

Are Changes Needed in Bowling?

This question was posed to each of the **Top Ten bowlers**. The following two bowlers' responses were longer than the rest and are presented below.

JIM LEWIS: More cooperation is needed between the better bowlers and the proprietors. This is the major flaw with bowling in the Washington area. The better bowlers divide into rival camps: pro shop vs. pro shop or Maryland bowlers vs. Virginia bowlers.

The better bowlers can help each other, promote the sport, and still be competitive with one another. Corporate centers and independent centers are in constant conflict. National governing bodies such as ABC, BPAA, and the PBA can't agree on major topics, such as lane conditioning. Bowling suffers from the actions of these divided organizations.

Bowlers with PBA aspirations are being misled about their chances of success. Short oil blocks are not the conditions that the PBA National Tour bowls on. Because of present lane conditions, scores are up and the pro shop business is great. However, bowlers are not being given a chance to bowl on all conditions. ABC, BPAA, and the PBA are at fault for this, by taking their own position on lane conditioning and not budging from it.

Bowling conditions should vary as do conditions of golf courses. There are tough courses and easy ones. This should apply to bowling as well. The present ABC and PBA rules on lane conditioning

need to be changed to allow for more diversity. This would allow for scores, which bowlers and proprietors want. However, good scores should be for good bowlers, not for people without bowling skills.

A leading ball manufacturer's television commercial is typical of bowling: "Buy a urethane ball and let it do the work." Skill can't be bought; it is learned through practice and experience.

Bowlers with PBA aspirations must practice on long oil conditions, with no area to swing or tug, for these are the present PBA National Tour conditions. I would like to see the PBA diversify their conditions, but presently long oil edge-to-edge is their pet condition.

LARRY O'NEILL: And how! I could probably write volumes on this topic, but I will try in a few sentences to get my views across.

First, you have to understand that the governing body, both locally and especially nationally, is controlled by a clan of elderly persons with antiquated ideas. This may be a harsh statement, but let's face it: this is where the problem lies.

Enough of that. Let's look at where these persons have led us. They have devised a short oil rule to bring scores back to "reality."

Give me a break! They have created rules which **legally** allow you to block a lane. There's no need going into detail about how "easy" the lanes have become.

At present you have a large number of people who are averaging 10 to 40--yes, 40!--pins higher than they ever have, but have they done this by improving their bowling skills? Hardly. A majority of these people have deteriorated their skills to score higher. Others have very few skills to start with, but still can shoot high scores!

Okay, what is wrong with this? Actually, it has increased interest in bowling; these people are happy.

The only people who are unhappy are the "skilled" bowlers who have been bowling for years and have watched these "lesser-skilled" bowlers accomplish scores and awards that have taken the skilled bowler years to accomplish--or, in many cases, never accomplished! Now these skilled bowlers have to garbage up their game to compete with this new breed. Not a happy situation for the skilled bowler.

Looking into the near future, I'll assume (and I do have my fingers crossed!) that eventually the ABC will devise rules that will bring reality back to scoring. What is this new breed of 200-225 average bowler going to do when he will be struggling to average 185?

He will have two choices: he can (finally!) really learn how to bowl, or he can just become frustrated and quit. It is my opinion that the majority of these people will give up the game.

Where will that leave bowling?