

Anthony Balaguer: The Next Bowling Prodigy

Twenty years ago, many local bowlers in my area would have considered myself a child prodigy. I joined my first league in 1990 at the age of ten. I only averaged 100 that year using house equipment for the first half of the season. Once my parents bought me a pair of shoes and my own bowling ball, my passion for the sport of bowling grew exponentially. With dreams of becoming a professional bowler someday, I spent all of my free time practicing on the lanes or reading any bowling literature I could find. Two years later, I was averaging over 190 and competing in scratch tournaments with bowlers much older than me. I soon went on to win a handful of junior titles and made the San Diego Junior All Star Team.

As I grew older, bowling took a back seat to academics, work, and then a mortgage payment. While my life experience increased, my bowling average dwindled to 178. About a year and a half ago, I was bowling in my league and I ran into an acquaintance that I have not seen since childhood. The first thing he said to me with a tone of puzzlement and a facial expression of disgust was, "That's not the Anthony I remember!" I tried explaining how other priorities took away from my desire to bowl, but he continued to go on about how many revs I used to throw or how accurate I used to be. At first, his remarks hurt my feelings because it brought back memories of a gloried past that were no longer achievable. But as I gave this particular conversation more thought, a fire began to burn inside me and I was no longer content with the status quo.

With a new found desire to improve, I knew that changes had to be made. I contacted my local pro-shop operator to update my span and experiment with different pitches in my bowling equipment. I also purchased a Gadget wrist device to keep my release point consistent. Most importantly, I sought coaching advice from several elite bowlers and I practiced a minimum of three times a week. The extra effort soon paid dividends as my average climbed to a respectable 210. I went from having bowled a 700 series zero times from 2006-08 to 12 times last season.

I used to regret how I did not pursue bowling further in my younger years. However, my experience taught me that you can take the bowler out of the game, but you can't take the game out of the bowler. I am the next bowling prodigy because of my intense desire to learn and unquenchable thirst for excellence. Although I meandered from my bowling aspirations of two decades ago, I am back on track with the confidence that I will one day reach my goal of competing at the professional level.