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BOWLING

DIGEST

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Training tips from the man who teaches the pros

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Bill Spigner's **Bowling Clinic**

■ I have made a lot of changes in my game over the last few years. My average has improved, but not to the extent I had hoped.

The one thing that has remained constant is my inability to keep a straight elbow throughout my armswing. I have been bending it for so many years that I don't even notice the flaw until someone points it out. I've tried bowling with the ball down like Carmen Salvino and I've tried using elbow supports, but nothing works. Do you have any suggestions? I'm willing to try anything.

The best advice I can give you about your bent elbow is to stop trying to fight it and learn how to use it.

People used to be taught that they had to have a locked elbow from the beginning of the pushaway until the follow-through. Personally, I don't believe your elbow has to be straight. As a matter of fact, I think a slight bend in your elbow can enhance control and hand action—if used correctly.

There are many top pros who bend their elbow during their swing—Mark Baker, Joe Hutchinson, Pete Couture, and Earl Anthony are just a few of the stars who have used a bent elbow successfully over the past 10 years. Another all-time great and Hall-of-Famer, Don Carter, was known for his bent-elbow style.

But the best example I like to use of the bent-elbow style is Pete Weber. Most people say his arm is straight, but that's not true. His elbow starts bending about two feet from the bottom of his swing, and he bends it to help get his fingers farther under the ball. After he bends his elbow, he turns his hand to the side of the ball to get his fingers well under the ball just before he releases it. As he releases the ball, his elbow straightens out. With his elbow straightening out and his fingers low on the ball, Weber gets tremendous lift with very little force. Thus, Weber uses a bent elbow instead of a cupped wrist to get his powerful ball.

I've seen people worry so much about a slight bend in their elbow that they totally forget about the rest of their game. As they try to straighten out their arm, they totally lose control over what they're doing. You should be as natural as possible when bowling, but understand what your mechanics are and how to improve them.

Learn to use that bent elbow and then you can start working on other areas of your game.

■ I am a 16-year-old bowler, and I've started having trouble with my bowling arm. A doctor told me I should stop bowling for six weeks because I have

tendinitis. Do you have any suggestions for me?

Many pros have had tendinitis or problems similar to that. The best thing to do is to follow your doctor's advice. When you get ready to bowl again, use a lighter ball and wear a bowling splint. A bowling splint is a support that goes on your forearm to help tighten and support your tendons. Your doctor might also be able to recommend something to wear.

At 16, it's worth the wait to let yourself heal. Also, gaining more knowledge about tendinitis might help you take care of your problem before the situation gets too serious.

■ I have aspirations of going on the PBA tour and I've worked hard to develop a solid power game. When I cup my wrist during my release, my hand breaks from side to side, thus not allowing my fingers to be in line with my forearm. I don't think I'm getting the lift I need. How do I correct this problem? Is there any special wrist exercise or wrist device that would help?

If you want to strengthen your wrist, you can do wrist curls with dumbbells or squeeze a small ball.

If you are considering using a wristband, get something that will add stability to only your wrist. You don't want to get used to using one of the more exotic devices if you are considering bowling for a living. Some are too restrictive and lessen your chances of developing different releases—something very necessary to be successful on the PBA tour.

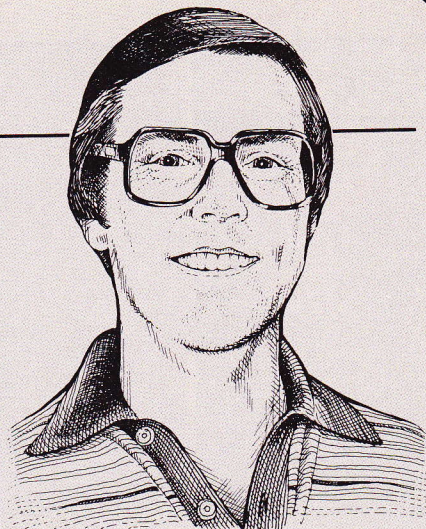
Also, stop trying to cup the ball so much. Not every pro bowls with a cupped wrist. Every style has a chance on the PBA tour—provided you're good enough at what you do.

Take a good look at your game and evaluate it. Then watch the pros to see what you should consider working on. Videotaping and a good coach are also necessary if you have professional aspirations.

■ I've been bowling for seven years and was happy with my progress up until two years ago. My average is 165, but I can't seem to increase it.

I had polio when I was small, so I can't finish up on my left leg when I roll the ball. I am right-handed and take three steps, but I can't seem to get my timing right. I can't figure out where my ball should be during the different stages of my approach.

In the three-step approach, your timing should be as follows: At the completion of



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your first step, the ball should have already traveled about one-half the distance to the top of your swing. (The swing starts when the left hand leaves the ball at the completion of the pushaway.) Upon the completion of your second step, the ball should have reached the top of your swing. In your last step, the ball should be coming forward for the release so your foot and ball get to the foul line at about the same time.

The biggest problem with a three-step approach is that everything happens too fast, and it makes controlling the ball difficult. I think you should try adding a fourth step to your approach. You should also work on balance and keeping your shoulders level.

As far as ending up on the wrong foot, the first tournament in PBA history was won by Wrong Foot Lou Campi. He had great success ending up on the wrong foot.

■ Should a bowler who is just starting out use finger grips?

When I am fitting people for their first fingertip bowling ball, I usually will not ask if they want finger grips. But if they ask, I will explain what they do. If the bowler has been rolling a fingertip and is purchasing a new ball, I will find out if the person has tried or considered trying grips. Of the people I drill fingertip balls for, about 60% put finger grips in them.

As far as a new bowler using finger grips, it should be left up to the individual. Finger grips are the most popular bowling aid used today.

Bill Spigner welcomes questions from readers and will answer as many as possible in this column. Mail your questions to: Bill Spigner, Bowling Digest, 990 Grove Street, Evanston, IL 60201.