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HOW TO SUCCEED BY NOT TRYING TOO HARD

After reading countless essays that belabor the significance of a soccer game or a school play, admissions officers will welcome the following one from author Scott Pelletier. He uses his enjoyment of that most mundane sport, bowling, to write an interesting essay that succeeds partly because it doesn't break a sweat. In no particular order, the essay shows that Scott a) cares about others, b) has a good sense of humor, c) can tell a good story, and d) doesn't take himself too seriously. Only near the end does he relate that his performance really does matter a great deal—he was very nervous during Sectionals—and that bowling has helped him build self-confidence. After his understated essay, it is a believable conclusion.

Essay by Scott Pelletier

A ball is rolled down the lane. Confidently, I turn around; there is no need to see the result. A perfect strike. I stroll back to the bench, receiving high-fives from not only my teammates, but the opposing team as well. Bowling has been my most satisfying extracurricular activity. Turning with a smile on my face to my teammates knowing I threw a strike, without having to see it, feels amazing. On the other hand, it can prove a little embarrassing when a pin is left standing.

When I was in ninth grade, I tried out and made the freshmen basketball team. Spending almost the entire season on the bench was not an enjoyable experience. While my spirit to play was strong, my height of 5'2" was an impediment. The next year I decided to try bowling instead of putting myself through another year of warming the bench. Bowling is an

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equal opportunity sport, where it doesn't matter if you're short, fat, or even deaf, dumb, and blind. It is the only sport I know of that you can eat french fries and play cards during practice. Bowling matches and practices are always fun as we never have to do strenuous wind sprints and no one ever gets injured. My teammates and I get to relax and have fun.

On good days, it is satisfying to know that I can throw a strike on any shot. My best game to date is a 266. On the other hand, I have also experienced the "agony" of getting a gutter ball. We often joke with each other about throwing gutter balls; claiming it "hit my leg" to use as an excuse.

It is amazing to see how although as individuals we don't have a lot in common, yet as teammates, we bond. The team is very supportive; we cheer when someone does well and give encouragement when one of us throws a bad shot. I have never quite experienced that kind of team sportsmanship before. As a varsity bowler, I enjoy helping the younger JV bowlers perfect their game. I have spent numerous practices working with one freshman in particular to improve his approach to the shot (unfortunately, my efforts had limited success).

My own game has improved as well. Sophomore year, when we went to the Westchester/Putnam sectionals, I was really nervous and I did not bowl up to the expectations I had for myself. In contrast, junior year, we qualified again and I averaged fifteen pins better than my season average. My skills, along with my confidence, had significantly improved. This newfound confidence has spread to other areas of my life. Recently, I had to give a speech for Mu Alpha Theta (Math Honor Society) and I was pleasantly surprised with the ease I felt at delivering the speech. While bowling is not as glamorous as football or basketball (no cheerleaders), for me it will always be wonderful way to spend an afternoon.

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