



Coach's Corner Tip of the Month

Playing Sport and PBA Lane Conditions

Since the PBA Tour will be coming to town at the end of this month, I'd like to take the time with you this month to talk about the lane conditions we see as professionals, and the lane conditions all of us see when bowling on sport conditions.

First of all, what makes a sport or PBA lane condition different from what we see in league? A typical league condition features a high concentration of oil in the middle of the lane (between the second arrows on either side of the lane), and a low concentration of oil on the outside ten boards on either side of the lane. Lane conditions are verified with a machine that reads a "tape" of the concentration of oil across the lane, using the UV additive in the oil as a measure of concentration. That measure is plotted on a graph in "units" of oil. League conditions typically have 3-6 units of oil on the outside of the lane, and 40-80 units in the middle of the lane. This helps errant shots find their way back to the pocket, and creates a built-in dry area the bowler can use to get the ball to hook back to the pocket.

Sport conditions, by contrast, have 15-25 units of oil in the middle of the lane, and 30-50 units in the middle. The distribution of the oil is more gradual across the lane, with no built in hook areas on the lane. The result is a premium on good shots and consistent execution.

The three things that separate amateurs from professionals on flatter lane conditions are speed, direction, and the way the ball gets into a roll. If you improve these three things, you will be on your way to conquering tougher lane conditions.

Flatter lane conditions do not feature a built-in dry area to "bounce" the ball off of, which can also be referred to as "automatic" recovery to the pocket. On these conditions, if the ball goes too fast, the speed of the ball will cause it to skid through the breakpoint area of the lane, leaving 2-10's (for right-handers) or 5-count washouts. When the bowler with too much speed slows down and moves to the outside, the ball hooks too early in the front part of the lane, and a big split is the result. The answer is to develop a natural, medium (16-18 mph) ball speed that will give the ball time to hook back off the breakpoint. I call this the PBA speed limit, as excessively high ball speed is not effective on these lane conditions.

When two balls go in two different directions on flatter conditions, the mistake is bigger at the breakpoint than it is at the arrows. In order to minimize your errors on these conditions, every shot should be parallel to your intended target line. This keeps a two board mistake at the arrows a two board mistake at the breakpoint, instead of a six board mistake.

High-caliber players are able to match their ball speed to their revolutions to create "heavy" roll in the mid-lane. This "high octane" roll gets the ball to slow down properly (when matched to the lane condition and the right ball) to then get the ball to make a smooth transition to roll back to the pocket consistently. You must get the ball to slow down at 30-35' down the lane to get a consistent ball reaction.

In summary, these three things will make you a better bowler on tough conditions:

1. Keep you ball speed consistent and match it to your rev rate,
2. Make your shots all follow a line parallel to your intended target line,
3. Make the ball slow down at mid-lane for a consistent ball reaction.

Try working on these things when you practice, and your next encounter with a tough lane condition will be more pleasant!

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