

Book Review

Bowling: Steps to Success, Second Edition

Bowling: Steps to Success, Second Edition by Doug Wiedman. Copyright 2015, 2006 by Human Kinetics Inc. 256 pages. ISBN: 978-1-4504-9790-9 (print). \$23.95 (available at amazon.com for \$22.98 [paperback], \$14.37 [Kindle]).

By **Jim Lewis**

Learning to bowl in the 1980s and earlier required reading, lots of practice, and talking with your coach(es) and others. Video usage was quite rare for the average bowler. The wealth of information available from previous generations was only available in these formats.

The internet/technology age of bowlers has many new tools available to them, such as a high definition video camera on practically everyone's cell phone and many sources of video teaching available from the internet—just one

example would be the online USBC Bowling Academy. I mention this for one reason: After becoming mainly dependent on video and the internet over the past decade, I initially found it difficult to bear down and read the book, although that had been the vehicle for my own learning curve in bowling.

My opinion has always been that it is difficult to write a piece on bowling information that includes the modern and “old school” teaching style. This is due to the great variance in characteristics that make up each person and can allow for a successful style in bowling in combination with the much greater range of variables that are in play on different lane surfaces, lane conditions, bowling ball characteristics/drillings, and lane play strategies.

Doug Wiedman's second edition of his book, *Bowling: Steps to Success*, initially touches upon the general rules of play, history, and etiquette of bowling. In following chapters (each of which are referred to as a “Step”), there are in-depth breakdowns of the elements of the physical game in bowling, systems for targeting strike shots and spares, lane conditions, and elements of league and tournament play. Throughout the book, the chapters end with a series of specific skills drills for focused practice routines. These skills drills have goals and a scoring system for success as well as steps to increase/decrease the difficulty of the drill.

The author gives credit to several of the most well-known coaches of the past several decades (Dick Ritger, John Jowdy, Fred Borden, and Mark Baker), as much of the infor-

mation in the book is a compilation of different coaches' teaching philosophies.

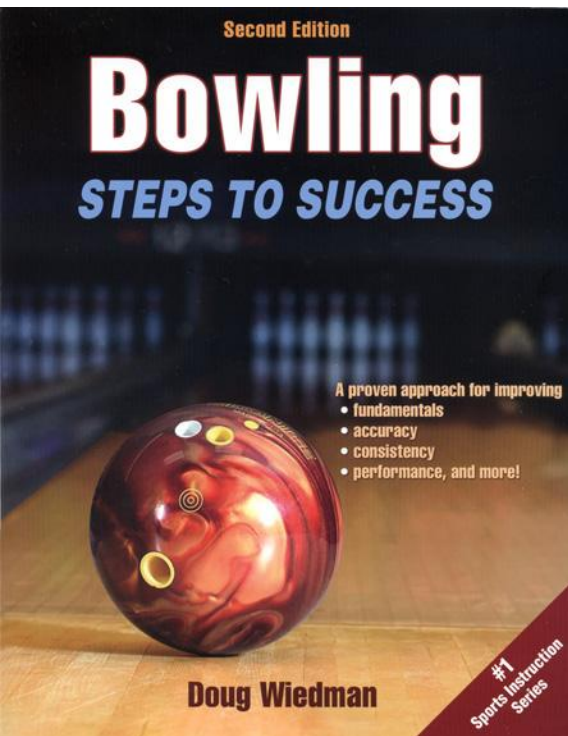
The author alludes that individuals should adapt their physical style according to their own individual body frame and how that pertains to shot execution. For example, taller people will likely take smaller, slower steps, and shorter people will have a faster approach. The available area for a bowler's approach is the same whether one is tall or short. Differences in individual stride length and momentum must still work within the area behind the foul line.

In addition, he notes the starting position, initial pushaway of the swing, the swing plane, and the momentum and direction of footwork during the approach and how the bowler has chosen to visually line up on the setup all interact and produce a bowler's final result. This is a more modern way of looking at bowling. I applaud that theme of the individual needing to adapt to a style that has a chance of shot repetition for accuracy.

The author explains “old school” techniques when discussing what needs to be accomplished to make proper shots with balance at the line. More modern methods of swinging under the head, relaxing the throwing arm shoulder, opening the hips at the starting position, and walking around the swing to open a slot for the swing to pass through for those that have larger mid-body frames and/or playing inside angles is also mentioned. Adapting and fine-tuning wrist positions/release technique, the swing, and footwork are also covered.

After beginning with a brief description of bowling's origins and history, the general playing rules and etiquette are described.

Step 1, “Selecting and Gripping the Ball,” offers descriptions of the proper fit of one's bowling ball



and all of the various elements in the fit, ball weight, span, hole size, pitches, fingertip or conventional fit, no-thumb, and two-handed release.

Step 2, “Establishing a Proper Stance,” makes the reader aware of two key points. First is the starting position, which is the actual location on the approach where the bowler stands to begin the delivery. Where one stands and the direction one faces is important to targeting the intended path of the ball on the lane.

Second is the stance, where the bowler sets his/her posture, angled starting foot, and hip position to help allow the swing and footwork keep the body out of the way of the swing.

Step 3, “Starting Fundamentals,” discusses the initiation of the swing and footwork. This is crucial, as this relationship between swing and footwork influences body position and balance through the delivery and finishing position. Four- and five-step deliveries are discussed as well as push-away, steps, direction, and timing involved in “roller” and “cranker” styles.

Step 4, “Finishing Position,” covers the balance, body position, and non-throwing arm and non-throwing leg positioning at the finish of the shot at the foul line.

Step 5, “Refining the Swing,” goes into detail on troubleshooting, pushaway moment, swing shape, swing speed, and shoulder positioning (including the “old school square shoulder” vs. “modern open/dropped shoulder”).

Step 6 “Improving Footwork,” discusses direction, number of steps, foot speed, rhythm, stride length, and how these impact body alignment. This section goes on to describe the “power step” and step height and how to utilize them to fine tune one’s approach.

Step 7, “Coordinating the Ap-

proach,” deals with timing issues/ characteristics and generating power with body position and timing.

Step 8, “Perfecting the Release,” includes hand position factors, wrist cup positions, forearm and shoulder rotation, wrist cock, leg drive, and swing shape. As this chapter continues, it goes into creating ball motions, modern release, and phases of the release, including drive phase, thumb release phase, turn phase, extension phase, and finger release.

Finally, various specific releases and potential mistakes are described. Straight release hand position, various hook positions, including what the author calls “passive or active” as well as relaxing the hand and rotation at the

the pendulum, flat swing, V-shape swing, Inside-Out swing shape, and Outside-In swing mistakes. Finally, the chapter goes into release strength positions, the benefits and pitfalls of each, and the reasons one might use them.

Step 10, “Targeting Strikes,” describes primary and secondary targets, line targeting, and an introduction to mathematical systems of targeting. The reasons for the lines and mathematics then become evident with discussion of the size of the pocket, maximizing attack angles with a straight ball, parallel moves, adjusting the distance of visual focus, and understanding pinfall and what information about your delivery can be obtained by the pinfall remaining.

Step 11, “Picking Up Spares,”

This book should be a valuable resource to those who acquire it.

shoulder are described as release mechanics mistakes. This chapter, like all the preceding ones, ends with a series of skill practice drills and then mentions the topic of “Enlarging the Strike Pocket.” This starts the reader to link the upcoming chapters on targeting and lane play with the bowler’s skills and choices in the physical game.

One note is on the backup release. (The author believes a backup release should be corrected as soon as possible. *My* personal opinion is that the author is correct in principle, but if the bowler is comfortable making adjustments on the lane and is not attempting to make a major leap forward to becoming a scratch-level bowler, then the backup style is not a detriment).

Step 9, “Fine-Tuning Your Game,” continues the discussion of adjusting stance and swing shape to play various portions of the lane and why to do so. Topics include

starts with the universal spare-shooting guide and has mathematics and charts to describe where pins are and how much more margin for error one has to make a spare in relationship to the difficulty in achieving a strike. Subjects covered are the key pin spare-shooting strategy, 3-6-9 and 4-8-12 pivot systems, focusing on a key pin, shooting splits, and special spare-shooting circumstances. The chapter ends with another series of skills drills.

Step 12, “Understanding Lane Conditions,” starts off mentioning lane patterns, lane changes, and ball motion. The differences in lane condition volume, length, and ratios and how various ball coverstocks and bowler ball paths impact the condition changes are discussed. Lane changes are then more thoroughly discussed, and breakdown, carrydown, and practice-shot strategies are mentioned.

See **LEWIS**, page 17

A. This comes up every year at this time, as most of us bowlers cut back in summer—not to the extent that you seem to do, however. But to stay in some kind of bowling shape, you will have to bowl some during the summer.

My advice every year is that it's a great time to work on your arsenal; go to the pro shop and have them check your equipment and get it cleaned up for the new season. Get bowling balls resurfaced and have them get the oil buildup out of the balls that need it. Buy a new ball or two to fill out holes in your arsenal.

This is a great time to buy a new ball. Business is slow, and deals on equipment can be made.

You still will have to practice some to stay bowling-ready. Go to your center a couple of times a month and get in a few games to stay at least a little sharp—even just two or three games will help.

Also, think about starting in August to getting a lesson or two, as this can really set you up for the season.

Q. *I am bowling in a summer league this year, and the lanes seem much different from winter. They seem much slicker in the center but really take off at the break point. Then they dry out almost between shots around the second game. What do you think is going on, and what can I do about it?*

A. Weather conditions in most of the country go through a big change in the summer. It's much hotter and dryer in some places, and more humidity in others. This really plays heck with the shot. The lanes are probably being dressed the same, but they will dry out quicker in the summer.

This is a great time to try a few things to smooth out how you throw the ball down the lane.

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Many of us have a tendency to hit the ball a little too much. We try to do more than we should to get the ball to finish hard at the pins. This actually hurts our game overall.

We need to smooth out the release, come out of the ball very clean, and let the ball roll do the work. Hitting the ball too hard at release causes much of the over-reaction that kills our game. We get more splits and just plain bad hits by trying to hit the ball at the bottom of the swing. When the lanes get dry, we get a worse reaction.

So my suggestion is try loosening up your armswing and let the ball roll off the fingers with very little effort.

In other words, no extra hit. Let the lane take the ball to the pocket—don't force the ball to the pocket. You will still have to move on the approach and lane to get to the correct line but maybe not as much. Believe it or not, your pin carry also will improve.

Summer is a great time to learn new things to improve your game for next season.

See **KORTH**, page 21

LEWIS, from page 15

Next mentioned are the three phases of ball motion (skid, hook, and then roll) as well as information to help decipher how and why the bowler can attempt to stay on top of what is happening on the lane. The information here is good and covers far more than just changing bowling balls.

Lane patterns are discussed, as are strategies on making the best out of tougher patterns and maximizing scoring and avoiding pitfalls on easier patterns. Style of bowler and the advantages one can have in scoring over a more-skilled bowler with a different style are other topics mentioned, along with Sport Bowling, reverse blocks, crowns, and blocked lanes.

Step 13, "Competing in the Sport," describes league bowling as formal organizations, team chemistry, personal commitment, financial obligation, and then goes onto tournament play and the various formats encountered. Handicap systems are described, and finally the chapter ends with alternative play and practice formats used, such as the Baker system, scotch doubles, and black-light bowling (better known as Cosmic or Xtreme with Brunswick and Bowlmor AMF).

This book should be a valuable resource to those who acquire it. The information can be helpful in enlightening any beginner or average bowler to the many aspects of the physical game of bowling and how to break down and improve those individual aspects. In addition, there are specific reasons for failure on a specific delivery, and even the "unlucky pocket tap" is a shot that needs to be judged as a mistake. Advanced-level bowlers can benefit from the same information, but with their own knowledge of how the differing physical styles of play have worked within their own experience.

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