WARNING: SSC IS BOWLING'S CANCER

EDITOR'S NOTE: *The following is Bill Taylor's famous warning to the bowling industry that first appeared in 1960 in a 22-page booklet that later caught the attention of* The Wall Street Journal. *Taylor, the controversial and legendary industry inventor, instructor, and writer, believed that when bowling pin manufacturers began making pins with voids in 1959 (with ABC's approval), bowling-the-sport began its downhill slide. Easier-falling pins, he claimed, would weaken not only the performance environment but also the performer, resulting in a new high-scoring generation that Taylor predicted would in fact become "The Weaker Breed"—bowlers who can't hit a single board, can't consistently pack the pocket without lane guidance, and don't know how to look to their bodies for the solutions to their scoring problems. Because now, said Taylor, they don't have to.*

HOW TO CHEAPEN A NATIONAL SPORT

THE FALLACY OF "HIGH SCORING"

BOWLING IS TRAVELING DOWNHILL FAST

WILL BOWLING JOIN WRESTLING AS A FAKE?

HOW MANY PIN-ETTES IN AN HONEST PIN?

HAS YOUR DAUGHTER SHOT A 300 THIS WEEK?

WHO KILLED DEFLECTION? WHY?

THE WAR OF THE MANUFACTURERS

COMING SOON: "THE WEAKER BREED"

FOREWORD

Dear Reader:

You may be puzzled by the series of substitute titles above (each of which appeared separately in large type on the first nine pages of Taylor's booklet)—or curious or irritated. Any emotion which helps evoke your interest in the following pages is welcome, for without your keen interest and participation, the problem of SSC will continue to make those titles valid headings and predictions.

The subject matter was prepared by Bill Taylor, teacher of professional bowlers, in defense of bowling and bowlers everywhere. Mr. Taylor will deposit $1,000 in any bank to match an equal amount deposited by any person or organization wishing to debate this subject, proceeds going to the winner as determined by a panel of professional bowlers.

The pamphlet is dedicated to those bowlers whose games have been destroyed or deteriorated by SSC, and especially to the stars and professionals whose careers and income-producing years have been adversely affected.

Sincerely,
COMMITTEE FOR HONEST BOWLING CONDITIONS

WHAT IS SSC?

SSC means Super Soft Conditions. Super Soft Conditions are bowling conditions where the lanes are excessively dry and hook too soon and too much, and bowling pins which deflect too easily because of weight reduction, weight distribution within the pin, plastic coatings which create excessive bounce or deflection, and similar bowling pin constructions.

Bowling is a game of skill. And body balance during the approach and finish is extremely important—in fact, vital—to good bowling. The development of a good bowling game—"game" meaning the player's style and form—is difficult and demands great amounts of knowledge, practice, and patience. Within the general category of knowledge, there is ever present the goal of being in good body balance during the approach and finish, in order to make a good "shot," or delivery.

When a player makes a bad shot due to imbalance of some degree, such as may be caused by rushing the feet, the results generally are two-fold. First, the bowling ball usually will not go to the desired target, the strike pocket, and secondly, even if it does hit the pocket, the chances of making a strike are reduced materially because the effectiveness of the rolling ball is reduced by the bad balance shot, or PULL.

Thus a player whose knowledge is minimal will claim a "tap," when actually the failure to carry a strike was a result of the bad shot, and *predictable* as such. This is not to say that all "taps" are bad shots, but a high percentage of bad shots which hit the pocket result in leaving the 5- and 10-pins and the 5-7 and 8-10 splits because the bowling ball deflects, due to the previously mentioned loss of effective roll, from bad balance, and the resulting PULL.

Deflection and Balance

The ability to execute a shot which will prevent the bowling ball from deflecting too much has been the primary test which separated good shots from bad shots. Seldom can a bowler whose normal shot results in the weak hit leaves mentioned earlier make up by pocket hitting accuracy the deficiency in pinfall which the leaves create. And there is good reason for this.

With the exception of a player who fails to employ either angle or hook (ball spin) to overcome deflection of his ball, most shots which leave the 5-7, 8-10, 5- and 10-pins, are made in bad balance. This same bad balance reduces accuracy, or Pocket Hitting Percentage. So with few exceptions, players who make shots in bad balance, and whose balls necessarily have a lower Pocket *Carrying* Percentage (PCP), a phenomenon of bowling, also have a lower Pocket *Hitting* Percentage (PHP), another phenomenon of bowling. (Please read this all-important sentence again.)

The sum and average of the two expressions, PHP and PCP, provide an *absolute* measure of a bowler's ability. It is important the reader understand that when Pocket Carrying Percentage begins to drop, so does Pocket Hitting Percentage begin to drop because of poor body balance and PULL.

When bowling conditions are altered so that the lanes are drier or the pinfall is easier due to the use of a more deflective pin, the bowling ball tends to deflect *less*. This is simple physics. When the triangle of pins present less deflection or when the dry lane

is assisting the ball's drive into the pins, the ball bounces *less.*

Since the ball does not deflect as much on SSC, the weak-hit pocket leaves, 5- and 10-pins, 5-7, and 8-10 splits, are reduced, increasing the poorer bowler's scores, *without any increase in his skills.* As the weak-hit pocket leaves are reduced, *even on bad balance shots,* there is no gentle reminder (5-7, 8-10, 5) to advise the bowler that he made a bad shot.

For a while, his scores rise. He is elated by his rapid "improvement" for a few months, and then something happens. He begins to notice that he doesn't hit the pocket as much as he formerly did. And, a couple of form problems, such as rushing the line for speed to reduce hook on some of the creek beds on which he bowls, has caused the body balance to become worse. Now the 5-7 and 8-10 splits begin to return, so he turns the ball a little harder to "help" it, and in a matter of months another amateur bowling game is ruined.

Star Bowlers vs. SSC

How does the star or professional bowler fare?

As any student might expect, the professional is in good balance a higher percentage of shots, and can roll the ball as effectively, generally, as he wishes. By effectively, we mean he can roll it strong, less strong, or weak, depending on how hard he wants to hit the enemy, the 10 pin triangle. He knows how to change angles for hooking lanes, how to reduce finger lift for lighter pins, and various other tactics.

On a drier lane which hooks more, he will move left, sometimes so far left that he is facing the 10-pin. In fact, a straight line connecting his swing and target, if extended, often will encounter the gutter at a point several feet in front of the 10-pin. Consider a professional trying to make a shot where prize money is involved, facing the 10-pin, trying to hit the pocket, which is far to the left of his approach line and target line. Out of fear, lack of confidence, or muscle tension, he may PULL the follow-through across his face or body (only five degrees is enough), and roll the ball ineffectively, for the very common 1-2-4-10, 2-4-5-8, 5-7, 8-10, or the 10-pin "tap."

Such weird approach angles are harming both professionals and amateurs. As the player encounters dry lanes more often, he unknowingly develops a consistent "small" PULL, five to 10 degrees, not realizing he no longer follows through straight because the ball is still hooking fairly well, although it doesn't carry like it did, leaving numerous 4s and 10s. Rule: PULL reduces Pocket Carrying Percentage in *direct ratio* to the *degree of PULL.* The more he pulls, the poorer the ball carries, due to poorer body balance.

Another star may use a different system. Instead of moving to the far left on creek beds, he uses a more reasonable angle and reduces the hook by opening his hand to reduce the force of the finger lift, thereby reducing the force of the spin revolutions which make the ball curve. In opening his hand, he is dealing with a variable. One time he releases it satisfactorily, next time he doesn't because the brain cannot accurately deliver signals to the hand in the fraction of a second allotted to the release. In addition, he develops a variable follow-through; one time he does and then he doesn't. Rule: Pocket Hitting Percentage drops when hook is inconsistent and target line accuracy is inconsistent.

Now aware that his weapon is sometimes weak and may not carry the pocket hit, in a tense situation he will "help" the ball, pulling the follow-through in some amount to the left, thereby weakening the ball and leaving the 5-7, 8-10, or other weak-pocket leave, just as he was afraid he would do because of bad body balance from the PULL. Rule: PULL can cause bad balance, or bad balance can cause PULL. Both result in a lower Pocket Carrying Percentage and, necessarily, in a lower Pocket Hitting Percentage.

A player who rolls a low-revolution ball to reduce the spin and grab on the dry lane is also risking *roll out,* more common among amateurs than stars. This occurs when the lane is dry, the ball speed is medium-slow, and the number of revolutions or spin imparted to the ball is low. The dry lane actually wears out the revolutions, just as on a rug or lawn, causing the ball to suddenly straighten out and hit with no more effectiveness than a ball rolled 60 feet with no spin at all. If a player lifts from behind the ball to eliminate side spin, which curves more, the forward spin will roll out even sooner, with the ball again hitting flat.

Another player will use speed to reduce the hook. If he does it by increasing footspeed, he creates two problems.

One, he may arrive at the line ahead of the ball and pull the late ball for a bad, off-balance shot which won't carry a hit effectively, causing possibly the 10-pin "tap."

Two, he may increase ball speed so much that he creates power taps, 4-pins and 10-pins, on the lighter pins being used these days. The problem can be extremely aggravating to a professional bowler.

Creek Beds

In recent years it has been the trend to put less finish on the lane to cover the bare wood. Since a majority of bowlers roll the ball ineffectively, an area four to seven inches wide gets most of the play on strike balls, and the finish in this narrow area often wears out completely.

Superior players who roll the ball well cannot play in the drier narrow area because the spinning ball will grab the creek bed within a creek bed and jump left into or past the headpin.

Occasionally during tournament play, the lanes keeper will dress the lanes with an oily dressing. The dressing soaks into the much drier and often bare track area, which soon becomes dry again. On either side of the track where there is some finish because that part of the lane gets less play, the dressing does not soak in and dry up, but lies on top of the finish.

When the superior player moves left to utilize more angle and avoid jumping into or past the headpin, he is then rolling the ball obliquely at the track, hoping to catch the track at the proper moment to ride it into the strike pocket. If the new approach line and target line is so sharp (necessary to avoid hitting the nose or left side) that the ball crosses the track and onto the dressing, the shot is gone as surely as if it had rolled over a cliff, because it cannot curve back on the oily dressing.

If the player happens to miscue a shot with a little extra speed or unsatisfactory hand action, that shot also will cross the track and head into oblivion. All players expect that a slight miscue will result in a slightly misdirected shot, but they don't appreciate, and justly so, that a small error can result in a very badly directed ball.

Lanes not only do not have enough finish, but the finish is not dressed often enough. Manufacturers have stressed that less dressing is needed with their finish, on the premise that the purpose of dressing is to keep the finish from cracking and peeling from dryness, as earlier finishes did when they weren't dressed regularly. While dressings may be important for the

prevention of dryness and protection of the finish, and less necessary for that purpose with finishes which do not crack and peel as readily from dryness, the primary purpose of both finishes and dressings is to keep the lanes in the best possible condition for bowling. More and more proprietors are led to believe that lanes need only a "coat a year and a mopping each day" with an oil mop, a very disgusting practice. This is due in part because many proprietors are new to bowling and have no idea how important proper lane maintenance is.

Unsuccessful in his attempts to catch the drier track area consistently, the star will move back to the right and try to keep the ball in the track by opening his hand to reduce revolutions, or by overturning the ball to kill the spin, or by various other hand action efforts. None of these efforts really are successful because they adversely affect both direction and follow-through.

Even if the player is successful in catching the track from the far left approach line, ever present in his mind is the fear of crossing the track. TRACK!!! In a pressure situation the most seasoned star may suddenly feel on the way to the line that the ball is going to cross the track, and he will pull the follow-through toward the pins, creating bad balance, and killing the effective spin and roll. The result is invariable. The ball will sail toward the 3-6, without any possible chance of reaching the pocket.

Depending on his knowledge of his *own* game, the better bowler can deteriorate to a point where confidence is shattered and he is often bewildered. Excessively dry lanes contribute materially to this possibility.

If the star can get into serious trouble, what hope is there for the intermediate 170 to 190 average bowler or the beginner to advance? There are thousands of teenagers and young men bowling today who are carrying respectable averages but who are not equal to those averages. In pressure situations, or on honest conditions, they cannot bowl their averages. They are The Weaker Breed, a direct result of excessively dry lanes, and they are destined to become stymied on a plateau of mediocrity.

The "Plastic" Ball

The so-called plastic or fiberglass ball which provides more friction and grabs the lane sooner than a rubber ball is by its description and purpose as dangerous to the bowler's game as dry bowling lanes. The greater traction permits a poorer shot to deflect less than a rubber ball would, permitting a player to execute poorer shots without being aware of the deteriorating effect on his game.

To be more specific, a player with 10 to 15 degrees of pull in his follow-through can use a plastic ball and carry pocket hits as effectively as a 90-degree shot would carry using a rubber ball because the plastic ball deflects less. Similarly, a combination of the plastic ball and a 30-degree pull is approximately equal in carrying power to a rubber ball and a 15-degree pull, or for purposes of comparison, the plastic ball permits a 10- or 15-degree poorer shot to appear normal in hitting power.

The result has been, from observing numerous amateur and professional bowlers who converted to plastic balls, that the player's shot becomes weaker. Ninety-degree shots become 80-degree shots, 80-degree shots become 70-degree shots and so on down the line. Accuracy deteriorates in direct proportion to the amount of pull, and with the exception of the bowler who cannot roll the ball at less than skidding speeds and needs a little more traction, and the bowler to whom the plastic ball gives trust and confidence in a 90-degree follow-through, using the plastic ball is almost certain to degrade the bowler's balance, form, and game.

PIN-ETTES

Let us now study the other major Super Soft Condition: highly deflective pins, more properly called pin-ettes.

They are called pin-ettes for the very good reason that they do not present as formidable an obstacle to the ball as pins did in the past, and they deflect far more easily when the ball strikes them. The excessive deflection or bounce results when pins are reduced in weight, when pins are made top heavy, when plastic coatings are used, and various other methods employing technological "improvements."

When a bowling ball strikes pin-ettes, it deflects *less* because pin-ettes deflect more, and a corresponding *reduction* in weak-shot pocket leaves results, such as 5- and 10-pins, 5-7, and 8-10 splits. As on dry lanes, the absence of pocket leaves on *weak or bad shots* invariably leads to worse balance and *more frequent bad shots,* subsequently reducing both Pocket Hitting Percentage and Pocket Carrying Percentage.

As a general rule, most players' games eventually will deteriorate almost as much as the condition is false. That is, when pin-ettes are used and averages rise rapidly as much as 10 pins, after a period of several months to a year the averages will return almost to normal as the players' games deteriorate from SSC. They are then weaker players and cannot maintain their true averages on an honest condition. Of course, the players with an exceptional knowledge of their own game will continue to knock down 10 more pin-ettes per game than pins because he knows how to make shots in good body balance, without PULL.

Stars vs. Pin-ettes

For professional or star players, pin-ettes present the same problem as dry lanes—or rather, call for the same "solutions" as dry lanes. The good shot charges through pin-ettes and leaves the 4, 4-7, 4-9, and 10-pins because of too much power—or more correctly because there is not enough deflection *of the ball by the pins.* These are all *power* leaves, due to the ball being too strong in hooking power and/or speed, for the little pin-ettes. Superior players sometimes feel like they are trying to swat flies on a window pane with a wooden mallet.

To combat the situation, some players attempt to reduce the hooking power by opening the hand, just as on dry lanes. As before, the "solution" is a cause of trouble, creating a hook which varies considerably, and damaging the follow-through. Both troubles help to reduce PHP and PCP, and cannot achieve the desired result.

When both dry lanes and pin-ettes prevail, the player who increases speed to reduce hook and to avoid extremely oblique approach angles, finds himself inundated by power leaves (4-7, 4, 10, 4-9) from the excessive speed.

Quite frequently, the combination of dry lanes and pin-ettes actually produces *lower* scores than a more honest condition would produce, due to power "taps," when on the identical condition an amateur bowler would score *above* his average because the pinfall is easier for poorer shots.

Recognizing the fact that SSC penalizes better games and rewards poorer games temporarily (a la Robin Hood, Socialism), the term "socialized bowling" has been used by a number

of professional bowlers. Unfortunately, stars depend on the equipment manufacturers for a livelihood and dare not complain, while amateurs are ignorant of the effects of SSC and assume their new ability to score higher is due to improvement in their skills. Theirs is a dream world where the degree of success is not determined by skill but by the ability of manufacturers to reduce the amount of skill required.

Pin-ettes and Deflection

In recent years it has become apparent to responsible observers that pin manufacturers are deliberately producing pins which topple more easily, to enhance and to sell their products. Many of their advertisements claim as much, as they proudly announce "more bounce for higher scores," "higher center of gravity for better 'toppling action' and high scores," and so forth, to the utter disgust of learned bowling teachers.

Deflection is the vital element in learning the game of bowling.

As a result, manufacturers are creating a monstrous national situation wherein it is *impossible* to learn bowling properly, with exceptional knowledge or instructions, because there is very little on the pin deck to deflect the ball and tell a player when he has made a mistake in delivery. Deflection is the vital element in learning the game of bowling. When it is removed, one cannot learn without an exceptional knowledge of the game. It is no more a test of bowling ability to score 200 against pin-ettes, than for a baseball player to hit .400 against hitting practice pitching or rubber baseballs. In both cases the condition is soft.

When pin standards originally were established, the purpose clearly was to regulate, so that scores could be evaluated and interpreted. American Bowling Congress standards are rigid regarding pin dimensions, and even specify gross weight limitations, although they are much too broad. But since the advent of plastic coatings, gross weight limits have lost their meaning. Wooden pins, which weigh 3 pounds, 4 ounces, offer more resistance and deflection to the ball than do plastic pins, which weigh 3-6. Plastic pins weighing 3-4 may be satisfactory for women and children, but they are definitely are not satisfactory for men bowlers and would not be used in national tournaments if the tournament officials were aware that 3-4 plastic pins are similar in deflection to wooden pins of 3 pounds or *less*.

Another factor is weight distribution within the pin. Formerly, a pin could roll over against a standing pin, wobble it slightly, and stop. Nowadays a pin-ette barely rolling will easily topple another pin-ette, although most of the time pin-ettes are not barely rolling, they are fairly flying off of the kickbacks. Where is there skill in this form of scoring?

With various types of plastic, different weight pins, different types of wood in the pins, hollow and solid pins, various centers of gravity, it should be more than obvious that gross weight is not a satisfactory standard by which to select or sanction pins. Since deflection is the key to proper bowling, it should be equally obvious that the American Bowling Congress needs to adopt a pin deflection test in order to sanction pins. Anything less is a waste of time.

While on the subject of official sanction, it is common knowledge that a 17-pound ball is illegal. Yet, a regulation 16-pounder delivered against pin-ettes hits them with a force equal to the force of an 18-pound ball striking 3-6 wooden pins. Clearly if a 16-pound plus ball is illegal, then pin-ettes are illegal, for they provide the same results.

A few professional bowlers who understand rules of force are now using 15-pound balls, so they will not hit the pin-ettes with too much mass. It then follows that on conditions where a better player must use a lighter ball because his shot is superior, a poorer player with a weak shot who uses a 16-pound ball has the same illegal advantage that a bowler would have if he rolled a 17-pound ball against honest pins, while other players were restricted to 16-pound balls. If pin-ettes are here to stay, heaven forbid, then 16-pound balls must be ruled illegal, for logic to prevail.

In observing the speed with which pins deflect and bounce off of kickbacks, and then bounce off of the other kickback to clear the deck of any pin-ettes which survive the shock, it is doubtful if pinboys could be induced to set pins once again. Certainly the pin-ette pits would be a dangerous place to be employed. This is not a criticism of automatic pinspotters, or a suggestion that we return to pinboys. Automatic pinspotters have made a tremendous contribution to bowling, and in fact may now prove indispensable to provide the precise and delicate touch necessary just to spot and balance feathery little pin-ettes.

Pin-ette Pocket

In golf, the cup is just as hard to hit as it was many years ago, and putting ability still separates the men from the boys. In bowling, a pin-ette pocket is much larger than a normal pocket *for the poorer shot*. Nose hits crash down corner pins, thin hits rattle off of the kickbacks, and in between, the poorer shot has a total of several inches wherein a strike can be made.

The superior shot has the nose hits, too, but does not have assurance of the solid hit anymore because so often it leaves the 4-pin, 4-7, or 4-9. Also, the superior shot formerly could strike on a good percentage of half-pocket hits and most of the lighter "swisher" hits (which knocks the 5-pin toward the 7-pin) and the poorer hit could not, because the ball would bounce and miss the 5-pin. On pin-ettes the PULL shot will strike on virtually all swisher hits and a fair percentage of half-pocket hits instead of leaving the 10-pin, giving the poorer shot an advantage it does not *earn or deserve*.

One parallel in golf would be to use slanted sideboards to the right and left of the cup, to enlarge the target area and give the less-skilled putter a better chance to sink the ball, possibly after two or three caroms off of the sideboards. Facetious? It certainly is. In fact, it is ludicrous, but it is happening every day in bowling.

Because the pin-ette pocket allows strikes on bad shots, many 279, 289, and 300 games which are flooding SSC areas deserve no more than 220 or 230, and often even less. When just three strikes are reduced to three nine-pin counts in between strikes, the score is reduced by 60 pins. Obviously, if the scoring conditions were only slightly fake, many 300s would be mere 250 games or less.

Nylons Are for Ladies

And only very, very young and very, very old ladies.

The slow but deliberate efforts of manufacturers to reduce the ability of pins to deflect the ball, thereby making pins fall with less skill, has been disastrous enough for bowling. But the "nylonized" pins, which utilize a nylon sleeve imbedded in a plastic coating, are the ultimate to date in minimum deflection.

These extremely deflective pin-ettes jump, bounce, and dance

as if manufactured of virgin rubber, making even the sorriest bowling delivery look powerful. This scandalous "improvement" eclipses 10 years of deliberate efforts to make bowling pins fall easier to draw more customers into the game via inflated scores. For the less than powerful game, it is precisely like playing poker with a pinochle deck, but it is the death knell for the bowler who has developed a shot to knock down something that isn't there.

The argument that nylonized pins will last longer is invalid, as would be an argument that rubber baseballs would last longer than cowhide balls. We predict, without any reservations or qualifications, that nylonized pins at their present weights will do more to destroy bowling's integrity than any other single factor. In fact, without resorting to metal cores, there is good reason to doubt that enough weight could be jammed into the pin dimensions permitted by ABC specifications to offset the rocket-like bounce of nylonized pin-ettes.

Should we believe that the persons responsible for sanctioning socialistic farcical pin-ettes are unaware of the meaning of pin deflection? One is sorely tempted to accept either that they are fools or are cleverly fooling the bowling public with benevolence intended to entrap customers via inflated scoring. Something is wrong in Milwaukee.

Integrity in Sports Standards

In virtually all sports there are standards which must be maintained. In track, a runner's times are invalid if any tail wind exceeds a certain limit. Hurdles must be the proper height, distance and weight standards must be observed, and so it goes in fairness and in respect for past record holders. In baseball, fences are not brought in closer each year, regularly, to increase home runs because the public recognizes and disapproves of cheap scores. Similarly, the golf cup has not been increased in size to make putting easier because it would be recognized as deceitful and damned by public opinion.

But in bowling, the public cannot see any change occur because all pins look alike. Heavy pins and light pins are identical in appearance, as are hollow pins and solid pins and wood pins and plastic pins. Thus, scores rise and record holders are displaced by a weaker breed and the public knows naught. In plain language, this is manipulation of scores through manufacturing prowess for profit.

A champion swimmer trains his or her heart out to clip a fraction of a second from the record. A runner labors month after month to do the same, as do jumpers, throwers, divers, and their brothers in other sports, all gruelingly working to improve their shots. Not we bowlers. With each "sanctioned improvement"—PRESTO!—we are better, smashing records and respected record holders to smithereens. Move over pro wrestling, here comes bowling.

TURNING POINT

A point has been reached where it is vital to the future of bowling that manufacturers halt the race between them to *manufacture* high scores. With each national tournament, the major equipment makers attempt to best each other with higher pinfall, the most 300 games, and so forth, until the game is becoming false and a mockery. In recent years, spectators at the World's and All Star tournaments hardly will applaud for games of 250 and under, with so many higher scores being made. And everyone, except the spectators, is aware that the alleged superior scoring is not being *earned*. Where will the race end if permitted to continue? Our prediction is in one of the titles of this pamphlet. Coming Soon: "The Weaker Breed."

The U.S. Golf Association scrupulously guards against golf equipment makers who try to "soup up" golf balls, and it is the duty of the ABC to do likewise with pins. When pinfall is ridiculously easy for bad shots, and more difficult for superior shots, skill is being penalized.

Manufacturers and proprietors defend their actions with the philosophy that bowlers are asking for higher-scoring equipment and that they are only satisfying the customers' wishes. Does a parent give his child candy upon request? Does a school teacher give pupils easy tests and high grades upon request? Of course not. High scores satisfy ego, and some bowlers would agree to have the pins spotted upside down or tied together just to inflate their egos with inflated scores.

A defender of the new cheap game will ask, "What difference does it make if it is fair and equal to all participants?" It makes a great deal of difference because only a very few professional bowlers have sufficient knowledge of their games to avoid the deterioration which SSC can create. Players who do not have the knowledge at least can buy it from a bowling teacher. But the millions of bowlers who are not professionals are helpless once the deterioration of SSC has reached advanced stages, just as cancer sufferers are helpless in the advanced stages. A dramatic comparison, but highly appropriate.

High scores satisfy ego, and some bowlers would agree to have the pins spotted upside down or tied together just to inflate their egos with inflated scores.

It is conceivable that manufacturers and ABC officials sincerely feel that higher scores made possible by more easily toppled pins are good for bowling and for bowlers. Seemingly logical arguments can be made in defense of this premise because it is definitely more interesting to watch 220 games than 190 games. But good bowlers can shoot interesting scores from 200 to 240, and occasionally higher, without any assistance from pin-ettes.

Furthermore, in the final analysis, the relativity of scores is always the most exciting factor in a match, not how high the scores are. In fact, quite frequently the pressures of TV and prize money cause finalists to drop rather suddenly from high scores in the qualifying rounds to low 200s and even very low scores, especially the weaker shots. But if the match is close, excitement is high. A game of 198 vs. 201 will generate more excitement than a runaway of 208 vs. 247.

One of the prime difficulties which the National Bowling League encountered was how to offer spectators higher scores than they could witness at local lanes by amateurs. On the NBL stage, the bowling pressures were so great that many players stiffened up for 190s and low 200s. To offset this deficiency, some of the NBL arenas were "doctored" to produce higher, and therefore false, scores. Virtually all of the NBL arenas employed extremely light pins in addition to other scoring tricks, such as making the 1-3 pocket wider. If scoring in recent years had not become inflated, the public would not pooh-pooh normal and honest scoring. Even so, NBL spectators showed much more appreciation and excitement for crucial matches involving rela-

tively low scores than for unrealistic and fake high scores where the match was no contest. The thrill of the outcome is the predominant factor in every sport, whether contestants are opposing each other or the record book. Otherwise, it is not a contest; it is an exhibition.

When pins fall so easily that 190 bowlers average 205 and 210, that mediocre teenagers shoot 700s and even 300 games, and ladies with 140 averages shoot series over 600, the time is not far away when bowling will be held in the same low regard as professional wrestling—fake, counterfeit, and fraudulent, not a contest but an exhibition.

These are harsh words, but even more harsh facts could be presented if we wished to indict and castigate bowling's officialdom. However, it is difficult to blame bowling's leaders alone when, one, the bowling public is guilty of requesting softer conditions, and two, past conferences on this subject with bowling's leaders indicate the probability of a genuine unawareness of the effects and folly of SSC.

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE?

The ABC should determine what is a satisfactory and proper amount of deflection by testing pins on professional or amateur bowlers under the supervision of teachers of bowling who know when players are performing properly, or how well they *should be scoring* for their present ability, regardless of what averages they currently hold. When a satisfactory and *honest,* not "good scoring" pin is found, deflection tests should be conducted and the findings retained as standards for future pin tests. In this way, new pins would not be "improvements" of last year's "improved" pins.

Under the current system, pins are improved by the salami method—just a thin slice of improvement here and there. Whenever actual bowling tests are conducted for the ABC and the pins fall a little better than the test bowlers' averages, that is called a "good scoring" pin and is sanctioned by the ABC. Consequently, subsequent tests are conducted with "improved" bowlers with higher averages, creating a new standard, and the succeeding marvel of manufacturing is approved by the ABC as a "good scoring" pin. This is like approving a 37-inch yardstick as a "good long yard" and then next year approving a 38-inch yardstick using last year's 37-inch yardstick as a standard.

By adopting a deflection test, the ABC could easily determine what weight plastic coated pin most closely equals a 3-6 wooden pin in deflection. Unless this type of test program is developed, our predictions will continue to materialize. We predicted the downslide of several prominent stars, and in tournaments today our student professionals consistently predict which players will falter under the pressure of final blocks and games, simply by recognizing them as pullers, unwitting victims of SSC. As long as SSC prevails, there will continue to develop a weaker breed of player of less ability than his predecessors, but one who scores higher than his predecessors—an extremely alarming paradox.

Statements by Mr. Frank Baker, Executive Secretary of the American Bowling Congress, that improved, better condi-

See TAYLOR, *page 14*

TAYLOR, *from page 13*

tioned bowlers are responsible for super scoring are unfounded by facts or reason and naive in the extreme. A few stars have upgraded their skills, but the majority have not significantly changed their games, unless deteriorating balance and unreliability under pressure is considered advancement. If, during a major tournament such as the World's or the All Star, honest pins were put into play inconspicuously, there would be evidence aplenty visibly manifested in the form of sick (SSC) sick bowling balls. But with pin-ettes, everyone throws a bomb.

If it is intended that pins and other equipment produce higher scores without commensurate improvement in the bowler's ability, then bowling's leaders are guilty of immorality and prostitution of a sport for profit.

If it is intended that pins and other equipment produce higher scores without commensurate improvement in the bowler's ability, then bowling's leaders are guilty of immorality and prostitution of a sport for profit. To prevent the pressures of bowlers and proprietors from influencing manufacturers, it may be necessary to educate the entire bowling public. But without doubt, it is necessary *to legislate* against highly deflective pins.

Other sports do not coddle the participant and improve his scores by lowering the physical standards necessary for success, so why should bowling? It should not. Not only is SSC grossly unfair to past record holders and to professionals who earn their livelihood from bowling, SSC will greatly reduce the chances of an amateur learning his game and developing into star material.

Think about SSC when you participate in bowling and observe. In time you will understand and appreciate the folly of manufactured, non-skill bowling scores, and you will become concerned. Anyone who is not concerned with this grave problem does not hold bowling very dear.

Because of SSC, this Committee, comprised of stars and professional bowlers, maintains that Bowling Is Traveling Downhill Fast. Will the American Bowling Congress, bowling's regulative body, permit manufacturers to "improve" scoring year after year until the trend is beyond reversal? If equipment manufacturers call the tune, then the ABC has no function other than promotional agent, registrar, and dispenser of high score awards.

Who will speak out to save bowling from its cancer, Super Soft Conditions, if you don't?

COMMITTEE FOR HONEST BOWLING CONDITIONS — Bill Taylor, Secretary