

A Training Philosophy

It's time to step outside the box. How many times have I heard that before??? Well, now I'm using it. This month lets look at evolving our thinking toward what we in sport science consider to be one of the more vital elements to athletic preparation: The training philosophy.

Conventional bowling wisdom for decades has revealed that:

1. Bowlers do not need to physically train to improve;
2. Bowlers have no need for injury management;
3. Bowlers should not be concerned with sport nutrition, and
4. Bowlers do not need to warm up before participating.

This conventional wisdom has, in essence, discounted all of sport science and all of sport medicine concerning bowling and the bowler. How can that be? Just because we haven't looked into these things surely doesn't mean they are worthless. In fact, if you look at some of our sport's counterparts, such as baseball, football, tennis, racquetball, etc., you will find they at one time also discounted the sport sciences, but are now advocating them to their players and athletes 100% of the time. In fact, training for football was at one time thought to be a hindrance to performance. Go to any tennis academy, any football camp, any racquetball school, or any golf camp and you'll see the application of sport science all throughout their programs.

I just returned from another golf training seminar where sport medicine specialists like myself are educating exercise physiologists, physical therapists, golf coaches, and golfers on sport-specific training and sport injury management for recreational and competitive golfers. Would you believe that seminar was packed and they give these all across the country? Can you see us doing that in bowling? The headlines will read **"Bowlers and Bowling Instructors: Learn the Finer Points of Sport Medicine as They Relate to the Bowler-Athlete and Athletic Performance."** Do you think that's funny? Well I want you to know it's already in the works. I'll keep you posted.

OK, so I'm of a somewhat more liberal mind set with only a touch of conservatism when it comes to these issues. Quite frankly I think that earlier bit of conventional bowling wisdom in paragraph two is hogwash. Granted, bowling in yesteryear was quite different than today's competitive atmosphere. Needless to say, there are a great many facets of our game that have evolved with time. We now bowl in a more highly advanced, technically, physically, and psychologically demanding environment, thereby, discounting, not all, but much of the conservative thinking of yesteryear. Though I'm sure some of my older and often self-proclaimed "wiser" colleagues cringe when I write and speak on advances in sport science, let's face it, our sport can't live in the 1960's, 70's, and 80's forever. So follow me into the new millennium.

Advancing Our Thinking

Let's start this year 2000 on the right foot. For you lefties, make that the left foot. You want to be a better bowler. Don't we all. You know you need to train and practice to be a better bowler. You want to start training specifically for bowling. You see it done in other sports and hear about it all the time now. You know it's important. You know its been proven effective. You know its something you want to do. So the big question is, "Where do I begin?" That's where a training philosophy comes into play.

You see, your decision to think outside the box, and begin considering sport medicine as part of your overall bowling training is the first step. You start with a thought process, a belief for example. Then you take that idea or belief and apply it. Here and now, the notion that sport-specific training will help you become a better bowler-athlete is the philosophy, and the actual training is the application of the philosophy. To get started, you need to develop your personal training philosophy ... a bowling-specific training philosophy.

A training philosophy, differing from a training principle, is the driving force behind your actions. Training principles are the specifics of training, while training philosophies are the reasons and answers to why. The training philosophy is partially your motivation, as well as your path, your guideline, your framework, and your map to a new and improved bowler-athlete... a more functionally efficient bowler-athlete. That's what you are striving for, to become a better bowler-athlete.

A training philosophy is a fundamental belief in the need for, the practice of, and the benefits from training on sport performance. It is an athlete's mission and vision statement all rolled into one. Bowlers too need a personal training

philosophy. Not a way to practice on the lanes, although that could be incorporated in the larger scheme of things, but a philosophy reasoning the need and justifying the act of bowling-specific training.

As an example, my personal bowling-specific training philosophy reveals that first and foremost, **bowlers are athletes. Acknowledging this precept, bowler-athletes should physically train to enhance their functional and physical fitness. My training philosophy further explains that bowlers should train specifically for their sport, and that the needs of the bowler-athlete differ tremendously from the needs of other athletes.**

Many of you probably do not have a training philosophy, nor I assume would have heard of such a thing. Elite athletes of other sports often adopt training philosophies while honing their skills in various structured programs and environments, such as scholastic sports, intercollegiate athletics, and semi-pro club sports. In these environments, training philosophies are routinely taught, practiced, implemented, and learned. For us though, our sport has not yet fully grasped the technological principles of sport medicine, although we are making great strides in many areas thanks to people like Bob Summerville and BTM. So, let's look at what you can do to develop your training philosophy.

The Bowling-Specific Training Program Manual, which is our sport's only sport-specific training protocol, provides a clear and concise framework of what to do, how to do it, and equally important, the reasons why bowler-athletes should physically train. We also highlighted some very specific reasons in this column in September 1999, and our web site at <http://members.home.net/bowlfit/> also has a section on it. Some of those reasons include:

1. A fitter bowler can withstand greater amounts of stress.
2. The conditioned bowler recovers quicker from injury.
3. The healthier bowler reduces his/her risk of injury.
4. A stronger bowler can maintain the flexed wrist position longer and more efficiently.
5. A flexible bowler can more effectively use the many wrist positions of today's game.
6. The stronger bowler can increase ball speed with greater ease.
7. The flexible bowler can ease into the finish position with less effort.
8. A well-trained bowler can maintain better balance.
9. The integrity of our sport depends on us presenting ourselves as athletes.
10. Perception - society must know the rigors of our sport and the intense training we undergo to manage our competitive environment.

Now, you must decide yourself if some of these reasons are enough motivation for you to begin developing your own training philosophy. Maybe you have some other reasons you want to share with us, if so, just send us an e-mail at bowlfit@home.com. You see, I can't force you to unequivocally accept my personal belief and life's work. Instead you must strive to understand, and accept or reject it on your own. All I ask is that you make an attempt to consider some of the rationale for implementing sport medicine principles as a preparation method to athletic success.

If you have made your decision to formulate a personal training philosophy, then put it down on paper. Try to make it one or two sentences at the most and memorize it as your mission statement for bowler preparation. After you have created some form of personal bowling-specific training philosophy, then start looking at how you can implement that philosophy. Finding a way and the means to begin training assures you are well on your way to solving a great many of your performance-related problems. As you progress and develop into a more complete and highly trained bowler-athlete, you will become the envy of your teammates and competitors as you last longer at peak efficiency and score higher.

Checklist to Get You Started

- Review the reasons for sport medicine.
- Formulate your training philosophy.
- Pick your training facility.
- Implement your personal bowling-specific training philosophy.

This month we wanted you to start thinking about some reasoning and then develop your own personal training philosophy. Next month begins a series on practical application. You will be able to see some of the sport medicine materials presented in this section applied firsthand. Until then, develop that training philosophy, memorize it, start implementing it, and be ready for next month.