

A Pro's Approach
YOUR GUIDE TO THE
BIG-MONEY
TOURNAMENTS

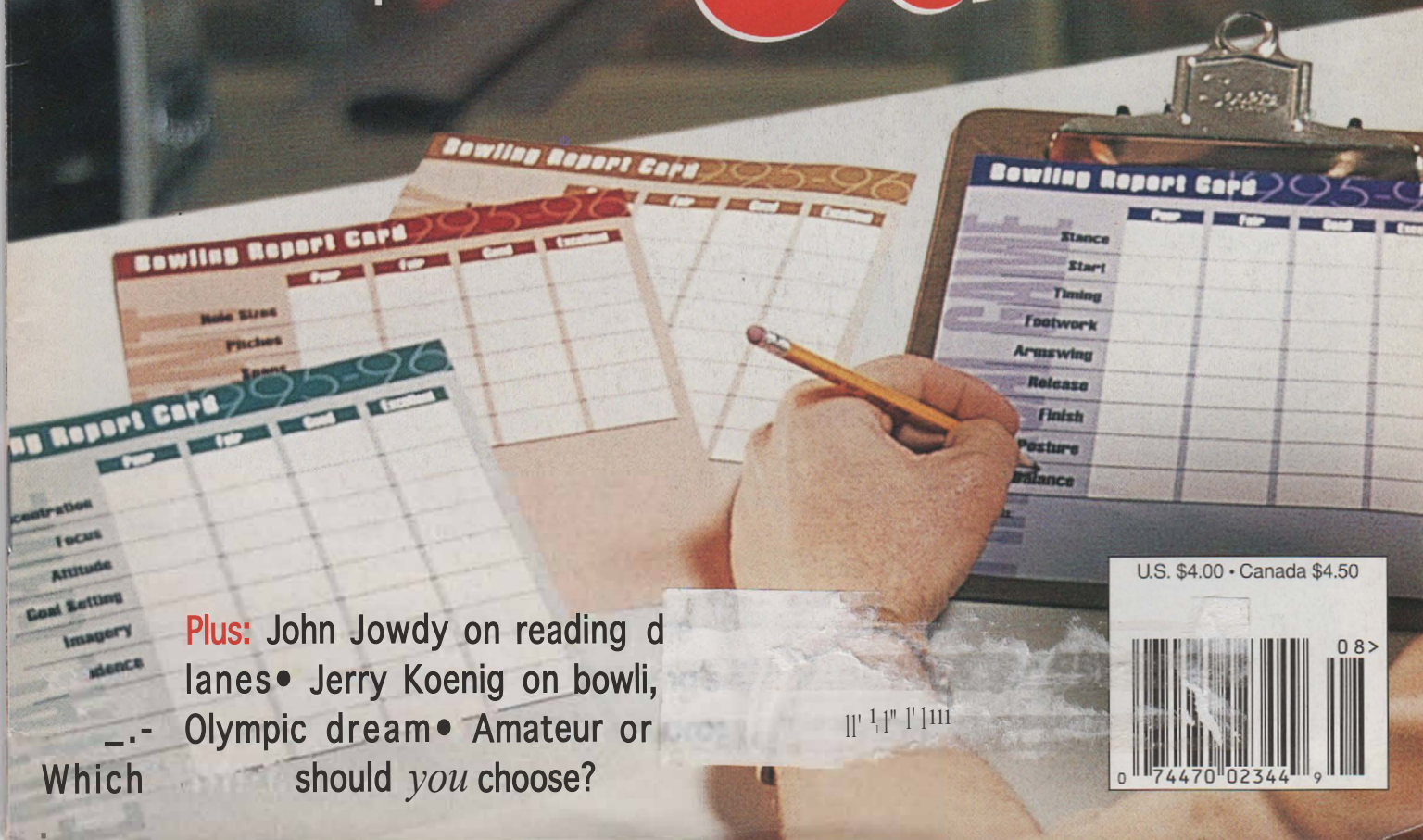
BOWLING CLINIC: Proper spine tilt helps your release

BOWLING DIGEST

August 1996

How to Grade Your Game

Summertime is the perfect time to assess your past season's performance



Plus: John Jowdy on reading d lanes • Jerry Koenig on bowli, Olympic dream • Amateur or Which should *you* choose?

U.S. \$4.00 • Canada \$4.50



0 74470 02344 9

Spine Tilt Is Vital to Your

■ *I have had a few higher-average bowlers—men and women alike—tell me I shouldn't lean too far over into my shot. I have tried to stay as straight as I can, but I feel more comfortable with some lean into my shot. I have more power in my shot by leaning into the shot and pulling up at the foul line. Should I maintain a certain degree of lean, or should I stay more erect and keep the way I pull up at the foul line to a minimum?*

The angle of your spine as you enter your last step is vital to your ability to deliver the ball with power and accuracy.

A spine angle that is perpendicular to the floor as you enter your last step and remains in that "zero tilt" angle throughout the release is not a very desirable position. The spine needs to be in a forward tilt, somewhere between 10 and 40 degrees—the amount of tilt depends on the bowler. A good rule of thumb is that the angle of your spine should have enough forward tilt so that the head is directly over the sliding leg at the release, with the shoulders slightly behind the knee. The shoulders can vary slightly from a little in front of the knee to a little behind and still be OK, provided you can maintain balance and accuracy.

The appropriate tilt of the spine can vary greatly based on your height, length of steps, and knee bend. Just by watching the professional tours on TV, you will see many different styles—but one thing you'll see *all* the pros do is position their head over their sliding leg when the ball is coming off the hand. The way they get to this position will vary slightly from player to player.

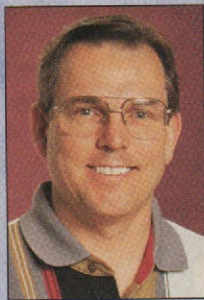
With a zero-degree spine angle, you have very little time to release the ball, which will reach the bottom of the swing well behind the sliding foot. At this time, if the back remains in this position, you have to release the ball from behind the sliding foot in order to keep from releasing the ball on the upswing. If you were to try to lift the ball out onto the lane from this body position, it would feel very

A



heavy—you would be releasing the ball against the pull of gravity. The arm and hand would be traveling in an upward direction, compromising your ability to get lift and turn on the ball through extension.

Most players whose upper bodies are in an upright position when the ball reaches the bottom of the swing will lean slightly forward through the release zone; or if they keep the high position with the upper body, the bowling shoulder will move forward. With both of these types of movements, the player will be able to lift and turn the ball by extension and release the ball out onto the lane, rather than



Bowling Clinic

By BILL SPIGNER

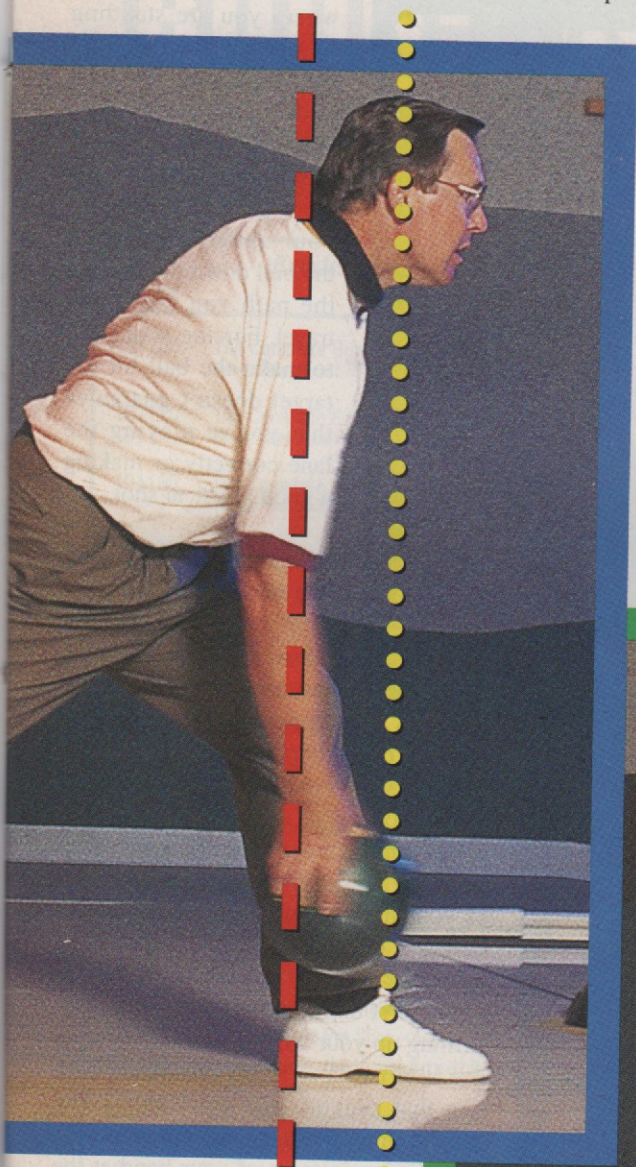
Need some help with your game? Bill Spigner welcomes questions from readers. Mail your questions to: Bowling Clinic, Bowling Digest, 990 Grove Street, Evanston, IL 60201.

Release

think of your upper body having a slight tilt so your shoulders are directly over your knee as you step forward.

Because your forward lean and straightening at the foul line produces more power for you, I would stay with it. One only needs to look at all-time great Walter Ray Williams Jr., who tilts his upper body way forward on his third step and maintains that position until the ball

Your spine should be tilted enough so your head is directly over your sliding leg at the release [A], with your shoulders slightly behind your knee. With little or no spine angle [B], you lose your ability to get lift and turn on the ball through extension.



release it on the upswing.

Players who have a lot of forward tilt entering the last step—about 30 degrees or more—have to pull up slightly to keep their head over their knee on the last step. With most bowlers, there is some movement forward or back, depending on the angle of the upper body entering the last two steps.

Try keeping your shoulders over your leading step throughout the approach. This can start right from the first step—

has reached the bottom of the downswing at a point next to the ankle of his sliding leg. At that time, he explodes upward by straightening his sliding leg and strongly lifting his shoulder and

upper arm. An opposite type of player is Brian Voss, who starts from a high position throughout the approach and leans his upper body forward when he goes into his final two steps. He leans into the shot with his right shoulder moving forward.

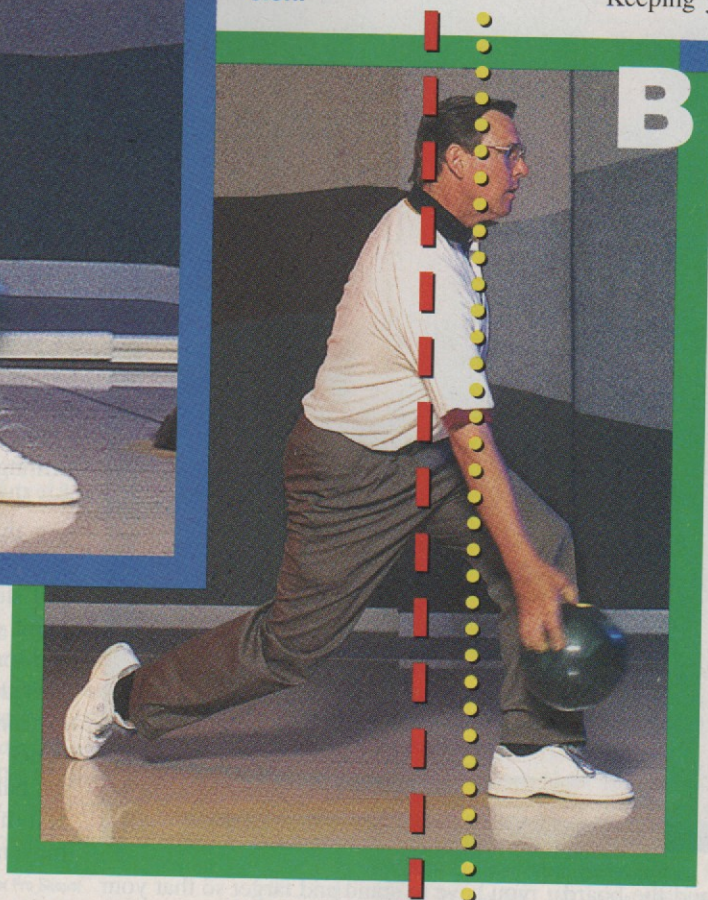
The key to whatever style you implement is making sure the ball is next to the ankle of your sliding leg when your arm gets to the bottom of the downswing. Your back must have sufficient forward tilt in order for the ball to get into that position. With the ball reaching the bottom of the swing next to your ankle, it allows you to easily project the ball out onto the lane.

■ *I have a habit of removing my eyes from my target (or "spot") after I deliver my ball. Consequently, I never know if my ball has hit my target. What should I do?*

Keeping your eye on your target and trying to split the board you are looking at is not for all players. It's most important that you understand where the ball is traveling on the lane, read what the ball is doing, and be able to adjust to the lane based on what it is telling you to do with the ball.

There are many methods of "spot bowling." The most common is to target around the arrows, which allows you to make the easiest logical adjustments. A basic rule of thumb: The straighter you roll the ball, the more important it becomes to see the ball roll over the spot you are looking at; and the more action you put on the ball, the more important it becomes to pick a path you want the

ball to travel down the lane. Whatever type of player you are, the target on the lane is primarily used as a guide to project the ball down the lane on the path you want it to travel.



I would recommend that you force yourself to see the ball roll over your target. If you find that it adversely affects the quality of your shot, you should have a friend or coach watch where your ball is hitting at the arrows. Write down where you are standing, the

play the part of the lane you want to play. Keep adjusting where you stand relative to your target on the lane, until the ball crosses the board at the arrows you want it to hit.

For example, if you want to play the first arrow—the fifth board—where do

mal for most bowlers to hit inside of the point they are looking at; the important thing is that you know where to stand and target to make the ball go where you want it to go. If you want to hit the fifth board, you may have to look at the second board to do it. Make sure that

the target is right for where you are standing so you can concentrate on delivering the ball and watching it roll down the lane.

Your shoulder alignment greatly influences your ability to project the ball down the lane on the path you want it to travel. Forcing your hand to make the ball hit the target doesn't guarantee that you're playing the lane correctly or making a good physical shot.

■ *I have a habit of twisting my wrist when delivering the ball. Sometimes my hand winds up on top of the ball. I'd appreciate some helpful*

hints on correcting this.

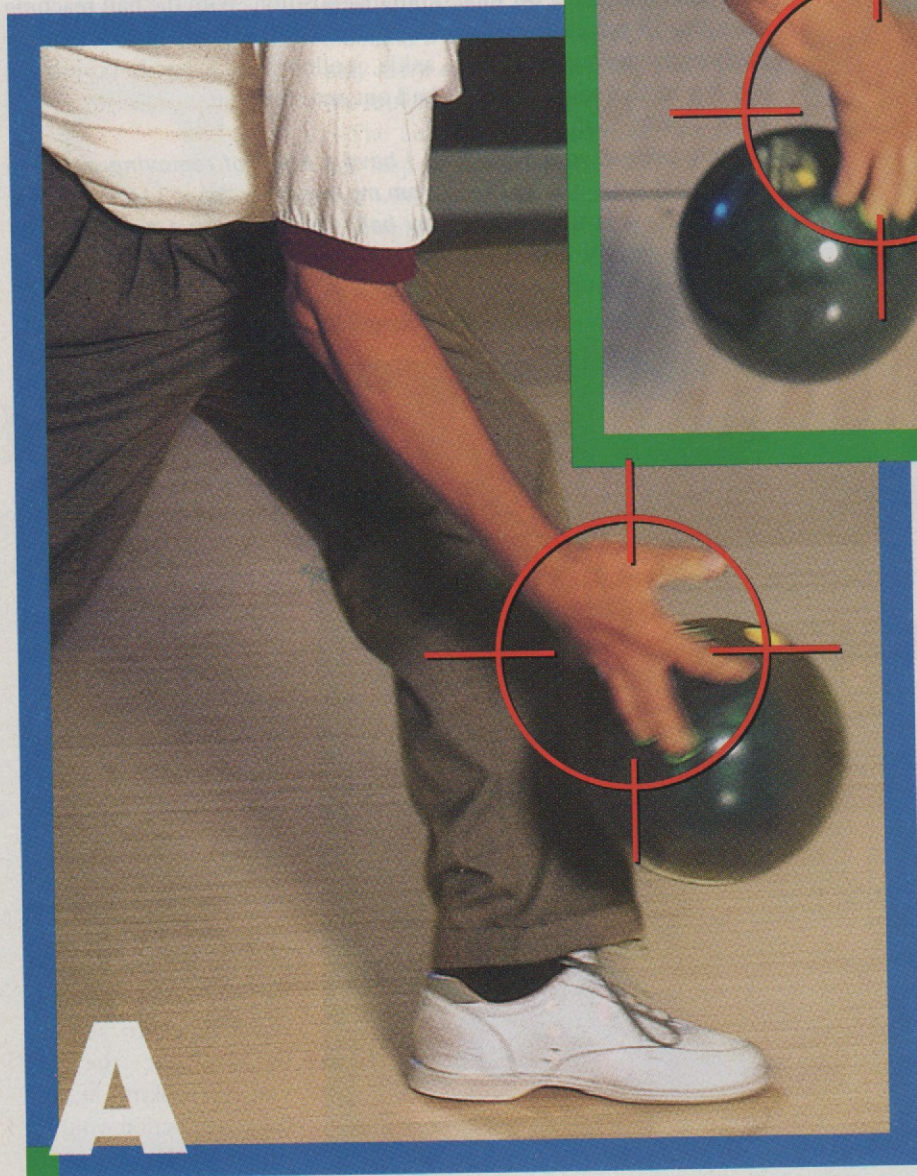
When your wrist twists and your hand ends up on top of the ball, it means you are having a breakdown of your wrist position. Your wrist bending back causes your hand to move to the top of the ball and eliminates your ability to lift the ball.

The first thing you need to work on is firming up your wrist. (You may need to use a wrist band to do this. Start with one that supports the wrist only.) The second thing to do is concentrate on the ball staying in front of your hand at the point of release. Visualize your palm and forearm staying behind the ball.

With your wrist straight and the ball in front of your hand, you will be in a better position to apply lift and turn to the ball. You will also have a more consistent release because there is less movement in your wrist. ●

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

When your wrist is straight and your hand is behind the ball [A], you're able to apply lift and turn. So make sure your wrist is firm—when it twists and your hand ends up on top of the ball [B], you're having a breakdown of your wrist position and are losing your ability to lift the ball.



board you are looking at, and the board the ball crosses at the arrows. You want to do this from the outside line all the way to the deepest inside line you can play. This will give you a basic idea of where you need to stand and target to

you have to stand and target so that your armswing naturally rolls the ball over the first arrow? You may find that you have to stand and target in different places than you normally do to actually hit what you want to hit. It's very nor-