

Bowling Clinic: Learning the semi-roller

BOWLING DIGEST

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an early swing

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on adjusting to
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■ *I have been bowling for 45 years and carry a 185 average, and my interest in the kegger sport is still quite strong. However, with all the rapidly changing technology in bowling ball cover stock and inner cores, I find it difficult to find the best approach to improving my game. Will a polished or dull reactive resin urethane cover provide the greatest hook potential? Do all major bowling ball companies have their own ball-testing device like Brunswick's "Throbot," or do they send their new creations to a private test laboratory? Each major bowling ball company may create its own cover stock and core design, but do they all manufacture their own complete ball?*



Bowling Clinic

By BILL SPIGNER

The key to improving is a continuing learning process in all facets of your game. First of all, you should always be working on the mechanics of your delivery, trying to make your shot-making more efficient with less effort. Second, always keep learning more about the limitations of your physical game, organizing what you can do and when to use what you know how to do. Also, keep learning more about your emotional side, which will help you keep focused on your game.

Then there is the equipment side of the game. Once you have a good understanding of how you're throwing the ball, it becomes very important to know the bowling balls today. The higher the level you compete at, the more important it becomes to understand the balls and how to use them. You need to have an arsenal of equipment that complements your abilities and knowledge. With all the choices that are available today,

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. (Due to the volume of letters, no personal replies will be made.)

though, it's very easy to buy balls that will either overlap or not fit in with what you have, and thus satisfy your needs.

Using the right equipment is definitely a way to improve your game. You can pick out equipment



Given the same cover stock, the more porous surface of a dull ball will always hook sooner than a polished ball.

in one of two ways. The first is to explain to your pro shop operator what you have and what you feel your needs are. With that information, the pro can guide you into a selection of balls to choose from. Every major ball company makes a complete line of equipment to cover all the bases.

The second way to pick out equipment is personal study. You can look up ball reviews on the Internet, read magazines and books, watch other bowlers and see what equipment they're using—and when they use it, ask them questions about it. A better understanding of the bowling ball will make it a little easier to add balls to your arsenal to improve your bowling. However, you don't want to add a ball to your arsenal that will confuse you as to which one to use. If the balls you have are too similar in their reactions, it becomes difficult to make a decision on which one to use.

Regarding your question about dull or polished providing the greatest hook potential: If the cover stock is the same, a dull ball will always start hooking sooner than a polished ball. What you have to do is determine where you

Improving Your Game

want your ball to start hooking. If your break point is too early, the ball will lose energy and not hit; a polished ball can give you a later break point and a harder hook into the pins. If the ball is breaking late, a duller ball will bring your break point closer to you.

One of the most important things for you to know is how much hook is comfortable for you to roll. Establishing your personal parameters on your hook potential will help you in selecting equipment to roll at the right time to give you your best break point. The key is getting the ball to break at the right time so the ball will have enough energy to carry pocket hits. Start looking at getting the ball to break at the right time, not trying to hook the ball more.

Regarding ball testing, Brunswick is currently the only company with a robot like the Throbot. However, all the major ball manufacturers use computers to aid in the development of the cores. They refer to this as "CAD," or computer-aided design. The urethanes typically are made by an outside source.

Each company has a staff of players who test the balls; most of the major manufacturers have pro and amateur staffs. These bowlers test the balls on varying lane conditions and in comparison to other balls on the market and their own equipment. Before a ball hits the market, a lot of testing and thought has been put into it.

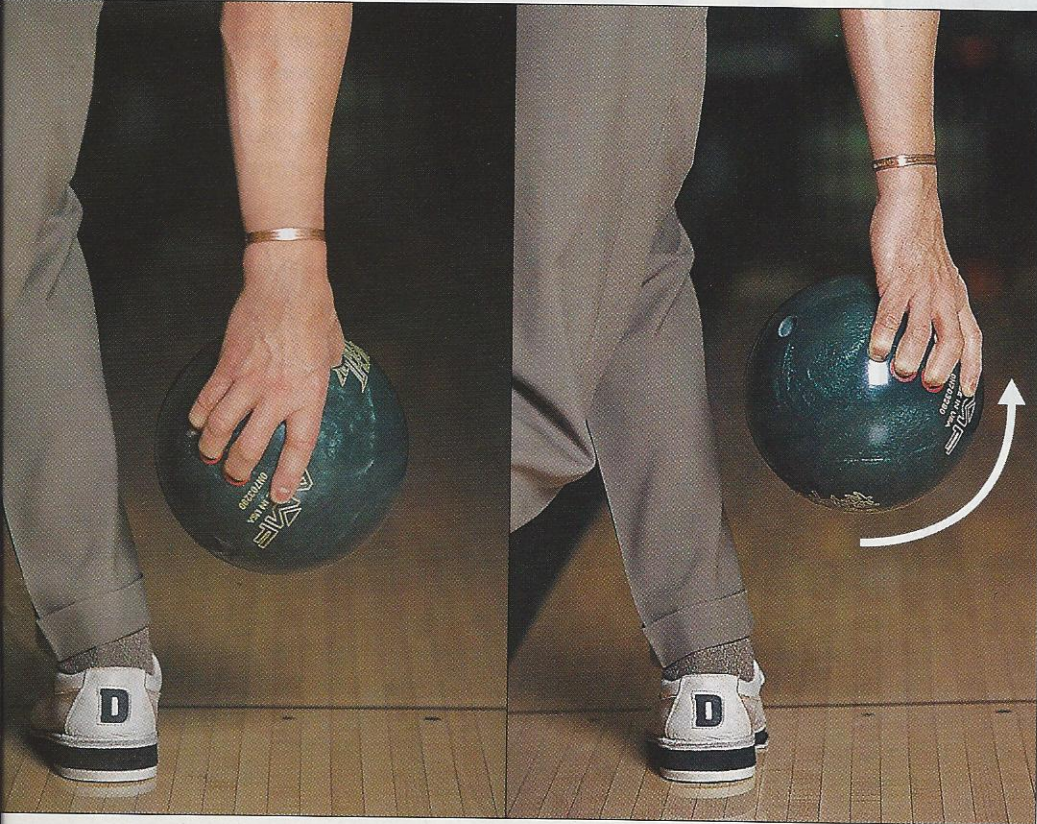
The manufacturers want to add to their equipment line and not overlaps balls.

For example, with the active balls—particle balls—the companies are filling in the gap between the resin urethanes and the particle urethanes to give the bowler more ball-reaction choices. Just as you are adding balls to fit your arsenal, the manufacturers are fitting balls into their equipment lines.

Finally, not all companies have a ball manufacturing plant. The major companies that have their own manufacturing plants in the United States are Brunswick, Columbia, Ebonite, Hammer, and Storm. All of these manufacturers also make balls for many different companies.

■ *I have two questions. I do a full-roller, and it has started to roll over the thumb hole. How can I get it off? And how do I change from a full-roller to a semi-roller?*

Rotating your fingers counterclockwise at the release [below] and relocating your pin properly will help change your ball track to avoid the finger holes.



You're already on your way to rolling a semi-roller, but there are two things you can do to help the ball get off the thumb hole and get the semi-roller track.

The first is to change your hand position. Start with your thumb at about 1 o'clock on the back of the ball, and as you swing the ball, work hard at keeping the thumb at the 1 o'clock position until the ball nears the bottom of the swing. At that time, try to release the thumb early and have the fingers rotate from the 7 o'clock position they should be in (with the thumb at 1 o'clock) to 3 o'clock. This will help the fingers move from an inside to outside position through the ball, and give you the semi-roller release.

The second thing to help is the drilling of the ball. Get a ball that has the pin three to four

inches out, and locate the pin about an inch above and a half-inch to the right of the ring finger (for a righthander, opposite for lefthanders). Putting the pin in this position will help move the track away from the thumb hole.

■ **Can you tell me if the foul line is of any importance anymore? I've noticed that at the house I bowl in the foul lights are not turned on. I have also noticed a number of bowlers, male and female, who slide over the line.**

What happens if a bowler throws a perfect game and the foul lights aren't on? There have been a number of 300 games rolled in my area, I'm sure. Do the ABC officials come into the house and check the lanes, or does the league secretary provide the information needed?

The foul lights are still a required part of league and tournament bowling in order for scores to be sanctioned. In the playing rule book, Rule 5d covers foul detection. It states: "A WIBC/ABC-approved automatic foul-detecting device

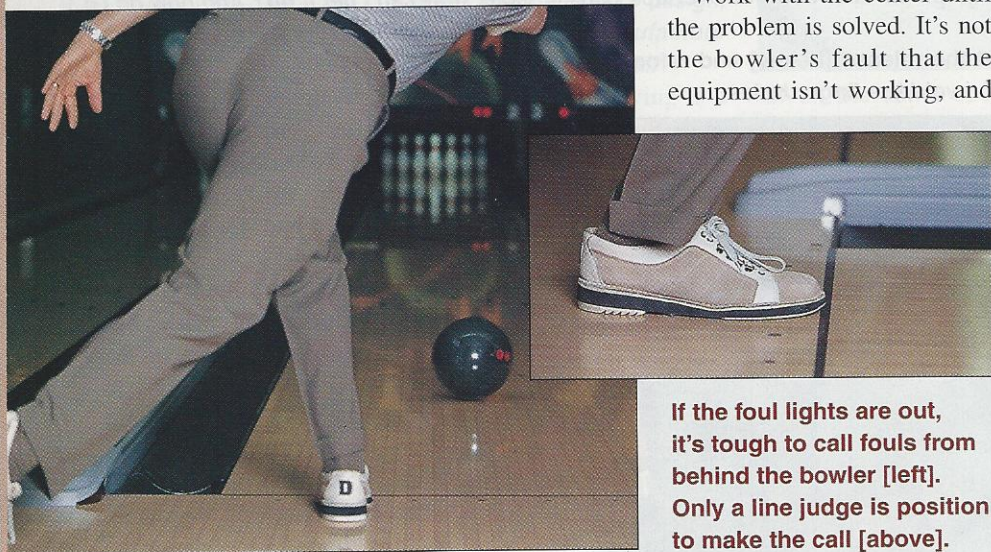
captains shall call fouls or designate a foul judge.

"Failure to provide for the calling of fouls as specified shall disqualify scores bowled for WIBC/ABC high score award consideration."

Although the rule is very clear, it normally isn't carried out exactly as written. If the bowling center is having a foul-light problem, the communication from the mechanics to the management to the bowlers is not always as good as it could be. The key to the foul-light problem is for the bowlers to know when there *is* a problem so they can police themselves according to the rules.

Local ABC reps go to the centers in their jurisdiction each season to sanction the lanes, and one of their responsibilities is to test whether the foul lights are in working order. However, foul lights are like anything else; they require maintenance, and if the system is old, they may need to be replaced. If a center is having severe problems with its system, it may have to replace the whole thing.

Work with the center until the problem is solved. It's not the bowler's fault that the equipment isn't working, and



If the foul lights are out, it's tough to call fouls from behind the bowler [left]. Only a line judge is position to make the call [above].

must be used if available. When not available, a foul judge must be stationed in a position to have an unobstructed view of the foul line.

"Should a foul-detecting device become temporarily inoperative, the following procedures shall be used to call fouls

"1. In tournament play, management shall assign a foul judge or have the official scorers call fouls.

"2. In league play, the opposing teams

when a high score is rolled and the lights aren't on, nobody will report the score was bowled without the lights on. It's easy to spot blatant fouls, but it becomes a judgment call on close ones. If someone trips and falls over the line it's definitely a foul, but if it looks like the very tip of someone's shoe is on the foul line it's tough to make the call unless there is a foul judge sitting at the foul line, very much like a foul judge in tennis.

Last year on national TV, Parker Bohn III fouled. The foul lights weren't on, but the announcers were reviewing the shot and noticed the foul. They weren't reviewing the shot to see whether he fouled, but having discovered this, they had to report it to the tournament officials, and the officials had no choice but to give Parker the foul. Parker, being the class guy he is, didn't contest it; he rolled for his spare, made it, and went on to win the match like nothing happened. It was just an oversight with the lights, and he realized it. If it wasn't for a replay of the shot, the foul would never have been found out—even with all the people in the audience, no one saw it. So you can see how difficult it would be to call a foul on someone from behind.

■ **I am a 66-year-old bowler. Last year in Madison, N.J., I averaged 229 in a summer league. I threw a semi-spinner and found it much more effective than the fingertip three-quarter spin that most of the other good bowlers applied. No one came close to the 229. In the winter leagues, though, it's the reverse. I average a low deuce but cannot carry, while the three-quarter rollers do much better.**

Is there any way I can get my semi-spinner to be more effective when there is carrydown oil present? I use urethane but am thinking about resin. I throw a five-finger ball over the first arrow (down and in) with a burgundy Hammer at a fast pace.

In the summer, with fewer bowlers playing, most proprietors apply less oil to the lane. You hit the nail on the head with the carrydown—with fewer bowlers there is less carrydown, so your ball finishes better.

I would definitely recommend a resin ball or one of the new active balls that go longer than the earlier releases of the active balls. You need a ball that will have more flare than your old ball, so the ball will pick up a roll in the oil. Have a pro watch you roll the ball, particularly noting the speed, rotation, and revs you have. Also, if possible, see a pro who is familiar with the conditions you're playing on. If you can't do that, you need to describe to the pro how your ball is reacting relative to the condition your league is playing on. ●