

LAST PINS STANDING: PARKER BOHN III ON SPARE PLAY

BOWLING

DIGEST



NORM DUKE

CHRIS BARNES

RYAN SHAFER

TOO CLOSE TO CALL

Like a certain election, our race for 2000 Men's Pro Bowler of the Year had a photo finish. We, however, were able to pick three winners

Women's Pro Bowler of the Year:
Wendy Macpherson

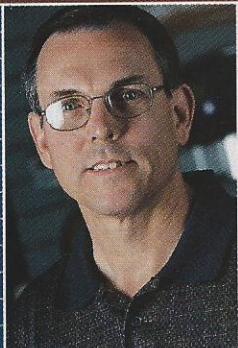
Bill Spigner tells you how to play deep

Our annual **Bowling Ball Guide**

April 2001
www.centurysports.net

U.S. & CANADA \$5.99





When Holes Are Burning, Fire Back on a New Track

By **BILL SPIGNER**

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.

Your first option when playing deep with the ball return in the way is to close your stance, push the ball toward the gutter cap, walk left to the 4th arrow, and open up to the line the ball should travel.

■ *I've recently seen a video put out by Ebonite about its Trimax III. From a deep inside line, the ball looks to be devastating. But this is where my troubles begin. My swing doesn't allow me to get that deep without walking left, passing the ball return. What do you do when playing so deep inside?*

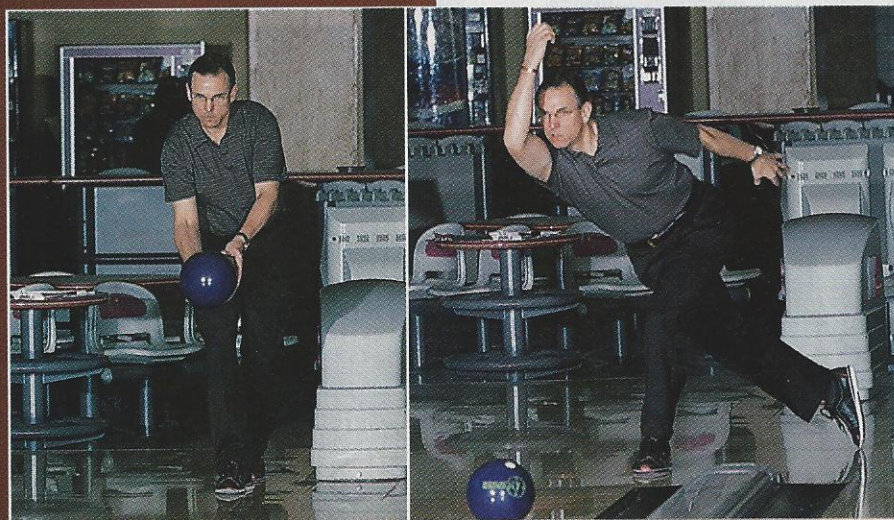
Many bowlers share your problem. First of all, because most bowlers learn how to play their strike ball from the 2nd arrow, bowling centers oil the lanes so you can play around that spot. They apply more oil inside the second arrow toward the middle of the lane and much less oil toward the gutter or outside the second arrow. This allows you to miss outside your target and have the ball hook back, or to miss inside your target and have the ball hit more oil and hook less. The oil gives you a lot of room to miss your target and still hit the pocket. Because most bowlers only bowl in a league, playing just three games a week, many never learn how to adjust to the deeper inside lines when the lane conditions change.

Most league bowlers will adjust to the

lanes by moving their feet and keeping their target the same. Righthanders will move their feet left, and lefthanders will move their feet right. This basic move will work if you are shifting only a couple of boards with your feet. But the problem with moving your feet more than a couple of boards without moving your target is that you are changing the arc of the ball down the lane. Changing the arc requires you also to change your swing path to match up to the direction you're rolling the ball. The key to adjusting is to move your target with you in the same direction you're moving your feet, as the lanes start to hook more in the place you originally started to play. Keep in mind there is more oil to the inside of your target, so you should try to use that oil to hold the ball on line to hit the pocket.

You must continue to follow the oil by moving your feet and your target inside as you bowl. Today's bowling balls wear the oil off the lane at a very fast rate, and bowlers who have a higher-than-average rev rate make the condition change faster than bowlers with fewer revs. This removal of the oil is referred to as "burning a hole" in the oil. Basically, what is happening when a hole is burned in the oil is that the balls develop a track in the oil.

The type of bowler who is playing on the lane determines the angle the ball track develops. For example, if there are a lot of straighter players on the pair, the track will develop in a straighter path down the lane. If there are a lot of crankers, the track will develop on more of an inside-out path. And if you have a combination of players, different tracks will develop. This is where the adjustments get complicated as the lane conditions change. The straight players will move a little at a time as the oil changes.



The crankers will have to move farther and faster because they break the lane down faster.

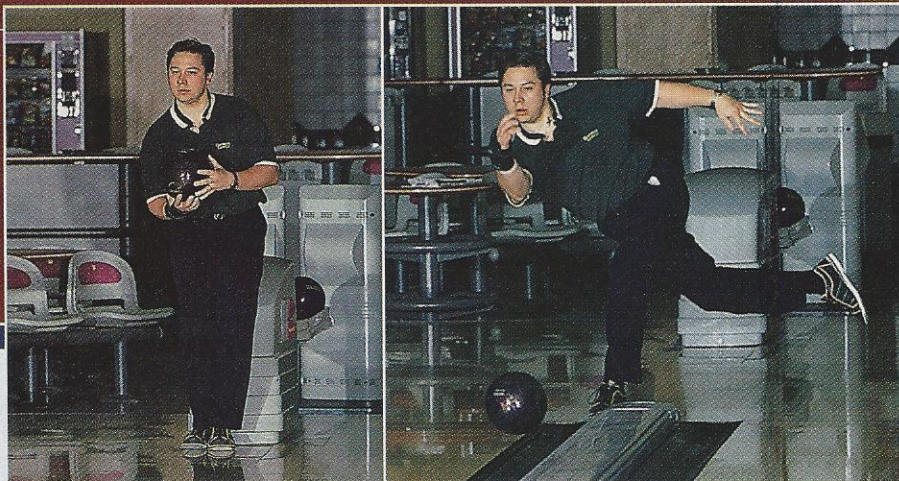
Let's trace what happens to a freshly oiled lane during play, paying special attention to how the conditions change, how to keep up with the changes, and how to play the deep inside line when it appears. We'll say the oil is buffed out to 40 feet with an oil line around the 10-board (the 2nd arrow). We'll use two five-man teams of righthanders as an example because there are more right-handed bowlers, and the lanes change faster on the right. In that group of 10 bowlers you have three crankers, four medium-rev players, and three straight players.

Every bowler on the pair has to play the oil line in order to take advantage of the area that the oil line gives the bowler to hit the pocket. The cranker will start out hitting around the 3rd arrow with the ball swinging out. The medium player will play in-between the 2nd and 3rd arrows. And the straight player will play around the 2nd arrow. Initially, all the players have a good shot at the pocket—but this only lasts so long.

As each type of player burns a hole in the oil, the break point of the balls moves up the lane, closer to the bowler, and the ball will finish high on the headpin. When this happens, each bowler needs to make an adjustment to get the ball back into the pocket.

First move your feet and target left. When the crankers move left, they have no one playing inside of their shot, so as they move they are going into fresh oil. Crankers can shift their feet and target a couple of boards left and get the same shot.

When the medium and straight players start to move left, they may find that their ball actually hooks sooner. Their first



A second option when playing deep is to stand in front of the ball return and take fewer and/or smaller steps, remembering to start your armswing quicker.

thought is that they made a mistake with their shots, so they speed up the ball, and it goes right through their break point and misses the headpin. As you can imagine, at this point the medium and the straight players are totally confused. The ball hooked early, they adjusted, and the ball didn't finish. The players are now experiencing some carrydown and a ball track to contend with. But the truth is, it's perfectly normal for the lanes to break down like this.

The crankers are throwing their ball more left to right, so the track they developed in the oil is at an angle going from, for example, the foul line toward the 10-pin. The straight player develops a track in the oil on a straight line down the lane, from the foul line toward the 6-pin, and the medium-rev player's track stretches from the foul line to a point between the 6-pin and 10-pin. As the straight player moves left, he or she hits the medium player's track, and the medium player moves left into the cranker's track. The straight and medium players have moved out of their tracks and into the tracks of players who hook the ball more, and the angle of that track is different than theirs.

Soon the ball track of the straight player moves into the track where the medium player started, and the medium player's track will move into the starting point of the cranker's track. When the medium and straight players move left, they aren't finding more oil; they actually find a dry track, because the bowlers they are following have already removed the oil on that

part of the lane. This is the time when all bowlers on the pair have to merge together to play the same part of the lane. The straight player may have to make a big jump from playing around the 2nd arrow to moving in-between the 3rd and 4th arrows. The medium player will have less of a move to play between the 3rd and 4th arrows. As you can see, the crankers on the pair set the tone for the shot that everyone will ultimately have to play.

Many straight players have a fear of playing deep inside because they feel their carry won't be good. Usually the straight players are more accurate than the crankers, so they will hit the pocket more solidly and consistently, and shouldn't be afraid to move inside.

When moving inside, you have to remember the cranker's ball track runs at more of an angle down the lane and not in a straight line like the straight player initially made around the 2nd arrow. When you play the cranker's track, you need to have a little more belly in your shot.

When the shots merge because the ball tracks get wide and the shot gets deep, it doesn't always leave the cranker the best shot. Many times the medium and straighter players will have a better shot inside than the crankers. How is this possible? Remember, the cranker's track is at an angle on the lane. As the ball track dries up, the crankers can no longer keep their balls in the track, and they can't move deep enough to find enough oil to hold the ball from hooking high. However, the straight and medium play-

ers' balls won't jump off the track as much as the crankers'. And because they hook the ball less, the straight and medium players can play the inside edge of the track the crankers originally made. The crankers can't play there because they don't throw the ball straight enough to play the oil in the mid-lane on the inside edge of the ball track they developed.

"When all players are playing the same line, the lanes will change even more quickly. At the beginning of the night you might have bowled the entire first game from the same spot. By the second game, you started to move and quickly found it was time to make one big move to the inside track developed by the crankers. Once everybody starts playing in the same area, you have to anticipate when you have to move. You may have to move a couple of boards every two frames, and eventually the shot will move all the way to the left gutter cap.

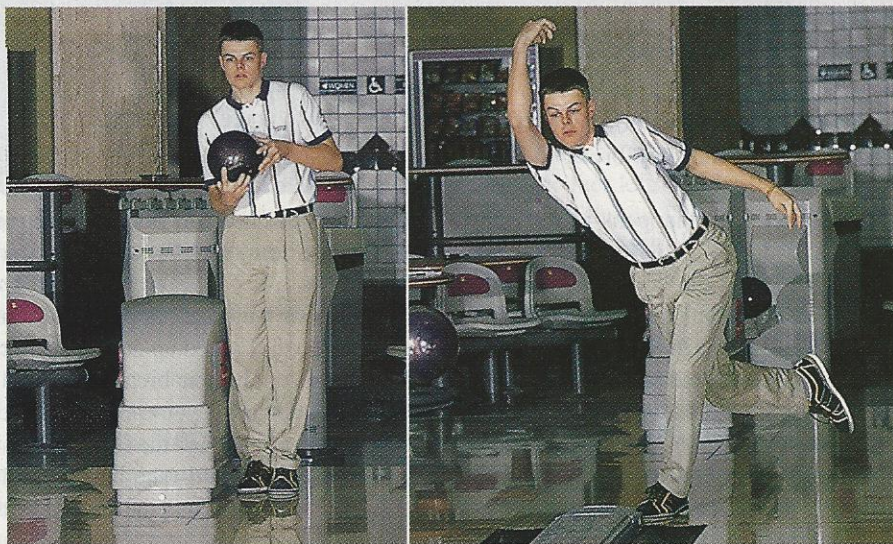
When the shot gets this deep, top tournament players call it "playing the cap." ("The cap" refers to the gutter cap.) The shot actually moves into the 5th arrow and deeper. It gets this deep because the ball track keeps moving left. You will eventually run out of room on the approach and lane, so creative shotmaking comes into play. The top tournament players will keep shifting left with their feet and target to keep up with the track. They end up having to actually launch the ball over the gutter cap onto the lane to continue to stay lined up to the track. This is where the term "playing the cap" comes from.

Because on the right-hand lane the ball return is in the way, there are three ways to get your feet far enough left at the time of release to play the 4th arrow or deeper. One is walking left. Most medium and straight players will opt for this method initially. Doing this you actually have to close up your stance, face the left gutter or gutter cap, push the ball toward the gutter cap, walk left, and during the last step try to open up to the line you want the ball to travel. Norm Duke, the 2000 PBA Player of the Year, is a master at this shot.

The second option on the right lane is to stand in front of the ball return and take

fewer steps and/or smaller steps. This requires you to get your swing moving faster so you can time it right with your steps and be able to generate the necessary ball speed. At last fall's Tournament of

lanes are ways the pros combat the adverse lane conditions that pop up today. Playing inside and adjusting as the lanes break down have always been key strategies in the game. But because of today's



A third option when playing deep is to start the approach all the way in the left lane and launch the ball over the gutter cap, hitting the lane at the 7th arrow.

Champions in Chicago, I saw U.S. Open Champion Robert Smith do this. His ball was crossing the arrows at the 34th board (that's almost the lefthander's first arrow) on both lanes. On the right lane he was standing in front of the ball return, taking three steps, and launching the ball over the gutter cap; his ball landed on the lane just past the arrows. Smith actually was lofting the ball out onto the lane about 15 feet. He was playing the same shot on the left lane but taking his normal five steps. The incredible thing about this was his ball speed and rotation were the same on both lanes. He shot 280 in the game I was watching, even though the condition was one of the most demanding the tour players faced all year.

The third way to play the cap on the right-hand lane is to start on the left-lane approach of your pair. The best I've seen at doing this is PBA Hall-of-Famer Mark Williams. He would start his approach on the left lane, walk right toward the right lane, and launch the ball over the gutter cap, hitting the lane at almost the 7th arrow.

These creative methods of playing the

bowling balls, the lanes change faster and more dramatically than ever.

The Ebonite video you viewed showing the big hook was created on lanes with a fresh condition, oily heads, very dry backbends, and very dry right of the second arrow. The condition, not the ball, allowed PBA touring pro Kurt Pilon to hook the ball in the manner you saw. The ball he was demonstrating is a very good medium-strong ball. But if you are expecting that ball to help you hook like you saw Pilon do in the video, it won't happen. The lane condition is what allows shots like that to work.

Remember, no ball will magically hook for you—you have to learn to play the shot yourself. Nor do you really want or need to play a lot of hook. Playing the lane right is a product of lining up to the oil pattern and keeping lined up to it as balls wear down the lane oil. You may be able to hook the ball a lot at the beginning of the night, but by the end you may have to throw the ball much straighter to score. Keep your mind and options open. ●