

As a kid, I believed thunder was the sound of angels bowling. I imagined an enormous alley tucked inside a valley of storm clouds, and pearly white gates replaced by automatic sliding glass doors. On one side of the alley, the seraphim and cherubim discussed the finer points of the entry angle. At the other, a group of archangels promptly exited, disgruntled, as Earl Anthony and Dick Weber exchanged high fives.

I am a bowler.

It's true, most people think I'm obsessed—but everyone agrees I'm in love. I dream about bowling, and when I'm bowling, I dream about striking. I secretly wish Rob Stone and Randy Pedersen would narrate my bowling. If everyone bowled, I believe we'd find world peace.

At the age of four, Florida's summer sun banished me from the outdoors. They say it was heat-induced asthma, but I maintain it was fate. No child was happier with an eight-pound house ball and size 4 rental shoes. "Your thumb is the steering wheel," my mom advised me. Seventeen years later, my thumb is still driving—only this time it's a Porsche instead of a clunker.

I have invested in Storm balls, fingertips, interchangeable thumbs, tape, cleaners, towels, bags, and shoes. The result is an arsenal powerful enough to take on any challenge. I have sliced the viper, punched the shark, crushed the scorpion, and outran the cheetah in true Herculean fashion. Once, I even found the chameleon.

My collegiate coach is a 30+ year veteran of the sport and holds six nationally recognized coaching certifications. I eat well, exercise, and stretch before every practice, game, and tournament. I spend hours reviewing techniques on approach, timing, and release. I watch videos, read books, and study the pros. I have evolved from a casual birthday-party bowler into a thirty-games-per-week skilled athlete.

I have the highest spare conversion rate on my team. Strikes win games, but spares win championships. When I shoot a single pin, I always go hard and straight. I've made the baby split, the bucket, the 6-7-10, washouts, and enough ringing tens to fill three bowling alleys. In my opinion, the only good wood is dead wood.

Over the years, the bowling alley has become my home away from home. Everyone, from the Saturday morning youth coaches to the pro-shop owner, is part of my family. They have helped mentor and guide me into a strong, independent individual. Because of their willingness to give back to the bowling community, I now volunteer to support younger bowlers achieve the same levels of confidence—both on and off the lanes.

I have won patches, plaques and trophies. But nothing compares to the feeling of throwing a good shot and being justly rewarded. Certainly there is no substitute for the euphoria of shooting 300 for the very first time. No amount of money can buy the friendships I've made, the discipline I've mastered, and the great times I've had on the lanes.

I am the breath before the approach and the first through three, four, and five steps. I am the backswing, the momentum, the slide. I am the focus on the foul line, the smile from the strike, and the high-five after the game. I am a leader, a mentor, a defender, a teammate, and an anchor.

I am more than a bowler – I'm a Storm Prodigy.