

This is how we roll

The secrets to bowling a strike

STORY BY JINELLE SHENGULETTE
Special to Metromix

The last time I took bowling seriously, I was 7 years old and rolled a bright red Mickey Mouse ball in a juniors league.

But kids are fickle. The next year I wanted to take dancing lessons, and after that it was swimming lessons.

My recent bowling experiences had been vicarious. I'd watch The Dude in *The Big Lebowski* and Roy Munson in *Kingpin* over a bowl of popcorn.

So it was a welcome challenge to visit Clover Lanes, 2750 Monroe Ave., Pittsford, and have bowling coach Randy Squier show me how to roll a strike.

To start, I picked up my bowling shoes (regular shoes stick on the approach) and a bowling ball.

Squier said choosing a ball was primarily about comfort and took me to a model ball with holes of different sizes drilled into it to measure my fingers. Turns out, I have small fingers. I selected a ball that fit them best and, at 11 pounds, wasn't too heavy.

After we made our way to a lane, I tried to summon my 7-year-old bowler self. I knocked down quite a few pins on my first attempt and managed to pick up a spare.

"You've bowled before, haven't you?" Squier asked. I should have told him it was just luck, because my next few frames were dismal. Squier noted that my form was off. When I got to the foul line (which bowlers must not cross) and released the ball, I was turning my hips rather than keeping them square, rotating my wrist and bending my throwing arm, all of which get in the way of bowling a strike.

After each frame, Squier told me what my form looked like, reminded me to keep my hips, wrist and arm straight and to start my approach from the center of dotted pattern on the alley. As a right-handed bowler, I needed to aim for the space between the center pin and the one

to its immediate left, called the 1-2 pocket.

Squier also reminded me to take my time approaching the foul line. As I waited for my ball to shoot out the return, I held my fingers over the hand drier so they wouldn't stick. Then I picked up my ball, stood at the center of the approach, walked to the foul line slowly and let go — all while envisioning my strike.

And I got it! My first strike of the day! "You took your time," Squier said afterward. "The most common thing people do wrong when bowling is they throw the ball so hard that their form fails. You can knock down the same amount of pins with a 5 mph ball (as) with a 30 mph ball."

After that strike, I was sure I had it perfected, but I only knocked down three pins in the next frame. Very disappointing.

My coach told me that even the pros "slip up" sometimes, and it all comes with practice. I realized there's a lot to remember, and having a coach comes in handy.

"I laugh at people who come in and think bowling's not a sport," Squier said. "There's so much to it." ♦



Photos by Rich Paprocki



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