



Coach's Corner Tip of the Month

How Tough is the U.S. Open?

Since I'm writing this column from the U.S. Open, I'd like to share some thoughts about how tough this tournament really is, and how you would prepare for this, the toughest of tournaments. Let's delve into this subject now.

This tournament is so tough, that your spare game has to be bulletproof. Even if it is great, you will miss some makeable spares. This is because the pattern is so flat that a small miss on a spare shot will go offline, and you will be shooting a lot of multi-pin spares. Almost all of the more difficult spares (washouts, 2-10's, even baby splits) will play differently than they might under normal tournament conditions. You will need to make some adjustments in making some of these spares in order to make them. The straighter you throw your spare ball, the better off you are. This is the tournament that finally makes most bowlers admit they need a spare ball and they need to learn to throw it really, really straight.

The second thing you need to understand is to repeat shots. You need to keep your shots all going in the same direction, with the same speed and target. Carolyn Dorin-Ballard put on a clinic this week on being consistent. Using a strong forward roll release and staying right of 10 when most players were left of 25, she just repeated shots, took the front of the lane out of play, and found a way to grind out a 207 average in qualifying.

This is also a reminder about understanding how you can best attack a pattern and be successful, which is not necessarily how everyone else might attack the pattern. Mike Scroggins was able to get a combination of equipment and lane play that allowed him to average 207 in qualifying. To put this in perspective NO ONE was able to average over 223 in qualifying, only two players averaged over 220 in qualifying, and players like Walter Ray Williams, Jr. and Pete Weber were unable to average 200 in qualifying, with a score of only -52 for 18 games allowing you to cash for \$1,000.

For many players, however, it means you need to be able to play ANYWHERE on the lane. For any right-handers with some "hand" it means that you have to be able to play in front of the ball return. In the third round of qualifying, many players were standing on the other side of the ball return and launching the ball out onto the lane and playing the 6th arrow or further left! I also had some games on the left side standing in front of the ball return and playing between the 5th and 6th arrow, and Billy Oatman qualified on the strength of some games playing in that same zone. Imagine trying to retain your tour exemption playing the 6th arrow on an extremely difficult shot!

Finally, you have to be mentally tough as nails, and never, ever give up, even when you are struggling on a pair of lanes. In a long qualifying format, it is the TOTAL for all your games, and not just your total for a given game. You have to understand that turning a 150 game into a 170 game is just as important as shooting 240. Every frame of every game must command your undivided attention for you to be successful. Also, you have to focus on EVERY shot, as a brief lapse in concentration will result in a missed spare, costing you another 11 pins or more.

How good are the exempt pros? All but three of 58 exempt players cashed in this tournament (all of whom will miss the exemption cut for next year), and Tommy Jones shot a 300 game from left of the 5th arrow. How many 300 games have you seen from the 5th arrow? How many amateurs can loft the ball over the gutter caps and still score consistently? How about controlling your roll speed, direction and target to play in an area barely two boards wide? Yeah, these guys really are that good. Not only that, but in a discussion with Tommy Jones, he confided how tired he was during the second round, as he had been bowling without a day off since a week before (since he made the show and won the previous week) and had been playing a lot of speed the whole time. He was tired, and his body was wearing down a little bit, but he was still scoring and being successful.

If you want to be a success at higher levels, expand your ability, your mental game, and your ability to execute and score NO MATTER WHAT. Any time you think a shot is really tough, it's never as tough as the U.S. Open – I promise you that.

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

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