

Pins 'explode' after being hit by Lakota East bowler's power

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When Jeff Pike's bowling ball hits the pocket, a distinct sound echoes throughout the bowling alley.



His Lakota East High School bowling coach Andrew Ehlers said the 3-pound, 6-ounce pins are no match for the power of Pike's 15-pound ball.

The pins "explode," Ehlers said.

Those explosions are why Pike has become one of the best high school bowlers in the region.

The sophomore carries a 213.7 average, second highest in the Greater Miami Conference. His high game this season is 277 and his lowest game is 165.

His highest two-game series is 477 with games of 223 and 254. His highest three-game series is 633 with games of 202, 266 and 165.

Last season, he qualified for districts at Beaver-Vu Lanes in Beavercreek, but after games of 141, 216 and 166, he failed to qualify for state.

The Thunderhawks are 8-2 overall, 6-1 in the GMC.

Ehlers believes once Pike masters his ability to adjust his powerful speed to changing lane conditions, he can carry a 220 average.

"Sometimes, on slick lanes, a slower ball can be more effective than one rolled faster," said Ehlers, a first-year coach and former member of the Professional Bowlers Association who competed in regional tournaments. "It's about realizing that lanes can vary."

When asked about his sophomore season, Pike said he's "kicking it around the bowling alley."

He started bowling when he was 5, and consistently practices on the weekends with his father, Daniel, who introduced him to the sport and who has rolled several 300 games.

Pike's career high is 279, a feat he accomplished his freshman year against Fairfield. He opened with five strikes, spared, then struck out. Eleven strikes, one spare.

One pin from perfection. That's why Pike said he has the "potential to be a good bowler."

When Pike consistently hits the pocket and the strikes continue, that drives him to "keep the streak going, going, going. But that also brings more pressure. I try to calm myself down."

His mother, Jessica, said watching her son bowl is “nerve wracking” because when he’s struggling, “I can’t help him.”

She credits her son’s willingness to listen to his coach and his frequent practice session with his father for his success and growth as a bowler.

“He puts in the work,” she said.