



What it takes to be a good bowler

One question asked a lot is: *What does it take to be a good bowler?* There are many different parts to the equation, but one that stands out is the philosophy, *Make your spares, and the strikes will come.*

For the most part, bowlers past and present still believe strikes win. It is not always the case. It is a great feeling to be in the position to throw the strike to win, but what got you there? A good answer would be: *stayed out of trouble and made the spares.* Right?

Being a student of the game and reading just about anything that has to do with bowling will give you a pretty good idea of what the game is all about. However, not a lot is written about spares. Winning leagues, tournaments, brackets, or whatever aside, a loss can be, and often is, attributed to a missed spare. There are times when strikes are needed, but that's another issue.

Maintaining notes about anything and everything is a must for me. A favorite saying I wrote goes something like this: If no spares are missed during competition, you are more often than not going to cash or possibly even win. If a spare is missed, I expect to lose or cash very low if at all. If the set or tournament is "clean" and I still didn't cash, I at least gave it my best, and I can live with that.

An article by Dean Hinitz in the November 2001 issue of *Bowling This Month* mag-

azine (1/800-282-7053) gives some very good insight into what spare shooting is all about. He provides a formula that is worth repeating: *Staying in present time + Commitment to plan + Visualization + Finish = Great spare game.*

Betty Neely, the statistician for our traveling team in Germany, kept track of very strike, spare combinations, and splits we threw. At the end of the year, yours truly's statistics went something like this:

- ✓ Average based on actual pinfall: 194.
- ✓ Average based on making every 7-pin: 201.

I didn't need to know the rest. I knew what it would take to be an accomplished bowler.

How many spares have you seen Jim Wolfe or Lee Brosius miss lately? They're darn good at it, aren't they? Their win and cash ratios are outstanding. (My apologies to the other great spare shooters, but these two come to mind as the best I've seen in this area.)

Is it frustrating to leave a lot of corner pins or tough spare combinations? You bet! However, if you learn to make them, the rewards will surprise you.

Larry Wallace, who was elected to the NCABA Hall of Fame in 1993, holds the association record for high series—869. He currently serves as manager of AMF Dale City.