

**BOWLING
CLINIC**
BETTER
FINGER
AND WRIST
POSITION

PARKER BOHN'S TIPS FROM THE PROS

BOWLING

DIGEST

February 2000



DEVELOP YOUR SCORING STRATEGY

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Tuck Your Fingers on

■ *A friend told me I have a wrist problem, and that a glove will help me. I also read that a glove will allow me to keep my wrist under the ball and give me a better ball rotation. Is this true?*

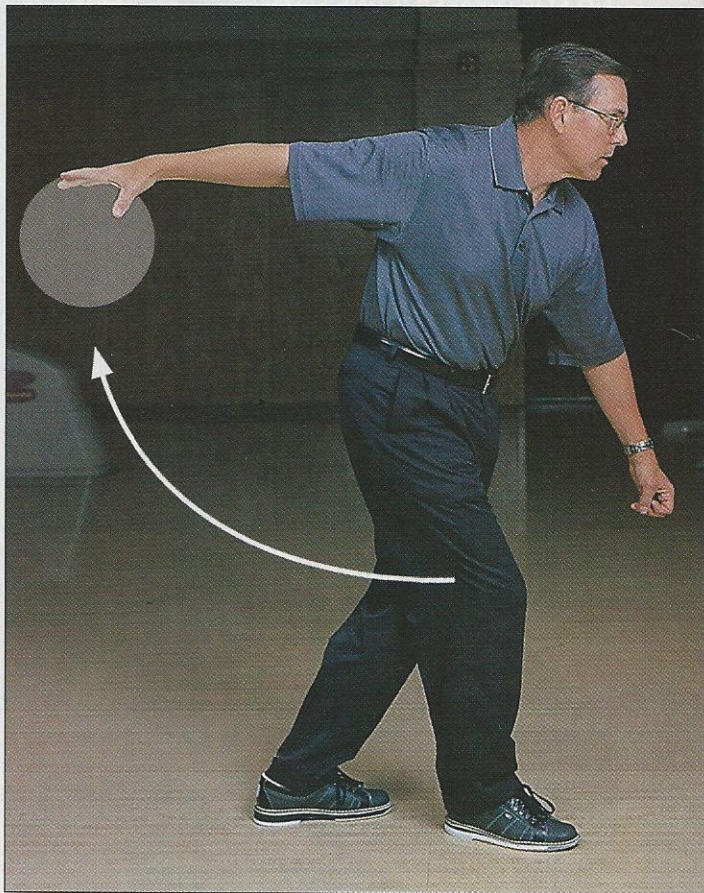
A glove doesn't support the wrist; a wrist device does. (It's an easy mistake to make—many bowlers refer to a wrist device as a "glove.") A wrist device is used to keep your wrist in a more stable position throughout your swing and release, but it doesn't put your wrist under the ball. You would have to cup your wrist at a 90-degree angle to get the wrist under the ball, which is not a reasonable thing to try.

You don't want your wrist moving around during your swing—you need to keep your wrist in a relatively stable position to have a good feel for the ball. You also don't want your wrist to support the weight of the ball during the swing. You need to let the weight of the ball swing the arm back.

If you try to keep your wrist cupped on the backswing, you're supporting the weight of the ball with the wrist while gravity is pulling on the ball, and the combination of gravity pulling the ball and you trying to keep your wrist cupped will make the ball feel heavy and cause a lot of muscle in the swing. However, if you let the weight of the ball take the arm and hand to the top of the swing without fighting it, the ball will feel very light. This is what you want to feel.

At the top of the swing, the ball has to come to a stop and start to come back down. When the ball starts down, your palm should face the floor, and this is when you want to think about

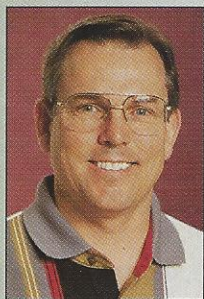
Need some help with your game? Bill Spigner welcomes questions from readers. Mail them to: Bowling Clinic, Bowling Digest, 990 Grove Street, Evanston, IL 60201. (Due to the volume of letters, no personal replies will be made.)



dropping your fingers under the thumb so the fingers can get under the ball at the bottom of the swing. By doing this, you'll be using gravity to help you get the fingers lower on the ball for increased revolutions and turn.

If you work on your swing and release this way, a wristband can help you to keep your wrist straight at the time of the release, when the ball comes off the thumb onto the fingers for the lift. You don't want a wrist device that totally locks the wrist—the wrist needs to have a little flexibility when the thumb comes out to help speed up the fingers lifting the ball and to keep the wrist from rolling around the ball.

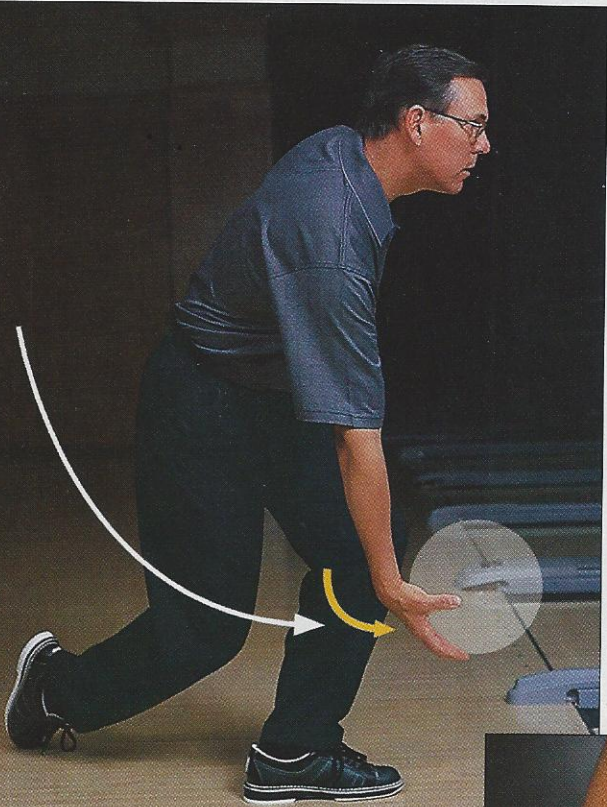
■ *My question relates to my armswing. I am about five feet tall and take six or seven steps to the foul line. How does the four- or five-step approach affect the type of shot I will throw?*



Bowling Clinic

By BILL SPIGNER

the Downswing



Let the weight of the ball drive your backswing, then drop your fingers under your thumb in the downswing for increased revs. Don't cup your wrist in the backswing [right]—it will make the ball feel heavy in your hand.

I also have problems with my release. I have read that with your release, your thumb must be at 10 o'clock (as a right-handed bowler). Does that mean that before I release the ball my thumb should be at 10 o'clock, or after my release my thumb should end up at 10 o'clock?

The number of steps you take doesn't affect the type of shot you throw. All timing is based on the four-step approach, so if you take more than four steps, your timing will still be based on the last four

steps of your approach. It's just easier to maintain good timing with the four- and five-step approach. It's also easier to work on your game with the four- or five-step approach.

Your thumb ends up at 10 o'clock because your fingers need to be at about 4 o'clock when they come out in order to put enough side rotation on the ball for hook. With the wrist cupped and the fingers under the ball, the thumb will come out of the ball more toward the 12 to 1 o'clock position. With less cup in the wrist, the thumb will be closer to 10 o'clock when it comes out. So the answer is actual-

and hook. When the fingers are higher on the ball, you have less time between the exit of the thumb and the release of the fingers, so the thumb will have already turned toward the 10 o'clock position that helps put enough side rotation on the ball for hook. This type of release produces less hook and is used by the down-and-in players.

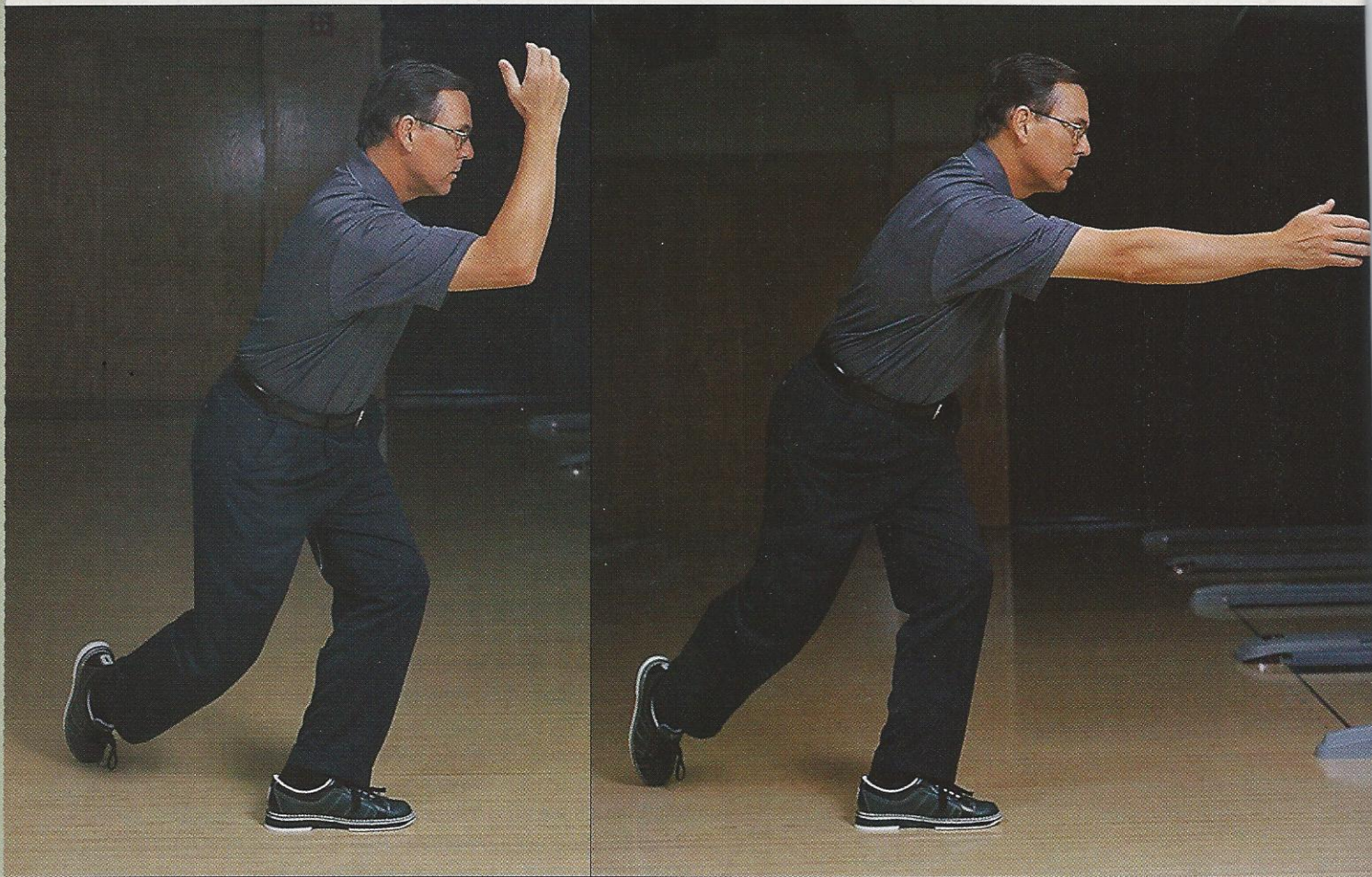
■ I am 19 years old and have been bowling for five years. Even though my average has gone from 95 to 159, I feel I haven't made much improvement. I honestly want to become an excellent competitor so I can bowl in money leagues and tournament competition. I have been teaching myself and going nowhere—even help from others hasn't helped very much. Should I take lessons? And if I do, for how long?

I'm a big believer in quality instruction.



ly both—it just depends on your wrist position when your thumb begins to exit the ball. With the wrist cupped, the fingers are further under the ball, which produces a greater time difference between the releases of the thumb and the fingers. This allows the fingers to lift and turn the ball more, which produces more revolutions

Getting lessons can take years off the learning experience. The better you get, the more you have to learn to get better—learning is a continuing process, and getting lessons should last as long as you're still trying to get better and you're able to find someone who can give you more knowledge. Lessons can come in many



To compensate for reduced ball speed on dry lanes, don't lift up at the release [left]. Instead, delay your hook by extending your hand toward your target [right].

different forms: reading, playing, other players and coaches. You never know where you may pick up a piece of information to help you, so you always have to keep your eyes, ears, and mind open.

Improvement depends on two vital things. The first is the physical delivery of the ball; the second is the mental game, the knowledge to be able to understand what's happening and how to control it. Developing a sound system to play the game will enable you to work on your physical game easier. Playing without a decent spare-shooting system and strike-ball adjustment system makes it more difficult to take advantage of the changes in your physical game.

To get better, you need to always work on both your physical and your mental game—it's a never-ending pursuit. The best athletes in all the major sports have coaches watching them, and bowlers are no different. We need another set of eyes

to help us understand what we're feeling and seeing when we bowl. Many times it's good to get a lesson when you're bowling your best, so the coach can help you understand your game when things are going right.

To find a good coach in your area, ask at your local pro shop for some recommendations. You can also contact USA Bowling at 414-421-9008 for certified coaches in your area.

■ I recently had a bout with cancer and had a bone marrow transplant. I have since tried to bowl again and had a hard time keeping the ball on the right side. I know I am not strong enough yet to keep my ball speed up on dry lanes, and I wonder if you had any suggestions on how to deal with the dry lanes. I throw a 16-pound Defense Zone and wonder if I should go to a lighter ball.

First, I would like to wish you best of

luck with your illness. It's great that you're getting better and can bowl again.

I would definitely go to a lighter ball—think seriously about a 14-pound ball. If you're going to be bowling on predominately dry lanes, you should get a high-RG resin ball. These balls are usually the least hooking of the resin balls and cost the least.

I also would recommend a more relaxed wrist position, because you don't need a lot of lift on dry lanes. When you're about to release the ball with the relaxed wrist position, don't think of lifting up—think of extending the hand down the lane along your target line. This wrist position and extension will help you project the ball farther down the lane before it hooks.

Two other things can help on the dry lanes. For one, use a little less knee bend. And second, make sure your shoulders are slightly open—facing a little toward the 10-pin (for a righthander)—so your armswing can travel inside-out and project the ball to the right. ●