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# **BOWLING DIGEST**

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## **Choose Wisely**

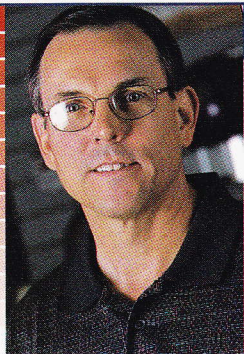
Our expert, **Bill Spigner**, tells you how to pick out the right ball for your game

**Jeri Edwards** breaks down all the angles on the lane

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# Need a Ball? Know Your Game First

By **BILL SPIGNER**

■ *Is there anyone who grades and tests all balls and publishes the results? It is a science to learn and read between the lines on the write-ups from the ball manufacturers. I have been looking for a new ball, and discerning the truth is tough. Referring me to a PBA shop is not an easy option, because there isn't one in the area, and even if I drove to one, the pro won't know my style. If there was a good report on bowling balls, it would help me.*

There is no single report that tests all the balls that are released. There are some people who test many of the balls that come out and write magazine reviews on them. Competent people do the reviews, and the information they give is good. Yet as with any review, it's a guide; it's still difficult to make a decision whether the ball is right for you based only on a ball review. The performance of a ball can vary a lot from bowler to bowler.

Picking out a new ball isn't getting any easier. There are a few things you need to know before you seek advice on what to get.

First, think about where you want the ball to fit in relation to the current equipment you have. With that in mind, decide on the cover stock you want. You can choose from a variety of urethane balls, which are divided into

*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](mailto:bowl@centurysports.net).*



When choosing a ball—from a light-load particle [left] to a powerful heavy-load particle [right] to a more controlled urethane—it's important to understand your tendencies.

three types: particle urethane resin, resin, and urethane. Although the base material for the cover stock of all the high-performance balls made today is urethane, the bowling terms used for the different types of urethane are used to describe the type of ball.

The **particle balls** are the earliest-rolling balls and are made with different loads of particles. A heavy-load particle ball will roll the earliest, whereas a light load particle will roll later. Particle balls give you control and power. They are designed to roll in the oil without over-hooking in dry conditions.

The **resin balls** also vary from very aggressive resin urethanes to less aggressive reactive resin urethanes. The resin balls slide in oil and hook in dry conditions—that's why they are called reactives. Use these types of balls when

you need length and back-end performance.

The traditional **urethanes** come in a few varieties today. Urethane balls are used mostly on dry lanes and on conditions where control without power is needed.

Regardless of what the balls are billed to do, the only thing that matters is what a particular type can do for *you*. The reaction you get out of a ball greatly depends on your ball speed, rotation, revolutions, and the lane conditions. You need to be armed with information about the balls, but just as important—if not more important—you need to know how you are throwing the ball in order to make an intelligent decision on purchasing a ball.

Develop a good understanding of your own game, then rely on the ball

reviews of the manufacturers to help you make a selection. Manufacturers are very good at comparing the different models of their equipment against each other.

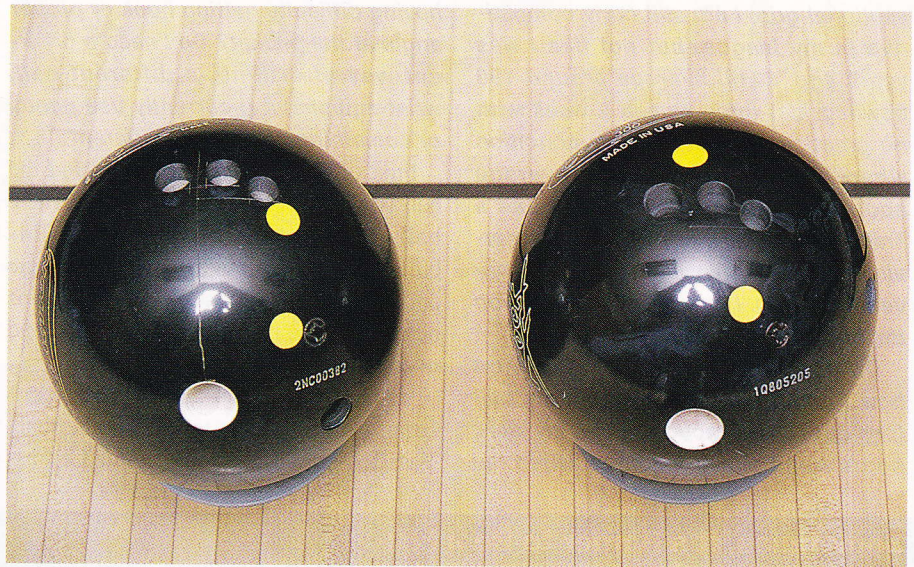
It's a bit difficult to cross over from one company to another for comparisons, but not impossible. For example, when a company rates its ball as its most-hooking ball, this means the ball is quicker to start its hooking action than all of the company's other offerings.

Sometimes because of lane conditions, a high-performance ball that is rated to hook the least will outhook the ball that is rated to hook the most. This happens when the hooking ball grabs the lane too soon and loses rotation very early. This ball will straighten out quickly and look like it's going straight. The ball that rolls the longest and is rated to hook the least may get down the lane and lose its rotation much later, allowing the ball to hook more at the back end. You'll see this ball hooking down the lane, while the hooking ball breaks so early it's difficult to see.

I can't emphasize enough how important it is to have an understanding of what's happening with your own ball. Many times bowlers will come into my pro shop and want a ball that hooks more. But when I get an opportunity to see them throw their ball, they need just the opposite. Their release may put very little side roll on the ball, and their ball loses rotation very early. They think their ball isn't hooking, when in reality it has used up its hook so early they can't see it.

When trying to decide on a ball to purchase, consider a type of ball and drilling that will give you the breakpoint you want and the type of move you want the ball to make.

**■ I am 32 years old and have been bowling for 28 years. I've thrown many balls: rubber, plastic, urethane, and the now-popular resin balls. There is one ball**



**By shifting from a stacked-leverage drilling [left] to a drilling with the pin above your fingers [right], you can achieve more length and less flare.**

*that I like very much, the Columbia Messenger TII Pearl. I throw a 16-pound version drilled stacked-leverage for a right hand. I like this ball so much I was thinking about buying another one, but drilling it differently (a little tamer). What drill pattern would you recommend? I already have a Purple Monster drilled to hook early. Should I go label?*

With the stacked-leverage drilling, you have a ball that will flare a lot with a very strong move at your breakpoint. The Messenger TII Pearl, by its very nature, is designed to go long and finish hard. You also have a particle ball, the Purple Monster, which will roll earlier and have a smoother reaction on the lane.

If you purchase another Messenger, get one with the pin three to four inches out, with two to three ounces of top weight. Drill it with the pin above your fingers, about five inches from your PAP, with the CG about four inches from the PAP. This type of drilling will provide a lot of length with less flare.

You will get a much smoother back-end reaction, allowing you to play a straighter line down the lane. In other

words, you will be able to play a little farther right. With less flare, the ball will also retain energy. This type of drilling will give you control, but the ball will still pack enough power at the back end to hit.

If you really like the drilling pattern of the Messenger TII Pearl and want to stay with that type of drilling, you might want to think about going to a ball with a weaker core and cover stock and keeping the drill pattern similar. Sometimes when you have a ball that you like a lot and try to drill the same ball a different way, you start looking for the new ball to do the same things your old one does. There are so many different balls on the market that it is better many times to drill a different ball to get the reaction you want. That way you won't be expecting to get the same look out of the ball.

**■ I am 46 years young and have been bowling since age 10. I have to use a conventional grip due to problems with my bowling fingers. Back in the days when the lanes were oiled evenly all the way across, I was one of the top bowlers in my county. With today's technology and being stuck with a con-**

*ventional grip, I am still fairly competitive in my league, but not like I was years ago. I still average around 190 bowling just three games a week with no practice. It's not an easy condition where I bowl, either—and I average about the same everywhere. I use a Track Champ bowling ball, and generally it hooks fairly well despite the conventional grip. I have medium speed on the ball and roll a 16-pounder.*

*Do you have any suggestions on how I could get more revs on my ball (besides more practice, which my work hours won't allow) for times when I'm*

*having difficulty getting hook or proper angle at the pocket? Do I need a different way of drilling, a different ball, wrist equipment (I currently use none), or something completely different?*

First of all, we need to understand the ball you're using. The Champ is a particle ball. There are no surprises with this ball—it provides control when the lane conditions call for control. The Champ is best on spotty, broken-down patterns and overreacting oil patterns.

Your first course of action to get a different ball reaction is to find another ball. You don't want to replace your Champ,

but you need a ball to complement it. I would recommend a strong-finishing resin ball with a strong drilling. Resin balls slide longer and finish harder than particle balls do, which will help increase your entry angle into the pocket.

To get more revs on the ball, you need more time difference between your thumb and fingers coming out of the ball. The best way to achieve that is by using a fingertip grip. You say you have finger problems, but actually, a fingertip grip makes it *easier* to grip the ball lightly than a conventional grip. However, you might want to think about dropping to a 15-pound ball if you switch to a fingertip grip.

You might even consider adding a pinky finger hole to help enhance your grip. Using the pinky finger makes the ball feel lighter, and it is good for bowlers who have finger or wrist problems and need the ball to feel lighter and more controlled.

Wrist devices can help if you are having trouble keeping your wrist straight until the thumb is releasing. There are many different types of devices, so try some different ones to test the feel and results. Maybe a teammate or another bowling friend has one you can try. Also, consult your local pro shop and, if possible, have the pro watch you roll a couple of balls. A pro should be able to guide you into a wrist device that could help.

With your limited time to practice, a new ball would be the best choice for you. Your second option is a wrist device. Changing to a lighter ball with a fingertip grip would be another good solution, but keep in mind that you will need time to adjust to it. In fact, you might want to think about making changes as big as these in the offseason. ●

## Sometimes, It's Harder to Be a Fan

I'VE COACHED A LOT OF bowlers in my time, but I don't think I've ever felt as proud of one of my students as I did this past January at the ABC Masters, when one was tied with me through the first round of action.

That's no big deal, you say? Well, it is if the student is your son—and he was. Robby and I not only had identical pinfalls through the first round, but only one of us made the first cut—and it wasn't me.

Yep, after the second round, I was watching Robby bowl against one of his heroes, Amleto Monacelli. He wasn't able to advance against Amleto, but he did come away with about \$2,000 in prize and side money.

What's ironic is that in two of his most prestigious appearances, Robby has bowled against his two heroes. In 2000, he lost a PBA regional match against his other hero, Pete Weber.

Getting a taste of watching Robby, rather than competing myself, was quite a change of pace. I was getting pretty worked up in the stands, as opposed to keeping my cool when I'm bowling a tournament. If it's all the same, I'd prefer to be out there competing with Robby, instead of just cheering him on. ○



Robby matched Dad's pinfall in the first round of the Masters, then passed him and qualified for match play.