

Jeri Edwards: Let pin placement boost your score

# BOWLING

## DIGEST

September/October 1994

# Don't Try This at Home

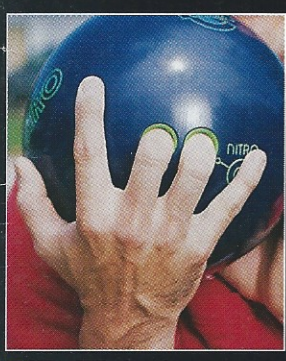
*What works for the pros—Pete Weber's sky-high backswing, for instance—isn't necessarily the best form for the league bowler to emulate*

- ALSO:** The PBA's main lane man on pro oil patterns
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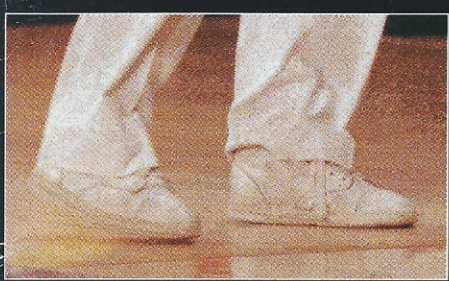
**Bill Spigner's Bowling Clinic:**  
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# Bill Spigner's Bowling Clinic

■ The center I bowl at installed synthetic heads this past summer but kept the pine back ends. The oiling pattern is heavy oil between the 5-boards, with a small trace of oil from the 5-board out to the gutter. The shot starts out very good each night, but since the head oil dissipates faster than the pine oil, there seems to be no place to move.

I have three questions: (1) What oiling pattern would lend itself to a more stable condition over a longer period of time? (2) What adjustments could a person make to maximize scoring on this current condition? (3) Why would a proprietor have synthetic heads and pine back ends?

Bowling center proprietors can oil their lanes any way they want as long as the condition meets the ABC lane-oiling specifications of three units of oil applied to the lane, for the entire distance the lane is oiled. These specifications create many lane-oiling options. Proprietors try to put out lane conditions they feel would provide the best possible service for their bowlers—in other words, a condition that allows bowlers to score reasonably close to their skill level and allows them to be able to utilize the high-performance bowling balls of today.

A number of factors affect lane conditions: the environment of the bowling center—heat, cold, humidity, or lack of humidity; the type of lane surface; the type of oil; the type of bowling balls being used; and where on the lane bowlers are playing. As a matter of fact, the conditions actually starts to deteriorate as soon as the lane is oiled.

The oiling pattern that would hold up the longest would be an extreme amount of oil in the middle with very light oil on the outside part of the lane—very similar to what you described as the condition you're playing on. The problem with this condition is you're very limited as to how you can play the lane. With this condition, the playing area is very clearly defined because of the big difference in the oil from the 5-board out to the 5-board in. You have to play on the oil line—you can't move to a different part of the lane and find a competitive shot.

Unfortunately, as the heads break down the back ends get tighter, so your ball has a tendency to grab the lane quicker and finish less. This happens because the ball picks up oil on its track as it first hits the lane. Initially, this oil is picked up off the head area

of the lane only. Then as the ball travels down the lane it deposits this picked-up oil on the back end of the lane, and this carry-down hinders the ball from finishing.

How do you better play this condition, knowing the only place to play is on that well-defined oil line? Well, there are a few things you can do. One would be to move deeper into the oil with a leverage-weighted ball or your strongest-hooking ball—both preferably with a slightly dull surface. This way you'll be playing in the oil and using it to hold the ball in the pocket.

Another option in playing this wet-dry condition would be to move farther out on the lane and play the dry part of the lane. If you do this, you should change to a tamer-reacting ball that won't hook too early and too hard. You'll also want to roll the ball straighter down the lane—don't swing it away from the pocket. The key to playing the dry part of the lane is to get the ball rolling in the dry area and have it hook into the oil, which holds the ball in the pocket.

You also can adjust to these conditions by changing your delivery. If you're planning to play in the oil, cup your wrist or bend your elbow a little to get your fingers under the ball more, and slow down your speed to get the ball rolling in the oil. If you're opting to play the dry boards, flatten your wrist out or break it back slightly, roll the ball more end-over-end, and increase your speed.

These two physical adjustments are very practical and can be used in conjunction with a variety of balls. It's more difficult to change how you roll the ball than to change the ball itself, but if you can learn to do a little more with physical adaptations in your game, you won't have to change balls as often.

The key is being able to recognize what's going on with the lane and then making logical adjustments to play whatever condition you find. You can't force the lane to be played the way you want—you need to be able to adjust to the lane and play it the way it needs to be played. With this particular condition, you have to stay somewhere around the oil line.

Why would a bowling center replace wood heads with synthetics and not change the pines? The main reason is the heads are worn out but the pine is in good shape, so only the heads need to be replaced. It's a very expensive proposition to replace the whole lane. Bowling lane manufacturers



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have come up with an affordable and effective way to replace just the heads.

■ I'm a once- or twice-a-week senior bowler with an average of around 150. Due to a physical restraint, I throw a 12-pound ball. With the advent of all the new types of balls shown in the March/April issue of *BOWLING DIGEST*, I can't decide which one is suited for me. Also, the price of the new balls is getting to be prohibitive. What do I do?

Although the prices of the top-of-the-line balls are continuing to climb, all the ball companies have lower-price reactive resin balls. Today there are a number of excellent reactive resin balls priced between \$80 and \$120—and some of these balls have been winning big money on the pro tour.

If you don't roll the ball very hard, I'd recommend you get a three-piece ball with a pancake-type weight block. This ball will go long before it starts to hook. If you have medium to strong ball speed, your equipment options are wider. Whatever type of ball you get, though, make sure the pro you're getting it from understands how you roll the ball, the lane conditions you're playing on, and how you want the ball to hook compared to what you're currently rolling. ●

*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.*