



Tips for senior bowlers

NCABA Past President James Stewart suggested that I put together some tips for the over-40 crowd. We are all getting older, and this is a great topic, so let's get started. I will offer some brief suggestions for on and off the lanes that will help you hold your own with the youngsters.

First, let's look at some things you can do away from the bowling center.

You should always stretch before competition. This will loosen those muscles and get them ready for peak performance. Focus on the neck, shoulders, back, and hamstrings.

For those taking any anti-inflammatory medication, do so at least one hour prior to competition. This gives the medicine plenty of time to work on those joints.

Let's get that regular walking routine going. A 20-minute brisk walk every other day does wonders for your stamina and flexibility.

All you youngsters beware: The over-40 group is on a mission this season.

Practice your armswing and delivery (without the ball) in front of a mirror. I do this daily to simulate armswing and ball delivery. I also incorporate bending of the knees (not at the waist) to facilitate a smooth delivery on the lanes. This should also help develop greater accuracy. I recommend 100 repetitions per day.

Keep sharp mentally by reading bowling materials and looking at instructional videos. If you keep a personal journal, read it regularly. This may remind you of something you did in the past that brought you some success. We often forget tips we got from someone many years ago. Reading your journal may keep you sharp and focused.

I also recommend watching the pros whenever possible. The ladies' and senior pro tours are especially good for refining

technique because most of these bowlers rely more on skill than power. The men's tour generally is dominated by your skilled players, but you do have some powerful young men who show up in the finals often enough to let you know that ball speed and revs can also get you championships.

Now let's look at some things you can do on the lanes.

For all you over-40 scratch players, check out some of the local tournaments in the area. This will help your mental game get stronger under fire.

As a shop operator, I must suggest getting your specs looked at every two years. Seniors quickly lose flexibility in their fingers/hands due to arthritis and some repetitive motion disorders.

Also consider going down in ball weight as you get older or deal with physical problems. We can adjust spans, layouts, and finger/thumb pitches to alleviate pain and keep you competitive.

If you are comfortable with your strike ball but need a little more pace and direction on your spares, consider going to a lighter weight plastic ball for your spare game. This will allow you to roll the ball harder and straighter, especially at those troublesome corner pins.

Bowling a game or two prior to competition always helps me play better during competition. This way, I can warm up properly at my own pace and not be limited to five or 10 minutes of practice before league or tournament play.

Remember, practice makes perfect, regardless of age. Those who have a regular practice routine may want to add a game or two to that routine. As we get older, we must do a little more to maintain that competitive edge.

Keep in mind that "chance favors the prepared mind and body." These tips can

help bowlers of all ages. You don't have to be 40-and-over to try them.

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As always, good luck, good bowling, and high scores.

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