

A league night to remember—well, maybe not everything

Broken ankle in 10th frame fractures bid for perfect game

Some of the details about this adventure are a bit foggy because it took place in this area around 30 years ago, but it's one of the craziest occurrences ever in a bowling center. Henry Starkey of Alexandria, 51, a customer service field representative for Virginia American Water who has been a league bowler since the 1970s, tells his story:

We were bowling on lanes 29-30, and it was the third game of a summer league at Ten Pin Coliseum, which today is AMF Alexandria.

I had the first nine strikes. I got up to throw my tenth strike and threw it a little bit outside, but it came in hard and hit the pocket kinda on the light side. Pins were flying, and the 10-pin stood, but the headpin kicked off the sideboard and slowly rolled across the pindeck toward the 10-pin.



Henry Starkey

good—it was not good!

Meanwhile, everybody was cheering and everything, but one of the guys on my team, Charlie Krisfalusi, saw what happened, and he came over and asked me if I was okay. I said, 'I don't think so. I think I've really, really done something to my left ankle here.'

They went up and got the center manager, who was Chuck Fairchild at the time, and he came over. They kind of assisted me over to a chair and sat me down and rolled up my pant leg a little bit and saw that the ankle had started to swell. They went over and got me a bag of ice to put over my ankle for the time being, and then I think some people were scrambling to see if ... what to do because I still had two more balls to throw.

I think they made a decision that it had to be completed, whether I could stand on one foot or sit in a chair or whatever

the case may have been. I want to say that it was about a half an hour later, Chuck Fairchild and Jack Bayliss, who was bowling in that league, assisted me to the lane and put the ball in my hand.

So I'm standing on my right foot, with my left foot raised and trying to balance myself on my right foot as they were standing on both sides of me in case I fell.

Well, I threw my ball, and got a six-count—I left the bucket—and then they retrieved the ball for me, and I shot the spare, which I made, and so I finished with 286.

I want to say it was the *third* game. Jack and another one of my friends said it was the first game, but I remember right after it happened being taken to the hospital. And I told Jack that I was almost positive it was the third game.

I don't recall what my set was that night, but it's so funny: It seems that everyone that I've talked to ... my best friend to this day, Mike Florence, was there and has different ideas on when it was and all this. Jack said it was a *men's* league—well, I don't remember it being a men's league.

I can just remember what I remember, and I don't remember sitting around after it happened.

They put me in their car—Mike and Charlie—and it was a big thing that they were rushing me to the hospital. But on the way to the hospital, they pulled into a 7-11 and got a case of beer. It was like, 'Okay, you sit right there. Don't move, we'll be right back.'

Like I was really going to go somewhere!

I remember having the cast put on and then coming out, and Mike and Charlie were sitting out there. I think there was a security guard standing next to them because I believe they were caught out in the parking lot drinking the beer.

I was in the cast for a good six-to-eight weeks, and it was probably a good month afterward or so before I was able to bowl. I think I was ready for the fall season because Charlie said it happened on the first night of the summer league.

He thought it was so funny because I had a really high average that was on the sheet for the rest of the summer, so I must have had a pretty decent set. I wish I could just remember what it was.

In case you're wondering, this wasn't Henry's only chance at perfection. Last July in the Lebanon Dutchman Tournament in Pennsylvania, he also began a game with 10 strikes, but this time his ankle stayed strong, and he at long last achieved a 300 game—something he repeated this past December in the Tuesday Tenpinners league at Bowl America Shirley.