



Coach's Corner Tip of the Month

These Guys are Good!

Ever wonder what it takes to be one of the best 58 players in the world, the ones who have that magical exemption for the tour? This month I'd like to talk about some things to look for when you watch the best players in the world practice their craft on the biggest stage in bowling.

When I'm talking about the great players, the ones in the top 20 year after year, they all have some very common traits. First, they all have fluid arm swings that allow gravity to do most of the work for them. Brian Voss and Norm Duke have relaxed, repeatable swings that allow gravity to send the ball in the same direction every time at the bottom of the swing.

Great players are consistent. They are able to repeat shots, and send them in the same, intended direction shot after shot. Direction and speed control are very critical when bowling on demanding lane conditions that change quickly. Not only can these players be consistent with speed and direction, they can change both on command. The ability to add or subtract one mile per hour on your ball speed as the condition demands, or move from the extreme outside of the lane to the fourth or fifth arrow quickly take a great swing, a strong mental game, and courage.

Did I mention a strong mental game? Yes, in order to get to this stage, you must be a courageous player who will make any adjustment at any time in order to gain competitive advantage over the lanes and your opponents. Players like Mike Scroggins, Mika Koivuniemi, Michael Haugen are all players who are mentally tenacious, believe in THEIR game, and play the lanes to the best of their ability from the strengths of their games. Always combine your strengths and the lane condition to maximize your scoring potential. In particular I've watched Mika combine his skills and the lane condition to win in Reno a couple of years ago on the Denver stop pattern, when most people would not have thought this was possible.

The great players are great spare shooters. They understand their spare games, use tactics that make them immune to the lane conditions, and are robotically consistent in making spares. There are many good players, including marginal tour players, who are not great spare shooters. These players never become great players over a long career.

Today, many of the great players have an amazing understanding of their equipment, when to use the equipment, when to change balls and why. In today's environment, if you are totally ignorant about equipment, you have no chance to succeed.

Finally, great players never stop learning. Ask Walter Ray Williams if he has learned anything in the last year that has made him a better player, and you might get a half-hour of stories about various events that allowed him to learn new things about himself and his game that helps him to continually improve. Players like Tommy Jones and Chris Barnes had to learn to modify their roll and their games slightly to be successful on tour. The good players may think they've got this bowling thing down, but the great players never stop learning.

When you watch the tour, take a look at the greats and see if you see the same things I do.

As always, if you'd like to see a specific topic discussed, e-mail me at proshop@denverbowling.com.

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