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Team Eglin Public Affairs

3/23/2009 - EGLIN AIR FORCE BASE, Fla., -- The no-hitter, a hole-in-one, the three-minute mile and a 300 game in bowling - all mystical moments of perfection in sports. The Eglin bowling center played host to four such moments all in the same week from March 9-13.

"It is unusual to have four bowled in a week," said Jay Rookstool, bowling center manager. "However, it seems like they often do come in bunches."

David Jefferson, an Air Force retiree, bowled a perfect game March 9. Later in the week, Michael Ross, and Staff Sgt. Paul Thompson, 796th Civil Engineer Squadron, hit the 300 mark on the same night March 12. Terry Forfa, also a retiree, went perfect the following night, March 13.

A bowler must roll 12 strikes in a row to score 300 points in a single game. At Eglin Lanes, bowlers roll approximately 11,000 games per month. According to Mr. Rookstool, yearly records are recorded beginning in September. Only 16 bowlers have rolled a perfect game so far this year. So the odds of hitting 300 at Eglin's lanes are about .02 percent.

As a spectator, to witness a run to 300 is the epitome of the Wide World of Sports slogan "the thrill of victory and the agony of defeat." A momentum builds as a crowd forms, and they always do. If the streak makes it to the 10th frame it becomes nail-biting, edge of your seat entertainment. The audience leans in on the bowler's approach and lets out a collective cheer or disappointed sigh depending on the outcome.

The four bowlers had all reached perfection before and had felt that building pressure. "Whenever I make it to the eighth frame, I start to feel the nerves of bowling a 300," said Sergeant Thompson, a bowler for 13 years who's hit 300 three times before. "I tell myself I've been here before and try to calm my nerves."

Mr. Forfa said he put himself in the zone and was concentrating solely on defeating the other team. One of his opponents had already thrown a 299.

"I didn't want to lose another game to the other team and wanted to prove to those guys that this old dog could still hunt," said Mr. Forfa, a lifelong bowler who's reached the perfect plateau twice previously. "I looked up at the other team's scores and set myself to throw another."

But with the score close and the pressure on, his last bowl seemed in doubt.

"I had to reset myself as I didn't do something in my pre-shot routine I was doing in the other frames of the game," he said. "When I did this, my hand was in the ball a little longer and when I released it, it felt like it had hung a bit. Lucky for me, the ball found its way home and carried the pocket."

For Sergeant Thompson, he wasn't even scheduled to bowl that day.

"I was filling in for a guy who couldn't make it," he said. "I just drilled up a couple of new balls and wanted to use this night to try them out."

For Mr. Jefferson, a 10-time perfect gamer, he was relaxed all the way through and every ball he threw found the pocket.

"I just threw the last ball with confidence and wished for the best," he said.

The bowling center offers chances to reach 300 and perfection every day except Sundays of varying hours. Games are only \$1 during March and April from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. 'Laser Storm' bowling is Fridays and Saturdays 9 - midnight. For more information, call 882-3352.

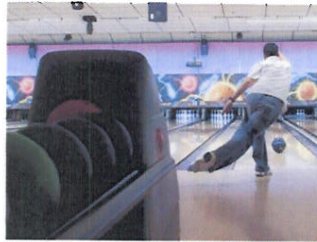
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Another bowler tries his luck at destiny and perfection at Eglin Lanes. A perfect score of 300 has been reached only 16 times since September 2008, but during the second week of March, four bowlers reached the mark. U.S. Air Force photo/Staff Sgt. Mike Meares.

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