

Part I

There is no way that *anybody* can write *anything* historic about bowling without mentioning 2-words, and those two words are: Earl Anthony. In my opinion, he was the greatest bowler in the history of the PBA. I feel as though I can say that, because I have seen *and* studied them all. In fact, he may have been the greatest bowler of all-time, but I can't say "*that*", because I haven't seen *them* all. I wish that I had. Of the greats that I have seen, there are a few that are close, such as; Don Carter, Dick Weber, and Walter Ray Williams, Jr.. Anytime that you compare athletes, arguments can occur. But, this man's record speaks for itself.

When Babe Ruth was demolishing all of the *home-run* records in his time, he became a National *hero*. Ruth dominated the game of baseball like nobody else ever has, or possibly ever will. His mammoth home-runs and his *bigger-than-life* "style", prompted a new word for the dictionaries: "*Ruthian*". The Bambino was "*something-else*". And, *so* was Earl.

I've got so many "*Babe Ruth*" (or, "*Ruthian*") stories about Earl, that I don't know where to start. Oh, I know, we'll start with explaining something a little "*technical*". We'll talk about *what* makes a player *great*. Most experts agree that a *great* player must possess: *versatility*. In my opinion, he was definitely the most versatile. Why? Because he could do everything. Why? Because he developed different *styles*. Most Tour players can win on *their* particular shot. Some Tour players can win on a couple of different types of lane conditions. A few Tour players can win on many different conditions. Earl could win on *any & all* conditions!!

How was he able to do that? Hard work. Hours and hours of practicing different *styles*. He, like all players, had his own favorite style. But, he knew that *his* particular *style* would not work all of the time. He knew that in order to win consistently, you must have *more* than one *game*. Let's put this into perspective. All of the players on Tour are either good, very good, or great. The "good" players have "one" game, and can *cash* from time to time. The "very good" players have "two" games and can usually make the *finals*. The "*great*" players have "three to four" games and can *win* on a few different types of conditions. Now, you ask, what was different about Earl? What "*was*" different, was the "*way*" he practiced, & "*how*" he was able to dominate.

He *highly* developed three different hand positions: A. Cupped. B. Regular (straight wrist). C. Flat (with the palm tilted back). These 3-different hand positions enabled him to create the three types of ball-reaction that were needed: skid, roll or hook; whenever he needed them. Then he *highly* developed three different types of push-aways: A. Ball held high and a straight push-away (for maximum ball speed). B. Ball held belt high (medium ball speed); C. Ball held low (below belt) for minimum ball speed. The hours and hours of practice on this gave him the great speed control that he had. Additionally, he developed 3-

types of ball *projection* onto the lane. A. He would project the ball 3-feet onto the lane. B. He would lay the ball down a foot past the foul-line. C. He would lay the ball down at the foul-line or *even* on the approach side of the foul-line. This would also allow him to get the ball reaction that he was looking for. This just didn't *happen*. He worked on all of *these* for hours & hours. What did it give him? Well, you really don't have to be a mathematics professor to figure that: $3 \times 3 \times 3$ equals 27. Yes, that's right, he had 27-"*games*" that he could go to !!!!

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RUTHIAN

Part II

THE difference between the "*good players*", the "*very good players*" and the "*great players*" is the "*mental game*". What exactly is that mysterious thing called the "*mental game*"? Many of the "*good*" and "*very good*" players possess similar physical talents to the "*great players*", but often fall short with their accomplishments. Simply put, the "*physical game*" (in any sport) is how the athlete performs based on their overall talent, ability, potential, skills and preparation. The "*mental game*" is a totally different animal. This element of the "*package*" is *HOW* the athlete thinks. We have all heard about how the *great players* are the ones who work the hardest. "They" are the first ones to practice and the last ones to leave. But, there is a lot more to it than that. Desire, dedication, determination, self-control, focus, concentration, confidence, self-esteem, positive thinking, goals, visualization, knowledge and a host of other things must be mastered

ONE time Earl was being interviewed after one of his early victories by a reporter. It was in the early 70's, and the reporter wanting to be controversial about the lefty-righty situation that had run rampant in the late 60's. He said to Earl, "This victory establishes you as one of the best lefties on Tour. Are you happy with that assessment?" Earl looked him right in the eye and said, "I don't know anything about *that*, my goal is to be the best *bowler*."

THERE was another time that showed exactly *how* the man thought. It was 1974 and he had just been named the Bowler of the Year. A press party was arranged and the award was being presented to him in his office. The wall was cleared and the photographer was going to take a picture of Earl putting up the plaque. Earl was standing toward the corner of the wall with the plaque, and someone in the crowd told Earl to put the plaque in the center of the wall. Earl said no, "*this*" one is going "*here*", and the rest of them will go across the wall!!!!

(He was right, the other 5 Bowler of the Year Awards eventually filled up the entire wall).

PREVIOUSLY, I had written a series of books called: Final Phase. They were instructional books to help bowlers learn about the great sport of bowling. I interviewed Earl for one of the books and posed this question: "Earl, in my opinion, you were the greatest bowler in the world. You totally dominated the Tour for more than ten years. What do you feel was the "formula-for-success" that you enjoyed?" His answer was: "In my opinion, success is the result of hard work, dedication, intelligence, selfishness and some luck. How hard you work and how much you are willing to sacrifice to achieve your goals will determine to a great degree your level of success. Natural talent is a wonderful

gift, and to be the very best you must have a lot of God-given talent. However, you *must* work hard to develop it. To be a winner, also takes a strong mind. You must be able to focus your concentration level, to a fine point and achieve a level of confidence in your ability that is unshakable under the most extreme pressure. Most winners develop an air of arrogance that is a by-product of the confidence that they have in their ability. The reason I was successful was my ability to understand and develop my mental game and the endless hours of practice on my physical game. There was also a certain amount of "fear-of-failure" that was tempered by a small degree of courage that I used as a motivator to let me continue to fight for my goals despite many setbacks and a willingness to put bowling and my desire to be the very best above all other things in my life."

THOSE 3-interviews alone, tells you volumes about why I thought he was the very best. I still get the "*chills*" and the "*goose-bumps*" when I read them.