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Who Bowls?

A wide assortment of sizes, shapes, and ages of people can be found in any bowling center enjoying the sport. There are old and young, skinny and fat, couples, groups of women, groups of men, mixed groups, groups of children, and even people bowling alone. You might even find a troop of Brownies there on a field trip if you drop in at the right time. These people keep the bowling centers rolling all day and half the night during the prime September to May season. Summertime is a bit more relaxed, and business is slower.

Bowling is one of the few sports where the sexes can meet on fairly equal terms, since it is more a game of concentration than brawn. This is evident when you see a child toss a ball and watch it roll slowly down the lane, wondering whether it will ever get to the pins, and then see ever; single pin fall down. In the next lane might be a 200 pounder who really hurls the ball and leaves pins standing.

While some children as young as four or five years of age have been known to bowl, and in fact do so quite well, the minimum recommended age for a beginner is seven or eight years, according to Toni Miga, certified instructor and Manager of Cloverlanes in Livonia. If a child is strong enough to throw the ball, he can bowl. If he isn't quite strong enough, he will put it on the floor between his legs, bend over, and roll it. Luckily, the lanes have enough of an incline to keep the ball moving no matter how feebly it is rolled. Children will stop when tired. And they are used to swinging 50 pounds or more every day on the monkey bars in the playground, so they are probably stronger in many ways than some of their parents who lead sedentary lives.

While bowling used to be considered mostly a male sport, the latest statistics reveal that now 48% of bowlers are female. The 1970 census showed that 34.4% of bowlers are 18 years of age or under.

We asked a number of Observer-land bowlers why they bowl. Fred and Virginia Roperti, of Livonia, signed their eight-and-a-half-year-old daughter Gina up for the summer bowling league offered by the Department of Parks and Recreation. Gina started out with a 39 average at the begin-

ning of the summer and brought it up to 51 by the middle of August, bowling some games in the 80's, with a high game of 115. The Ropertis frequently bowl together as a family now. "It's fun," says Mrs. Roperti. "It's a challenge--you are always striving to do better," says Mr. Roperti. Gina, too, says it's fun.

"I bowl for the sheer enjoyment of the game," said one father who was bowling with his 13 year old son. His son has been bowling for about four years and carries a 94 average. Fifteen-year-old Jim Zelezny, of Livonia, has been bowling for two years and carries a 150 average. He bowls twice a week--once as a substitute on a league and once for practice. "It's fun; I like it," says Jim. "I'm trying to beat my friend," he adds. His friend was not with him on this particular day. Unlike most other sports, bowling is something you can do alone. "You meet a lot of nice people and make a lot of new acquaintances," commented one woman. "And at the end of the season, they have a nice banquet," she continued. "It's good exercise; it takes you away from home." Her companion, a first time bowler, said she was bowling for the exercise and to have something to do.

As you can see, reasons for bowling are as diversified as the people themselves. The consensus of opinion does seem to be that bowling is "a ball."

Bowling exercises many muscles, and the benefits of regular exercise are well known. If you bowl too many games at one time for your current physical condition, you will quickly become aware of muscles you didn't realize you had, and it will be quickly evident (the next day) that bowling exercises more muscles than merely those in your forearm.

Persons in lousy physical condition would be wise to consult their doctors before undertaking to join a bowling league. Those in merely the standard semi-lousy condition common to people who lead sedentary lives should limit their first outing to three games. Or even two, if they tire too quickly. If you feel great the day after bowling three games (with no sore

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