

# BowlersJournal

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INTERNATIONAL

## 'Just Watch'

O'Grady's Answer  
To Those Who Say  
Regional Qualifiers  
Shouldn't Bowl TOC



2018 PBA  
Tournament of Champions  
winner Matt O'Grady

# THE PRO APPROACH

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## A Bowling Camp Like No Other

**AS OUR SPORT** keeps evolving, it takes more knowledge and training than ever before to play at the highest level. It's the cycle of all sports: The up-and-coming players have the benefit of the knowledge of past generations, combined with ongoing progress in technology and training to develop and fine-tune their skills.

Being a Team USA coach and having all the latest technology at the International Training and Research Center in Arlington, Texas, at your fingertips is a privilege, and it all comes in handy when working with Team USA at camps.

The Team USA program was revamped last year, adding more coaches to help the athletes train in Arlington. There now are two head coaches and seven assistants. The camps are five days long, with players arriving on Monday, and the work starting on Tuesday and continuing through Saturday.

These camps are anything but fun and games. Yes, the players have fun interacting with each other on the lanes and during meals, but they spend an average of about eight hours per day training — both classroom and going through skills and physical testing. It's no walk in the park, and everyone at the camp is expected to work their hardest at whatever is presented to them.

The first day starts with an orientation, at which players learn what's going to happen and what's expected of them. Then it goes into data collection, which is very extensive and takes up most of the day. There are four categories of data collected, and the athletes rotate through different stations of testing to develop their personal profile and rankings in

the way down to 0.

Then it turns to Elite (E), with 0 as the starting point and the numbers going up, with E6 being the highest. For example, the men's the highest ranked player overall was Chris Barnes with an E 2 ranking, and the lowest-ranking male

player had a T 2.25. For the women, the highest ranked player was Shannon O'Keefe with an E 2.25, and the lowest was a T 1.

What's tested in each category to come up with a ranking is interesting. The Release Versatility category incorporates:

- Release Ball Speed — normal, minimum and maximum.
- Axis tilt and rotation —

normal, minimum and maximum.

- Rev rate — normal, minimum and maximum.

Then the player has to mix and match the three; for example, max speed with max rev rate, max speed with minimum rev rate, etc.

The next category is Overall Shot Repeatability. What goes into this analysis are Release Velocity Range, Target Arrow Range, Break Point Range and Launch



**Head Games:** It wasn't all hard work at the girls' camp. Some, like Danielle McEwan (foreground), Missy Parkin, Shannon O'Keefe and Stefanie Johnson (l-r), got to enjoy their big heads. But none really have big heads, all of them being very grounded individuals.

each category.

The information for the player profiles and rankings comes from release versatility, overall shot repeatability, spare shooting and athleticism. They are measured on a sliding scale, developed by the USBC, called the Elite Training Assessment (ETA), classifying the players from Tier to Elite. It starts with Tier (T) 10, and the better the bowler's ranking, the lower the number goes, all

Angle Range. This is tested on two pattern lengths (short and long) with two different speeds (fast and slow). This test really shows how consistent a player is with their shot making.

The most interesting stat of this grouping, to me, was the break point consistency at about the 40-ft. mark. For the men, Ronnie Russell had the lowest number at 1.2 boards variance, which he did on the long pattern with his normal speed. For the women, it was Shannon O’Keefe with a 1.5-board range, which she accomplished with her normal speed on the short pattern. It’s pretty amazing to hit within a board-and-a-half or less at the break point for 20 shots.

The testing was done with only the 5, 8 and 9-pins set up. Doing it this way, the players weren’t worried about striking — only making the most consistent shot they could.

In the spare-shooting category, each player rolled 30 shots at five different spares: the 7-pin, 10-pin, washout, sleeper (2-8 for right-handers and 3-9 for left-handers), and the baby split (3-10 for righties and 2-7 for lefties).

For the 10-pin, there were six men and three women that made 100 percent of the shots. For the 7-pin, each gender had three athletes that were 100 percent.

The toughest spare to make, by far, was the washout. I think it’s because there are fewer of them left now due to the blends in the oil and the strength of the balls; players rarely miss the headpin. Most of the time, the ball will get back to the headpin on a wide shot, and you’ll see more 2-8-10s for right-handers and 3-7-9s for left-handers than washouts.

The fourth category the players were tested on was their athletic ability. They went through five different tests to determine their summary. Those tests were: functional movement strength, grip strength, balance strength, broad jump and vertical jump. The summary of these tests showed who the fittest athletes at camp were. In the long run, with all things being equal, a fitter person

Player Name	Overall	Release Versatility	Overall Shot Repeatability	Spare Shooting	Athlete
Chris Barnes	E 2	E 3	T 0.75	E 3.75	E 1
Tommy Jones	T 0.5	E 2.25	T 2	E 2	T 1.5
Steven Badovinac	T 0.75	T 1.75	T 0.25	E 2	T 2
Marshall Kent	E 1.5	E 2.5	T 0.75	E 2.5	E 1.25
AJ Johnson	E 1.5	E 1	T 0.75	E 4	E 1
Sean Rash	T 0.5	T 0.75	T 1.5	E 1.25	T 0.25
Jakob Butturff	T 2.5	T 3.25	T 2.5	T 0.75	T 2.75
AJ Chapman	E 1	E 3	T 1	E 1	T 0.5
Kyle King	T 1.25	E 2.5	T 3.25	T 1.25	T 1.75
Chris Via	E 1.75	E 1.5	T 1	E 3.5	E 2.5
Nick Pate	T 1.25	T 0.75	T 0.75	E 1	T 3.25
Ronnie Russell	E 1.5	E 1.25	T 0.25	E 3.5	E 1.25
Andrew Cain	T 0.25	T 1	T 0.25	E 1.5	T 0.25

**By the Numbers: Results of some of the Team USA players’ Elite Training Assessment Ranking Levels. There is not a big difference from the highest number to the lowest. This method of ranking can be done with anyone wanting to go through the process of training at the ITRC, and it’s really a very advanced way to look at your game through a very thorough testing procedure.**

will outperform someone not as fit.

All this happened on day one, along with a three-game tournament at night on three different patterns.

Day two started with photos (a little breather for the players), then went into pattern play on three fresh shots. The players had to pick the pattern names and lengths. The patterns were close enough in distance and shape that the players really had to think about what their ball was telling them. Then there was a six-game competition on the three patterns in the afternoon, with a mock medal round. After dinner, there was another competition.

Day three was the start of the players’ Elite Training Assessment review, which Head Coach Rod Ross does with each individual privately. For those that had been on the team before, Rod has all of their previous records and could compare those to the most recent tests. A big part of the testing was to show the players where they could improve for the future, and it gave the players a very good look at their overall game. Day three also marked the start of player development — coaches working with the players.

Day four started with about 75 USBC employees assembling at the ITRC to meet the coaches and players. Chairs were set up for them and Team USA

members were chosen to represent the team in fielding questions from the employees — who were allowed to ask anything they wanted. This was affectionately called “The Gauntlet.” It was a fun time and a great way to have staff meet the players and coaches. Somewhere along the way, everyone’s job at USBC touches Team USA.

After that session, the rest of the day was devoted to mental development, with a guest speaker brought in. The two camps I worked had two different speakers; both were good and very different from each other. By this time, the players really needed a physical break. Their bodies were beat up and they were tired, but they were ready to put on their

thinking caps and were very engaged in the presentations.

The fifth day was a continuation of the ETA evaluations and of player development. Players could go to any of the training stations they wanted. The stations consisted of SPECTO on six lanes, CATS on four lanes, BowlersMAP video equipment on the other lanes, and a mirror on the end lane so players could look at themselves while rolling a shot.

With all the technical equipment, the players could roll a shot and immediately look at their videos on BowlersMAP and ball-tracking results on SPECTO and CATS. This technology is invaluable in the development of the athletes and the communication between the coaches and players.

Besides the players getting to train at the ITRC, one of the really cool things about being a Team USA member is they get a free lifetime pass to train there and work with coaches that are available. Coach Ross keeps records and videos on everyone who attends a camp so the players can measure their development over time. It doesn’t get any better than that for a player.

*In addition to his work with Team USA, Bill Spigner is a Gold-certified coach. Read past “Pro Approach” columns at [billspigner.com](http://billspigner.com).*