

JASON BELMONTE
2008 JUNIOR NATIONALS Opening speech:
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Boys and Girls, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The President Shield in all of my experiences has been the one that I truly will never forget.

It's a time that girls and guys get to meet, have fun and most important see friends who you may not have seen for many months. Oh and we bowl tooright?

My first and only President Shield - allow me to paint the picture. The year was 2000, the venue was Tuggerawong ACT and I was apart of a team that was once called Central NSW. Central was the team that everyone wanted to beat. Why? Well because on paper for many years, Central had the best team. Funny thing though was once I was one of the many haters too. But that is a whole other story!

So to keep on going, we walked around like our **** did not stink, very cocky and that line between arrogance and confidence was crossed just a couple of times. Now that I think about it, I'm surprised we didn't get rolled in the car park before we started for some of the things we had said. I'm not proud of it, but in my defenceI was young and stupid.

Our first day, didn't start all that well for me or for the team. My first ever ball of President Shield I had a brain malfunction, forgot how to walk and fell on the lane, slid past the arrows and had everyone laughing at me and that was the highlight of Centrals first day.

Central had lost every single game and had only won a handful of points all day.

A HANDFULL!!!!!!!!!!!!!! We were devastated! Our Coach Doc Ed Kee, sat us down that night for a team meeting.

He basically told us that we are not GODS, we can be beaten. We had been beaten, but we were not DEAD! He took our mobiles off us (as punishment) and proceeded to give us a curfew.

Our mind set the following day is something to this day I still feed off when I need it while I am overseas.

Of all the people in the building, I could only see my team mates and my Coach. Everyone else didn't matter and all I was thinking about was to bowl each ball over my mark and make every spare. There was no heckling, well, not from us anyway, there was no arrogance, and there was only a team of 7 guys who busted their behinds for each other, paying attention to nothing other than each other and our Coach.

I still remember thinking to myself that after the day had finished; it was the fastest bowling I had been in. 5 man teams usually last forever but because nothing else mattered..... Things like TIME, it flew through.

Central went on to win President Shield, not by a little; we had won enough points to carry our girl's team to the overall team award.

What did that teach me!''

OK a few things

1:

Words off the lanes mean nothing, what you do on the lanes mean everything. No matter how good you think you are, if someone knocks over more pins than you, well they win. No words that will come out of your mouth will change that fact.

2. No matter how far you're out/down/smashed if it's mathematically possible you still have a chance, then you are still alive and anything can happen.

3.

Teams must stay together. 'Bad'still happens, if it happens to 1 or 5 it doesn't matter. It has happened to the TEAM, and as a team you must pull together and work through it.

4.

A teenage bowler does not know it all. Trust me; I thought I did at 17. Ask Doc.....we had our moments of arguments. As a 24 year old I have now realised that I still know so little about bowling and I ask more questions than anyone I know. So don't be afraid to ask as many questions as your head comes up with. And.....

5.

Bowling only gets better from here on in.

How does Bowling get better?

Simple. I have been to places that I didn't know existed. I have met more people than I have read about and the greatest thing bowling has given me is, I have made friendships that are going to last forever.

Let's be honest. We all love bowling, otherwise we wouldn't be here, but why do we love bowling so much? (Apart from the ball comes back to you) It's the people who make the sport so enjoyable. What's winning a tournament, or bowling a perfect game if you cannot share it with as many people as you can?

These friendships that you form in your junior days are the friendships that make bowling memories the most precious.

I have won tournaments all over the world. I have bowled 300's on TV and I have competed in the world's biggest and hardest tournaments and each time I go away I always look back to these times, the junior days, because its bowling at its most fun!

I do not have many words of wisdom, but if I was to pass on some advice to you all today it would be this.

Bowl till you wake up one morning and stop loving it
Bowl till you have learnt all there is to know about bowling
Bowl till you win every time you lace up your shoes...
Because until any of these happen bowling has so much to offer you and trust me
when I say You're going to love what bowling will bring to you!

I unfortunately won't be able to stick around to watch. I have to fly to the UK for the
World Masters, and then off to Kuwait – BUT through the amazing discoveries of
technology... like the internet – I will be keeping an eye on how everyone is going.

I wish all the teams' good luck, maybe just a little more luck to the Sth NSW team...
I wish that after the tournament is over that you can say to yourselves that you gave it
everything you had. I wish good luck to the coaches and managers and parents who
have helped each student get to where they are now.

I wish the best of luck to those who are aging out this year and remember what I
said... There is so much more to bowling, all you need to do is grab it with
.....'wait for it'.....2 hands!!!”