

SMALL BALL AND PARTY ROOMS



"The small ball area is without a doubt the best dollars spent for the return it is producing," Cottom states. There are ample spectator tables and chairs behind the mini-lanes where parents can sit and enjoy a beverage or snack while watching the youngsters enjoy themselves.

Parties are big business at Ross Cottom Lanes Family Fun Center and Doug Cottom concluded that adding multi-purpose space would even further promote this aspect of his business. He was right. Located off the small ball area are two party rooms, each designed to accommodate parties of up to 16 people. The two rooms can be combined for larger parties.

Cottom says, "This is the single best space added to our building. We sell numerous party packages which utilize the room. This is truly the most multi-functional room in the new layout."

It's been a while since we left the patrons at the old center, who were waiting for a lane. They did find the old and very

cramped arcade and had a beer at the counter. They also got to bowl, an experience they enjoyed except that the ladies would have liked to purchase socks to wear with the rental shoes. They never did notice the pro shop hidden away behind the control counter. And when they finished their bowling, there seemed little else to do except leave.

At the new Ross Cottom Lanes Family Fun Center, however, our patrons check the monitor, see their lane is ready, and return to the reception counter. They collect shoes and an automatic scoring leaflet, and are escorted to the lanes by a professional-looking instructor who helps them select just the right weight and fit, and gives them a hand getting started with the play.

Finally it's over. Or is it? Unlike the old center, there's so much to see and do that patrons typically stay for one more drink, another game in the bar, or to earn just a few more points on a machine in the arcade, enjoy a tasty late-night goodie in the new café, try their hand on the mini lanes, or purchase a shirt from the pro

shop that's the ideal gift for a husband who's now decided that he likes bowling just as much as golf.

As you can see, two very different sets of experiences. What did all this cost, and what about return on investment? The old 16-lane center with limited venues was producing \$23,000 per lane bed. The expansion, at a cost of \$1.4 million, enabled Doug Cottom to add more profit areas and create a facility with fewer limitations for customers out to have a good time. The gross income has doubled due to the remodel. The new entertainment center now produces over \$55,000 per lane bed.

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