

**BOWLING  
CLINIC**

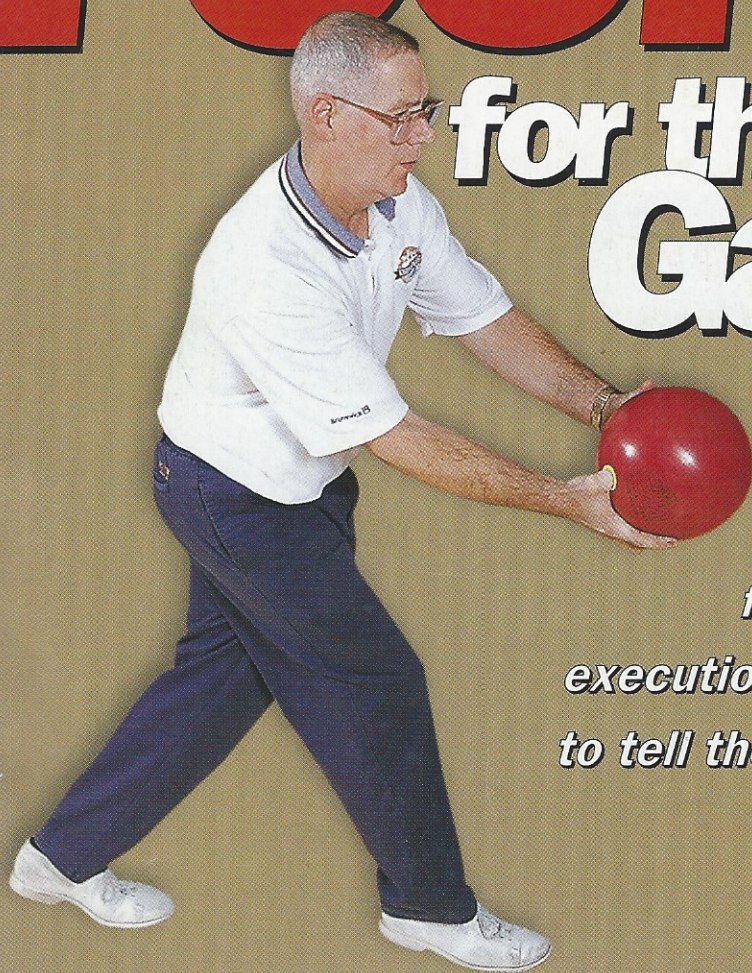
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to your  
target

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# BOWLING DIGEST

February 1999

# How to Get a Better Feel for the Game



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# Open Up to Change Yo

■ *I'm a right-handed bowler, a stroker carrying about a 180 average. If I'm going to accomplish my goal of a 200-plus average, I need to correct my backswing accuracy. I have no problem picking up my spares, but I need more strikes in my game. I use a five-step approach and aim about 30 feet down the lanes (I get a better follow-through that way). I use a fingertip grip, and roll a hooking ball for my strike shots and a plastic ball to pick up corner pins.*

*However, due to the inaccuracy of my backswing, I have to compensate for my accuracy by aiming around the No. 2 board in order for my ball to go over the No. 7 board, my desired target. My friends tell me that when I break my wrist back to cut the lift and make the ball go straighter to the corner pins (thumb at 3 o'clock), my backswing is a lot straighter. For my strike shot (thumb at 12 o'clock), I keep my wrist straight using a wrist support, and with this hand position my backswing tends to swing outward after I pass my body, then go inward on the follow-through, which throws off my aim to my target by about five boards. Cutting down on my backswing decreases the swing outward but doesn't eliminate it, and I lose some power too.*

**How can I get a more accurate and more consistent backswing?**

You will need to change the path your arm-swing travels. A swing that travels on an outside-in path from the top of the swing into the release zone greatly restricts where you can play the lanes and the action you can put on the ball.

You said your swing is better when you break your wrist back to kill the ball when shooting spares, which tells me you're using a lot of muscle when you roll your strike ball. On your spare shot, when you break the wrist back, you're not worrying about applying action to the ball, and it frees up your swing.

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*Need some help with your game? Bill Spigner welcomes your questions. Write to: Bowling Clinic, Bowling Digest, 990 Grove Street, Evanston, IL 60201, or e-mail us at bowl@centurysports.net.*

You also said you have no trouble with spares, which leads me to believe you really don't have an accuracy problem.

I believe your problems are associated with your body position at the stance and during the approach, and possibly the direction you walk. In order to execute a good release, the swing has to enter the release zone in at least a slight inside-out swing path. The turn a bowler applies to the ball isn't generated from the wrist turning around the ball, but from the fingers, hand, and arm traveling in a slight inside-out path. To visualize the release, let's use a clock as our guide. When the ball reaches the bottom of the swing is where we will use our clock for the release of the ball. When you release the ball the thumb points up at roughly 12 o'clock. The fingers travel from around 6 to 7 o'clock out and up to about 4 o'clock. I say "out and up" because a clock is round—this motion will make the fingers travel out and up away from the ankle. This very small move allows the ball to roll off the fingers to the inside of the hand.

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**If your backswing moves out away from your body when you're square to the foul line [a], adjust by keeping the same swing but staggering your feet and opening your shoulder [b]. Thus, your outside-in swing path is straight relative to the lane.**



## Bowling Clinic

By BILL SPIGNER

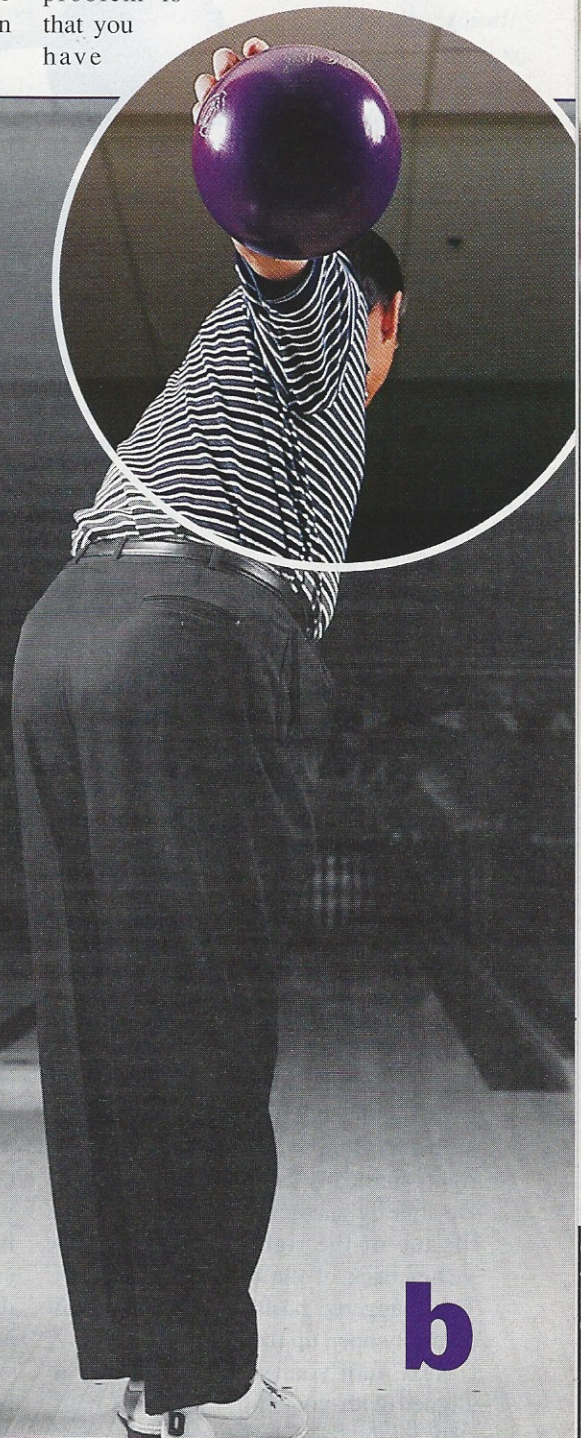


# ur Swing Path

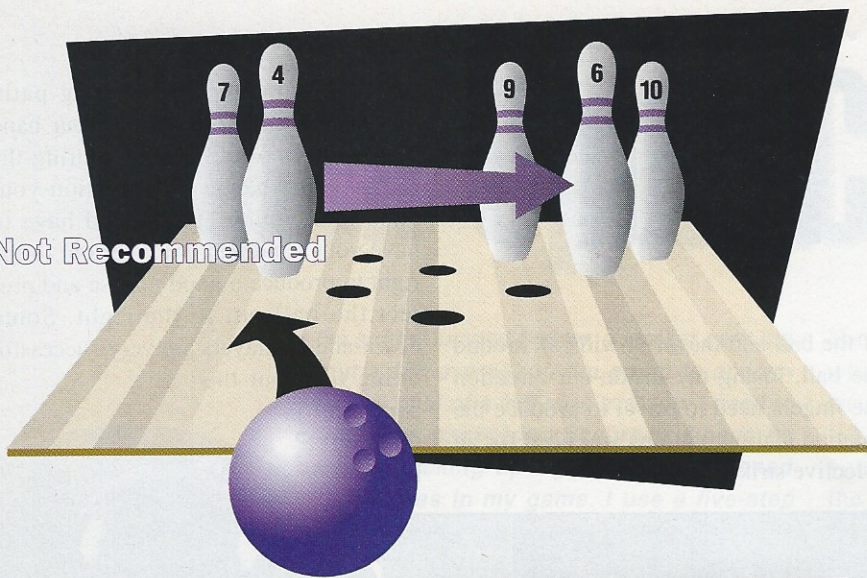
Two keys to the release are (1) the thumb points up to 12 o'clock and (2) the ball stays in front of the hand. If the thumb rotates too much past 12 o'clock, the palm of the hand will go to the top

of the ball and the wrist will roll around the ball, losing the inside-out direction the fingers need to travel to produce the rotation and revolutions you need for an effective strike ball.

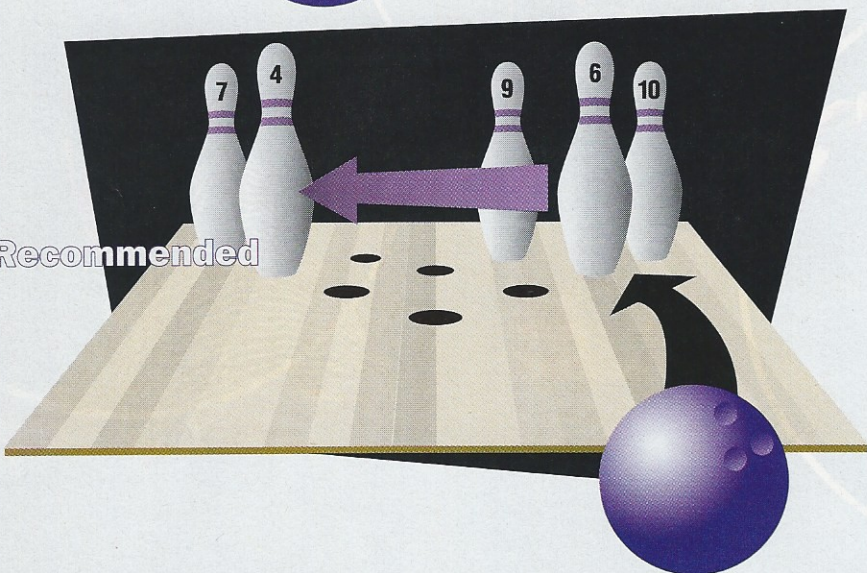
With your outside-in swing path, there is no way you can get your hand in the right position, unless during the release you change the direction your hand is traveling. You would have to have your hand and arm veer out to the right to produce a good release and project the ball out to the right. Some down-and-in players are very successful doing this, but the problem is that you have



Not Recommended



Recommended



**When you're trying to pick up the Greek Church—the 4-6-7-9-10—aiming at the 6-9-10 is the better approach for a number of reasons. For one, you're using one pin, the 6-pin, to take out two pins instead of three. Furthermore, if you don't pick up the spare, you're likely to get three pins instead of two.**

to change the direction that your arm and hand are traveling during the release.

Our solution will start with the stance. Set up with your body in a slightly open position to the lane, which for a righthander means having the hips and shoulders facing more to the right—basically facing the right corner. Do this by staggering your feet: Place the toe of the right foot three to six inches back of the toe of the left foot. This staggered position of the feet will naturally open up the hips.

Next, turn your shoulders so they're aligned with your hips. This will naturally set the ball a little more to the right

side of the body. Basically, don't change your swing path by moving the ball out to the right—it's better to set your whole body up at a different angle.

You want your body to remain in this open position all the way through your approach and during the release of the ball—your body position will automatically change your swing path without you making any specific effort. Your body position and the direction of your steps have a great influence on the direction the swing travels and the action you can put on the ball. That's why you should check your walk pattern, which needs to be straight or slightly left.

You're missing way left of your target because you're standing in the wrong place in relationship to your target. However, most right-handed players will miss left of their target; the amount varies with the individual, but your situation—having to look at the No. 2 board to hit the No. 7 board—is a lot. Two to three boards inside of where your eyes are looking is the most your ball should miss.

With this new stance and body position, your swing will naturally project the ball to the right, so you should be able to move your target closer to where you want the ball to go. Remember, accuracy is determined by where you start and finish your approach. Never use your hand for accuracy—the hand is strictly used for applying action to the ball, while the shoulders and armswing combine to create accuracy.

**■ I bowl about 45 games a week and carry a 184 average. I've been told by a fellow bowler that I'm shooting at the wrong pins when I have a Greek Church [the 4-6-7-9-10]. I shoot for the 6-9-10, but I've been told that I should go for the 4-7 and try to pop the 4-pin over to take out the 6-9-10. Which way is correct?**

I agree with your approach to making the Greek Church. As with many spares, you want to attack the most pins you can. There have always been bowlers who think that shooting at the 4-7 is the way to go for this spare, but there are good reasons not to do this.

First, the object of the game is to knock down the most pins you can, and in the long run shooting for the grouping of three pins will add more pins to your totals. Second, it's easier to expect the 6-pin to come across the pin deck to take out two pins, vs. the 4-pin having to take out three pins. And third, you'll normally have a little curve to the ball even when you roll it straight. That curve will help hit the 6-pin at a better angle to send it across the pin deck.

Your percentages to make the spare and get a higher pin counts are better when you shoot for the 6-9-10. The pros roll for the three pins, and so should you. ●