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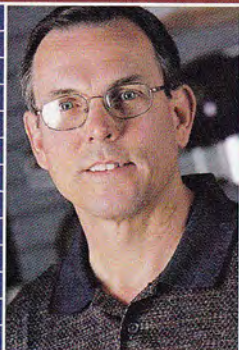
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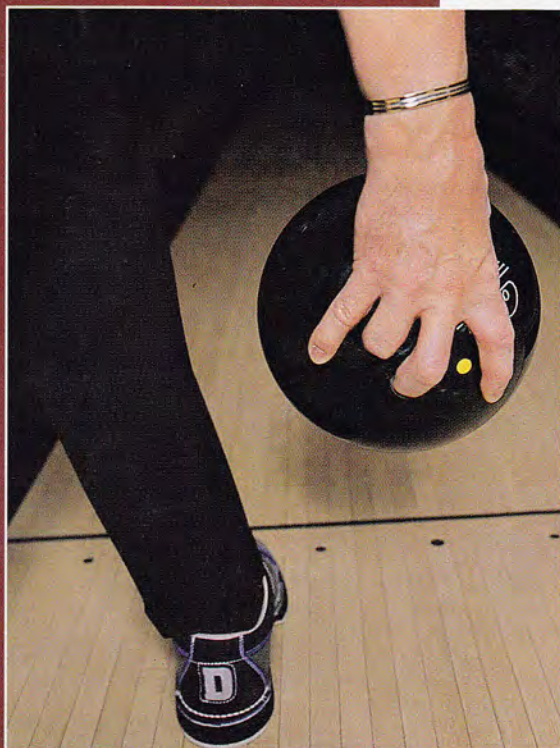


Adjusting Your Roll? It's All in the Axis

By **BILL SPIGNER**

Need some help with your game? Bill Spigner welcomes questions from readers. Send a letter to Bowling Clinic, Bowling Digest, 990 Grove Street, Evanston, IL 60201, or e-mail bowl@centurysports.net.

The Easter grip—in which the ring finger is drilled with a conventional grip and the middle finger is a fingertip—can help reduce lift and better control the break point.



■ I am 30 years old and have been bowling for 25 years. I throw what can be considered an average ball speed to somewhat fast. My release for the most part is end-over-end with little side turn. Ever since resin balls hit the market, I have been having a tremendous amount of trouble controlling my hook. I've tried different equipment, various drills, and just about everything else I could think of to control it. But with each new ball constructed solely to outhook its predecessor, I feel I will never be able to keep the ball to the right of the headpin again unless I go back to plastic (which can't compete powerwise to what everyone else is throwing) or return to a conventional grip. If I try more speed, my approach becomes more erratic and inconsistent, and I give the ball more lift, which causes more hook. Can you suggest anything that will help me?

The problem is your end-over-end roll. With that type of roll, it's difficult to project the ball down the lane and to the right. An end-over-end roll has a tendency to hook early. When the ball hooks early, it's difficult to control the break point—you constantly fight the lane conditions.

If there's enough oil on the front part of the lane (the heads) and the back ends are dry, you don't have a lot of trouble. On this type of condition, you can get the ball through the heads—your end-over-end roll gives your ball enough roll so it doesn't over-react when it reaches the end

of the oiling pattern at the back end. The only problem with this condition is that you will only encounter it right after the lanes are oiled, and it will last for a very short period of time.

You have already gone the route of trying to find equipment that will solve your problem, with no success. The best players are able to use the very latest equipment on a variety of lane conditions. Good examples can be found on both pro tours. This past fall, the PBA and PWBA bowled on sport condition patterns that have a tendency to hook more and are very unforgiving in relationship to the lane conditions that league bowlers play on, and they were able to succeed using today's best bowling equipment.

The answer to your problem is to change the roll on your ball. You are going to have to change your axis tilt and axis rotation. There is nothing wrong with the ball having a forward roll as long as you have enough tilt so the ball can get down the lane and turn up toward the pocket.

When the axis is tilted up or forward (which is referred to as mid-roll), the track of the ball is rotating more horizontally than perpendicularly to the lane. Award-winning writer Tom Kouros' all-time bestselling bowling book, "Par Bowling the Challenge," has a great description about mid-roll and how to achieve it. The side roll enhances the hook, so the amount of side roll combined with tilt will determine hook potential. Different lane conditions and where you play the lanes will require different amounts of tilt and rotation.

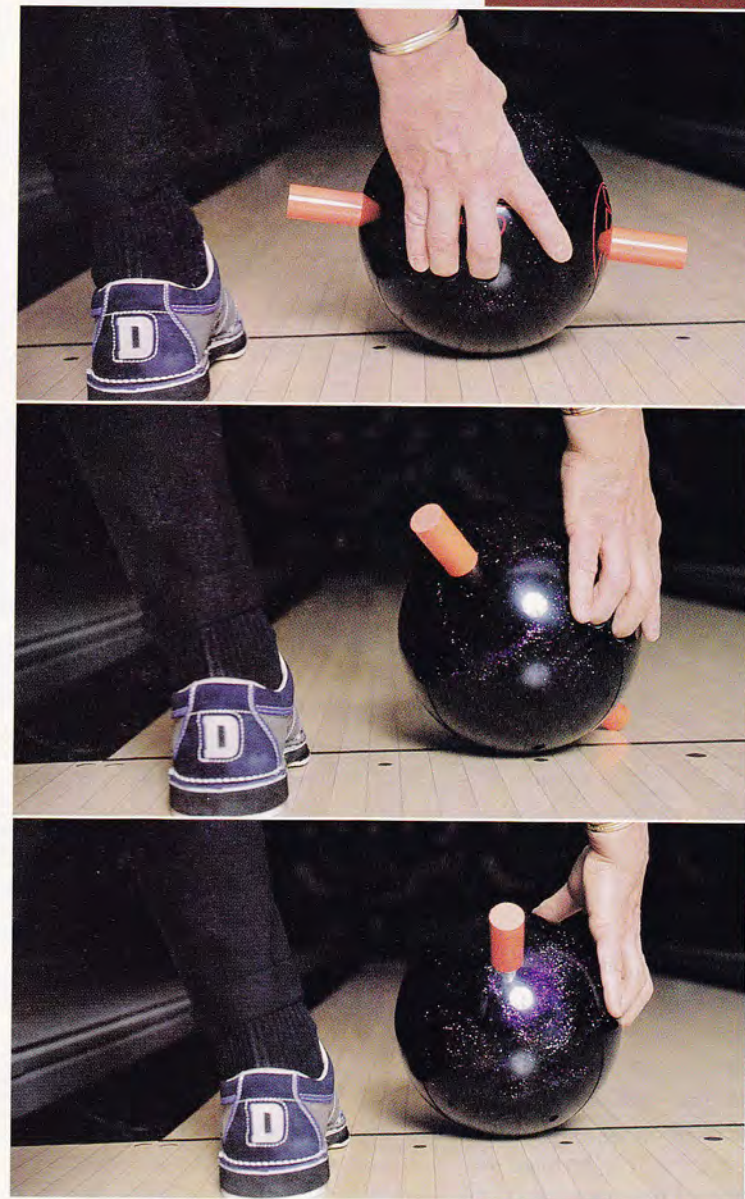
Axis rotation determines the amount of side roll on the ball. A zero degree axis rotation with no tilt is a straight ball. The degree of axis rotation can vary a lot and still produce an effective strike ball.

Approximately anywhere from 20 to 90 degrees of axis rotation can produce an effective strike ball with the right amount of axis tilt. Axis rotation of about 45 degrees is a good amount to use as a guide for a roll that can function well on a variety of conditions and lines.

For more hook increase your axis rotation, and for less hook decrease your axis rotation. Pete Weber used a release that produced an axis rotation of an astounding 90 degrees for years. He was one of the few pros who was able to do this and still control the ball. However, he now uses less rotation because of the sport condition on the PBA tour. (On this type of condition, you need less axis rotation.) Walter Ray Williams Jr., on the other hand, was at the top of the bowling world for years with less than 30 degrees of axis rotation in his bread-and-butter shot. However, both players can change their rotation to get the desired ball reaction that helps them be competitive on a variety of conditions.

A general rule of thumb is if the lanes require a straighter shot, less rotation is better. A lane condition that allows you to swing the ball a lot enables you to use more side roll.

I would recommend getting more tilt and a lower track on your ball. You need to have your fingers turning the ball from 7 to 3 o'clock from behind the ball. You want to extend through the ball, not up, with the hand following the ball down the lane so you can complete the turn through extension, not upswing lift. This will help tilt the axis, and the fingers will be moving inside out through the back of the ball, helping create side roll. Having the hand follow the ball down the lane will help you project the ball farther down the lane before it hooks. It will also help you



place your shot more easily.

A change in your finger pitches can also help you. Put some reverse pitch in the fingers, starting with about one quarter of an inch or more. The other thing to

A zero-degree axis tilt with no rotation [top] is a straight ball. Axis rotation of 45 degrees [middle] gives you a ball that functions well on a variety of conditions. Tilt of 90 degrees gives you a Weber hook.



To adjust your grip to move from a full-roller [left] to a semi-roller, pin placement (the small red dot) will have to move from the thumb hole to finger holes.

do with finger pitches is to use more left lateral pitch. These two changes will help you hit the ball more softly and turn the ball with greater ease.

U.S. Open champion Robert Smith had trouble controlling his powerful ball until he changed his grip. He went to the Easter grip, named after ABC Hall-of-Famer Sarge Easter. Easter was a star bowler in the 1920s and '30s. The Easter grip is different: The ring finger is drilled with a conventional grip and the middle finger is a fingertip. This grip helped Smith get a little less lift and a higher axis tilt. This enabled Smith to project the ball farther down the lane so he could control his break point better. Seeing Smith bowl, it's hard to imagine that he actually tamed his ball down.

■ *I own a Columbia Rock. After a few months, it had soaked up so much oil it no longer hooked enough to be used as a spare ball. When I first bought it, it hooked. I have since resurfaced the ball, which restored the reaction it had when it was new. I don't want to go through this again, so how do I keep the clean? I have heard of using everything from dishwashing detergent, Fantastik,*

Windex, and alcohol. Also, I've been told that a ball-cleaning product called "Black Magic" works. What is best?

The Columbia Rock is a very porous particle ball. Every manufacturer makes these types of balls. Particle balls come out of the factory with a dull finish. When this finish absorbs oil and dirt, the balls hook less. Cleaning these balls on a regular basis is important to maintain the hooking ability they had when they were new.

There are many products specifically made by the bowling industry for today's bowling balls. Stick with products that are specific to the problem. If I were cleaning my windows, I would use Windex—not a bowling ball cleaner.

There are products that can keep the ball dull for maximum hook, ranging all the way to products that will shine the ball and reduce hook. In my pro shop, I only use cleaning products that have been made for bowling balls. We have experimented with many different products, including those made for other uses (such as alcohol), and have found nothing better to do the job than what the industry is manufacturing.

Because there are so many good prod-

ucts, I would recommend that you talk to your ball driller about what he or she likes to use. Different shops use different products. But the one thing all the shops have in common is that they know the products they use and will recommend the best fit for your cleaning needs.

■ *I am a lefty. My average is 187. I use a Hammer Nasty Nail Extreme and a 14-pound Quantum purple ball. I stroke the ball with medium revs. I roll between a full-roller and a three-quarter turn. Both balls are drilled with the pin near the thumb hole. Is this normal, or should the pin be closer to the finger holes? The balls have no life when they enter the pocket. Also, would changing the thumb pitch help me get a three-quarter roll?*

You are rolling a full-roller. Most of the time the problem with a full-roller is that you can't get enough spin to allow you to move inside when the shot changes. It's best to increase the spin on the ball so the track moves outside the thumb hole.

There are a few things you can do with your grip to help you accomplish this. One would be to shorten the span. A shorter span makes it easier to turn the ball. The second thing is to change the thumb pitch. As a lefthander, you want to pitch the thumb more to the left (under the palm). This pitch could help a little with turn. The third thing to try is the finger pitches. Again, being lefthanded, you will want to go more right with the lateral pitches in the fingers.

You also can try a combination of all three changes. With some of these grip adjustments, you also must change the pin placements. You want higher pin placements, behind the fingers and to the left of them. You also need to think about your fingers turning in a clockwise rotation as you are turning through the ball.

Most bowlers who roll a full-roller can modify their style. Putting a little work into it, you'll find it's worth the effort to change. ●