



My Bowling Diary

Strike out with information... don't spare the details!

November 2005

Spare Me the Numbers

(By Timothy A. Sawyer)

Bowling is an exciting sport. Not only is it exciting to participate, but it is also exciting to watch. Most people that are not familiar with bowling compare it to "watching paint dry", but it is fascinating to see the top bowlers on tour make it look like child's play to strike, strike, strike. But alas, I have some alarming news.. even the best professionals do not strike all the time! Hence, even today's top professionals need to convert spares.

To be competitive in the sport of bowling, you MUST be able to convert spares. Even missing ONE spare in a game can cost you up to 11 or 12 pins from your score. Obviously we are not going to convert every spare that we are faced with. Most of us consider the 7-10 or even a 4-6-7-10 to be a lost cause (unless you are Mark Roth). However we must be able to convert a majority of the spares that we are faced with. Being able to convert spares can make the difference between making or not making the cut in a tournament, or even winning or losing on your league night.

What a difference a spare makes

To illustrate the power of spare conversions, I will use single pin spares as an example in this article. Every bowler who aspires to improve their game MUST be able to convert all if not most single pin spare attempts. When I say most, I mean that you must be able to convert 9 out of 10 single pin spare attempts. Walter Ray Williams has over a 98% accuracy rate in single pin spares, to give an example.

I recently did some analysis of my own bowling and I came up with some startling results. I will share some of these results with you to illustrate the numbers in spare shooting.

Using MyBowlingDiary, I pulled up my information from my appearance at the PBA GEICO Open in January of this year (I did this by running Event Reports). This is the line score from my 9th game in the PTQ:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
6/	X	X	90	90	X	90	X	9/	X60

20 49 68 77 86 105 114 134 154 170

Note that the “90” are single pin spares that I missed. The 4th frame was a 5 pin, the 5th and 7th frames were 10 pins (the 10th frame was a 1-2-8-9). I don’t remember why or how I missed these spares. However these were easy spares that I should have converted. So what is the difference? Let’s do a “what if” scenario and convert all of the missed single pins.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
6/	X	X	9/	9/	X	9/	X	9/	X60
20	49	69	88	108	128	148	168	188	204

If I converted all of the single pins, I would have shot 204, **a 34 pin difference!** So by just converting single pin spares, I would have turned an average 170 game into a very respectable 204 game.

After going through my entire event report and converting all of the “easy” spares that I missed, I found a difference of 131 pins!

So as you can see, spare shooting accuracy is as critical as the ability to strike.

How do I get there?

The first step in improving your spare shooting accuracy is to determine which spares you miss the most. If you use MyBowlingDiary, this can easily be done by running “Reports” -> “Statistical Reports” and looking at the spare summary. If you don’t use MyBowlingDiary, please visit <http://www.mybowlingdiary.com> for more information.

The next step is to determine a “spare system”. This is a system that you use when you convert spares. For example, a widely accepted rule is to stand on the side of the lane OPPOSITE the greatest number of pins – hence for a 2-4-5, you would stand on the right hand side of the lane and roll the ball toward the 2 pin side. For single pin spares, you would do the same and roll the ball straight and hard toward the pin. There are many good resources available that explain spare systems in better detail.

The next (and probably most important) step is to PRACTICE! Practice your spare shooting without worrying about the scores. For example, use a frame to practice the 10 pin on your first ball and the next ball to practice the 7 pin. Use a frame to practice getting the ball into the 2 pin zone (2-4-5 and 2-5 leaves).

Another piece of advice ; many top pros (and high average amateurs) use a plastic ball for spare shooting. This is a ball that does not hook and is designed to go straight and hard at the pins. I recently bought a spare ball for \$40, and I have already seen a marked improvement in my spare shooting, especially single pin spares.

Summary

I have used just a few paragraphs to explain a little about spare shooting. This was not designed as an “end all” to the technique, but more of an eye-opener to help you understand the importance of spare conversions. There are many tools available online as well as via bowling coaches – even some of your bowling companions may be able to offer a bit of advice. Hopefully

after reading this, you have gained an insight to the importance of spares and what they mean to your game. Good luck!

Other News

- We have improved our mailing list capabilities. If you would like to subscribe to our mailing list, please visit <http://www.mybowlingdiary.com> and look for the "Get Email Updates" link on our page. It is our policy to NEVER send out unsolicited email.
- We have released MyBowlingDiary 2.0 with our long awaited support for Palm OS and Pocket PC devices. If you would like more information on these new products and how they work, please visit us at <http://www.mybowlingdiary.com/about.htm>.

If there is a topic that you would like to see covered in upcoming newsletters, we value your input. Please send an email along with a brief description of the topic to tsawyer@mybowlingdiary.com.