

Be All The Bowler You Can Be

I recently saw that ever-present commercial, brought to us by the United States Armed Services providing one of life's never failing phrases: "Be all that you can be." I wondered to myself if that applied to the bowler-athlete, and how I could capitalize on the Army's branding efforts to further promote sport science. After some thought, I realized I was closer to my objective than met the eye, for everyday at I'm asked that very question by bowlers all around the globe "how can I become a champion bowler-athlete?"

As you advance your skill levels to new heights and attempt to reach that epitome of elitism, which so few bowlers do, I encourage you to ask yourself, "what more can I do to become that all mighty bowler-athlete? It's no longer a hidden secret, that more professional bowlers are turning to sport science (fitness and sport psych) to provide them a competitive edge. We've seen it in other sports, such as collegiate athletics, which generally have permanent strength and conditioning coaches, injury specialists called athletic trainers, sport psychologists, and they go so far as to require all their athletes to attend mandatory physical training during the off-season. Training during the off-season...what a concept.

You know, we've got it easy in bowling. Just as I sit here and write this article, there are thousands of athletes around the country engaging in off-season conditioning programs in preparation for their next season. So how do bowlers prepare in the off-season? Well...let me take a stab at what I've seen in recent years. It goes like this: put your balls in the closet for the summer, swing the golf club religiously, read your newest BTM and the physically speaking section, and then drill some new equipment just before fall season begins, anticipating those pretty new balls will become the saving grace. Sport Bowling hurry up and get here!! End this demise of summer mischief, and bring back the days when bowlers would set out to work on something other than their putting skills and short game. Hey, if you don't want to practice on the lanes, join me practicing in the gym to burn a few additional calories.

The New PBA

I'm quite excited to see things moving along with professional bowling. It should bode well as we all work together to promote a stronger bowler-athlete image. Speaking of bowler-athletes, two-time Bowler of the Year Amleto Monacelli knows the importance of strength and conditioning. So, too, does his training partner, George Branham III. Between the two of them they toss around enough weight and expend enough aerobic energy to make even those at the Olympic Training Center proud. As a side note, the National Coaches Convention is held this summer at the USOC Training Center and is focusing on Sport Science for the Bowling Coach. Next month I'll fill you in. It's good to see our coaching organization supporting sport science concepts and precepts. In fact, fellow BTM author Palmer Fallgren has taken his physical fitness to new heights. We spent some time training together and discussing training initiatives, and I must proudly say he's looking buff and bowler tough. By the way, Palmer also has some new Team USA fundraising initiatives that I found favorable. Next time you see him, ask him about them. Please support Team USA...my annual push.

Researching a Tidbit

Our research has shown that well-conditioned bowlers can significantly improve their functional and physical fitness, all of which apply directly to our athlete skill development and performance. So conditioning is the way to go these days, but one reader recently asked me about the risks of becoming muscle bound and inflexible through training. Great question and let's address it.

Simply speaking, it's nearly impossible to naturally become "muscle bound" through bowling-specific training, as referenced in our Bowling-Specific Training Manual. It's crucial that bowlers apply proper training principles and training philosophies...sounds kinda deep, because it is. Genetics plays a major role in physical development, as well as many other factors including age. You can't just automatically get big and bulky, if your body wasn't designed for it. Nor can you evolve into Mr. Lean merely by increasing your aerobics. Training through a full range of motion and adding a little extra proper stretching will ward off any potential loss in flexibility. Muscle size is contingent on the body's ability to produce growth hormones and other neat chemicals. Not to worry about this though, just remember: Training for bowling and training for a power lifting are two totally different things. Personally I think guys like George Branham, Amleto Monacelli, Dave Stevenson, Henry Foley, and Frank Devane have nailed it; to gain the competitive edge in this day and age, you must mentally and physically prepare yourself for battle.

The corporate environment is no different. Corporate fitness centers are popping up in every major corporate headquarters. Corporate executives know the value wellness has on the performance of their employees. So to do I preach the value of physical conditioning to your bowling. If you are a bowler-athlete, and would like some personalized and serious bowling-specific training and conditioning; or, if you are interested in pursuing a more serious bowling career, and would like to gain a competitive edge, then take a tip from me, consider the benefits of strength and conditioning and begin to surpass your competition, while propelling yourself to be physically capable and prepared for the rigors of the competitive bowling lifestyle.