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BOWLING

DIGEST

August 1995



BOWLING DIGEST pro Bill Spigner on...

How to Throw a Semi-Roller and Why

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adjust your delivery
to master this release**

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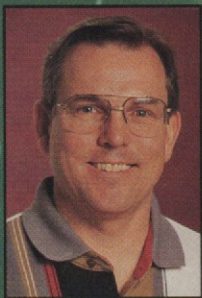
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From Spinner to Semi

■ *I am in a YABA league and average 153. I'm a right-handed bowler and roll an Ebony Turbo bowling ball with a fingertip grip. I currently throw a spinner, and I want to know how to throw a semi-roller.*



Bowling Clinic

By BILL SPIGNER

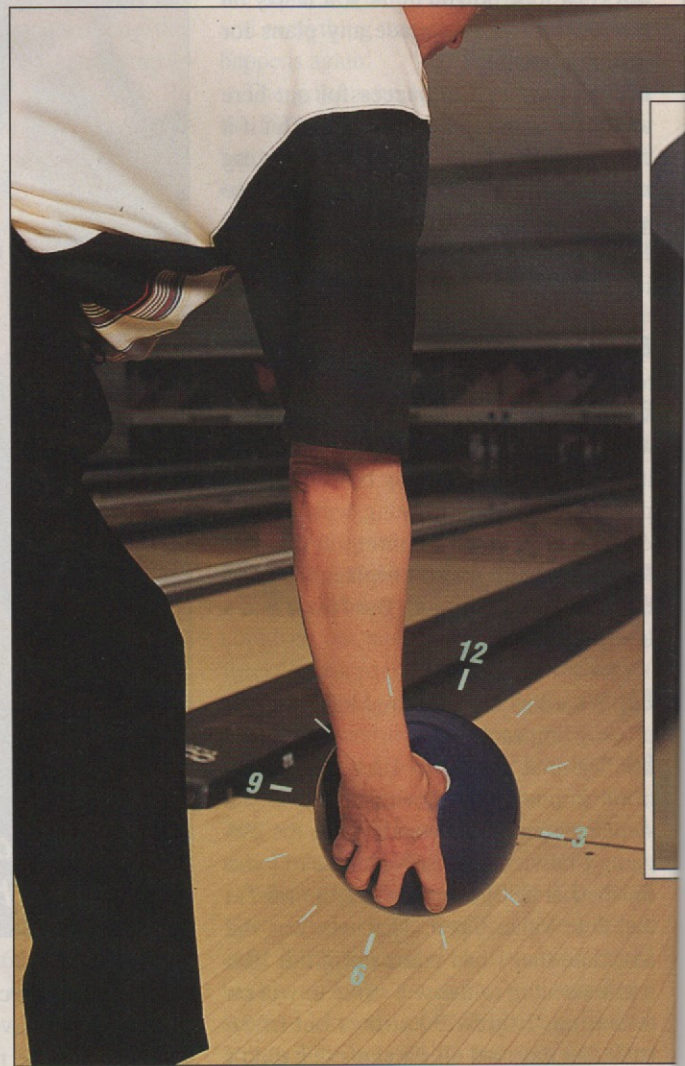
Before changing your release, you need to understand what causes you to roll a spinner. The spinner is caused by the thumb, hand, and forearm turning the ball in a counterclockwise rotation. When the thumb exits the ball, it will be pointing down toward the floor. Normally, the wrist also breaks back, causing the palm of the hand to move to the top of the ball. This causes a loss of leverage and dramatically decreases the lift that can be applied by the fingers. Normally, the spinner will produce a small hook or, if really overturned, a backup ball.

There are a few things you can work on to strengthen your release. First, you need to have a firm, straight wrist when the ball comes off your thumb. Next, concentrate on the ball staying in front of your hand in the release (commonly referred to as "staying behind the ball"). You should have your forearm facing your target and have your thumb exit the ball when it is at the bottom of your swing, with your fingers at 6 o'clock (looking at the ball from behind and visualizing it as if it were a clock). From that point, with your thumb out, your arm lifts upward. This lifting of your arm with a straight wrist and your thumb out will apply sufficient lift for your ball to get revolutions.

Next, you'll need to get some turn. Do this by

Need help with your game? Bill Spigner welcomes questions from readers. Mail your questions to: Bowling Clinic, Bowling Digest, 990 Grove Street, Evanston, IL 60201.

having your fingers moving in a slight counterclockwise rotation (to about 4:30) as you release the ball. You can also get turn by having the ball move to the inside of your hand as you are lifting it out onto the lane. Many of today's power



players use this method. For it to work, though, the fingers need to be under the ball, and this is a very difficult position to place the hand in. For most players, keeping the wrist straight and the fingers a little more than halfway down the ball should be sufficient for a strong ball.

One thing to concentrate on is having your armswing accelerate as your thumb is coming

-Roller

out of the ball. If you work on having a straight wrist, bringing your thumb out of the ball at the bottom of your swing—with the ball staying in front of your hand, keeping your forearm facing your target, applying a slight turn, and accelerating your armswing at release—will help produce a strong ball. It sounds sim-

■ *I currently have an average of 217, but I have a flaw that I just can't seem to correct. My armswing wraps behind my back, which often causes my timing to be off, and some days I can't hit the broad side of a barn! I have worked and worked at this, and even have videotaped myself. I feel this flaw is keeping me from reaching the next level.*

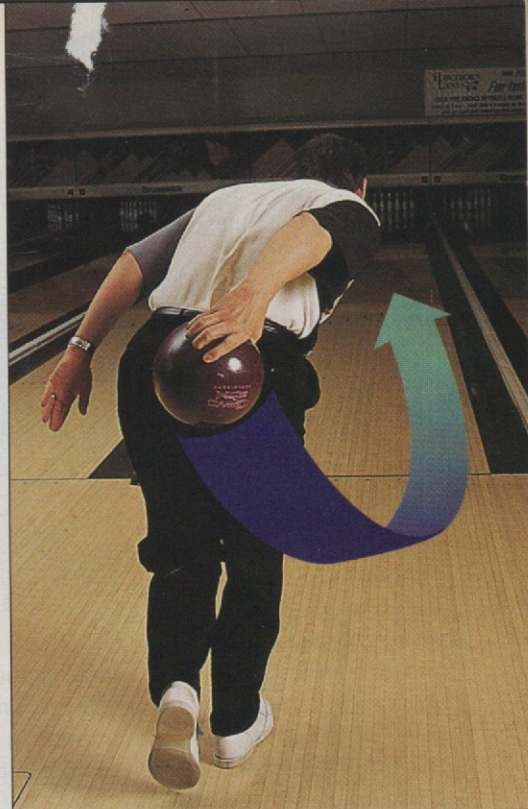
Having an armswing that wraps behind your back will make it very difficult to be consistent because you have very little time to release your ball and still project it down the lane in the direction you want it to travel. If you release your ball early, it will miss outside your target, and if you release it late, it will miss inside. This happens because your ball and swing are traveling in an arc instead of a straight line from the top of the swing to the release, so the timing of the release must be absolutely perfect for any level of consistency. Lane conditions that are very easy can hide swing problems because the easy lanes forgive the mistakes.

PBA and ABC Hall-of-Famer Nelson Burton Jr. has a swing that goes behind his back. The keys to Burton's game are that he is very strong physically and he has a consistently strong follow-through. He is able to realign the ball to his target line at the bottom of his swing.

It would be difficult to remedy your problem without seeing your game; the problem can be a combination of many things that are causing your swing to be off-line. I would recommend you work hard on feeling the timing of your release. Along with that, work on a consistent follow-through, with your arm and hand following straight through the line you want your ball to travel. This will help improve your accuracy. The next step is to find an instructor who can tell you the cause of your problem and give you a plan to correct it. This type of problem is difficult to correct, and it could take a long time.

On a positive note, Teata Semiz—who at one time was considered one of the best part-time touring pros of all time—had this same problem, and he won three PBA titles. Teata always was trying to improve his swing, and he has done so for his Senior tour play, which has been quite successful.

■ *In the April 1995 BOWLING DIGEST you responded to a question about a sticking*



Easy lane conditions can hide the problems created by an armswing that wraps around the back.

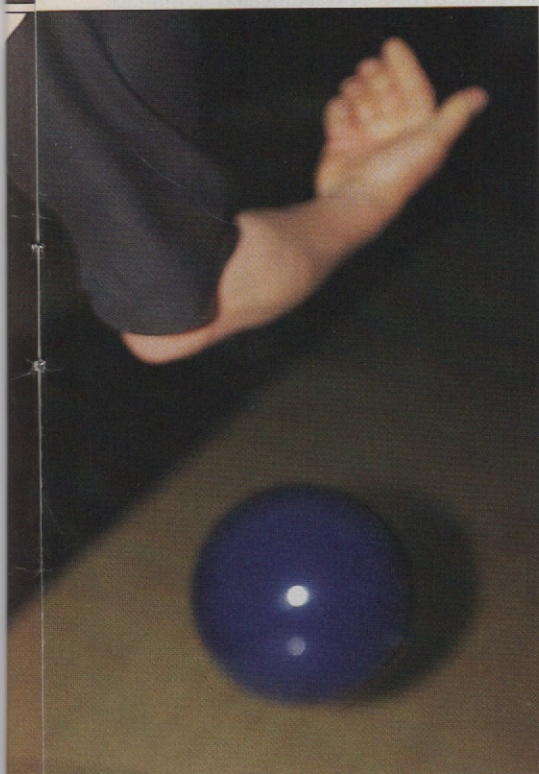
thumb. Your response dealt with the release, hole size, tape, pitch, and span.

I recently went through a change in my ball because of a sticking thumb. My problem was due to the makeup of the resin material; I understand that with the newer ball materials, this is a common problem. A local pro shop owner suggested a thumb plug, and that solved my problem. Was that the wrong solution?

No, you were correct. Many bowlers have difficulty getting a smooth thumb release with the reactive resin balls. As it warms up and your thumb swells, the reactive material can get tacky.

One solution is to make your thumb hole large and use tape to fine-tune your fit. You want the thumb hole large enough to use three to five pieces of tape. With this much tape, you can take some out when your thumb starts swelling. But even when your thumb is as large as it will get, you still want a piece of tape or two in the hole so that part of your thumb is making contact with the tape—and not the material the ball is made of.

Thumb plugs (commonly referred to as slugs or solid inserts) and thumb inserts (also known as thumb grips, even though they don't help you grip the ball) are being used more and more frequently in reactive resin urethane balls. These inserts are made of plastics, and the



For a semi-roller, keep the wrist straight and the ball in front of the hand. Bring the thumb out at the bottom of the swing, applying a slight turn as you accelerate upon release.

ple, but bowlers can spend years trying to perfect a good release, and a lifetime trying to maintain it.

There are many minor variations of wrist and finger positions that can produce an effective strike ball. The key to a good ball is making it strong enough to allow you to play different lines and still be able to strike consistently.

BOWLING CLINIC *continued*

thumb slides off these materials easier than off the reactive resin.

Thumb inserts come in sizes ranging from $\frac{5}{16}$ inches to $1\frac{1}{16}$ inches, in increments of $\frac{1}{16}$ inch. They come in three different shapes: round, round tapered, and oval. Several companies make these inserts, and all professionally run pro shops carry them.

Thumb plugs are solid cylinders made of plastics and urethanes. They are about three inches long and come in $1\frac{1}{8}$ -inch, $1\frac{1}{4}$ -inch, and $1\frac{3}{8}$ -inch outer diameters. These inserts are installed in a predrilled hole, and then the thumb hole is redrilled into the solid insert. Plugs are very handy for experimenting with changing the size and pitch of the hole,



Inserts and plugs will prevent sticking thumbs, a common resin ball problem.

the thumb hole. Many bowlers like the thumb inserts, but for those who don't I would recommend trying the solid inserts. You might want to experiment with both to see which you like better. Either way, you still have to work the holes out to fine-tune the fit of these inserts. Also, you still should use tape to adjust the hole size to compensate for swelling and shrinking of the thumb.

■ *On my bowling team we have two three-step bowlers who find it difficult to adjust when we travel away from our home center. Their problem is with the approaches: The five- and*

four-step bowlers have markers to assist them, whereas the three-stepper has nothing. At home we can mark a starting point for them, but we can't do this at

you want your stance to start on at the second row of dots. Slide the foot forward along the board until you reach your starting spot. It's important to be consistent with positioning so you can make adjustments based on your ball reaction.

It would be a good idea to have a third row of dots on the approach. Rows already are located at 12 and 15 feet from the foul line. A third one at nine feet would work very well; not only would it help three-step bowlers, but it would be a great help to junior bowlers, seniors, and people who take small steps.

According to current ABC equipment specifications, four rows of dots are permitted on the approach. The first row must be located at the foul line. You can have three rows of dots located at nine to 10, 11 to 12, and 14 to 15 feet from the foul line, respectively. Each row can have a maximum of seven dots. The dots must be permanent and flush with the surface of the approach.

Ideally, manufacturers will consider



For consistent positioning on a three-step approach, slide the foot forward along the selected board from the second row of dots.

and the span. You can have an existing hole drilled larger to accommodate the insert, to get the quick change that you can't get by plugging the thumb hole. There also are smaller solid inserts for the fingers.

I'd recommend that anyone who has a problem with the thumb sticking because of the reactive resin consider an insert for

away lanes. The result is that our three-steppers are at a disadvantage.

A set of markers approximately six feet from the foul line would be a big help for the three-steppers. What can be done about this, without making these bowlers move to four or five steps?

The best way for a three-step player to find the starting point is to pick the board

putting in a third row of dots on the lanes, since it's already legal to do so under ABC rules. ●

BILL SPIGNER has won three national and seven regional PBA titles. He is co-owner of Hawthorn Lanes in Vernon Hills, Ill., and is a former Pro Bowling Camps head teaching professional.