

PRODUCTIVE PRACTICES

My favorite word is productive. What I like about productive is it means you are making the best use of your time. Many a bowler has traipsed out to the lanes to practice. Often times following on some gut sense that their game needs sharpening. It may be because their league play has been off, or possibly they see a tournament in the future that they want to prep for. Practice is most certainly the path to improvement, and to that end this article is going to skim the surface to practice and provide a couple of drills.

Everyone and their dog, (wish I had one) likes the top ten list idea so...how about SIX ? Help yourself to the following six very important criteria for establishing effective practices.

KNOW WHY YOU ARE COMING TO PRACTICE

This seems to make so much sense but...it is probably the one area that many can improve on. It is important to have a specific goal, not just one of "*I want to improve*". Set a goal for the practice, (i.e.) will it be to work on spares, or some aspect of your deliver AND...(name that aspect)

DEDICATE AT MINIMUM 60 MINUTES TO PRACTICE

Five minutes before league play begins is a great idea in getting you ready for the league night BUT it will not induce improvement. Improvement requires repetition; repetition without the hindrance of waiting 4-5 minutes between turns.

DO NOT KEEP SCORE

I firmly believe that you do not need to keep score to measure your success. In fact...if your measurement of success is based principally on score and results than your road to success will lack reliability. This will also enhance your opportunity to get in touch with the feel of your shot.

TWO SESSIONS PER WEEK FOR THREE WEEKS

This is a no-brainer – MODEST change that you can establish as reliable requires a consistent effort. It has been my experience both as player and instructor/coach that to affect change requires a minimum of a 3 week commitment for basic rudimentary change to occur. What MIGHT the basics be?

- Holding your follow thru until the ball hits the pins.
- Slowing down – simply reminding yourself to take a slower smaller first step
- Lift (after essentially 6 practices you will be getting the ball consistently past the foul line but...not necessarily to the same distance on each shot (that takes considerable more practice).

NARROW THE GAP

Make your practices real. Come to practice with the intention you give to tournament play. By doing this you get away from simply throwing balls. I call this Narrowing the Gap. It is an important essential to productive learning. This leads to another topic for another day....FEELING IT. All successful athletes use their feel for the game to both elevate and maintain a consistent level of performance.

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VARIETY

Doing the same thing over and over again is BORRING!!! AND IF you don't believe me just ask your sex therapist ☺ Improvement is aided by the variety you bring to the practice. You may have 1 or 2 drills you do at practice but...finding other ways to get the same thing done helps aid in keeping yourself attentive and interested in the dryer repetition necessary to improve. The following drills will provide you with some variety for practicing spares.

Five Ball – Individual or Competitive Drill

Objective of the Game:

- To practice pin conversions
- To knock down the best pin count with five balls

Procedure

Begin with a full set of pins

1. Knock down with each ball, whatever remains standing.
2. Keep track of the total pin count you achieve after 5 balls. (the max is 5 strikes or 60 points)
3. The goal of each ball is to clear the deck whenever realistically possible.
4. Repeat three or more times.

SP. 10

Object of the Game:

- Knock down with one ball all pins standing. If unsuccessful deduct one point from player's existing total

Procedure:

1. Starting Game –
2. Each player is given 10 points to begin the game.
3. Player one throws for a strike.
4. If successful no point is taken, if unsuccessful player loses one point from their current total.
5. Player Two – must convert with one ball any remaining pins left standing by the player ahead of he/she. If previous player was successful and a full set of pins is up then player two must throw a strike. Continue this process through the list of players involved in the game.
6. Winner is declared when only one person remains with points.

Options

- Continue point deduction method and add; Award one point each time a player successfully converts their shot. Player cannot gain more than 10 points.
- Attempts made with unspareable shots If successful with traditional cleanup with their ball deduct no point or... award a point for successful execution.

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The 3 Point Game

Object of Game:

- Develop value of spares.

Procedure:

1. Play a regular game format
2. Scoring award per frame
 - One point for a strike
 - Two points for a spare

Options

- Subtract point for each spare not converted.

Format Options

- Make this a competitive game by challenging others with the game.

Scoring Options

In a competitive match – Award

- One point for highest pinfall at the conclusion of a game
- Two points for the person with the best spare percentage for the game played