

How it all started

This is a brief overview of the major highlights of how I and a proshop called Bowlers World came about.

My name is Patrick Birtig and I started bowling in 1964. At the time I was happy to bowl socially for a number of years as it was an outlet for me.

I got a little more serious and bowled league in 1977, I like many bowled in about 3 leagues.

New Employment

I then started working at AMF Chadstone in Melbourne in 1980. I was employed part-time working as a counter attendant in those days, it was a great learning experience because it was also a time before we used computers; we ran the counter manually, bookings, leagues, waiting lists etc. We gave the customer their shoes and a sheet for scoring, we turned the lanes on with a switch and we kept count by keeping our eyes on the counters. We emptied the ashtrays and replaced pencils and kept the center clean, and we told bowlers not to loft their bowling balls half way up the lane.

Getting more serious

It was then that I became interested in bowling more competitively in tournaments, and because I didn't like to lose, I guess I was a little obsessed with correct technique that I would bowl in excess of 50 - 70 games a week to try and get my game right (I don't think I ever really got there) and because of this developed severe injuries caused by ball fit.

In my mind I really felt there had to be a better way, although even the best bowlers of those times accepted injuries as being part of the game, anyone that has ripped apart their thumb or fingers just before the end of a tournament can relate to what I was feeling (frustrated).

Time for Experimenting

Because of my injuries I started to develop an interest in better understanding more, about the art of ball drilling and how I could fix my own hand problems.

I wanted to learn as much as I could, however the available literature on the subject was limited, there was the basic AMF & Brunswick manuals available which were a bit of a help, I did read them cover to cover a few times till I understood what they were about.

I then managed to find a copy of Bill Taylor's book on Fitting & Drilling which at the time seemed complex to a novice like me, but I did read it a few times till I could get my head around it, from there I got a copy of Bill Taylor's Balance which explained in great detail about weighing a bowling ball, these books got me started, and I was on my way!!

The proshop

I started doing work in the pro shop more than I worked the counter, so during this time I experimented on myself learning to create oval-shaped thumb holes and shaping my finger holes to fit, the invention of rubber finger inserts later on made life easier after that. In time my calluses went away and all my problems were solved, at last I was finally pain free!!!

Many of my friends had similar problems, so I worked on their bowling balls as well, one thing led to another and it just grew from there. Because I spent so much time in the pro shop, I no longer worked the counter; I was becoming more useful in the pro shop.

Coaching

My interest with coaching started with my first and only coach Dennis Booth in 1979, I was his first student, and it was a casual session just going through basic stuff, there was soon a couple more that joined the session, and this became more regular as time went on, we should realize that coaching was not really accepted back then. Dennis was working at AMF at the time and was learning to be a coach; I guess we were his experiments!!

Dick Ritger

In 1981 AMF with the co-operation from the ATBC funded the US professional bowler and master coach Dick Ritger to come to Australia. His role was to run clinics and help establish the ATBC Coaching Program; this same program is the basis of the Level 1 & 2 Coach Courses still used today. Dennis Booth was chosen to accompany Dick Ritger around Australia.

Coaching Classes

When Dennis returned he mentioned to me that he would like to start a clinic, the program was based on the hand written manuals handed to him by Dick Ritger. The clinic had eighteen pupils because we only had 6 lanes (3 to a lane) the objective was to provide a combination of theory and practice to bowlers each Saturday morning for 33 weeks.

The program included a 20 minute theory session, warm-ups & stretching, the Ritger Drills, and bowling skill type games. I was accredited as a coach in 1983 and took over the clinic in 1985 when Dennis moved to the ACT. The same bowlers stayed for many years, but we always managed to maintain the numbers when some left. They all developed great skills that helped them become more competitive as league and tournament bowlers. This clinic was certainly ahead of it's time!!

Bowlers World

During these early years I was becoming more committed to the pro shop, and wanted a full-time position, this proved difficult as it was not something that was done as a profession and I was rejected. It was after conversations with two of my friends in 1987 that we developed the concept of a stand alone pro shop that would cater to bowlers of all levels from beginner to the better bowler, it was then that Bowlers World was created in McKinnon in Melbourne. We thankfully kept our ever growing clientele base which we developed in the seven years with AMF, these included some of the best bowlers of the time, and this helped develop our reputation as being the best pro shop in the country.

We published a book

In 1988 we invested our own money and published the "**Australian Tenpin Bowling Book**" which sold more than 4000 copies and still holds the title of being the only book written about bowling in Australia to this day. This was something we became very proud of because we used the best bowling writers of the time Steve Mackie, Bob Cook and Dr Ed Kee, the book was edited by Phil Brook.

By publishing this book we believe we have preserved a part of the history of our sport that would have been otherwise lost. Some of these books are still available with me, and if you are interested can grab a free copy with any purchase over \$AUD100.00 in our pro shop or

for the small sum of \$AUD25.00 just call me during working hours Tuesday - Friday on (03)9555-3555 and I will post a copy to you anywhere in Australia, overseas costs are higher, we accept Visa, MasterCard and money-orders.

Time to move

In the early 90's we moved out of the shop, and moved to an 8 lane center in Box Hill where we set up the pro shop, eventually moving to Ed Fleming Lanes in 1993, Bowlers World remained there for a number of years.

Level 2 & Seminars

In 1990 I passed my Level 2 Coach accreditation, and started to do seminars for coaches through the ATBC (Australian Tenpin Bowling Congress) about better understanding ball fitting, drilling, weights & balances, and I continued to give those seminars each year for several years.

Ball Drilling Course

Because of these seminars, I managed to create hundreds of transparencies I used with the overhead projector during my talks and decided one day that I would put together a course on the art of fitting and drilling as well as other pro shop techniques.

At first I just taught individuals and progressed to groups of 6 in a 2 day course, this went on for years till the course became an accredited course now used by TBA (Tenpin Bowling Australia). The **TBA Level 1 Ball Drilling Course** is conducted throughout the year, courses are always being planned.

I became a HP (High Performance 2 Coach) in 2002 and today help in creating manuals and seminars for the ever developing TBA Coaching Programs. I am also involved with two other HP2 Coaches in a business called "**Super Schools Australasia**"

Bowlers World closed as a business in 2005, the name remains but today we operate under the AMF banner, we do however continue to maintain the same original standards and objectives we have had at the beginning, which was to service the beginner to the very best of bowlers.

We were one of the first online proshops in the country which did sell products at the time, and whilst we still sell products in our proshop, the site makes bowlers aware of products that are available in our proshop and many others within AMF Australia.

Regards, Patrick Birtig