

Bill Spigner's **Bowling Clinic**

■ After reading Mike Durbin's tips on timing in the December 1983 BOWLING DIGEST and trying them, I'm still having trouble with the problem of jerking my arm up at the point of release. My arm is out on the first step, next to my leg at the second step, and fully back on my third. But instead of fully extending my arm like a pendulum and coming out of the ball at the release point, I have a terrible habit of forcing my downswing at the release point by jerking my arm up and ruining all my timing, plus putting too much speed on the ball.

I have tried everything to make my arm swing smooth and relaxed, but nothing seems to help. I need some advice on how to make it smooth so that the ball does the work and not me.

Mike Durbin's tips on timing and how to go about getting good timing are correct. The problem you are probably having is the positioning of your body throughout your approach. After your pushaway, your upper body might be going forward, with your shoulders ahead of your knees during the approach. When you get to the release point, you now have to jerk your upper body back up so you can get your sliding knee under you for leverage. That might be why you are having the feeling of being late with the ball.

There are two things I would recommend you do. First, keep your upper body in a more upright position throughout your approach. Second, if you're walking stiff-legged, your upper body can tip forward easily. Try to walk with your knees bent slightly throughout your approach. This will not only help keep your upper body from going ahead of your knees, but will also put you in a better position to get more knee bend at the release point.

At first, these changes will feel a little awkward, but give them time, and I'm sure you will be on your way to better bowling.

■ I just started using a fingertip ball and I'm getting very bad blisters on my thumb. I bowl six out of seven days a week. What can I use to keep my thumb from getting any more raw than it already is, or what can I do or use to prevent blisters?

When bowling as much as you do, it's important to get the thumb hole to fit properly. You must be able to get into and out of the thumb hole freely. If you have any drag, it will cause friction and produce a blister.

What you need to do to prevent further blisters is to carve or sand out the area or areas of the thumb hole that are causing the friction. Once you enlarge that area of the hole, you might find it to be a little large in

other areas. If this happens, you will need to add a piece of tape or two to make the thumb fit properly.

Usually, thumb holes are drilled round, but most thumbs are not round. Another thing you can do after you have made your thumb hole fit is to put "New Skin" on your thumb before you bowl. Many top pros patch their thumbs before they start bowling, which helps relieve some of the friction caused by their release.

■ I have a composite average of 211 and have been averaging over 200 for the last 10 seasons. My problem is that 90% of the time I release the ball, it will bounce past the dots on the lane, then double dribble before starting the skid-roll pattern. This started about eight years ago, when I bowled in a house that was hooking a lot and I had to try to get the ball farther down the lane. I've gone to many different pros in the area with no positive results. I am currently using ½ back pitch and ¼ right pitch, with a lot of bevel in the front of the thumb hole. I also use a Shur-Out, and a lot of baby powder. When I do get out of the ball right, it has much more hitting power.

I would say your problem is you are releasing the ball too far in your upswing. When you do that, the ball is actually traveling slightly upward, so when it hits the lane, it's coming straight down. That will cause the ball to bounce when it hits. You'll have to release the ball more parallel to the lane surface to correct this. Also, if you pull your head up, it will cause you to release the ball too much on your upswing.

If there are other people having the same problem in the center where you are bowling, it might be the lanes. There are houses in which, when you release the ball, it will actually bounce when it hits the lanes. We have played in a couple of centers on the tour where this happened.

You might find it comforting to know that Mark Roth has double dribbled the ball many times during his career. But when he does this, his ball is not quite as effective.

With all the different things you are doing to get out of your thumb hole faster not working, I would have to say the problem lies in your swing. You are probably muscling the ball a lot, trying to get the ball farther down the lane. Loosen up your swing and let the ball come off your hand, instead of squeezing to hang onto it.

■ I have been bowling for seven years. I have developed a lump on my inner thumb where I grip the ball. My doctor suggested I give up bowling. He called it "bowler's" thumb. Have you ever heard



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of this? If so, what can I do? I have already had an operation, but the lump is on the nerves. If it was taken out, I would lose feeling in my thumb. I don't want to give up bowling.

I have had students with the problem of a lump at the base of their thumb where they grip the ball. I found a good way to take the pressure off the base of the thumb is to bevel the thumb hole so it is more round at the top. That will take a little of the pressure off the base of the thumb.

Next, you will notice that the base of your thumb is wider than the tip of your thumb, so you are still putting more pressure on the base of your thumb. Buy an Ace Mitchell Shur Hook or a similar cork insert. Insert the cork ¼ to ⅜ of an inch into the thumb hole, and make sure it is positioned in the front of the thumb hole so it evenly covers the flat, palm side of your thumb.

This cork will take up some of the space farther down in the thumb hole and allow you to get a better grip on the ball with the palm side of your thumb. This way pressure will be more equal on your whole thumb.

Another thing you might want to consider is going to a shorter span. Hall-of-Famer Don Johnson had a problem with a pinched nerve at the base of his thumb, and it was caused by a ball with a long span.

Bill Spigner welcomes questions from readers and will answer as many as possible in this column. Mail your questions to: Bill Spigner, Bowling Digest, 1020 Church Street, Evanston, IL 60201.