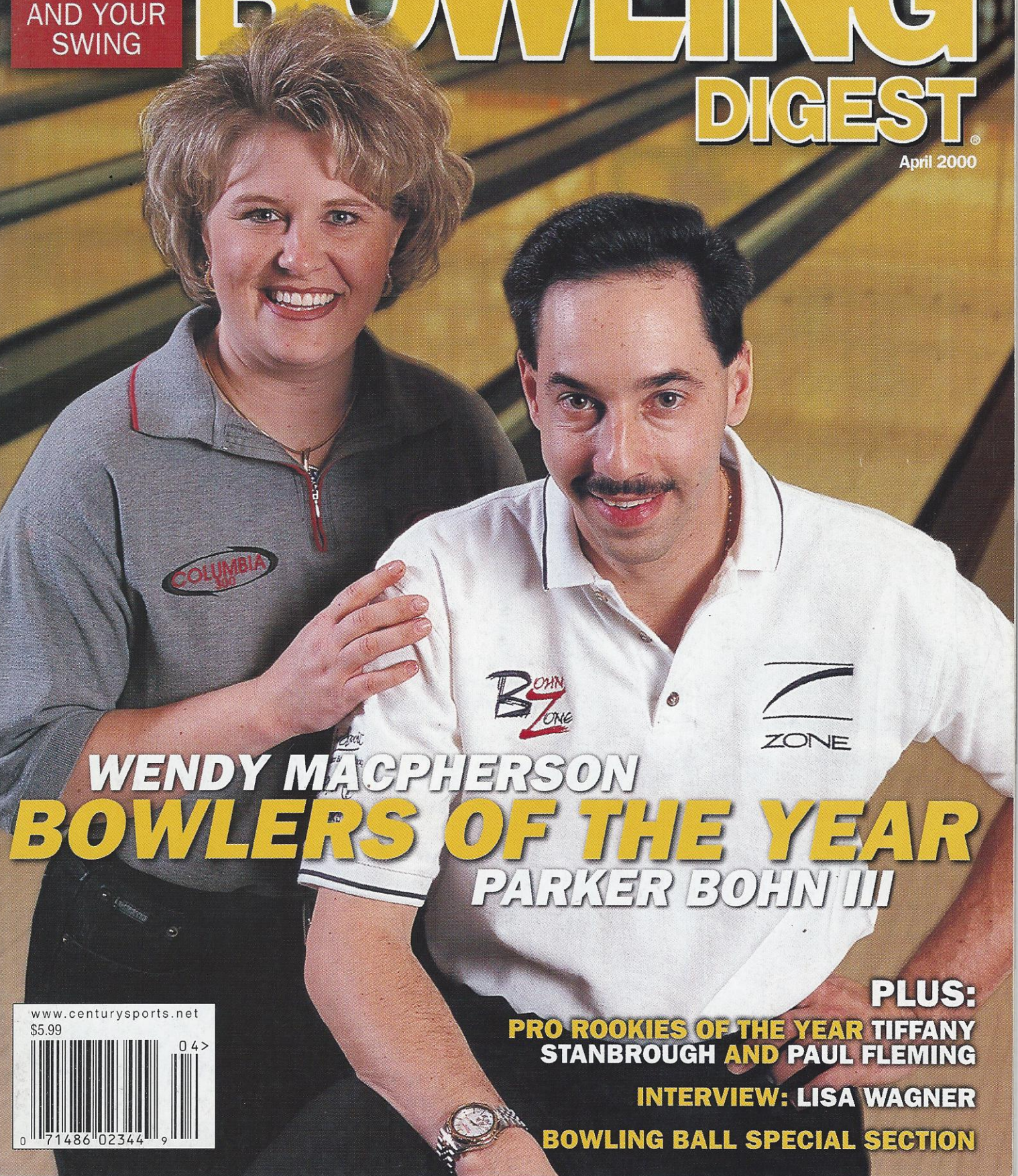


**BOWLING
CLINIC**
BODY
POSITION
AND YOUR
SWING

PRO'S APPROACH: PLAYING THE LANES

BOWLING DIGEST

April 2000



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Get Your Body in Line

■ *I read your column every time it comes out, and now I need your help. I had kidney surgery and now that I'm back to bowling, no matter what I do I cannot get my ball past my ankle. That means I'm losing a lot of power, so when the lanes are dry I cannot move far enough left. When I change to a harder ball, it doesn't finish on the back end. I have a hard time getting the ball through the heads and still hook on the back end.*



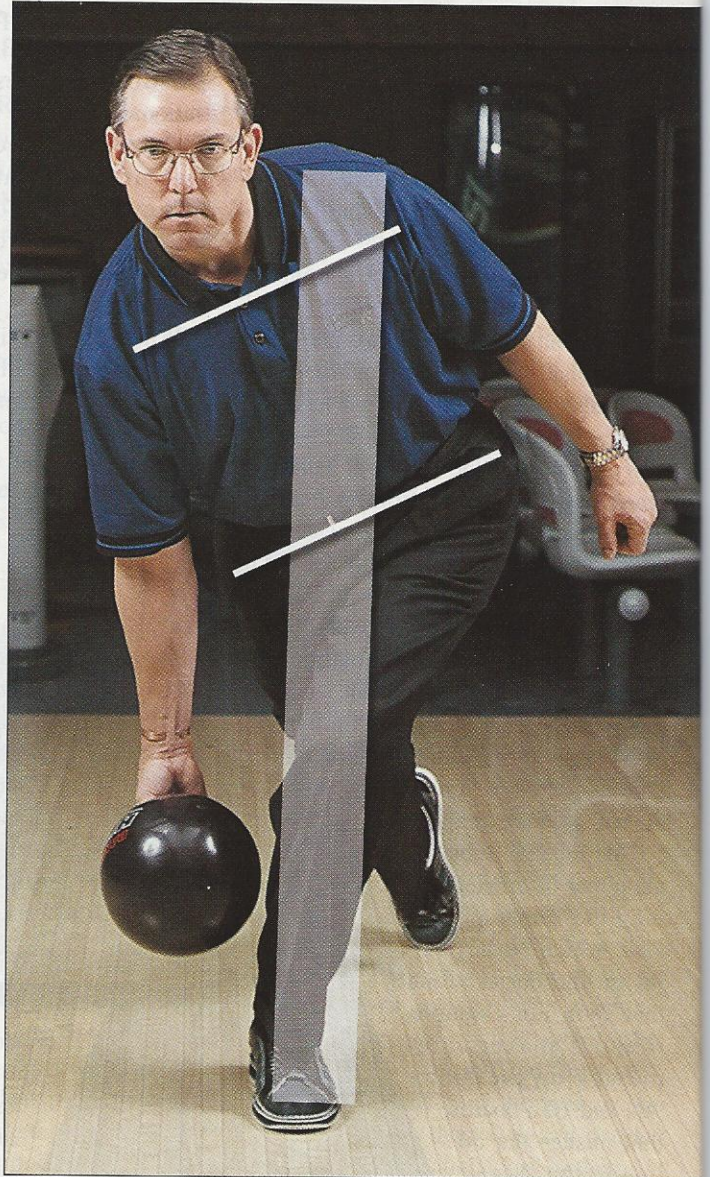
Bowling Clinic

By BILL SPIGNER

It's important for the ball to be close to the ankle or the sliding leg as you release the ball. The ball can be above the ankle and close to the leg and still be all right—former PBA star Del Ballard Jr. released the ball from his mid-calf, but it was close to his leg. For the ball to get close to the ankle at the release, the body has to be positioned to allow the arm to hang perpendicular to the floor during the release and get the ball close to the leg.

However, the body position as the ball reaches the bottom of the swing is not what a lot of bowlers think it is. Most people think the shoulders and hips need to be level to the floor, with the sliding leg and foot directly beneath the chin. This was the old way to teach bowlers to play straight up the second arrow with minimal hand action. The body position for power and good leverage is quite different, though.

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.)



Keep your shoulders and hips parallel to each other, and the left shoulder and knee aligned above the left foot.

First of all, the shoulders and hips need to be parallel to each other but not to the floor. The upper body—from the hips to the shoulders—has to be tilted enough that if you let your arm hang to your side it will hang straight to the floor. The amount of necessary tilt varies a little depending on the physical shape of the body. Normally this side tilt would be at least

For More Power

10 degrees, which mirrors the forward tilt of the spine—if you looked at the proper spine angle from a rear view, it would tilt at least 10 degrees down toward the bowling arm, and the side view would be tilted at least 10 degrees forward. This would help the arm swing under the shoulder.

The other thing to look at is the left side of the body (for right-handed bowlers; opposite for lefthanders). The foot of the left leg should be directly under the knee, and the knee and foot should be directly under the left shoulder at the release position.

Now with the hips and shoulders at a slight tilt and level with each other, and the left foot under the left shoulder, there should be a straight line from your right shoulder through your right knee. This would put the right leg out of the way of the swing, and the arm can swing under the shoulder and get the ball close to the ankle (or sliding leg). Once you get the big parts of the body in the right positions, you'll increase your leverage and be able to work on your release and play the lanes better.

■ I'm 15 years old and have been bowling seriously for the past two years, and I have a problem I'd like some help with. When I was using a urethane ball, my average was in the 140 to 150 range. I decided to try using a different kind of ball, and so just recently I purchased an Ebonite Stinger, a reactive resin ball. At first it seemed to work well, boosting my average to around 170. But my scores have been very inconsistent, ranging from a 247 to a 152, and now my average is getting worse—it's at 162 and plummeting. I realize reactives are not as consistent as urethane, but this is ridiculous!

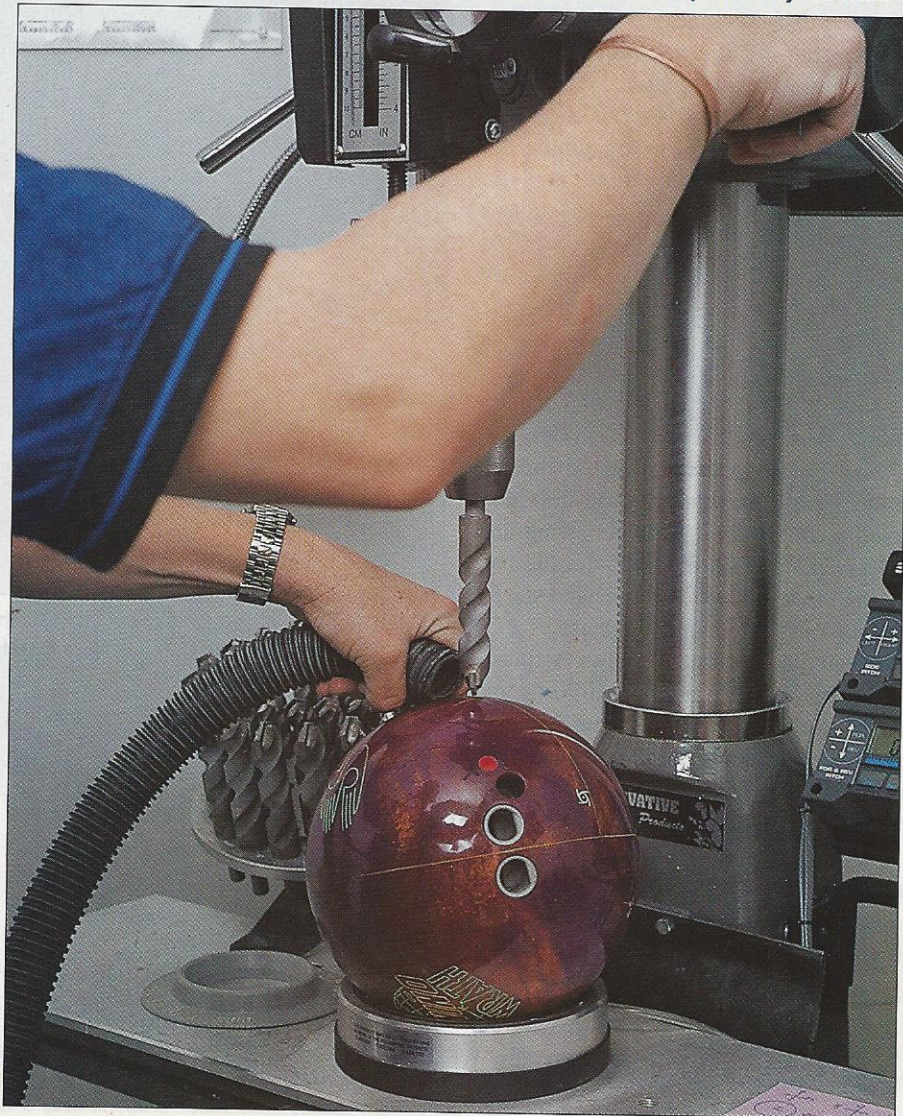
There is definitely a big difference in the control of the urethane ball relative to the resin ball you're using. The Stinger is a strong hooking ball relative

to the urethane ball, and with more hook comes the problem of consistency. However, the hook the resin ball helps produce also gives you a stronger angle into the pins, which can increase your striking ability. If you're having difficulty with spares, either learn to straighten out your release or use your old urethane for spares. And because the ball does hook more, you have to be more prepared to make quick adjustments on

playing the lanes, based on ball reaction.

Last, if the ball continues to overreact and you want to smooth out its reaction, there are three things you can do. (1) Take the polish off the ball, so that it rolls earlier, which will give you an earlier break point. (2) Have a hole drilled on your positive axis point to change the balance of the ball—again, to make the ball roll earlier and smooth out the break point of the ball. And (3), have

Drilling on the positive axis point affects the roll and break point of your ball.



the ball plugged and redrilled to weaken its reaction.

With the amount of oil being used on the lanes today, it's important to get the ball rolling in the oil so it doesn't over-react on the back end. Your Stinger has a sharp break point, and on heavy oil that can be difficult to control. Therefore, try dulling the ball first, then drilling the hole, or a combination of both. As a last resort, redrill the ball.

■ ***I'm a right-handed bowler with a 170 average. I use a 14-pound ball, and my question to you is, what is the right grip? I first put my index and middle fingers in, then my thumb, but I don't have good control or a good grip with that technique—it causes me to roll the ball everywhere. It's almost like I'm bowling with just two fingers. Could you give me some advice or hints that would give me the grip and control I need for my bowling game?***

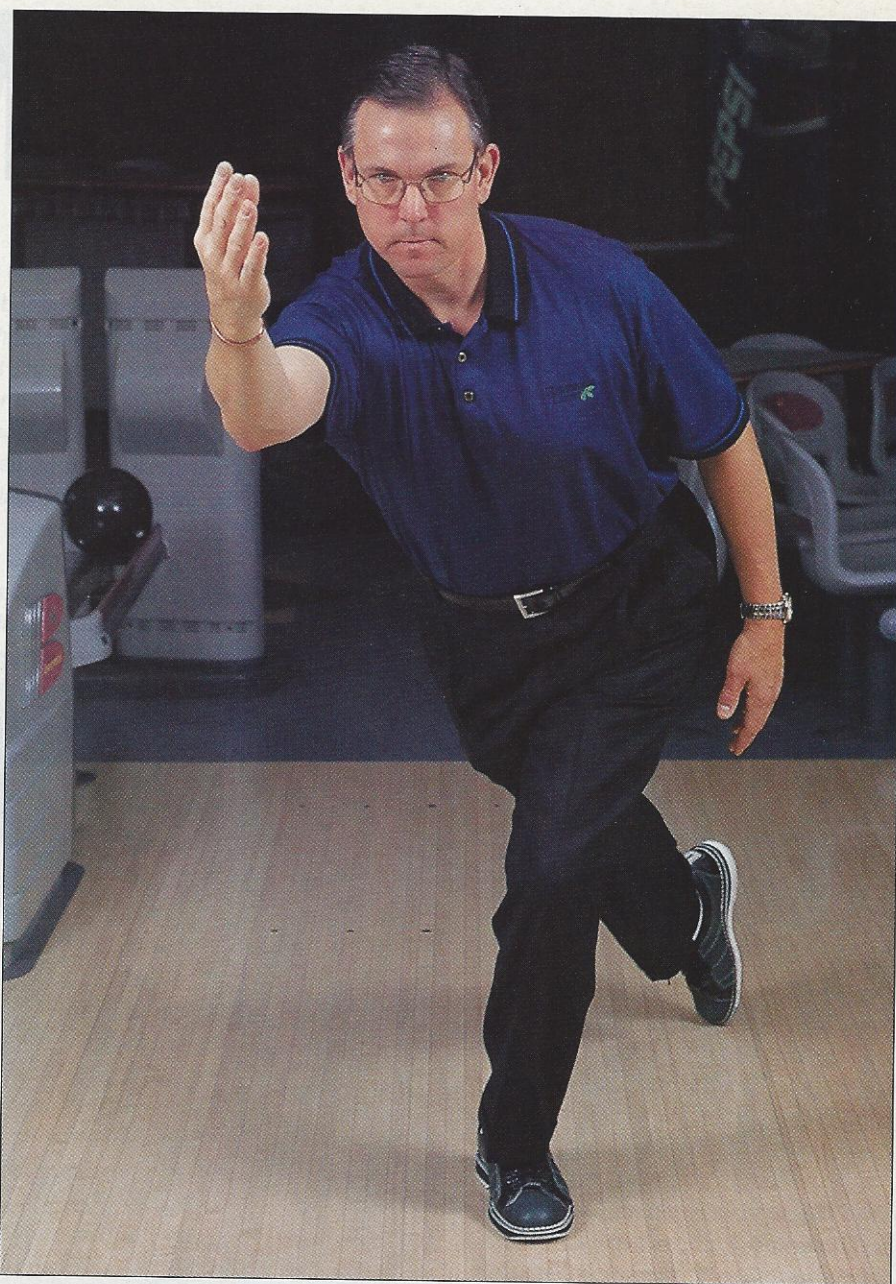
The first thing I would do is check out the fit of the ball. If you're slipping out of the thumb hole during the swing, you need some adjustments. You can do two things: One is to add tape to the hole and keep adding it until the ball stays on your thumb with minimal pressure; the other thing is change the pitches in the thumb hole so the ball hangs on to your thumb easier. You also might try a combination of both tape and pitch change.

Next, after you've adjusted the fit, concentrate maintaining on a steady hand position throughout the swing and release. Don't cup the ball—let the ball swing the arm, and keep the hand steady throughout the swing and release.

Finally, concentrate on always finishing with your arm at about a 90-degree angle to the shoulders in your finishing position. The combination of the fit, hand position, and finishing position will help you be more accurate with your shot.

■ ***I'm a once-a-week bowler with a 180 average, and I want to be at 185. How many practice games should I bowl a week to achieve this goal? Is it realistic to think that I can average 185 just bowling once a week?***

It's definitely possible to raise your average bowling once a week. However,



Finishing your delivery and follow-through with your arm at around a 90-degree angle to your shoulders will help you with your accuracy.

a little organized practice between league nights would increase your chances of increasing your average.

Regardless of whether you bowl more or not, however, it's important to have a game plan each time you bowl. First, address the fit of your ball. Are the holes tight enough so you don't have to squeeze the ball hard when you start? Next, are you paying attention to the reaction of the ball right from the first shot? You need to pay attention to what the ball does on the

lanes, even when you're stiff and not up to full speed—it's more important than what you knock down. Also pay attention to how you feel, because we very rarely can start out with our best stuff.

In effect, each time you bowl, you're starting over. Pay attention on each shot to what you're feeling and what you see the ball do. Keep your concentration level up, and you'll be better prepared to make the adjustments as the lanes are changing—and as your body changes, too. ●