

Interview: Carol Gianotti • Ron Williams, the PBA's King of the Hill

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To Bill from Muhammad Ali

Bill Spigner's Bowling Clinic 4-28-93

■ Many people come up to me and say that I look like Brian Voss in my approach, except that I crank the ball. I have been trying to break this cranking habit, but I'm not sure how to do it. What can I do to eliminate this from my game? For instance, do I need a large wrist brace like the Cobra? (I use a Robby's Plus now.) What do you suggest?

Having a game like Brian Voss' is wonderful: You have the type of game that will give you many years of bowling pleasure. Voss is what I would classify as a power stroker. Not only does he have a great swing, timing, balance, and consistency, but he also has strong hand action that produces a very strong ball.

Brian is very strong physically, and that, combined with his great technique, allows him to roll a strong ball that looks effortless in its delivery. When you watch him bowl on TV it looks as if he doesn't roll a powerful ball, but his ball is very deceiving, because on normal house lane conditions his ball would hook a great deal.

There are three basic bowling styles. Brian, as I said before, is a power stroker, and the other two categories are stroker and cranker. A great example of a stroker is Gary Dickinson. He's approaching his 50th birthday, yet he's still a threat on the regular PBA tour, mainly because as a stroker he's extremely accurate, keeps the ball in play, and has a phenomenal physical game.

A good example of the modern-day cranker would be 1992 phenom Bob Vespi. His game is greatly dependent on lane conditions: He can be unbeatable on certain surfaces—and totally mortal on others—because of how complicated it is to deliver a ball with that power.

In your case, the Cobra wrist device would be too much. This particular device and others like it serve people who need help to get more lift and turn on the ball. With you working on your game the way you are, the Robby's Plus or a similar type of wrist device is the type you should use to help you keep your wrist straight.

What you need to work on is trying to keep a firm, stationary wrist position throughout your swing and release, without cupping your wrist in your stance or throughout your approach. Voss uses a turn-and-lift method for his release as opposed to a cranker like Vespi, who uses a lift-and-turn style of release.

Voss also allows his arm to swing from his shoulder, and you too will want to do this to complement the style of bowling you're trying to develop. The arm needs to swing freely, yet the hand and wrist need to be in a very firm position throughout the swing. Keeping the wrist firm and not cupping the ball will still allow the fingers to get under the ball sufficiently at the point of release to get enough lift to produce a strong ball.

■ I'm having problems hooking the ball on oily lanes. When the lanes are not too oily I bowl great, so I thought I was getting too much turn on my ball because the ball was too light, but it's a 16-pound Blue Hammer. I carried a 198 average last year, and I'm about the same this year, but I want to improve.

Another problem may be that I get too much wrist into the ball. Is there anything I can do to help me slow down and get an even roll? I throw from the fifth board out to the third board. (I'm trying to be ready for the High Roller Tournament at the Showboat Lanes in Las Vegas in July.)

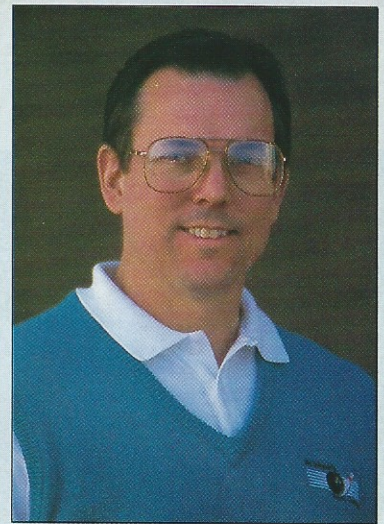
In order to firm up and sharpen your game for this major event, I'd recommend a few things.

First, start practicing different lines. You should practice playing different lines all the way to the fourth or even the fifth arrow. The thing you want to get straight is basically where you have to stand on the approach for each target you take aim at on the lane. The key is to position yourself in your approach so that your swing naturally tracks toward your target on the line you want the ball to travel down the lane.

It will help to have someone watching you so they can tell you what board your ball is crossing around the arrows as you aim at each particular target.

For example, if you're starting your approach on the 30th board and looking at the 15th board (or the third arrow), find out whether the ball rolling over that board. If it is, then you know where to stand to hit board 15. However, let's say the ball did not hit the 15th board but crossed over the 17th board. This tells you that where you're standing and looking is the right place to play the 17th board.

It's really important to become familiar with where your ball is going in relationship to what you're looking at; when you under-



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stand how your eye works, you have a better chance of lining up in the right place on the lane to be able to play the shot you want to play. In bowling you have to play where the lanes tell you to play, not where you want to play.

The next area to look at would be your release when you're playing heavy oil. On heavy oil you don't want to try to hook the ball like you can on dry lanes—the lane just won't allow you to do it.

Learn to play a little straighter line. You can do this by not turning the ball so much. Of course, you still need *some* turn on the ball to get enough side roll to make the ball hook when it starts to roll. To help you with the problem of being *too* wristy—by which I think you're saying you have a lot of movement of the wrist during the release—I would recommend a wrist device to keep your wrist in a straight position.

This type of wrist device would help you feel when you start to work with the wrist too much. Being able to feel the problem and identify when it starts to happen will help you work through the problem. For your bowling equipment I recommend a ball with very little top weight or even a little bottom weight and about three-quarters of an ounce positive side weight. ●

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.