

Interview: Mark Roth • Tips for Older Bowlers

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Bill Spigner's **Bowling Clinic**

■ I averaged 186 last year and I'm averaging in the mid-190s this year. However, I'm having trouble bowling in tournaments where the back ends are tight. I stroke the ball like Gary Dickinson, Mike Durbin, and Bo Burton, and when I try cranking the ball I get a lot of revolutions but also a lot of deflection. Could you give me some advice on how to create more back end?

On lane conditions that have long oil, or tight or spotty back ends, trying to crank and hook the ball a lot goes against what the lanes are allowing you to do. You stated that when you crank the ball you get a lot of revolutions, but your ball deflects. On a tight lane with no back end, a ball with a lot of revolutions could slide too far and not pick up a good roll. A good example would be a car on ice—the more you press down on the accelerator the faster the tires rotate, and the more the car skids. To get the car moving, you have to accelerate slowly so the tires can catch the slippery surface.

It's the same on an oily lane condition. Instead of trying to create area on a tight lane condition by cranking the ball, just stay with your best release. Find the area of the lane that will allow your ball to pick up a good roll and hit the pocket consistently. Then after you are able to hit the pocket consistently, worry about your carry. If you are bowling on a tough condition you may have to sacrifice some carry, but if you are consistently in the pocket, you'll get your share of strikes.

Lane conditions change throughout the course of a day, and if you can follow the lanes as they change, your best carrying angle to the pocket may appear. The ability to recognize this, and pour it on at that time, produces the big scores for bowlers. You need to be patient and grind it out when you don't have your best strike ball going so you can take advantage of the time when you can strike.

■ Suppose I am playing the second arrow, standing on the 20th board and shooting for the 10th board, and my ball is crossing over to the left of the head pin. How far left on the approach would it be practical to move my feet and still keep my same line at the arrows?

Personally, I would move my target left as I move my feet left. As a starting adjustment, for every two boards I move my feet, I move my target one board. If your ball is crossing over at the start of your league night, and you know the best place to play the lanes is the 10th board, I would recommend that you move no more than two boards with your feet without changing your target.

If your ball is starting to cross because

the lanes are breaking down, you will be looking to follow the oil in the heads so you can create enough skid to get your ball to break where you want it to.

The type of oiling pattern you are bowling on also determines the type of adjustment you will make. For example, if you are bowling on a long oil, heavy block, and your ball crosses over, you can move your target left into the oil, keep your feet in the same place, and your ball could go into the pocket. If you are bowling on an evenly oiled lane, and your ball crosses over, you'll have to move your feet left and possibly your target.

Remember, don't move your feet too much without moving your target in the same direction. All bowlers have a range they can play a certain board from without making major changes in their body alignment to their target or making changes in their swing and walking direction. I've seen bowlers move their feet on the approach five, 10, even 15 boards left (opposite for lefthanders) and keep their target on the lane the same. Doing this makes you walk right, causing you to walk in front of your swing, which makes the ball have to swing out around your hip. Most of the time you miss way inside your target yet you think you are hitting your target. Being so far out of line with your target hinders you from executing a well-balanced shot.

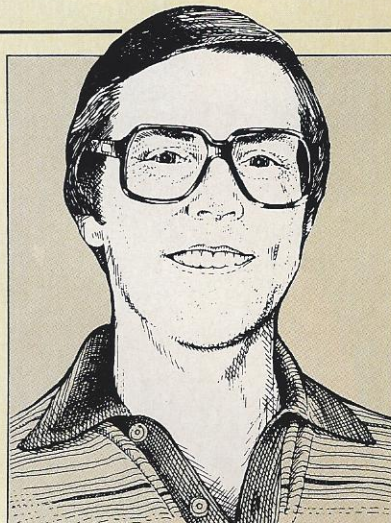
■ What is the best way to bowl on a reverse block condition, and what type of ball should I use?

A reverse block is a lane condition where the center of the lane has less oil on it than the boards closer to the gutter. It is also called an inversion in the oil and is generally low to moderate in scoring.

There are three ways to play a reverse block: 1) play the outside line in the heart of the oil; 2) play the deep inside line; 3) play right on the inversion of the oil.

If you elect to play the outside line around the first arrow you will have to keep the ball on a straight line. If you swing the ball, it will never come back. Playing this outside line is probably the most difficult way to play a reverse block. You need a strong enough ball to create the amount of hook necessary to get the ball to the pocket, and you need to be extremely accurate. If you roll a down-and-in type of ball, you'll need to be able to point the ball to the pocket.

The deep inside line around the 4th arrow—17th to 25th board—is many times a good place to play on the reverse block because you can find some oil inside of your target line. If this is the case, there will be drier boards outside of your target area, and you can swing the ball a little and create



Bill Spigner is in his 13th year on the PBA tour. He has won three national PBA championships and seven regional PBA titles. He also owns and operates Bill Spigner's Pro's Corner in Northbrook, Ill.

some area to hit the pocket. Playing this line requires a strong finishing ball to carry the pocket hits. If you have never played in there and you know you are on a reverse block, try it—you might surprise yourself. Your adjustments on this line would be normal: you move in the direction the ball is going for an adjustment to hit the pocket. In other words, move right if you miss right, or move left if you miss left.

To play a reverse block from the edge of the inversion (usually around the second arrow), you'll have to make different adjustments than what are considered normal. If the ball hooks too much, move a little closer to the gutter, more into the oil; this will hold the ball from hooking. If the ball isn't hooking enough, move a little into the drier part of the lane.

The type of bowler you are (cranker, stroker, etc), how inverted the oiling pattern is, and how much oil there is on the lane will determine what part of the lane will give you the best angle to play on a reverse block.

Normally a down-and-in type of player is at an advantage on a reverse block because he doesn't swing the ball away from the pocket enough to worry about the ball overreacting if he misses his target a little one way or the other.

As far as the type of ball to use, that is determined by the amount of oil on the lanes (the heavier the oil, the softer the ball).

Bill Spigner welcomes questions from readers and will answer as many as possible in this column. Mail your questions to: Bill Spigner, Bowling Digest, 990 Grove Street, Evanston, IL 60201.