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BOWLING

DIGEST

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to Beat
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- ➔ **Bill Spigner on balls:**
Go lighter with confidence

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Pounding the Issue: Does

■ *I'm a 63-year-old with a book average of 200, and I roll a full-roller. A friend and I were talking, and I said a 16-pound bowling ball will hit harder than a 15-pound ball due to the difference in weight, with all other considerations being equal. My friend said I was wrong. If I roll a 16-pound ball and can handle it well, would I hurt my game by going to a lighter ball? I remember reading a book by Earl Anthony in which he said the heavier the ball, the more pins it will knock down. And isn't it true a 16-pound ball will carry the corner pins a percentage better than a lighter ball, with all other considerations being equal?*

You are correct. A 16-pound ball will hit harder than a 15-pound ball with all other things being equal, namely hand action, ball speed, using the exact same ball, lane conditions, and the ability to consistently roll the same quality of shots for the duration of your match. However, on the senior pro tour about three-quarters of the players use a 15-pound ball. The players choose that size because it enables them to make higher-quality shots for a longer period of time.

With today's bowling balls, speed is a very important factor. If your ball loses speed because you're getting tired, you'll see a drop in your ability to carry. The balls that flare a lot grip the lane surface more. When the ball grips the surface more, the ball slows down.

For example, if a ball comes off your hand traveling 17 mph, by the time it gets to the pins it will slow to about 12 mph. If 12 mph is fast enough to kick out the corner pins, then that's the speed you need to maintain throughout the night. Now if you start to fatigue and lose one mph in speed, your carry will also decrease.

There's one other factor to look at that will reduce the speed the ball travels down the lane: oil. As you are bowling, the lane conditioner (oil) is wearing off the lane. When the oil wears off the front part of the lane, two things happen:

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.

The ball grabs the lane quicker and therefore slows down.

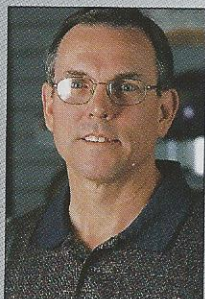
Earl Anthony's book was written 15 to 20 years ago. At that time we were using low-flaring urethane and rubber and plastic balls. Lane maintenance also was not what it is today. At that time, there was an advantage to using the heaviest ball you could.

Today's conditions are much different, though. Most bowling centers have lane maintenance equipment that allows them to completely clean and re-oil the lanes every day, which means the back ends of the lane will always hook. When you combine a higher-flaring ball with a big hook, the ball has so much surface contact when it enters the pins it deflects less. The ball contacts the head pin first, then it deflects into the 3-pin, to the 5-pin, and finally deflecting a little toward the 9-pin. Without the right amount of deflection, it's very difficult to carry.

Adding everything up, you will bowl better using a lighter ball and trying to change your roll slightly, to a semi-roller track. You may think you are handling the ball well, but are you getting the most out of your game with a 16-pound ball? Today, even 14-pound balls can carry better than the old-style balls of the '70s and '80s. Go lighter, with the confidence that it will help you.

■ *I am a 13-year-old bowler with a 155 to 165 average. I have three bowling balls: a Matrix TPS, a Track Triton Elite, and a Columbia Pit Boss. My question is about adjusting to different lanes. At my home house, I stand in the middle of the approach and play over the 18-board out to about the 5-board. When I go out of town, I have to move way right, and I feel very uncomfortable. Is there any way to shoot the way I normally do, and still get the ball to come back in all the oil?*

Adjusting to lanes is the most important aspect of bowling. As bowlers, we have to learn how to play each bowling lane as it's meant to be best played. It's a never-ending learning experience, and you can only get the experience by recognizing the new lane conditions you're faced with and coming up with a solution. No



Bowling Clinic

By BILL SPIGNER

Weight Add Up to Power?

matter how much difficulty you have with a lane condition, by the time you are done bowling on that lane you should learn two things to better handle that condition in the future.

First, you must recognize the lane condition and the type of shot that works best on that lane. Second, as the lane wears during play, you have to adjust to keep up with the changes. Bowling is a game of educated guesses—no one has all the answers to playing the lanes right. You need to understand yourself and your equipment to be able to make better adjustments.

In your case, the lane conditions you are bowling on at home allow you to

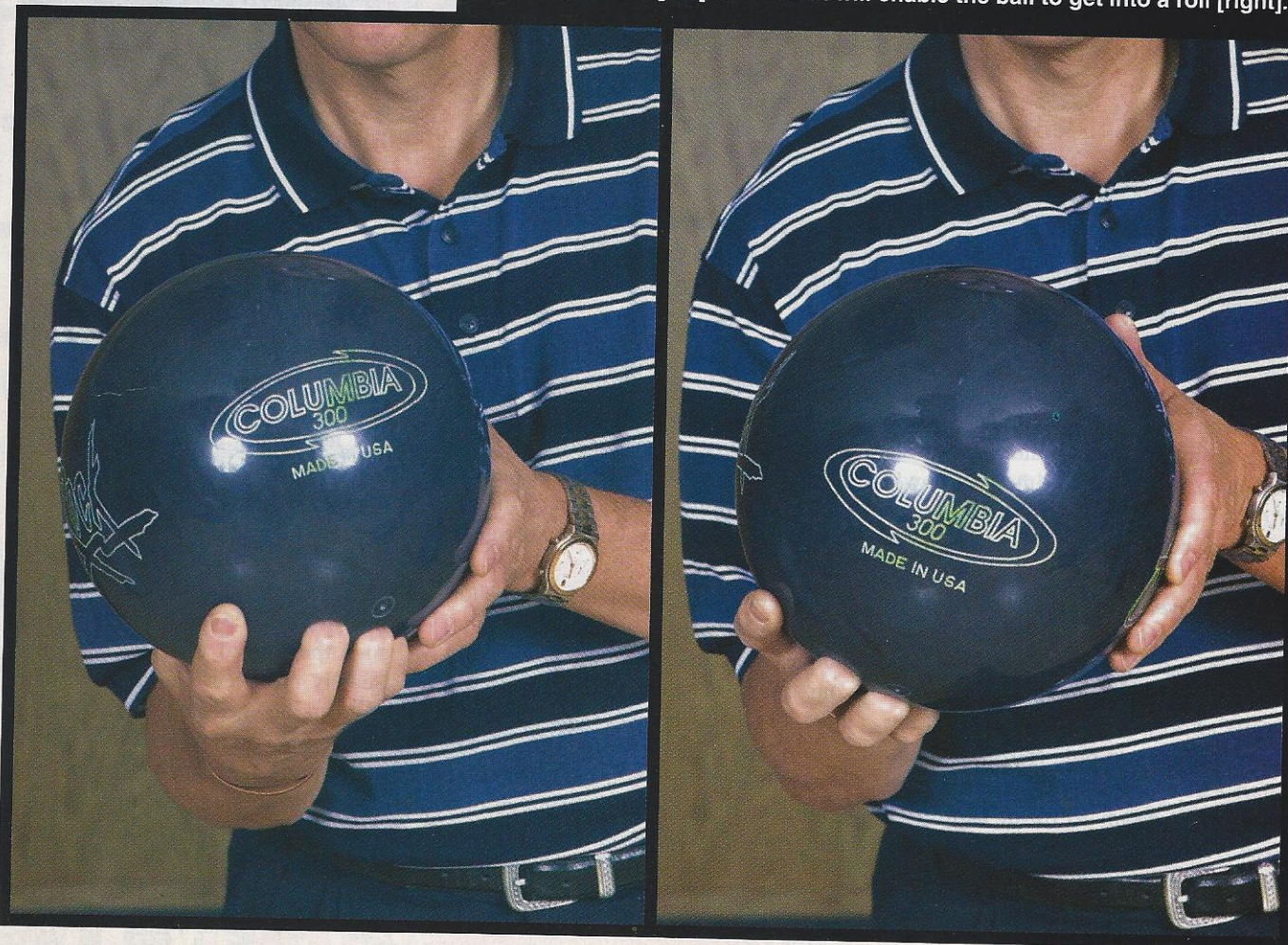
swing the ball a lot. Based on the numbers you gave me, you are hooking the ball about 26 boards, which is about five-eighths of the width of the lane. That's a lot of lane to cover on a consistent basis without much help from the oiling pattern. You are able to turn the ball and send it right because the lanes are very dry right of the second arrow.

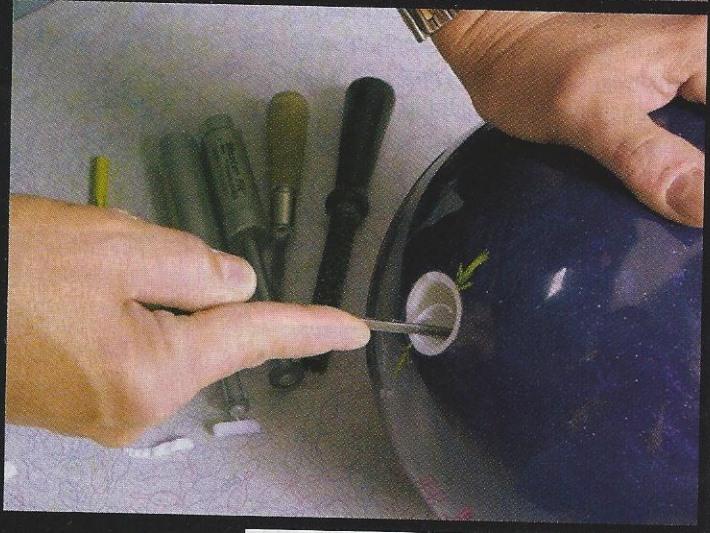
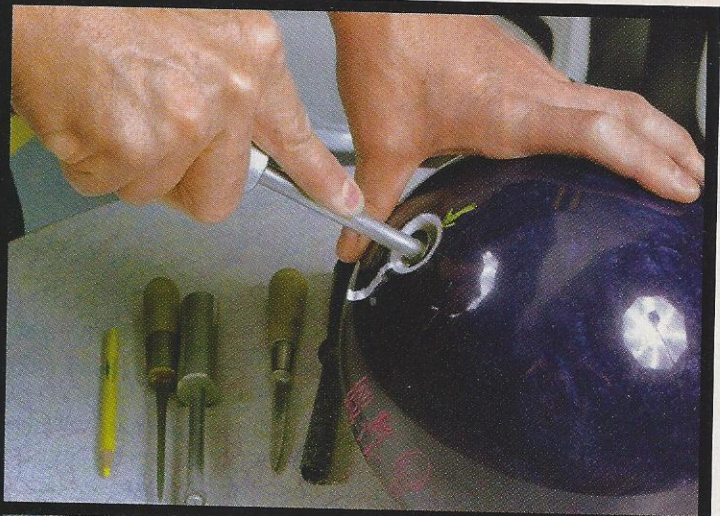
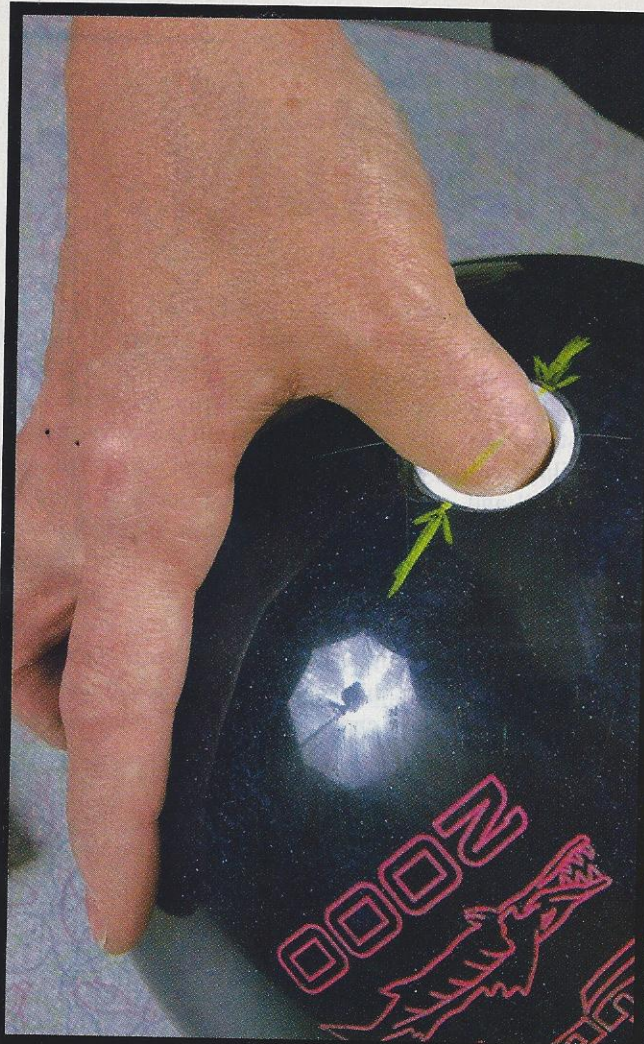
In your tournaments, it sounds as if there is oil all the way across the width of the lane. Therefore, there's no way you can roll the same shot in the tournaments that you do at home. When the lane

doesn't allow you to hook the ball, go with the flow and don't ever try to hook it.

You can do two things that will help you play the lanes better. First, visualize the direction you want the ball to travel down the lane and align your shoulders perpendicular to the line you're envisioning; think of your arm following through down that line. Second, instead of turning the ball a lot, change your hand position slightly. Put your thumb at about 11 o'clock, don't cup your wrist, and think about rolling the ball more end over end, so the ball will get into a roll.

When you're on a heavier-oiled lane than you're used to, switch from the cupped position [left] to one that will enable the ball to get into a roll [right].





If your thumb hole is fitting too tightly [above left], pro shop tools such as a bearing scraper [top right] or a beveling knife will open it up.

At 13 years old, you already have a nice average. You're thinking about how you can conquer the lane conditions that are giving you trouble, and that's good. Keep up the hard work and always be willing to learn. Every time you bowl, think of it as an opportunity to learn something new about the sport.

■ *I'm a 15-year-old, and I bowl with a 16-pound Track Enforcer. Before that, I used another 16-pound proactive ball. I love the ball and have made a conscious effort not to squeeze it, but my thumb swells and gets terrible blisters when I bowl. Tape and liquid Band-Aids don't seem to help. Usually I bowl five to 10 games two or three times per week. When I bowl on consecutive days, my thumb is very tight in the ball. It's frustrating to love a*

game so much and have so much riding on the day-to-day condition of my thumb. Could the ball have been drilled with the wrong pitch, or do I have to modify my grip or release?

The size of your thumb hole is too small. It sounds like your thumb is swelling, which makes it difficult to get it into the ball.

Take the ball to your local pro shop and have the hole widened so your thumb can fit into the hole even when your thumb is swollen. It's best to get fitted for a ball when your hand is slightly swollen; in your case, because you bowl a lot of games, you should have the ball fit when your hand is the biggest it's going to get. When your hand shrinks, add a little tape in the holes to tighten them. That way, the ball will continue to fit properly.

Getting blisters is part of the game from time to time, but it shouldn't happen on an everyday basis. It's also good to develop calluses on the thumb and fingers; they help protect the hand from blisters.

You may have to do some experimenting to get the hole size right, but you'll save yourself a lot of pain in the future. There are thumb inserts that you can put into the ball that come in round and oval shapes. I would recommend using them because if you need to change the size of the hole later, they are easily removed. These inserts still need to be beveled and carved to fine-tune the fit, but if you screw one up working on it, you can easily replace it. Also, with the resin balls the inserts don't stick to your thumb like the resin urethane does, which can help reduce the swelling you are experiencing.

Work with your local pro for a solution. ●