

Bill Spigner's **Bowling Clinic**

Q. I was reading your column about what could be done for an oval-shaped thumb. What I would like to know is if it's within PBA rules to fill the thumb hole with a putty or plastic wood and shape it to fit the thumb. I have a problem with blisters and haven't found anything to work, but I do want to stay within the rules and be fair.

A. Plastic wood, wood putty, and similar materials are allowed. Any material that can be readily removed for spot checks is permitted, but it cannot exceed ¼" in thickness across the diameter of the hole.

Before the manufactured grips became popular, many players used plastic wood to shape their thumb and finger holes. Carmen Salvino was, and still is, one of the masters at using materials of this kind. In between blocks of bowling he would take his bowling balls back to his hotel room and partially fill in his finger and thumb holes with a wood-type material. He would come back to bowl and be constantly carving out the holes to get them to feel right. With the material he would actually be able to slightly change not only the size of the holes to keep up with his changing hand size, but also slightly change the pitches and span.

Remember, this rule is a PBA rule. The ABC has no rule prohibiting use of wood putty in the finger holes, but the ball still must meet all ABC specifications after putting the material in the holes.

Q. I am a 12-year-old and have a problem with my bowling ball. The inside of my ball is made of cork and it has taken some of the skin off my thumb. I have sanded it out a couple of times before, but it still bugs my thumb. The holes are not too small, because my fingers fit perfectly. I have a 10-pound ball. What can I do?

A. It's normal for lighter bowling balls to have rough centers. Since cork is light, it's used for the core of the ball to help keep the weight down. The shell of the ball has to be sturdy, so it is made of a tougher and heavier material.

One way to remedy your thumb problem would be to bring the ball to your pro shop and have the pro plug and redrill your thumb hole. The plug material will create a much smoother thumb hole, which will cause less friction on your thumb. Another thing you might want to do is patch your thumb in the area where the abrasion occurs by using "New Skin" and a nylon patch.

Many professionals, such as Mark Roth and Steve Cook, patch their thumbs and fingers before each bowling session. They do this to help protect their hands and fingers from the tremendous amount of

bowling they do. I also see some league bowlers patch their thumbs before each league night.

Q. I am left-handed, 5'2", 145 pounds, and I have a 15½-pound ball. I throw a full-roller. My old ball rolled between the thumb and fingers. Now I have a new ball and it rolls over the finger holes or on the outside of the finger holes. I would like to know if you think the ball could have been drilled to roll like that or if I am rolling it that way. I would like to know what type of wrist device or aid would help me get a better roll on the ball.

A. Unless there was a major change in the pitches of the holes, or the ball itself is out of balance, I would have to say it's in your release.

Your problem is in your wrist. As a left-hander, in order to roll a full-roller, you have to have a counter-clockwise rotation on your hand at your release point. As you are releasing the ball, you are breaking your wrist back. With your wrist breaking back, and your full-roller release, you are causing the new roll you are getting on your ball.

There are three wrist aids on the market that can help you overcome your problems and help you get a better roll on the ball. All three aids not only support the wrist but also one or more of the fingers. These are the Cobra, Pete Couture Pro Model Perfect Wrist, and a new glove called MoRevs.

Q. Could you please tell me what type of lane conditions all the various ball surfaces are used for?

A. There are three categories of bowling ball surfaces: polyester, rubber, and urethane. Polyester and urethane are both forms of plastic, but they're totally different from each other. All of these types of balls are made in hard and soft shells.

Harder-shelled balls will hook less and are usually better when the lanes have less oil on them. The softer-shelled balls will grab the lane more and are better on lanes that have more oil on them. Most manufacturers make both hard- and soft-shelled balls.

There is another factor involved in deciding what ball to use—porosity. Urethane balls and some of the soft shell rubber and plastic balls have porous shells. A soft-shelled ball that is porous will hook more than a smooth-surfaced ball. You can tell if a ball is very porous by looking closely at it. A porous ball will look like it has tiny holes all over it, or a rough surface. These porous balls are best on slick lanes.

Today's bowling has evolved to the point



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where it has become a three-ball game. Fifteen years ago you had one rubber ball. About nine years ago the soft polyester and soft rubber balls came out, and you needed two balls. Now you have the high porosity urethane ball, so it's become necessary for the serious bowler to have three balls in his arsenal.

Q. I am a left-handed bowler. At one time, I was bowling great, and then I developed a problem by bending my elbow. As that happened, I lost all of my ball speed and accuracy. I would like to know what I can do to stop bending my elbow.

A. When you bend your elbow you lose a lot of ball speed because the bending causes your swing to get shorter and slower.

Bending your elbow comes from muscling the ball. You are probably squeezing the ball a lot, and that's causing you to carry the ball through your swing. You need to loosen up, grip the ball very lightly, and let your arm swing without trying to do anything to the ball. If the ball feels like it's going to fall off your hand, add some tape to the thumb to get a better grip.

The more you fight the ball, the tighter your swing will get. So let that ball swing freely. I'm sure you'll find this simple remedy a good start to a straight, loose swing.

Bill Spigner welcomes questions from readers. Mail your questions to: Bill Spigner, Bowling Digest, 1020 Church Street, Evanston, IL 60201.