors. I worked long enough to retire, and I came back down here in May 1971. I had enough time to retire at General Motors, but I've been retired now for eight years.

How often do you bowl these days?

I bowl Wednesday and Friday in my regular leagues, and sometimes I sub on Wednesday mornings with the seniors—that was where I shot my 800.

Do you practice often?

Yes. I bowl three games on Monday through Friday.

Have you done any instructing?

I have, but not in the last six years. Me and Wilson Rowe took a class one time at [Bowl America] Shirley back in the early 1980s. We took an instruction class, and I had a card, but I don't know what happened to it.

How important is bowling to you today compared to years past?

At this stage in my life, that's all I've got to do, so it's very important that I'm able to bowl. I thank God every day that I'm able to walk up there. And I've been bowling pretty well lately.

How do you like participating in senior leagues?

I love it because I know most of the people, and I bowled with them when we were younger.

What constitutes a satisfying league session for you these days?

When my team wins. Like I say, I'm not a good interviewee!

What adjustments have you made in your game as you've gotten older?

My physical condition—I exercise every day, so I don't trip over my feet. I've been fortunate that I'm doing pretty good at it. I do stretch exercises all the time, every day.

Has the modern equipment helped or hindered your game?

It's hard to say because I averaged 225—that was my highest average—and I averaged that with the old bowling balls, so it's kinda hard to tell. No, I don't think it's bothered me at all—let's put it that way. No.

What is the strongest part of your game today?

My concentration—I have to really concentrate in order to score well because I don't have the balance I used to have at the line. And my agility—I don't have the agility and the balance that I used to have, so I've got to really concentrate so I don't fall off balance.

Who were your strongest competitors in your day?

[Fellow NCAUSBCA Hall of Famers] Lee

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Brosius, Larry O'Neill, Steve Sipe, and Jim Robinette.

What area bowlers impress you today?

They've got a kid that bowls up at Shirley called Wes Martin—he's only been here a couple of years, but man, this kid can really bowl. The other kid that's been here a long time is Anthony Whitehead. This kid can bowl, and he's nice and cool—he's a nice guy.

What is your most challenging spare combination?

The 2-4-5. That's a tough shot, man, any day!

What's been the most helpful piece of advice during your bowling career?

There was a guy back home, back in Buffalo named Charlie Shellenburt, and he told me ... well, I was a good bowler ... so he told me to never disrespect your competition at no time, your competitor—ever. You always respect the guy you're bowling against and the people around you.

Now that's the best tip I've had since I've been bowling—ever—and it's always worked because most places I go now like Texas and California, I always see somebody, and they'll come down and say hello. So I'm really glad I never treated anybody wrong.

What occupies your days these days besides bowling?

That's just about it. I do a lot of housework, a lot of things around my house. I guess that's about it—bowl and work. That's it.

What's been your most memorable tournament performance?

I beat all the guys in New York to qualify for the 1970 BPAA All-Star Tournament [renamed the "BPAA U.S. Open" the following year]. I still have pictures from that now—guys like [USBC Hall of Famer] Jimmy Schroeder and Dick Ciprich. It was like the Invitational that we used to have here. I beat Ciprich back-to-back!

I think about that tournament all the time. I beat the best bowlers in the city, and they've got some good bowlers in New York.

What is your most immediate bowling goal?

Shoot 850!

Our Back Pages

5 Years Ago

- Hall of Famer [Anthony Chapman](#) composites the association's second highest average ever with 230.855 in the 2004-2005 season.
- [Karla Pereira](#) discusses her decision to have laser eye surgery in the "My Stuff" feature.
- [Ernest W. Spriggs](#) provides "The Best Bowling Tip I've Ever Received."

10 Years Ago

- Dawn Fay tops the WDCAWBA Unofficial Ranking for the fifth consecutive season.
- Larry Wallace (869 series), Dana Gore (741), Jim Wolfe (733), Barry Wallace (717), and Russell Rose (697) score a 3,757 five-man series, a Virginia State record.
- [Harlin Watkins and Steve Harter](#) write that for our sport to stay healthy, "we need to be open and sensitive to both old and new bowlers."

15 Years Ago

- A \$30,000 contribution by area bowlers unseats Orange County (Calif.) as the No. 1 money raiser for BVL nationwide for the first time in nine years.
- In his "The Strike Zone" column, Scott Bailey writes: "Having the right equipment and knowing when to use it is 50 percent of the game today for better bowlers."
- John Jowdy decries the increased cost of league bowling often due to the additional dollars required to participate in jackpots.

20 Years Ago

- A 277 game by Mary Brooks at University tops the WDCAWBA Awards listing.
- Alison Shurtleff (621 series) and Eunice Jones (552) capture WDCA 600 Club titles.
- Kenny Jones (739) and Joanne Harris (650) are divisional winners in the MWPBA Award Score Tournament at Bowl America Shirley.

25 Years Ago

- Sheila Pinkston and Tyrone Brooks win Bowl America's Open Tour Grand Finals.
- In her best bowling tip, Ann Scoles notes that "bending at the knees gives me more lift and leverage on my ball."
- Patricia Bailey (A Division) and Katie L. Johnson (B Division) capture Washington, D.C. Area Women's 600 Club titles.

30 Years Ago

- "The Pocket Pro Shop," led by Chuck Gannon's 246-248-227/721, scores an association record four-man team score of 2,750.
- Just moments after his official induction into the NCABA Hall of Fame, Joe Zinicola suffers a fatal heart attack.
- Joan Burnett's 182.7628 composite average is the unofficial high for WDCAWBA for the 1979-1980 season.

35 Years Ago

- In his "President's Message," Vernon R. Burke explains how the Washington City Tenpin Bowling Association was formed in 1945.
- High averages in the Virginia Masters: Ray Shackelford (208), Glenn Myers (206), Ken Shaw (205), John Nurmi (203), and Jerry Jessee and Buddy Engleman (201).
- In the (Bowl America) Silver Hill Thursday Night Men's Handicap, Leroy Hosgood rolls the first 600 series (617) for the second consecutive season.

40 Years Ago

- Rockville's Bob Bruner tosses the area's first perfect game of the 1970-1971 season in the Friday Night Men's Commercial at Fair Lanes Wheaton Plaza.
- Steve Harter's 193 average is the highest in the AJBC Summer Petersen Point Doubles league at Annandale Bowling Center.
- Annandale's Skip Dawson captures top honors in the Boys 12-13 age group in the U.S. Youth Games in New York City.