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INTERVIEW: Carmen Salvino Sounds Off

BOWLING

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'I didn't get my turn yet. I'm gonna
break this tie.'
—John Madden



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Bill Spigner's **Bowling Clinic**

Q. I have only been bowling for a short time and my biggest problem is deciding how big a curve to put on my ball. Some people have told me that the bigger the curve, the more effective my ball will be. How true is this?

A. I would have to disagree with what your friends told you. There are many problems with a large hook. You want to throw enough hook so that if you hit a little light in the pocket the ball will take out the 5-pin. If your ball isn't taking out the 5-pin, you need more hook.

When you start getting too much hook, you will notice your spare leaves will be very difficult. You will start leaving a lot of 2-8-10 splits, washouts (1-2-4-10) Big Four (4-6-7-10), railroads (7-10) and Greek Churches (4-6-7-9-10). All this happens because the ball comes through the pins on a very sharp angle.

If you watch the Pro Bowlers Tour on TV, you will notice about 75% of the bowlers throw medium-hooking balls with quite a bit of power and speed on them.

When you have a big hook on the ball, it's very difficult to control and it's not good for all lane conditions. Even the pros on the PBA Tour who throw large hooks can also throw the ball very straight when they have to.

Too much hook means trouble. A smaller hooking ball will give you more control and consistency.

Q. I'm 68 years old and I have arthritis in my fingers. Right now I'm using a 14-pound ball and it hurts my hand. I don't want to go to a lighter ball. What might help me?

A. I would suggest that you add a third finger hole. You can use either the index finger or pinky finger. The use of one of these fingers, or possibly both, will take pressure off the other two fingers. If you add the pinky, it will help you lift the ball from behind it more.

Steve Fehr, an excellent newcomer on the PBA Tour, uses his index finger in the ball, and he has won two national PBA titles using it. He uses the third finger hole in his ball because of a past wrist injury, and he feels it helps strengthen his release.

Either way, these additional finger holes will help take pressure off your fingers and hand.

Q. I lay the ball down right at the foul line. My friends say if I'd get more loft I would bowl better. Is this true?

A. Your friends are correct about the loft. When you roll the ball early it has a tendency to hook early. When this happens the ball will lose a lot of its hitting power.

By getting more loft (two to three feet) you will delay the hook, which will make the ball hit harder.

Also, by getting more loft you will automatically impart more lift on the ball, which will further increase your hitting power.

To get more loft you should try to release the ball later, or a little on your upswing. You can try finger inserts or have more forward pitch put in your finger holes, both of which enable you to hold onto the ball longer.

Q. I throw a straight ball and would like to get more hook. What should I do?

A. First, position the ball in your hand with your thumb pointed toward 12 o'clock. You want to hold this position throughout your approach. As you release the ball you want your whole forearm to turn in a counter-clockwise rotation. You want to keep your fingers in the ball as long as possible so you get good loft.

Most people think the wrist gives you the turn, but it's the whole forearm. The wrist plays the important part of applying lift to the ball.

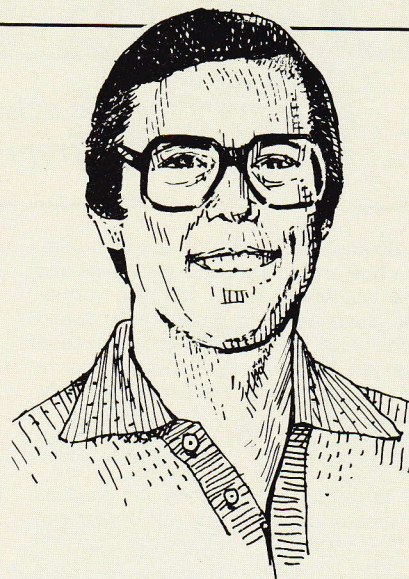
When practicing the forearm rotation to get turn on the ball, be sure not to let the inside of your elbow face down toward the floor. You want the inside of your elbow to rotate no further than facing toward the side wall of the building. If the elbow turns down you will get too much spin and not enough roll on the ball.

Q. Which would be better to use—a four- or five-step approach?

A. Basically, both approaches are the same. In the five-step approach there is no movement of the ball on the first step. The first step is used to get the body in motion and then the pushaway is started on the second step. In a four-step approach the pushaway starts with the first step.

There is less chance of making timing mistakes with four steps, because the pushaway and ball move with the first step. But either approach, if timed properly, is fine.

There are bowlers on the PBA Tour who use more than five steps—Mark Roth uses six and a newcomer, Norm Duke, uses seven. I have changed my approach from four to five steps at various stages in my career, and I have won PBA titles using both. Mike Durbin has won PBA titles using



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.

three-, four- and five-step approaches.

I would not suggest that an amateur switch approaches as we pros do. It requires practice and your timing has to be very good. Some of the four veterans have switched from five to four steps now (Dave Soutar and Steve Neff are two) because it's simpler and easier to execute consistently good shots.

Q. I'm currently using a conventional grip ball. I'm thinking about changing to a semi-finger tip or finger-tip grip. Which would be better.

A. I would suggest going to a relaxed finger-tip grip. Relaxed means you should be able to put your fingers in the ball up to your first joint, and then when you put your thumb in the ball your fingers do not come partially out of the finger holes. If your fingers come out a little, your span is too long, and it will be difficult for you to hang onto the ball.

One problem with a semi-finger tip is that it's fitted between the first and second joint on your hand. Your fingers don't bend there, so it's an unnatural grip. The relaxed finger tip is the way to go.

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