

Training For Your Sport

I watched the PBA's initial 2001 telecast with much anticipation last weekend. One of the Japanese professional bowlers made the show. Asian professional bowlers always seem to have the most beautiful styles. I have grown fond of their fluidity, and the freedom in their game over the years, having done much teaching in Asia to witness it firsthand.

I happened to listen closely as Marshall Holman described today's game and Robert Smith's game. He said something that greatly pleased me; in fact it excited me. He said something that the bowling world needs to hear and repeat more often. He referred to Robert and today's game requiring strength, flexibility, and power. That's right, I've got it on tape. What Marshall was recognizing was the demand for functional and physical fitness as an evolution of today's game.

Look at the bowlers who are doing well these days on the professional level:

- WRWilliams - he throws hard, lofts far, and can really wing it.
- Robert Smith, pure power.
- Chris Barnes, he's on a training program and is a powerful stylist.
- Parker Bohn III, have you seen his finish position up closely!!! Tremendous leg strength and flexibility.
- Jason Couch, he gets on it with a lot of body motion (strength).
- Ryan Shafer, he is a grip-it-'n-rip-it player nearly pulling himself out of his shoes at the foul line.

Athleticism, and what we call functional fitness, is now playing more and more of a factor in sport performance. In athletics abroad, we are finding that the better-conditioned athlete (i.e. the better prepared athlete) performs better. It's really that plain and simple. Both research in sport science and the national governing bodies of various sports are learning basically that the better-conditioned athlete will generally perform better, perform longer, and have a stronger mental capacity than the lesser-conditioned athlete.

1. The stronger swimmer will most often swim faster than the rest.
2. The more aerobically inclined distance runner will most often outlast the others.
3. The better-conditioned thrower will most often throw farther.

In golf, tennis, racquetball, and baseball, we are seeing and hearing about more and more of the athletes coming out in better playing shape each year. They are recognizing that even the better-conditioned skill-based athlete performs better, perform longer, perform stronger, and have a greater mental capacity than the rest. Baseball players are stronger, bigger and in shape more so than in years past. Golfers like Tiger Woods and David Duval are preaching the exercise training practices and the direct benefits of conditioning. I have met Butch Harmon, Tiger's conditioning coach, and he has Tiger under a very strenuous training program. In tennis and racquetball, these athletes are realizing the demands of their sport and the benefits of conditioning and training. Martina Navratilova trained heavy with weights and conditioning exercises in the 80's, and consequently opened the door for women tennis players to venture into the weight room and onto the court in better shape. Now many of the women tennis stars boast biceps, sleek firm legs, and large aerobic capacities. Female gymnasts are stronger than ever. Look closely at them in the Olympics. They have legs that bulge with muscle and arms some men would die for.

So, we have seen athletes in all sport, even the most technically oriented skill-based sports, embrace sport science, sport medicine, sport nutrition, and physical conditioning as an integral part of their performance and preparation process. Isn't it time we in the bowling community do the same??? I think so.

Check back next month, as we look closer into bowling-specific training and our research here at Briggs Consulting on the bowler-athlete. Think sport science will help or hurt your bowling? Well re-read this article and consider the precept. Then, come back next month and find out more.