

The Stance
Don't take it for granted

Interview: Nikki Gianulias • Paula Carter

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Bill Spigner's Bowling Clinic

■ As I understand it, once my thumb is in the ball—with a little pressure to flatten it out—the back side of my thumb hole should “tickle” the back of my thumb as it comes out. I tried this and discovered that my thumb hole was too loose, so I put more black tape on the back side of the thumb hole to tighten the fit. It felt much better, and I was able to relax my hand pressure considerably, allowing my thumb to come out sooner.

After a few shots, however, my thumb started to stick. I really like the feel of the tighter thumb and think it will help me get more revolutions on the ball, but I need to come out cleanly every time without sticking. What are your suggestions?

The fit of the thumb hole determines how you grip your ball during your swing. This can affect how free your arm swing will be; the harder you must grip your ball, the more muscled your swing usually gets, and the heavier your ball is going to feel during your swing. When your ball feels heavy it makes it difficult to keep your wrist straight, and if your wrist isn't straight when your thumb comes out, it will be very difficult to get the lift and turn you need to roll an effective strike ball.

Your thumb hole should fit tightly enough so that you don't have to bend your thumb or squeeze the ball very hard. In order to do this, your thumb hole needs to be the same size and shape as your thumb. That can be a problem because your thumb will change sizes in reaction to heat, cold, humidity, or how much bowling you're doing. Thus, you need to be able to change the size of your thumb hole by adding or taking out tape to accommodate these fluctuations.

Every successful professional bowler I've known uses tape to adjust the size of the thumb hole. In your case, I would recommend you look at the shape of your thumb—whether it's round, oval, tapered, or a combination of shapes—and make sure you're tightening your thumb hole the best way to complement the shape of your thumb. Consider using white textured tape, which gives you a better grip than black tape. Both white and black tape come in one inch, three-quarter-

inch, and half-inch sizes. Since you're having trouble with your thumb hole getting too tight, you may need to switch to a smaller-size tape a few frames after putting in the tape. You also should take the tape out if you hang, even if you first put it in only a couple of frames before.

The tightness of the thumb hole varies from bowler to bowler, but usually the weaker the hand position and the more inconsistent the release, the looser the thumb hole needs to fit. The stronger the hand position and the more consistent the release, the tighter the thumb hole can be.

Don't be afraid to experiment with tape, and also look into the fit of your ball. Ask your pro shop operator: A pitch change in the thumb or a different span might help.

■ My 10th-grade son has bowled in Young American Bowling Alliance leagues and tournaments for several years. He maintains a high average and loves the game, and has won numerous awards. I'm interested in information about junior tournaments he can compete in, and about colleges that would offer bowling scholarships.

In regard to junior tournaments in your area or region, first contact your local Bowling Proprietors Association of America office and/or your YABA director. Then call other bowling centers and ask the managers whether they know of tournaments your son can bowl in. Also check out your local bowling newspaper or call its editor, who should know where the tournaments are. You can call the YABA directly at (414) 421-4700, or write the YABA at 5301 South 76th Street, Greendale, WI 53129-1192.

Fifteen colleges currently offer scholarships or financial aid for bowlers. The YABA also should be able to provide college information. A representative should be able to supply you with a list of the schools and possibly some guidance.

■ Will you tell me what differences exist between the reactive resin Piranha with two inches of Flexel, the HyPower with Hytherm, and the Critical Mass with



Bill Spigner has won three national PBA championships and seven regional PBA titles. He is co-owner of Hawthorn Lanes in Vernon Hills, Ill., and teaches at Pro Bowling Camps summer camp in Connecticut.

Versathane? Are all these balls made out of the same materials?

The Piranha and Critical Mass both are made out of reactive resin urethane, while the HyPower is made of a totally different material.

There are differences in the reactive resin and resin-type cover stocks the different ball companies use, but they are all of similar quality; the nicknames the ball companies give their cover stocks are to help them market their balls and to help consumers remember and distinguish each from its competitors. The major differences in the balls you mentioned are their interior construction.

The HyPower is a three-piece ball with the performance characteristics of a traditional three-piece resin ball, but with more gripping power. The Piranha is a two-piece, center-heavy ball. The Critical Mass is a three-piece center-heavy ball that has a very dense ceramic piece in the middle of its core. Your pro shop operator will know about the differences in core design and should be able to help you decide which ball to get and how to drill it to give you the performance you're looking for. ●

Bill Spigner welcomes questions from readers and will answer as many as possible in this column. Mail your questions to: Bill Spigner, Bowling Digest, 990 Grove Street, Evanston, IL 60201.