

When Attacking Pins, Watch Your Weight

By **BILL SPIGNER**

■ *I currently own two 15-pound balls, a Brunswick Zone Missile and an Ebonite Maxim. I have some control problems in spite of a league average of 146. Would switching to a lighter ball—say, 13 pounds—help my control problems on the lanes?*

The weight of the ball is important for consistency. The ball needs to weigh enough to allow you to let the ball help swing the arm from the shoulder. Your accuracy comes from the direction the swing takes, angle of the spine, and position of the shoulders relative to the swing and follow-through.

When your ball is too light, it is very easy to dominate its weight during your swing. If you grab the ball a little during the swing when your ball is too light, it's very easy to have your swing thrown off-line.

Many bowlers, especially kids and women, will use a ball that is too light because they feel they can't roll a heavier ball. This happens because most beginning bowlers have no idea of the fundamentals that are necessary to deliver the ball and don't have a ball that fits them.

As a result, they are playing a game with an ill-fitting ball and will grab the lightest ball they can throw down the lane. What's worse, they throw the ball as if the hand is in control of the direction of the ball.

Only when beginners refine their games do they learn about the importance of a properly fitted ball: grip, weight, balance, and type of ball. Having your fingers fit into the ball alone does not constitute a properly fitted ball.

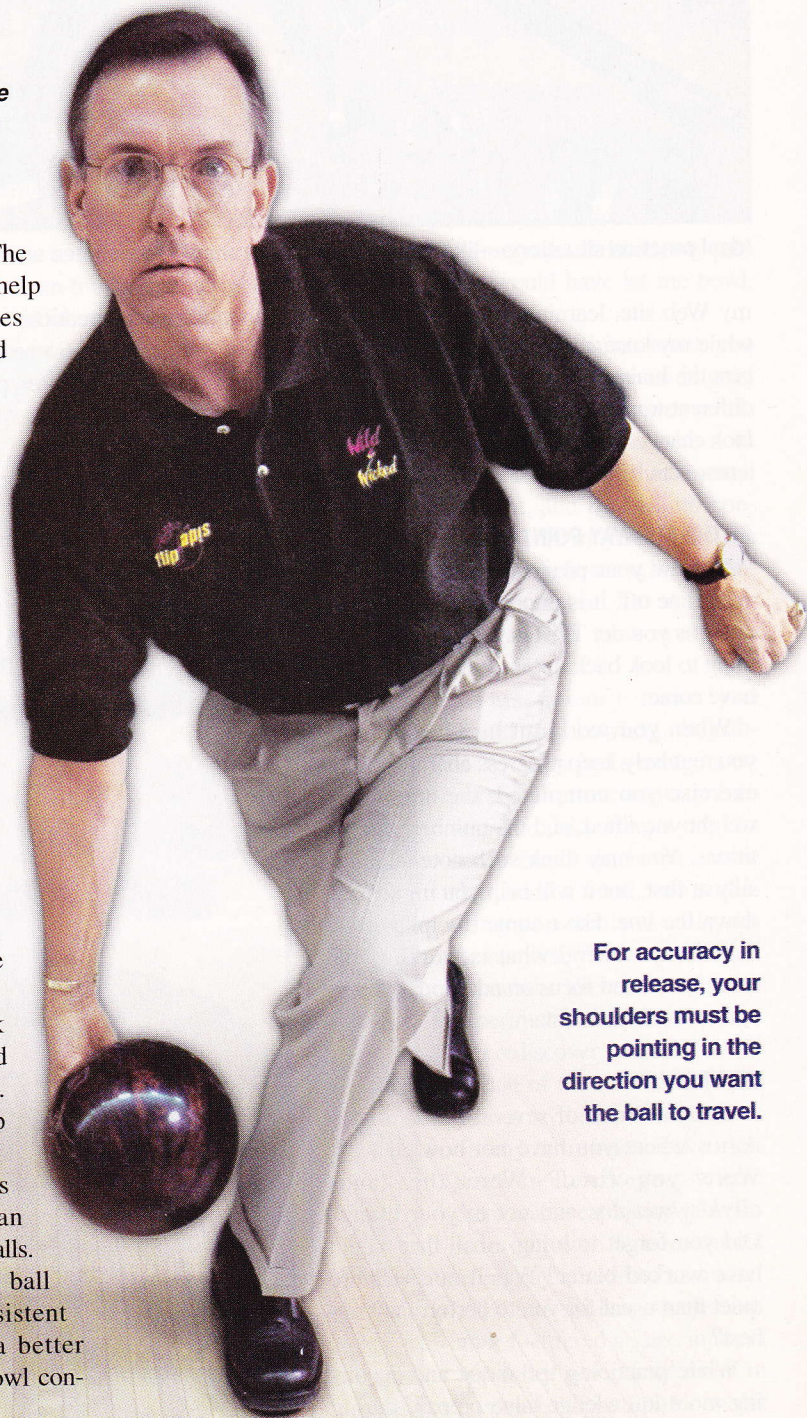
A properly fitted ball helps beginning bowlers work productively on their games. To bowl correctly, you need to roll a hook/curve, which complements good form. Once you have a ball that hooks, it's easier to develop good form.

To improve accuracy, don't use a ball that is two pounds

lighter than your other balls. Keeping the ball weight consistent gives you a better chance to bowl consistently.

The real keys to

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 bawl@centurysports.net.



For accuracy in release, your shoulders must be pointing in the direction you want the ball to travel.

accuracy come from accurate and consistent form. First, the arm and ball should not change direction from the top of the swing, through the release zone, and to the finish. Second, the shoulders need to be facing the direction the ball is going to travel at release in order to execute a 90-degree release. The third thing is that the upper body needs to be over the sliding leg so the ball reaches the bottom of the swing at or slightly in front of the ankle of the sliding foot. And last, you have to release the ball without grabbing it.

Seek out some instruction—but keep the weight of the balls the same.

■ *I have been bowling with a conventional grip for a year now, and my middle and ring fingers are sore around the second joint. I have noticed that you use a four-finger grip. Is this better grip? Does it give you a better feel and more leverage? Can a beginner use a four-finger grip?*

I have been using the four-finger grip for about 20 years. It makes the ball feel lighter and better balanced in my hand, and allows me to have a lighter grip on the ball without losing it. It's a good grip for bowlers who want to use a heavier ball with less trouble, may have trouble hanging on to the ball, or have soreness or an injury.

I would recommend that you go to a relaxed fingertip grip as soon as possible. The conventional grip is hard on the middle joints in your fingers if you are trying to get under the ball to get lift and turn for a hook.

Using the pinky finger is a cross between curling the pinky finger and leaving it extended. When you curl the pinky finger, it tightens the muscles on that side of the hand. When the pinky



Over time, the joints in your bowling hand can be permanently swollen [left]. One solution to ease discomfort and strengthen your grip is to use the pinky finger.

finger is extended, the muscles on that side of the hand are more relaxed—but the two fingers that are holding the ball are bent, making the muscles in those two fingers tighter than the ones in the pinky finger. When the pinky finger is added to the grip, all the muscles in the three fingers are contracted equally.

To get an idea of how this works, curl and uncurl the pinky, then curl the middle two fingers like they would in the ball, then curl all three fingers as if they were in the ball. Which setup feels the most comfortable without the ball in your hand? The answer is the third, the setup with all three fingers curled. It's a natural grip

when you don't have a ball in your hand.

Now, I'm not saying because it's a comfortable grip without a ball that everyone should run out and drill pinky holes. Pinky holes are an option for some. They've worked very well on the balls I have done for my bowlers, which amounts to about 2% of my annual total.

■ *I'm a right-handed, retired construction worker, bowling in three leagues. Last year my averages ranged from 190 to 196. This year I can't get my averages out of the low 180s.*

Most righthanders miss their target to the left, but this year I seem to miss my

target one to three boards to the right. Then my ball gets out into the drier area and comes screaming back into the headpin. And I'm plagued with splits. What can be the reason I'm missing to the right so much?

Missing to the right of your target for a righthander and left of target for a left-hander is unusual.

There are a few reasons you could be missing right. You may be walking to the right, which would block you from being able to swing straight through; you have to be able to have a smooth motion from the top of the swing through your target line.

If you're doing this, you have to realign the direction of the swing and ball at the bottom

of the swing to stay on target, which will make you *pull* the ball to your target. You don't want to do this, which means you are probably letting your swing come through unrestricted—and right of your target.

Another reason you might be pulling your shots right is that you're not lining up your body in the right place in relation to your target. If your starting position is too far to the right, you'll end up too far to the right at the foul line.

The third thing that could be happening is that your swing is behind your back and you are following through without pulling the swing back in line with your target. On dry conditions, the ball recovers very quickly and disguises a misdirected swing. But when you move into the oil, you'll experience the opposite problem; the ball slides too long. You get an overreaction, and you're stuck not being able to play dry or oily conditions.

You need to check out your position at the foul line to see if you are far enough away from your target, which will ensure that your swing is inside of the target and the line you want the ball to travel down the lane. The inside edge of your sliding foot should be about eight

to nine boards inside of your target at the arrows.

The bowling ball is nine inches wide, making the center of the ball four and a half inches from your ankle. The ball passes your ankle at about one to two inches away. So if your ball is about six inches from your ankle, add two more inches to determine where your target should be. (You want your target to be a little to the right of your swing so you can swing and turn the ball out to your target.) The target, being about eight

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inches from the inside edge of your sliding foot, will produce a very straight trajectory down the lane.

For example, if you are sliding on board 18 and targeting board 10 at the arrows, your ball should pass one to two boards inside of your target, meaning the ball will cross at about the 11- or 12-board.

Keep in mind that players who hook the ball more will have a bigger difference between where they slide and the target at the arrows.

■ **Why is it when a ball appears in BOWLING DIGEST the specs aren't listed? The companies just say how great their ball is. Some give specs, but most don't.**

I throw the ball about 16 mph, and I am 73 years old. I have a ball with a small core and am thinking about adding a large core Pearl that will give me a hairpin snap at the end. What do you think?

Most of the ads you see in BOWLING DIGEST and other publications will give a general description of the ball. The ads tell you if the ball is good for oily, medium, or dry lanes, and the type of break the ball will have. The manufacturers leave it up to pro shop experts to help

the bowler choose and customize the right ball. When there is too much information given in an ad, it makes it difficult to understand what the ball is really designed to do.

The type of core affects when the ball breaks and the shape of the break. A small-core ball has a very heavy core, placing the weight in the middle of the ball. These types of balls rev up quick and are good to get the ball rolling early with an arcing break.

A large-core ball will be light in the center, with more weight to the cover. These types of balls revolve slower and break later.

You are looking for a ball that will go long and break hard. The tall core balls will break

harder when they start to hook. So you want to pick up a tall core reactive resin ball. Stay away from particle balls and small cores when you want length and back end.

One word of caution: A ball that breaks late and snaps hard is very difficult to control. Many times bowlers think they want a ball that snaps hard, when in reality they just need a ball that will make its move at the right time.

The shape of the break you want out of the ball should match up with where you are playing your strike ball from. If you are playing the outside line, you want a ball that will project straight down the lane with a soft break when it starts to hook. As you move into the track area (around the second arrow), a ball that will break a little harder will be better. And as you move to play the inside line, a ball with a harder break is the right fit. The reason for the type of break the ball provides when you are playing different areas of the lanes is to get enough angle into the pocket to carry.

To get the correct answers, it would be a good idea to talk to your professional ball driller before making your purchase. ●