

A good serve is a valuable asset

bowling
Red Poulin

North Hill bowler stops scoring slump

Well, the leagues are back in full swing. Some bowlers are in full swing, too, but some are still recovering from the holidays.

Steve Golding from North Hill Lanes in Rochester used the holidays to break out of an eight-week slump. The 200-plus bowler couldn't hit a 600 series, but when he finally broke the spell, he shattered it.

In the Tuesday Trio League (two weeks ago), Golding shot a 216, 288 and 257 for a 761. In the second game he had the first 10 strikes, but luck ran a little thin, and he left the 7-10 split. Welcome to North Hill Lanes, Steve.

He followed up the next Wednesday with a 253 and 245 for a 717 series in the Classic League.

Last week in the Friday Night League, Golding eased up a bit, and shot a 255 and 201 for a 625 series. What a way to start the new year.

Other scores in that league include Bob Whitwell with a 244 and Ralph Creech with a 238. Dan Williams shot a 236, and Les Bryan shot a 233.

TWO TEAMS battled it out. Eric Racette on Bekins Moving and Storage shot a 220, and Blake Howie backed him up with a 226, 201 and 218 for a 645. But they were no match for Gen Oak Fabricators, which had Ed Marsh's 676 series, including games of 256 and 217. Bill Zander added a 216 in a 609 to take 17 points.

A 13-year-old junior bowler used the holiday spirit to bowl the highest game of his life. Mike Sosnowski rolled a super game of 275 in the North Hill Junior Early Risers. The 158-average bowler also rolled games of 149 and 161 for a 585 series. His previous highs were 208 and 244.

Then, there is Joe Simma from Gold Crowns in Troy. Simma rolled a perfect game last Saturday in the Major League. From what I understand, it wasn't his first 300 game. It seems he had a previous perfect game at Sunny Brook in Sterling Heights.

At Bel-Aire Lanes in Farmington, 9-year-old Nicole Burns did something pretty spectacular. After finishing a four-week course of "Learn to Bowl," the 76-average bowler picked up the 5-7-10 split in the Tuesday Prep League.

Joe Taylor is a teaching tennis professional at the Centaur Racquet Club in West Bloomfield and Livonia Athletic Club. He is a member of the United States Tennis Association (USTA) and will offer tips on the basic strokes and strategies of tennis.

tennis
Joe Taylor

People ask me what the most important shot is in tennis. I usually tell them they are all important. If I had to pick a shot that can make or break a player, it would be the serve.

Most errors on the serve go into the net. Think of the serve as being an upward and outward motion, rather than a downward motion as some players imagine. Keep your head up as you hit through the serve. Dropping the head will usually result with the ball going into the net.

Spin is necessary for control. Either topspin or slice is okay. But you must put some amount of spin on the serve to gain power with control.

Even the pros don't hit their serves perfectly flat.

Topsin is developed by brushing up the back side of the ball. Slice is developed by hitting behind and brushing around the side of the ball. Remember,

hitting the serve perfectly flat is too hard to control.

DON'T SQUEEZE the racket too tight on the serve. It should be a free-flowing motion. Gripping the racket too hard tightens the muscles in the forearm, reducing the wrist snap.

A continental grip (halfway between the eastern forehand and backhand) should be used. Most players feel comfortable using a forehand grip. The problem with this grip is that it's difficult to hit the ball with power and control.

A serve is very similar to a pitcher's motion in baseball. Imagine you are throwing your racket out into your opponent's service square. Like a pitcher, you will get most of your power from the shoulder, elbow and wrist.

Start your serve with the back foot

parallel with the baseline with the front foot off on a slight angle. Start with the feet slightly wider than your shoulders.

Both arms on the serve should carry up together like a bird opening its wings. As the ball-lift hand continues skyward — drop your racket behind the back in a "lasso-type" motion.

AS THE RACKET drops behind the back, accelerate the shoulder, elbow and wrist, extending the arm completely and making contact with the ball. Don't let the racket slow down once it drops behind the back. Many players lift the ball too high, forcing you to slow down or stop behind their back. Make sure you are not lifting the ball more than two feet in the air.

The ball-lift technique is the toughest part of the serve. Remember, it's a

"ball lift," not a ball toss, which is defined as using the "wrist and elbow." These components of the body should not be used when lifting the ball up. Players who toss the ball have great difficulty controlling it.

With the ball cupped in your hand and wrist locked — lift the arm skyward.

When the arm is outstretched, open the hand and let the ball continue to rise. The ball-lift should be two feet out in front of the body, forcing your weight forward.

An improper serve often reverts back to ball-lift.

If your serves are going into the net, you may be lifting the ball too far out in front. If it's going long, you may need to adjust and lift the ball in front of the body.

No doubt about it, the serve is a tough stroke to master. The only way to serve like Rocco's "Ranger" (known throughout the world as having the premier serve) is to **PRACTICE, PRACTICE AND PRACTICE.**

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