

BILL SPIGNER: CHICKEN-WINGING IS FOR THE BIRDS

BOWLING

DIGEST

CHRIS WARREN'S
redemption

**NORM
DUKE**
bounces
back

KIM ADLER:
Shooting
spares
for sport

String strikes
the **PARKER
BOHN III** way

JOHN JOWDY:
Turn off
your mind
and relax

WHAT PRESSURE?

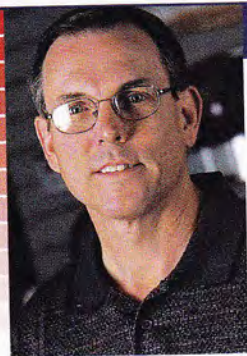
*In his PBA diary, tough-talking
DANNY WISEMAN reveals how
he takes command of the lanes*

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If You Try to Sling, You'll Chicken-Wing

By **BILL SPIGNER**

■ *I don't slide when I release the ball, and my arm flies up like a chicken wing. How do I correct these problems?*

Not sliding is usually caused by taking your last step with your heel hitting the floor first, followed by your sole. The problem with this type of last step is that your body weight has to wait for the foot to land flat so the body weight can be transferred to the left leg for a righthander or the right leg for a lefthander. You need to have your upper body over your last step when you stop so you have leverage to move the ball into the release area and execute a proper release.

To illustrate, I'll use a right-handed bowler (lefthanders, reverse the information). When the last step is taken heel-to-toe, the left leg usually straightens out, the upper body straightens up, and the weight

is trapped on the right leg for too long. This can cause the spine angle to be too vertical, with the ball reaching the bottom of the swing behind the ankle.

In the era of soft plastic, rubber, and urethane balls, there were some very successful professional bowlers who took their last step heel-to-toe, with no slide. All of these players released the ball on the upswing with a lot of loft. With today's bowling balls and the amount of oil that is put on the lanes, you have to release the ball more parallel to the lane. In order to do this, the ball has to reach the bottom of the swing at the ankle or right in front of the ankle. This allows the ball to come off the hand when the arm and hand are traveling their fastest, because they are moving downward with gravity. If the ball hits the bottom of the

swing behind the ankle—which is very common for heel-to-toe bowlers—there's a danger of releasing the ball on the upswing by the time the ball gets in front of the sliding foot.

Changing from a heel-to-toe last step to a slide is very difficult if you have been bowling heel-to-toe for a long time. You not only have to try to slide, you have to position your upper body over the sliding leg—and all of this has to happen just before you release the ball.

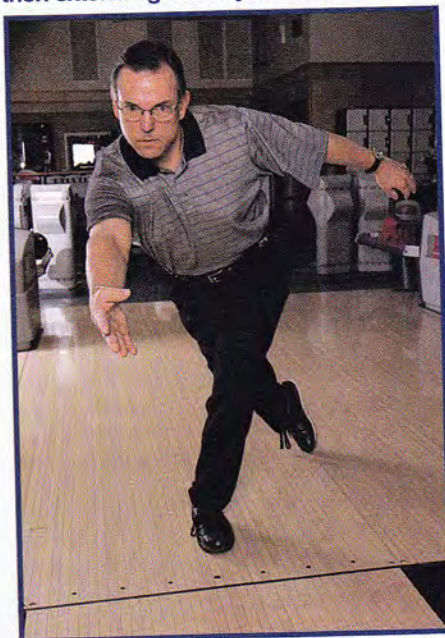
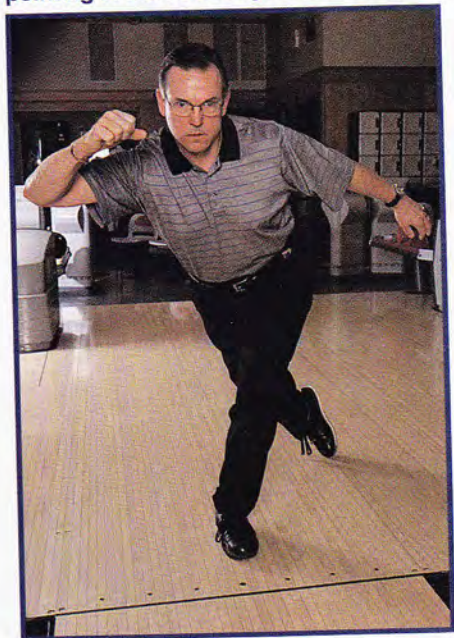
To make the change, you have to forget about where the ball is going and totally focus on learning how to execute the slide step. There are three things that you can do, and to try to do them all at the same time is not easy. It's difficult enough to try to change one thing. But the good news is that all three are related, and learning to execute them in combination will improve your play.

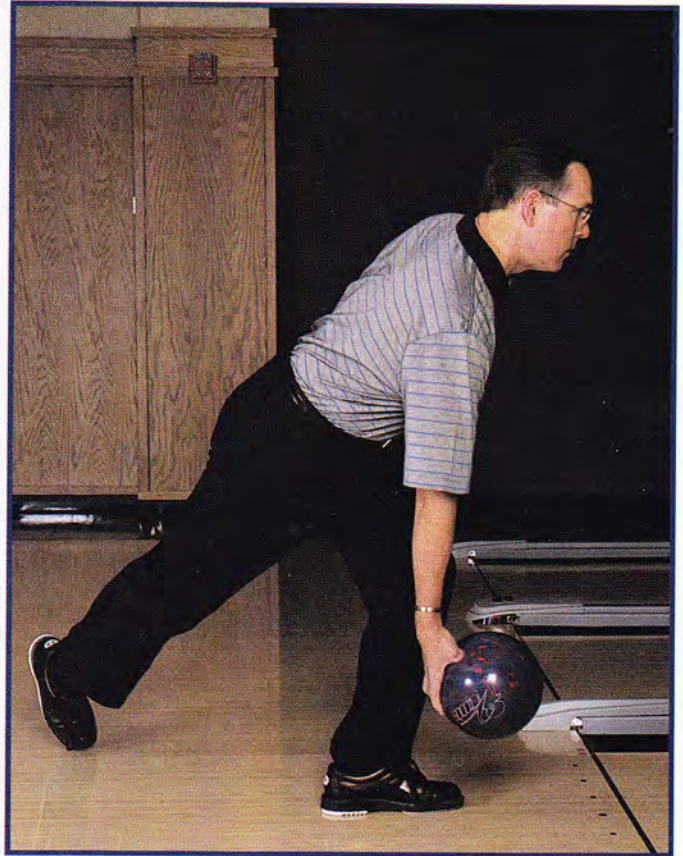
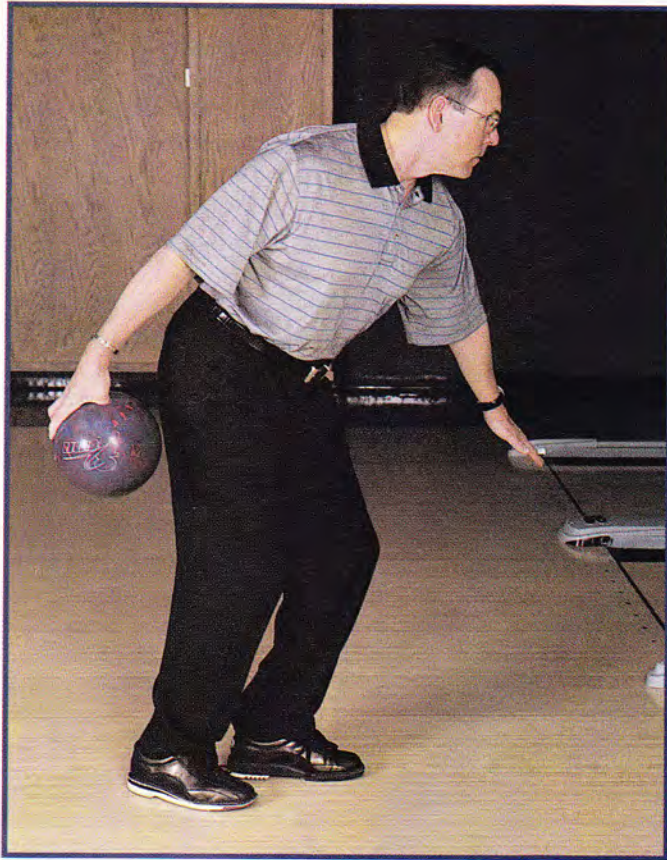
The first change comes on the last step. Force your toe to contact the floor just as it is passing your right foot. Second, lean forward with your upper body so your weight can transfer quickly from your right to left leg.

The third concerns your release, which can remedy your chicken-winging. Think of the tips of your fingers pointing to the floor when the ball comes off your hand, then extending out to your target with a very low follow-through. This will help keep you from grabbing the weight of the ball and will make it easier for you to transfer your body weight to your left leg for the last step.

The heel-to-toe last step is often the result of muscling the ball from the top of the swing, where your spine angle straightens up to be vertical to the floor. When that happens, your body weight is

To avoid chicken-winging your release [left], imagine the tips of your fingers first pointing at the floor as you release the ball, then extending out to your target.





Forcing your toe to touch the floor just as it passes your right foot [left] and leaning forward with your upper body to facilitate a quick weight transfer from your right to left leg [right] sends you on your way toward a successful slide-step release.

actually moving in the opposite direction of your ball. This causes the toe to come up on the last step and the heel to hit the floor first.

To sum it up, go into the last step toe-first, keep the same forward tilt in the spine (or increase it), and release the ball down into the lane with a very low follow-through. Practice this and you will be on the way to curing your slide and chicken-winging problems.

■ **My ball driller tells me my pin is four inches from my axis. On the outside of the box of the ball I bought are three**

figures: 15 pounds, 6 ounces (weight), 3-4 inches (pin), and 2 ounces (top weight). Does he choose a ball that begins with the pin in a certain location before drilling, or does he choose any ball of the brand that I want, and then drill according to my specs? If I were to order a ball over the Internet, are these three figures all the information I need?

If you were to come into my pro shop and say you wanted an ICON, for example, and you had no questions for me and I didn't know you at all, and you weren't interested in anything but the ball, I would have a few questions for you. I would ask if you had a ball with you, where you bowled, and what you were looking for the new ball to do in relationship to the ball you have. If you were only interested in the ball you asked for and didn't want help in selecting the ball, I'd drill what you asked for.

If I have a ball to work off of and a history with the bowler, then I make sure I have a ball that fits the needs of the bowler. If I don't have a ball in stock that is close to what needed to be done with the requested ball, I do one of two things: I recommend another model that is as good a ball, if not better, based on my knowledge of the player, or I ask if he or she can wait a couple of days so I can order the desired ball.

If I feel the desired ball is totally wrong for the person, I will speak up. Then it's up to the bowler to decide whether or not to take my advice. I know many professional pro shop operators who work this way. It's our job to help guide you through your purchase.

Your second question is about ordering over the Internet. The model of ball, weight, pin placement, and top weight are all you need to know when ordering a new bowling ball. Keep in mind that if

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

the ball doesn't come with the specs you requested or has another problem, you will have to send it back to the place you bought it.

■ *I have been teaching myself how to bowl for the past 20 years, and I try to get as much advice as I can. I average more than 200 and my game is pretty solid (I still get lazy and miss a 10-pin every now and then).*

Right now I am on the Amateur Bowlers tour and have started to cash on a consistent basis, but I'm still having a problem with my mental game. I can put my last game behind me, but my problem is with the game I am bowling. Last week I had seven taps, two 10s, and the 2, 4, 7, 8, and 9 in one game. I wasn't happy at all. Is there anything I can do to not get so upset? I'm angry with the bad breaks more than anything else. And how can I get into regional events? I can't seem to find them listed in the paper.

Stop looking at nine counts as bad breaks. Instead, start looking at the reason you are leaving them—there's always a reason the pins are left standing. The pins are telling you that the way you are getting to the pocket is not right.

You are bowling at the level where understanding *why* you don't carry is the secret to getting better. You already have to be very consistent to keep hitting the pocket and average more than 200.

Start to learn more about your ball rotation. Seek out a good instructor in your area, or consult with your pro shop operator and have him or her watch you roll some shots. Such a seasoned observer might be able to help you understand what your ball is doing on the lane that is keeping you from carrying.

To get information about PBA regionals or anything else about the PBA, go to www.pba.com. While you're there, check into the Webcasting for PBA events on Real One video. You can actually watch the top eight players' matches live each week, with commentary. The commentators discuss what's happening on the lanes and what each bowler might need to do to perform better. You can learn more about



Taking a four-hole ball [bottom] and drilling an extra hole for balance [top] is not legal by ABC standards.

playing the game by watching these shows. Earlier tour events from this season are archived for viewing.

■ *I have a question regarding the number of finger holes a bowling ball can have. I use a full fingertip grip (thumb and two fingers) and would like to have a conventional hole drilled (ring finger) in my current bowling ball, which is a full fingertip. The ball would have four holes: thumb, middle, and two ring fingers. The fingertip*

ring finger would not be used when I use the conventional hole. What is the ABC rule on an extra hole? Would drilling a ball in this way be in violation? I have arthritis in both my middle and ring fingers, although it is most severe in my ring finger.

The ABC rule book states, "The following limitations govern holes in a bowling ball: (1) Holes or indentations, not to exceed five for gripping purposes; (2) One hole for balance purposes, not to exceed $\frac{1}{4}$ inch in diameter; (3) One vent hole for each finger and/or thumb hole; and 4. One mill hole for inspection purposes, not to exceed $\frac{3}{8}$ inch in diameter and $\frac{1}{8}$ inch in depth."

The way the ABC rule reads, you could drill up to 12 holes in a bowling ball and it still would be legal. Many times there are misunderstandings about holes in balls. The rule says that you can have five holes for gripping purposes—but it does not say you have to use all five holes at one time. For example, if you had a hole drilled for each of your fingers, including the thumb, you would have five gripping holes. If you were to take all your fingers out of the ball and just rolled the ball with your thumb, the ball would be legal. But the five holes that are drilled for gripping purposes have to be able to be used by all four fingers and the thumb at one time. The holes have to be clearly drilled in the ball to be used at the same time.

You want to drill an extra hole for balance, which is prohibited because the four holes you have drilled for gripping purposes can't be used at the same time. When you use the conventional hole, the fingertip grip hole is considered an extra hole for balance, and vice-versa using the fingertip grip hole. So you can drill your ball the way you plan to and your ball will be legal; just don't have a balance hole drilled in the ball.

If you don't have a copy of the ABC rule book, ask one of your league officers for one to look at. Or you can read the rule book online at www.bowl.com. ●