



DOWN LANE (ABOVE): Senior Lexi Thompson bowls during the regional competition at Fairlanes Alley in Grandville. She has been bowling since age five and now competes in the varsity sport. (photo by Grace Ostric)



HELPING HAND: Thompson helps junior Lauren Elias with her technique. The two have a special bond. "Lex is my go-to when I need someone to talk to or when I want to laugh," Elias said. "My favorite memory with her is jamming out in the car on the way to practice to get us pumped up!"

Success strikes

Thompson develops skills despite different year **By Sarah Mayer**

Senior Lexi Thompson closes her eyes and takes a deep breath.

A hush falls over the alley as she prepares. Her eyes open and narrow in on pins. She brings the ball back in her stance, lined up to perfection. The target is locked in.

With a quick flick of her wrist, the ball is on its journey. Thompson's eyes trace the track of the bowling ball. It appears to be veering to the left, but at the last second it corrects and curves to the middle.

Boom!

Pins clatter. One does a final spin before following suit.

Strike! Her team is beaming with smiles as she turns around and celebrates.

Thompson began bowling at five years old, and now is a varsity bowler. She has worked hard throughout her high school career, even earning 21st place in the state match last year. Her success has been a long time coming, but the realities of COVID-19 have changed the normals of her beloved sport.

"The virus has affected the team and I majorly," Thompson said. "We have not been able to get much practice with bowling alleys being shut down."

On March 16, 2020, Governor Whitmer announced the closing of many public places. Soon after, all high schools declared virtual learning. The future of sports was utterly unknown.

"We thought we would be able to practice on our own if not for school," Thompson said. "But then everything was shut down."

Thompson and her teammates were ecstatic to hear they would play a partial season this year as restrictions decreased, but knew it would be far from normal. The bowling team has had to make adjustments in order to pursue their season.

"The whole team was struggling in the beginning," Thompson said. "Not being able to get in and practice was a bit of a let down, and on top of that the season was pushed back by a month."

Usually, the team would participate in a variety of state wide competitions, such as invitationals each Saturday. This year, they've only been allowed to compete with those close by, and less frequently.

"In a normal competition, we go into match play which consists of two regular games and two bakers," Thompson said. "Bakers are different from a regular game, it's where each player from your team plays two frames."

The team has had to support each other this year more than ever.

Sophomore bowler Lauren Elias has admired Thompson's work and her positive spirit despite unprecedented times.

"Lex has been so successful at bowling because she puts in the time and effort to practice," Elias said. "She is prepared for each practice and match."

Thompson and Elias have become close over the season, and Elias has looked to her as an athlete, friend, and confidant.

"Lex is my go-to when I need someone to talk to or when I want to laugh," Elias said. "My favorite memory with her is jamming out in the car on the way to practice to get us pumped up!"

With this being her senior season, Thompson has learned to take nothing for granted. Her positive attitude and influence has been vital to the unusual season, and she continues to be recognized and appreciated by her teammates. They have undoubted faith in what their star player can achieve.

"I think that when Lexi believes in herself," Elias said. "She can reach any goal she sets her mind to."



(photo by Grace Ostric)