

STEVE SIPE

a candid conversation with the area's "hottest" bowler

Steve Sipe began bowling in New Jersey at age 9. He started getting serious about the game when he moved to this area 18 years ago and has been a "really serious" kegler for the past five seasons.

He never took lessons (he now gives them), he never had a coach and never wanted one. He has learned the game and continues his bowling education by studying everybody and adapting their good habits to his game, which he feels he thoroughly understands.

Three major highlights have recently occurred in his bowling career: two perfect games and an 848 series in an exhibition match at NMC Lanes, a record-setting 821 series (276-299-246) at Falls Church and a fourth-place finish, good for \$4500, in this year's Fair Lanes Open.

Editor Bob Cosgrove caught up with Steve at the Skor-Mor Pro Shop in Arlington, Va. where he works and they discussed many topics, including the following:

BOWL: How does working in the pro shop interfere with your bowling schedule?

SIPE: Being a one-man operation is a lot tougher; I can't just get up and leave. I'm going to bowl some tour stops this sum-

mer, but I'll have to get someone to cover for me.

BOWL: What is the strongest aspect of your game?

SIPE: Probably my arm swing. It's closest to the correct way it should be done that there is. It should be real free and most of the time it is real free. I have problems with my footwork if I want to go faster when they're hooking because I try to throw harder, but I lock up. When my arm swing is free, it's probably the best arm swing—I'll go as far as to say that. That's my strongest.

BOWL: And your weakest?

SIPE: Weakest is just rare'in up. That's my legs; I've got a lot of work on my legs to go. You see a lot of guys keep under their legs, especially when you watch the tour—the way they end up at the line, with their legs up underneath themselves. That's the best way to be. You look around here at the bowlers—how many people do that? Not many.

BOWL: How are the lanes in this area today compared to 2-3 years ago?

SIPE: Getting better—much better. Only because I think they're putting a little more oil on them and the people are getting a little more knowledgeable about it

because the bowlers are starting to get a little better and, all their gripings: it's helping a little bit. You still have some houses that say, 'well, it doesn't make any difference,' or, 'you're a good bowler—you should be able to adjust.' Well, you can't adjust on sandpaper! You just can't do it!

BOWL: How do you respond to those who say that Steve Sipe is "Mr. Falls Church" and that most of your accomplishments have been at one house?

SIPE: At least I have a house I can bowl in. How many people can say that?

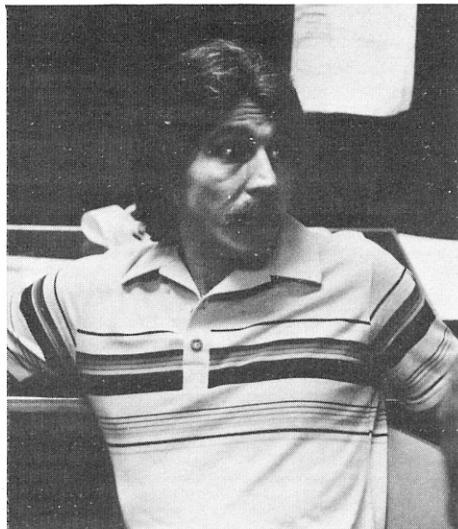
BOWL: Do you feel angry at those who say such things?

SIPE: It's just stupidity that they say that—jealousy and stupidity. I average 225 on a "swinging gutter" condition. So what? Anywhere there's a swinging gutter I should average 220; if there's not, then I won't average 220. Second arrow—I played the second arrow at Woodlawn and averaged 213. Okay, fine—that was good for that week. I didn't expect to average that there, but my game is strong enough where I can average 200 anywhere.

The people will never say you're 'good' unless you were 'bowler of the year,' then



"... bowling is the main thing in my life."



"I think my game is sound and that's all that counts."



"... if people around here don't think I can bowl, that's fine!"

I think that you'd be 'good.' That would be the only way that you'd get any credit. It doesn't make any difference—as long as I get what's coming to me.

BOWL: How do you compare yourself to the other bowlers in this area?

SIPE: In the top five. There's probably ten good bowlers. There's a lot of guys that could be real good—there's a lot of guys that are real good— but as far as week-in and week-out, you have probably ten guys.

If a person can't play a condition, it's a fault against him, but that doesn't mean that he's not a good bowler.

I think my game is sound and that's all that counts. At the tour, people wanted to bet \$1000 that Earl Anthony would beat me. At that point I was 200 pins ahead of him. Well, there's just no way—it's impossible—he had no shot and I had a good shot. Granted, he's good, but he's not *that* much better than me on that condition. If he was, he'd have walked right on by me.

It's funny. The next week I bowled, the lanes were hooking and I had no chance. I knew it. I didn't go around bitchin' because the lanes were hooking. I had no chance. That's my fault; I can't play when they're hooking—but that's what I got to work on.

My game is geared to bowl on the tour. Sometime or another I'll get to bowl on the tour full time, but right now I have to work here. Maybe this will help. Maybe I will pick up a sponsor—maybe I won't. But my goal is to bowl the tour. Now if people around don't think I can bowl, that's fine! I can't bowl because I average 'two-o' around here. Maybe I'll go out on

the tour and average 220 and have my pockets stuffed! Who knows?

BOWL: How did you feel after you knew you had made the 'top five'?

SIPE: I felt pretty good because I was still in a shot to win. I knew I had a shot so it's not something I had to create for myself. The TV—I was wondering what was going to be next—I didn't really know.

I handled it pretty good—first time on TV. It's different—that uncertainty you don't know about. I could have shot 140—who knows? If you just look at it realistically and say, 'there you go, all you can do is lose,' what difference does it make? You've already bowled good all week long. I knew I was going to shoot around 200 because I was lined up all week long, unless they would have changed the lane conditions—then I would have been completely confused. I just played 'em the way I had all week long. It wasn't enough, but, what can I do? There's nothing I can do about it.

BOWL: Have you had any different thoughts while watching the "Pro Bowlers Tour" since making your appearance?

SIPE: I try not to watch it, to tell you the truth. It makes me feel like I want to be there all the time. I hold kind of a grudge; I look at these guys and I *know* I'm as good as some of them out there, yet I don't get a chance to play because I don't have the bucks. And that upsets me.

People around here are very tight with their bucks. And then, the ones that do give you money expect an immediate return off to it. The game is not that way. You just can't do it.

There's a lot of people around here

who could bowl on the tour if they could stay—if they could bowl and not worry about the money. Your mind does funny things on you when you bowl and you're down to your last hundred dollars!

BOWL: What are your major future goals?

SIPE: To be a full time tour player, I don't think I want to own my own bowling alley—it's too much work. I would like to own a chain of centers, but I would not like to own one, especially not in this area—you can't play. A string of pro shops, maybe . . . that would be good.

BOWL: How important is bowling to you?

SIPE: It's my way of life. It's most important. I work bowling. I play bowling. Everything I do is bowling. I have other things I do, but bowling is the main thing in my life.

I don't want a 9 to 5 job. I want somebody to say, 'Hey, you know, that is Steve Sipe'—even if it's bad. Whenever something comes about, your name will always get mentioned, and that's good because the breaks will open up somewhere along the line. If you wait long enough, they'll open up.

BOWL: Finally, Steve, do you have any type of general tip for our readers?

SIPE: I would tell them just to learn to bowl—be more knowledgeable about the game. Try and find out what you can; that's the most important thing. Learn the inside of the game . . . what it takes to knock the pins down or why you leave a certain pin . . . what different balls will do for you. Basically, just learn the game . . . what it's all about. People would tremendously score better by just doing this. ■

SKOR-MOR LANES

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Arlington, Virginia

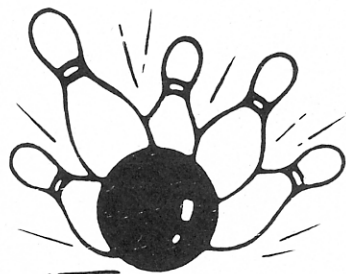
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