

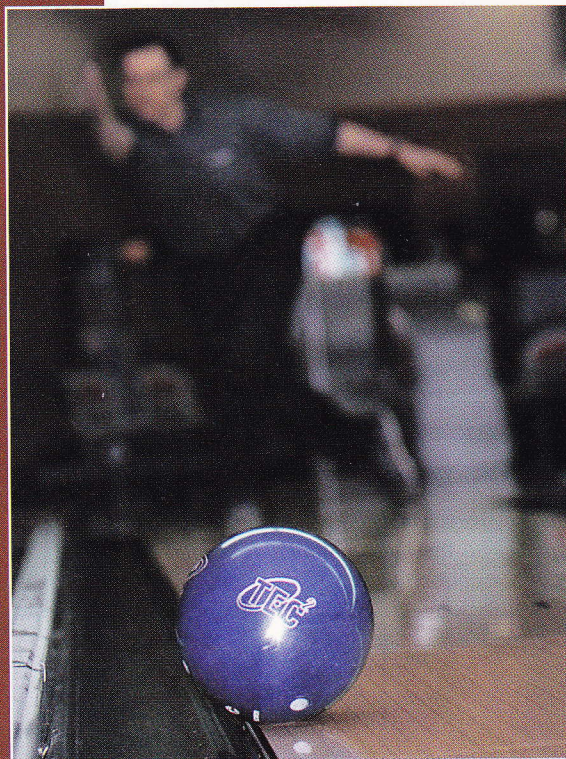
For Effortless Play, Expand the Lane

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, or send an e-mail to bowl@centurysports.net.

The ability to play the lane from gutter to gutter enables you to use all of the angles—and put up better scores.

■ *I have a game similar to David Ozio, nice and smooth with good movement on the ball. But it looks like Ozio doesn't have a lot of hand in the ball or as much turn as other people. How do I get more turn on the ball? Should I try to make up the difference with different drill patterns? I have been rolling the Savage and Storm SP, both drilled in a strong position with a hard arc to the pocket. If I don't have that much hand, would a different drilling pattern be better to try? I have tried all the usual steps, cupping my wrist, lowering the ball to slow down, staying behind the ball, but I know there is a way to hold the ball and roll it by changing the axis rotation. Could this help?*



David Ozio has built his Hall of Fame career around a virtually flawless physical game. With a game that is as fundamentally sound as David's, it's difficult to generate the power of a player like Pete Weber. The reason is that Weber uses a very high backswing, which is achieved by the rotation of his shoulders and the angle of the spine during the approach and release.

Ever since Mark Roth was tearing up the tour in the late '70s and '80s, young bowlers have been developing power before developing a sound game. I don't see a problem with this for young bowlers; they have the time and body flexibility to do it. Also, developing power at a young age often requires the body to get in a position to support the power they are trying to develop, which helps create a great deal of leverage and good timing. Smoothing out a player's game once power is achieved is much easier than trying to develop power after so-called picture-perfect form is achieved.

However, if you have developed textbook form like Ozio has, trying to develop action on the ball beyond what the body is trained to do is very difficult. But that doesn't mean you can't develop a better strike ball.

David was the king of practice bowlers. He could bowl endless numbers of games and never get tired because of the effortlessness of his game. This ability to bowl so much, and the desire to continually improve and learn, helped Ozio become an artist with a bowling ball. He now can play anywhere with success, from hanging the ball on the 1-board—where almost half the ball is exposed over the edge of the gutter—all the way to playing the cap on the left side of the lane. He learned to change his axis rotation and tilt and combine it

with different speeds and lofts that allow him to be competitive from any part of the lane.

Spend your time working on ways to expand what you do so you are able to play more of the lane, and different angles from all parts of the lane. For example, play straight-up 10 to swinging 10 within the framework of your game, rather than trying to develop a Weber type of power game. There are 39 boards on the lane, and all of them are there for us to play.

■ ***My favorite line is the second arrow. That's where I threw all of my 200s. I started bowling about eight months ago, with a first game of 64. Now I'm a semi-roller with a 140-plus average. I stand in the middle and throw straight across the second arrow with my thumb to about 10 or 11 o'clock, with moderate ball speed, although I get my best results with speed and power. Am I over-turning the ball when I do this? Where should my thumb finish—12, 11, or 10 o'clock?***

What the thumb does at the time of release affects what the fingers will do. The standard way a simple hook is rolled is by thinking of the thumb releasing at 10 o'clock and the fingers at 4 o'clock. That will produce enough side roll to get the ball to hook once it encounters friction.

To look at the position of the thumb beyond just thinking about it relative to a clock is important. We also need to look at the position of the thumb relative to the other fingers on the hand.

Your thumb is pretty much in line with the index finger. If you were to clench your fist, your thumb would overlap your index finger. Putting your thumb over any of the other fingers of your hand while making a fist would put the hand in a weaker posi-

tion, with the weakest position being the thumb over the pinky finger. After the ball is released, the index finger and thumb should end up parallel to each other, forming a V, or else the thumb should end up pointing away from the palm or to the outside of the index finger.

If the thumb points to the middle finger, or beyond it toward the pinky finger, then the thumb is having too much influence on the turning of the ball. The thumb is turning downward and throwing the fingers around the ball, reducing the lift because the thumb stays in the ball too long. This reduces the time differential between the thumb and fingers coming out of the ball. The time difference between the thumb and fingers coming out is what gives you the opportunity to get the maximum amount of lift on the ball relative to hand position, wrist movement, and the speed the hand is traveling during the release. Just like when you are forming a fist, when the weakest position is the thumb pointing to the pinky finger, releasing the ball is the same—the more the



Upon release, the thumb and index finger of the ball hand should be in a V [top]. A more powerful swing like Weber's ends in a thumbs-up position [middle], which is also acceptable. If the thumb points toward the pinky [bottom], it is reducing lift and creating bad form.

thumb points toward the pinky finger, the weaker the release will be.

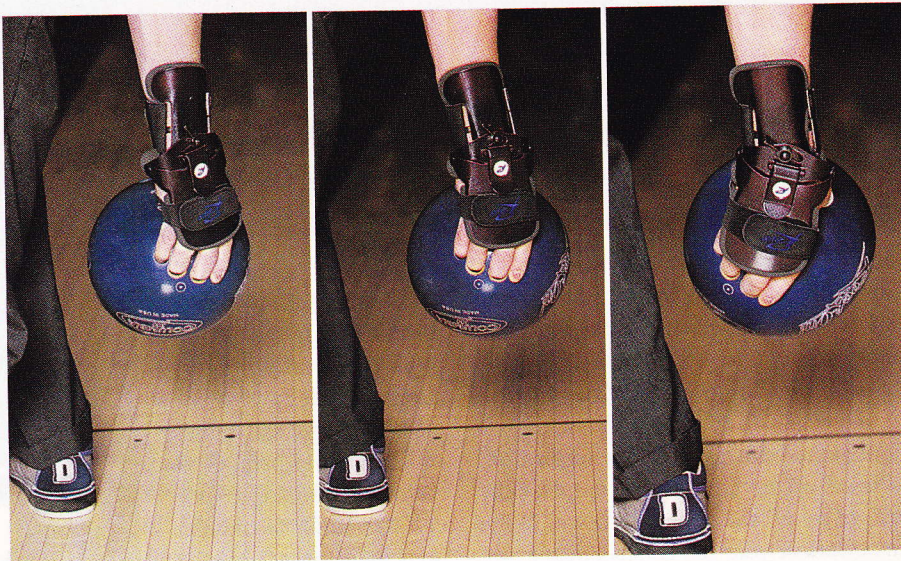
Instead of thinking about the position of the thumb in your finished position relative to a clock, think of it relative to the index finger and palm.

■ Is it true that to be successful in combating lane conditions I have to use a few different release positions? What do you think of the Pro Release wrist device? I'd like for that to help me maintain my wrist consistently, because I use only one reactive ball.

It is important to know how to change the rotation on the ball. No one roll works on all lane conditions and from all angles. Changing rotation has always been a very important part of being a successful bowler.

The Pro Release is an excellent wrist device. It allows you to adjust your wrist position from a weak position to a strong, cupped position. It also allows you to cock and uncock the wrist.

Cupping the wrist gets the fingers farther under the ball, helping to produce more lift. Cocking the wrist helps put the fingers in a position to spin the ball more. You can get a number of different wrist positions with this type



Adjust a wrist device to 5 o'clock for more roll [left]. The 6 o'clock position [center] will offer support only. The 8 o'clock setting [right] will give your ball more spin.

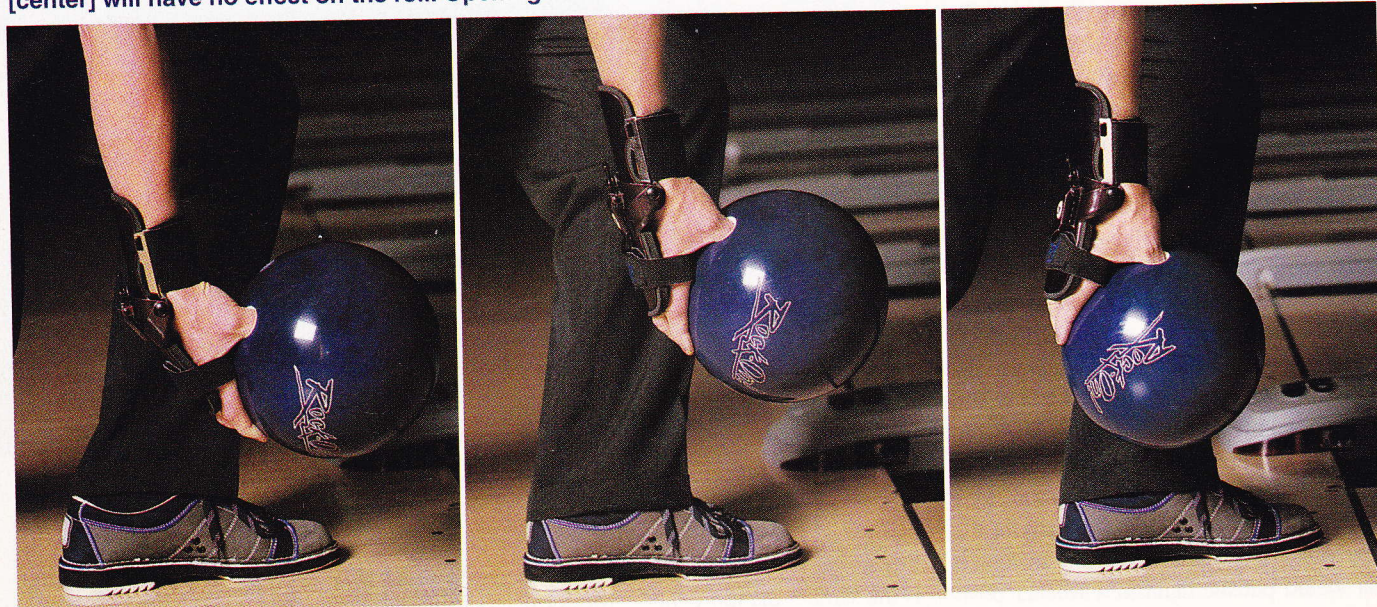
of product, helping you produce different ball rolls.

U.S. Open champion (1975) and current Senior tour superstar Steve Neff used the Pro Release as a training aid. He practiced with it in many different positions to help him understand where he needed to have his hand and wrist to be able to produce different rolls and

spins. He also practiced on different lane conditions and angles to see how the different releases would work.

Neff doesn't use wrist devices in competition, but there are a lot of Senior tour players who do. Dale Eagle, former Senior Bowler of the Year, uses Cobra wrist devices; in fact, Dale uses three different wrist devices

A good wrist device should also offer front-to-back support. A cupped setting [left] offers more lift. The middle setting [center] will have no effect on the roll. Opening the device to a "weak" position [right] gives the ball less lift.



to get the reaction he wants, and occasionally he will roll without one. He has made a science out of the use of wrist devices.

One of the most popular wrist devices on the Senior tour is Robby's Revs, which is currently used by former Senior Bowler of the Year Pete Couture. Pete actually designed wrist devices in the late '70s that would help the bowler get more lift on the ball. His work helped lead the way to what we have today in wrist devices.

Many Senior tour players use the wrist devices not because they want to, but because they have to. After many years of bowling and game after game of competition, many players develop wrist and hand problems, requiring them to use a device for support. Wrist devices help them get more revs and turn on the ball. It's not that bowlers lose the ability to bowl over time—it's just that age has eaten at their natural ability to bowl.

With that in mind, use a wrist device the way Neff has, as a training aid. Learn how to roll the ball end-over-end for a straight ball for spares, all the way to being able to spin the ball a lot. Today's adjustable wrist devices will help you do this. The one problem with some wrist devices is that you can only set them to release the ball one way, so make sure you use one that gives you a number of release options.

Something else you can do because you have only one ball—and this is just as important to help you maximize your options—is adjust the surface of the ball. You need to be able to dull the surface for heavy oil and polish it for dry lane conditions.

One problem is that once you start competition, you cannot alter the surface of the ball, so you'll have to anticipate how to surface your ball. Unless you know what the lane condition is before you start bowling, you should keep your ball polished up. It's easier to use a pad to dull the surface than to try to polish the ball quickly. You can alter the surface of the ball before you roll your first ball of the competition. ●

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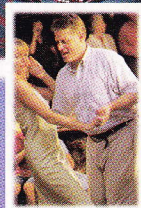
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