

PREMIER ISSUE!

Buying a Ball: What's Best for You?

BOWLING

APRIL 1983
\$2.00

DIGEST

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APR. 4 1983
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Bill Spigner's **Bowling Clinic**

Q. My thumb always gets sore on the sides, but the thumb hole of my ball seems large enough. What do I do?

A. Your problem is a common one. Most people have oval-shaped thumbs, but their bowling balls have been drilled with round thumb holes. You are feeling pain because you are only getting pressure or friction on the sides of your thumb, and not from the front or back.

Get your thumb hole plugged up and redrilled one size smaller than you had before. Then get 300-grit sandpaper and cut it into one-inch strips. With these small pieces of sandpaper it will be easy for you to start sanding the thumb hole out on the sides. Sand until you can get out of the thumb hole freely all the way around.

Or, you may want to try the new oval-shaped thumb grips that are on the market. Either way, you'll find your pain reduced and, I hope, your scores going up.

Q. I took my daughter bowling the other day. Her ball hooked so much she couldn't keep it on the lane, no matter what I suggested. Help!

A. There could have been a problem with the ball. Bowling balls have weight blocks located inside them, near the label on the ball. Sometimes, with very light bowling balls, there is too much weight in them, which can make them hook tremendously, no matter what you do.

Also, at a young age the best thing to do is teach your daughter an approach and to look at the arrows for a target. As she gets older it will become easier for her to control the ball. The most important things she can learn from the start are the basics and targets to aim at.

Q. I'm dropping the ball at the line before I get into my full extension. What can I do to change this?

A. There are a couple of reasons why you might be dropping the ball. First, your thumb hole could be too large. I would suggest you bring your ball to a reputable pro shop and have your grip on it checked.

A second problem could be your timing. You are probably getting to the foul line ahead of your ball, which will cause you to drop the ball behind you.

To correct this, make sure you start your push-away as you start your first step, if you take a four-step approach. If

you take a five-step approach, start your push-away on your second step.

Q. How can I stop throwing a back-up ball?

A. Back-up balls or reverse hooks are caused by a clockwise rotation of the hand as the ball is leaving the hand (for right-handers).

To get out of the back-up you must have a counter-clockwise rotation of the hand as the ball leaves it. A good mental thought to help correct this problem is to think about reaching out to shake someone's hand. If your hand finishes in the "handshake" position, you will roll a curve.

A reverse-hook ball is not necessarily a bad hitting ball, but it must be played as if you are throwing the ball with your opposite hand. In other words, played by a right-hander, you should use left-handed lines. In fact, there have been a few professional bowlers who have finished high in PBA tournaments using a back-up ball.

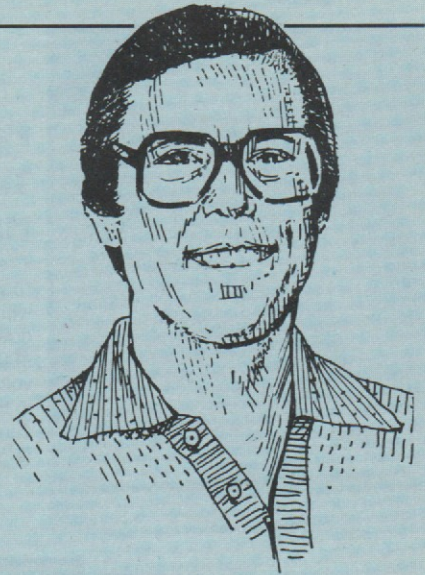
Q. I have a bad habit of pulling the ball to the left side of the head pin. What should I do?

A. One of the problems might be the direction of your swing. If your swing goes out away from your body in your backswing, it will come back down in a right-to-left direction (for right-handers) and make you pull the ball.

The correction would be in your stance and push-away. Make sure you hold the ball in line with your shoulder or slightly outside your shoulder. When you push the ball out on your first step, make sure it goes in the direction of your target. These two tips will ensure a straighter swing and less chance of pulling the ball to the left.

Q. I throw a semi-spinner and I'd like to know what weights are best for the roll on my ball?

A. For a semi-spinner, usually the best weights are negative side weight and thumb weight. These two weights will help the ball go into a stronger roll. Since your track is farther away from the thumb and finger holes, these negative weights will help you develop a stronger or higher-tracking roll. The closer the roll is to the thumb and finger holes on the ball, the more positive weight you want to use. Positive weight would be side, finger and top weights.



Bill Spigner is in his 10th year on the PBA Tour. He holds three national PBA championships and six regional PBA titles. He is also a head teaching pro and instructor at Don Johnson's Summer Bowling Camps.

Q. When is the right time to use a heavier ball? And would a heavier ball improve my scores?

A. You should use a weight that you can control. Using a heavier ball might help you knock down more pins, but if the ball is too heavy you can lose control of it and your scores might not improve. Dave Davis at one time used a 14-pound ball, Dave Soutar uses a 15-pound ball. Marshall Holman even used a 14-pound ball in the TV finals of the Syracuse Open in November, 1982. He averaged more than 240 for his two games with it.

So, control is the most important factor when choosing the weight of your ball.

Q. How fast should my approach be?

A. The speed of your approach should be what is comfortable for you. The faster your approach, the lower you should hold the ball in your stance. The slower your approach, the higher you should hold the ball in your stance. Use your normal approach speed. Speeding up or slowing down your natural approach could throw your timing off.

Bill Spigner welcomes questions from readers. Mail your questions to: Bill Spigner, Bowling Digest, 1020 Church Street, Evanston, IL 60201.