

The Summer Blues

The season's over and you're heading to the driving range...maybe a round of golf or a swim in the ocean on your vacation...hiking in the mountains sounds like work, but rafting down the Euphrates River is not an option. We often think to ourselves this time of year:

"I'm glad it's over."

"What a terrible year."

"I'm only bowling one league next season."

"Should I even bowl summer league?"

"I want to work on my game sometime before league."

"Maybe I'll practice this summer each week to get better for next season."

I hear these comments all the time. I've probably uttered some of them in years past. So what can you do if you don't want to bowl during the summer, yet want to prepare for next season? Although I always advocate a summer league and an on-lane practice routine, let's look deeper into Dr. Jeff's crystal ball and find out what he thinks can be done.

1. **Take up a summer conditioning program.**

I think you will definitely perform better next season, if you give your body a little attention. An athlete in good physical condition will always perform better, last longer, reduce the incidence of injury, and recover quicker from injury. Enhancing your physical fitness through a summer conditioning program is just the thing you're looking for.

2. **Implement a daily stretching routine.**

So you don't want to workout. Not everyone does. That's part of life. However you know deep down inside the value of your body to your bowling. So how about a compromise! Stretching the shoulder, legs, and forearm muscles daily will enhance your flexibility and provide you with a form of preparation that you may not have considered. Take just five minutes in the morning or before bed and do it every day till the start of your next league.

3. **Prepare Your Mind: Learn Some Sport Psychology for Bowling.**

Don't want to train the body; I know it's not everyone's interest. So considering training the mind. Few people actually understand the depth and breadth of sport psychology as it relates to bowling. It's so often misinterpreted, under-utilized, and sometimes over-dramatized. But having conducted some academic research in sport psych and bowling, here's one-way to get some good info without sifting through the many scientific journals. One person who does an outstanding job teaching several components of the mental game is a friend of mine named Rich Williams. Rich teaches his vast array of mental game stuffs at all Bowler Educational Clinics (BEC) and will be in Rego Park, NY this summer doing some training at a clinic (<http://members.home.net/bowlfit/clinic/2.htm>).

4. **Balance Yourself into an Improved Finish Position.**

Your coordination, proprioception, balance, and several other things all begin to decline around the age of 30. That's right, the ripe age of 30 has been identified as when you first start to fall apart. Well, not exactly fall apart, but more like experience diminished capacity. Balance and coordination go hand in hand with strength and flexibility. You can have one without the other, but your effectiveness and functional use is limited. Try some balance training drills such as standing on one leg and closing your eyes for a period of time to improve your balance and kinesthetic sense of feel. If you're not familiar with balance training, refer to June of 2000 in the literature section on our web site for a look at balance training (WWW.BriggsConsulting.Com).

5. **Sport Nutrition: Restrict the Fat and Reduce the Sugar.**

Eating healthier can have many indirect benefits. Reducing your waistline and upper body fat has been scientifically shown to bring the armswing closer to the body and reduce the friction between the swing and body. Cutting back on the fat in your diet, as well as the high sugary foods, can provide a negative caloric balance often resulting in reduced body fat and weight loss. Although appropriate weight loss must be accompanied by sound physical activity, it doesn't hurt to start by monitoring and then reducing your fat and sugar intake. Keep in mind many processed foods may be low in fat as advertised, but are usually high in sugar, an overabundance of which always converts to fat.

6. **Care for that Injury.**

I'm sure a lot of you ache somewhere. The elbow, shoulder, knee, lower back, feet, or even the hand. Bowling and other sport injuries should be cared for immediately upon recognition, but that doesn't often seem to be the case with diehard bowlers. For some reason, we tend to let it ride and then hope something miraculous occurs. Well folks, I'm still waiting to hit the lottery, but I'm not betting my farm or bowling career on it. So too should you take the time to have that ache or pain evaluated and then rehabbed. Don't wait till next season starts; jump on it now while the thought is fresh in your mind, and before you do possibly serious damage that will make it that much harder to come back from.

The summer can be a very relaxing time away from the competitive side of bowling. Yet at the same time, using your time away wisely can have implications for future engagement. Select one or more of these summer busters to help you prepare for next season. I'm sure there are many others we could dream up; so don't let the summer whisk you away without doing something to prepare for the fall.