

Earl Anthony: The Match I'll Never Forget

BOWLING

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Bill Spigner's **Bowling Clinic**

■ **My mental game is terrible. When I start bowling badly or miss an easy spare I get upset with myself. What is my problem and what do you suggest I do to solve it?**

It's all right to get upset with yourself when you miss a shot. If you never get upset when you're struggling, you probably don't have much desire to improve. Every pro gets upset with himself when he misses, and each has a different way of venting his emotion. Some players, such as Earl Anthony, Don Johnson, and Dick Weber, hardly ever show their emotions. Others, such as Marshall Holman, let all their emotions hang out.

You need to control your emotions so you can use them to your advantage. Don't act a certain way because someone else acts that way. Players who are naturally "hyper," such as Marshall Holman, can be more volatile and it won't disrupt their concentration. A low-key player, such as Tom Baker, keeps his emotions inside and doesn't get too excited because he knows it can affect his performance.

Learn your emotions and what they do to your game. Getting upset with yourself is fine, but learn how to use that emotion and channel it in the right direction so it doesn't disrupt your concentration. Think about what you did that got you upset and try to correct it.

■ **I am a 33-year-old male with a 170 average, but I have been sidelined temporarily because of back problems. I had been using a 14-pound fingertip ball with good results before my injury. Now I have been instructed to use a lighter ball when I start bowling again. Under what conditions would going to a lighter ball help a bowler, and how do you judge how much weight to drop? I am particularly concerned about the 5-pin and deflection.**

The lighter the ball, the more difficult it will become to carry the pocket. Even with a 14-pound ball, your chances of consistently carrying the 5-pin on light hits are not very good.

I recommend you do a couple of things before you even try to roll a ball down the lane. In order to not use your back when throwing your ball, take some practice approaches without the ball. Concentrate on keeping your upper body in a vertical position throughout your approach. Let your arm swing freely from your shoulder and at your release point. Let your knees bend, allowing your arm to come through without force. This way you will not be using your back to

roll the ball—your legs and the gravity from the arm swing will do the work. After you have gone through this a number of times, pick up the lightest ball you can find and go through your approach. At the release point let the ball drop out of your hand. Slowly, you can start adding a little momentum to your follow-through. The reason for this is to try to protect yourself from reinjuring your back. Many times a doctor will tell a bowler to give up bowling when back problems occur. Actually, you really shouldn't be using your back to roll the ball. In many cases back problems developed by bowlers are caused by bad technique.

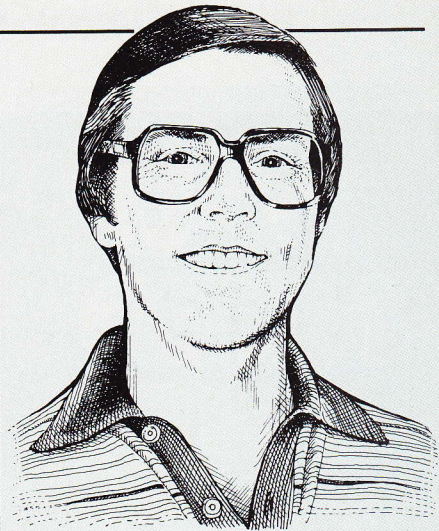
Remember one thing: Don't use your back to throw the ball. Let your swing and legs do the work. If that happens, you won't have a back problem any longer, and you'll start producing some impressive results.

■ **I am a right-handed bowler and lately I've been having problems drifting to my left during the approach. In order for me to hit my mark, I have to drop my shoulder and swing my arm outward. Can my problem be solved?**

Walking to the left usually occurs in the second and third steps of a five-step approach, or the first two steps of a four-step approach. The step before the slide will be straight, and in the last step the sliding foot will come back in toward the center of the body to get leverage and balance.

There are many top professional bowlers who walk to the left during the approach—Marshall Holman, Mark Roth, Pete Weber, and Ted Hannahs, to name a few. These players have what I call a "clearance" step. This step goes left to clear their hips and shoulders out of the way during the early part of their approach. It allows for a straight, tight-to-the-body swing. All of these players slide back in on their last step to compensate for having drifted left, and to get the balance and leverage they need.

Walking left is not always bad. It's how you finish your shot that becomes the major factor. In your case, you say you're dropping your right shoulder and swinging your arm to the right. (You are probably also falling off balance on each shot.) If your shoulder is dropping excessively, it's probably caused by bending sideways from your waist, which causes your swing to get away from your body. When this happens, it becomes very difficult to center your sliding foot for balance and leverage. You might also be continuing to walk left on your last two steps. This will cause you to end up too far from your target, and it will make you reach to the right to try to hit it.



Bill Spigner is in his 12th year on the PBA tour. He holds three national PBA championships and seven regional PBA titles. He also owns and operates Bill Spigner's Pro's Corner in Northbrook, Ill.

You will need to straighten out your upper body and concentrate on sliding in. You'll need to have someone watch you. Have a friend check the direction of your steps. Ask him to tell you how close your swing is to your body (if you're bending from the waist, your swing will most likely be away from your body), and the direction of your slide.

Many times bowlers will walk differently depending on how they are playing the lanes. You might subconsciously be walking differently for various shots. In playing the outside line some players subconsciously walk to the left. But they might walk straight when playing around the second arrow, and walk to the right when playing inside. Check out what you do with your natural walk when playing different lines—it will help you better determine where to stand to play different zones on the lane.

Professional bowlers George Pappas, Gary Dickinson, Ernie Schlegel, Earl Anthony, and others will vary their walk directions to get the results they need on certain types of lane conditions. Walking perfectly straight is not always the ideal way to walk for every bowler. There are many factors that determine what is the best way to walk for each individual, but for the once-a-week player, walking straight would be ideal.

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.