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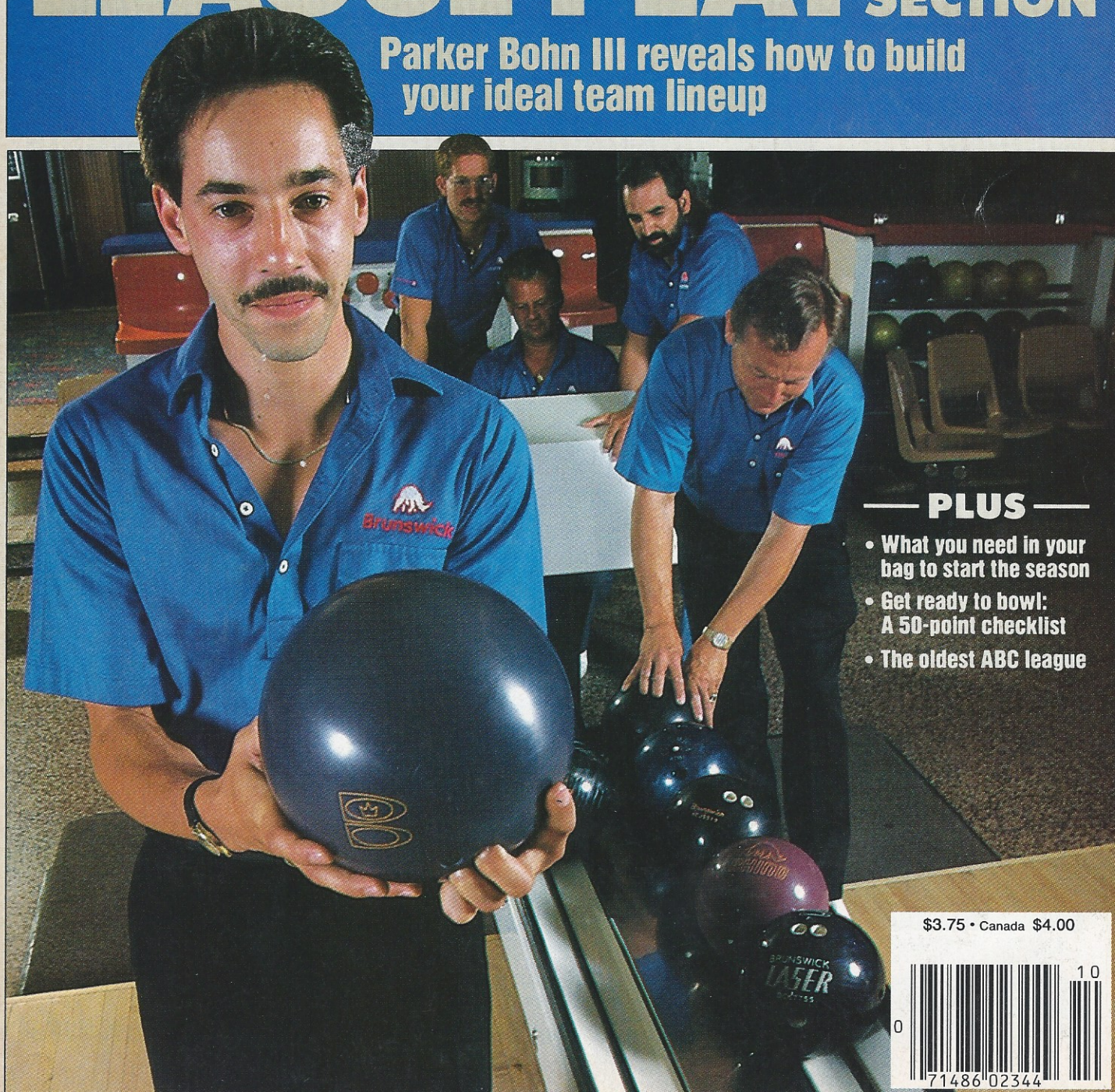
BOWLING

DIGEST

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LEAGUE PLAY



Want To Improve? It's in the Bag

A well-stocked bowling bag is essential to those who want to continue to boost their scores



By Bill Spigner

THE BOWLING BAG AND ITS contents have changed a great deal in recent years. With the equipment revolution of the 1970s and '80s, a serious bowler's bag might contain more than 30 items. Because of this revolution, today's single- and double-ball bags are made with several compartments to accommodate all the

different accessories bowlers carry with them nowadays.

Every bowler needs the basics to play the game: a ball, bag, and shoes. As bowlers become more proficient, though, they will add to their arsenal of equipment to help them bowl better or to help them continue to play up to their current level.

The most popular bowling bags today are the soft-shoulder, tote-type bag. These are

especially nice for parents as they can sling their bag over their shoulder and still have two free hands to open doors and hold on to the kids at the same time. The shoulder bags also are good for the tournament bowler who changes pairs of lanes each game and likes to carry four to six balls.

The first accessory added to a bowler's bag normally is a simple towel. The towel helps to keep the bowler's hand dry and to wipe off any



sliding, drying, and gripping. The sliding agents are used in the bowling ball holes when a bowler's hand swells up and the holes become so tight that the thumb and fingers can't release cleanly. The sliding agents also work well on the soles of the shoes when the bowling lane approaches are tacky or when the shoe soles get moist from walking on a wet floor or carpet. (Be sure not to use too much of these sliding agents on your shoes; you don't want to affect other bowlers if they are not having a sticking problem.) If a bowler is having trouble with a sweating hand, then the drying type of hand conditioner should be used.

The gripping type of hand conditioner—usually rosin—is a tacky substance that helps a bowler get a firmer grip on the ball without having to squeeze. These gripping products can be in bags of powdered rosin or jars of gripping cream.

In addition to these hand conditioners, bowlers should have electrical or first aid tape—and a pair of scissors to cut it—in their bag.

Tape is very important because it can be used to get the right feel when a bowler's hand changes sizes. An easier way to customize a hole is to buy some pre-cut tape. It comes in various sizes and textures, and it's a good idea to try them all to see which kind is right for you. Use a penknife or a small screwdriver to insert or remove tape—it makes the job much easier to do. (If you don't like tape, there are all sorts of inserts to put in the thumb and finger holes. They are made in different thicknesses and materials to help you hang on to the ball better or slide out of the holes easier. The ones made out of cork help you hang on to the ball, and there are ones made out of Teflon to help you release the ball easier.)

The next item for the well-equipped bowling bag—a wrist support—is probably one of the most important aids a bowler can use. Many bowlers need a wrist support because they don't have the timing, leverage, or strength to release their bowling ball with a firm wrist position. The wrist devices on the market are so varied in what they do that some players will even use different ones to get the type of release they desire. Because of the variety of wrist aids available, bowlers should consult the local pro for help in choosing the one appropriate for their game.

The next piece of equipment added to a bowler's bag would be a second ball (and get yourself a double-ball bag to carry them). Carrying two balls is practically a given in today's bowling environment. It's important that the second ball a bowler buys is different in hooking characteristics than the first ball. For instance, if the first ball is a hooking ball, the second ball should hook less. This way the bowler is prepared for both oily and dry

conditions. In fact, the serious bowler normally carries four to eight balls just to be prepared for any condition. Unfortunately, no one has come up with an eight-ball bag yet, but I'm sure they're working on it!

A bowler who bowls a lot of tournaments also should keep a beveling knife, a rasp, a file, and some sandpaper in the bowling bag. The beveling knife, rasp, and file are used to enlarge the size of the finger and thumb holes if a bowler's hand swells a lot. Sandpaper should be used to smooth out the holes and edges after you've used a rasp or knife, and it also can be used to rough up the surface of a ball so it grips the lane better. However, that job is better done by a pro shop.

The tournament bowler who uses finger and thumb grips should always keep an extra set of grips in the bag. Some players even carry a couple of different sizes of grips so they can change them as their fingers change size or if a grip gets damaged and there is no pro shop at the bowling center to get it replaced. To help remove the grips, carry an insert remover to help quicken the grip replacement. Also needed for this job is fast-drying glue to bond the grips to the ball.

Many times a bowler will blister a finger or thumb before deciding to open up a hole or remove a piece of tape. For those minor injuries, a bottle of "liquid skin," which is collodion, should be kept in the bowling bag to patch the wounded area. This is done by brushing a thin coat of liquid skin on the wound, then applying a patch or a thin coating of cotton and another layer of liquid skin. This will protect the affected area from further damage. Liquid skin also is used to patch a sensitive area before bowling to prevent further damage or blisters.

If a bowler has a dull urethane ball, it's a good idea to keep a bottle of ball cleaner in the bowling bag. That way you can remove the dirt and oils the ball will collect.

Also, keep some notebooks and a pen in your bowling bag. It's a good idea to keep notes on the lanes: how you played them and what ball you used. Keeping these notes not only will keep you concentrated on your bowling, but give you reference tips in the future that can help you know how to play a certain condition. You also may want to include a score card in your bag to keep your individual scoring records.

Lastly, buy an accessory bag to hold all your bowling aids inside your bowling bag. Keeping them all together makes them easier to get at and prevents them from getting crushed and destroyed by a bowling ball.

As you can see there are many different bowling aids available to you. Shop wisely for the products that you need, and remember: These products can aid and assist you in your bowling, but they cannot make the bowler. ●

oil or dirt that accumulates on the ball. There are other uses, too: For a nervous bowler, the towel can act as a "security blanket" to fiddle with; for the aggressive bowler, gripping and pulling at the towel allows them to vent some of their frustration if they experience a bad break.

The next items added to a bowler's bag would be hand conditioning products. These can be classified in three different categories: