



## CHUCK GANNON

### FASCINATING

Frequently, friends kid me about my being fascinated with various aspects of life. Well, they're probably right. Lots of things *do* fascinate me: computers, old houses, the brain, science, beautiful women, electronic gadgets of all types, archeology, animals, space, man in general, and a host of other items. All these fascinating subjects generate many equally fascinating questions that mainly go unanswered: Who was the first man in history to shave? What do dogs dream about? When will we learn the true story behind the pyramids? Where will modern technology be ten years from now? Why would anyone think the Three Stooges were funny?

Well, this leads up to a recent fascinating experience. The scene was the 50th anniversary convention of the Bowling Writers Association of America in Niagara Falls, New York. During this event, I had the pleasure of having several discussions with fellow writers who are additionally top authors/instructors, specializing in coaching professional level bowlers. The singlemost thing I found *absolutely fascinating* was that none of them could agree on hardly anything pertaining to bowling. Actually, I doubt if they could have agreed on what city they were in.

Don't get me wrong. I don't think that they should have sat back and politely patronized each other, either. I'll be the first one to speak up if I don't agree with a particular subject or postulation. Constructive criticism that can be predicated on a sound factual basis should have its place in any discussion. Yet, I was quite surprised to see the lack of respect for each other's abilities that was voiced by these "experts"—surprised because that criticism seemed to be based on petty jealousy or personal dislikes rather than factual disagreement. It seemed to me, quite disappointingly so, that each was too set in his opinions and methods, so much so that they had no objectivity left when evaluating others' positions.

The crux of my complaint is that they seem to have forgotten the one thing that helped them gain the positions of respect they enjoy as top instructors: they have *forgotten* how to *learn*!!

And that's what this column is really about. Not bowling per se, but *learning* bowling.

When you reach the point—in any endeavor—where you stop analyzing or learning and begin resting on your laurels, you are in trouble with a capital "T." Your own performance will begin to stagnate, then ultimately deteriorate. Giving personalized bowling instructions can be a complicated and very trying task. Each person has a completely different physical structure; therefore, each requires their own set of rules unique to themselves.

The most productive method I have found for giving individualized instructions is not to just expound on a set of general beliefs, but to try to tailor those principles in such a fashion as to be compatible to the requirements of an individual. Clearly, a person standing 6'1" and 160 pounds, with a 29" arm and a 32" waist, cannot successfully emulate another person 5'5" and 220 pounds, with a 27" arm and a 42" waist. Each requires a different method to achieve the *same* goal.

There are no rigid rules that cannot be deviated from in some fashion, which is why arguing about bowling methods is such a superfluous pastime. We are not *robots*; therefore, ironclad guidelines do not necessarily apply. Of course, when dealing with groups or in the written form, an instructor must isolate factors to be addressed as *basic* principles, but they do not work for all of the people all of the time.

When listening to others expound on their personal theories, my intent is not to prove or disprove them, as so many "advanced" instructors seem to like to do. I believe that one should listen, analyze, and then see if the results can be

absorbed into your overall comprehension of the game. Unfortunately, many seem incapable of recognizing any middle ground between totally right and totally wrong or perceiving the distinction between a theory and a hypothesis. Why???

An approach to a particular subject may be proved invalid, but a thorough analysis may still provide a nugget of useful genius embedded within. Even learning from others' mistakes can be a positive experience. Why dismiss something as meaningless pap before you can analyze it to determine if it has any credence at all? This smacks of a narrow-minded bigot who is afraid to investigate something because the results may shake his own beliefs.

The route to the truth follows many paths. The problem these fellows seemed to have was that they appeared to actually *believe* that they know so much that a mere "amateur" can't tell them anything. Horsefeathers... most non-experts are intelligent, rational people, and are capable of coming up with astute observations that may be useful, despite their lack of training in a particular field.

The way to learn and advance your skills as a bowler is to actually *listen* to all theories about any aspect of the sport. Digest this information carefully. Extract for application that which you determine may be useful to *you*, and store the rest for future reference and/or discard.

Learning should be an *ongoing* process. However, for my friends, the experts, it seems they have transcended that stage and moved on, in their minds, to a higher plane—one where they are the deity and only they can speak the truth, one where any digressions are aberrant and therefore heretical.

Well, I wish them the best of luck in their little kingdoms, but I think they're missing a lot out here in the real world—a world of constant flux and change, a world where technological advances are coming almost faster than we mere mortals can assimilate them, a world that is not stagnate, but is healthy and growing.

One day they will wake up and find that the bowling world has left them behind. Then they will analyze their decline and try to discover the reasons behind it. When they do, they will probably find that the reasons for their downfall are really quite... *fascinating*.