

Defining the Nuts and Bolts of Your Game

By **BILL SPIGNER**

BOWLING HAS A LANGUAGE ALL ITS own. Beginning, intermediate, and sometimes even advanced players are unfamiliar with terminology I use in my instruction. Because there are so many terms and words used to describe different aspects of bowling, ranging from basic to obscure, I've stitched together a glossary that should help you get a better grasp of the language associated with balls, the lane, and playing the lanes.

BOWLING BALLS

ARSENAL: Having three or more balls to cover a variety of lane conditions.

BALANCE HOLE: An extra hole that is required to be drilled into the ball when the ball is drilled off center. It brings the ball back to legal balance specifications.

CG: The spot on the ball that is the static center of balance when weighed on a bowling ball scale. This is the heaviest spot on the ball and is referred to as top weight. When this weight is offset from the center of the grip, it will create a balance. There are four basic balances that the CG is used to create: side, thumb, finger, and negative side weight.

CORE: The inside of the ball. There are many different types of core configurations. The core is commonly referred to as the engine of the ball.

COVER STOCK: The outside surface of the ball. All the high-performance balls today are made of urethane. Plastic balls can be house balls and are used by entry-level bowlers. More skilled players use them as spare balls.

HARDNESS: The minimum legal hardness of the cover stock is 72, as measured by a durometer.

PAP: Positive axis point, the spot on the ball that is equal in distance from the track all the way around the ball.

PARTICLE BALLS: Reactive resin urethane balls with



The pin [above, yellow dot] marks the top of your ball's core and is a key component in creating ball reaction.

additives in them to increase their gripping power.

PIN: The colored dot on the ball that signifies where the top of the core is in the ball. The combination of pin placement and CG is used to help create your desired ball reaction.

PITCH: Angle at which holes are drilled into the ball.


REACTIVE RESIN: A type of urethane ball that has the typical high performance cover stock material used today.

RG: The radius of gyration of balls. Simply stated, RG is how fast the ball spins. A low RG ball has the weight concentrated in the center of the ball and revolves faster than a ball with a high RG, where the weight is near the outside of the ball.

SPAN: The distance the finger holes are drilled from the thumb hole.

SURFACE: How the cover stock is prepared. A dull surface makes the ball roll early. The shinier the surface, the longer the ball will go

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before it breaks. The surface has the biggest impact on ball performance.

TRACK FLARE: Every full rotation of the ball creates a track or ring of oil around the ball. The placement of the core relative to the PAP can create more or less track flare. A high-flaring track might be as wide as six inches.

THE LANE

APPROACH: The approach in modern bowling centers is 16 feet long. The dots are located 12 and 15 feet from the foul line, in line with the lane arrows. The middle dot in all bowling centers is in line with the center arrow.

ARROWS: There are seven arrows located about 15 feet past the foul line. They are the primary targets used for spot bowling. The arrows start on the fifth board in from the gutter and are located on every fifth board across the width of the lane.

BACKEND: The last 20 feet of the lane to the headpin.

HEADS: The first 20 feet of the lane.

LANE: The modern lane is 62 feet, 10³/₁₆ inches long and 42 inches wide, consisting of 39 boards.

MIDLANE: The middle 20 feet of the lane.

PINDECK: The pin deck is the last two feet, 10 inches of the lane, where the pins stand.

LANE CONDITIONS

BALL TRACK: A path that is created in the lane oil from play. In the old days of soft lane finishes, the ball would

actually wear away some of the finish and a track would develop in the surface that the players used to help get the ball to the pocket. Some of the old wood lanes today that are not well kept may still have a ball track in them.

BLEND: Oil applied across the entire lane, with more oil in the middle than on the edge. Most sport bowling conditions have a slight blend to the oil. The sport condition allows a 2:1 blend in the oil from the gutter to the middle of the lane. Blends are a difficult playing condition, with some forgiveness on well executed shots.

BLOCK: Dry boards on the outside portion of the lane and enough oil in the middle to cause a distinct oil line. This condition produces very high scores. It disguises bad shots, but does not give you good feedback on the quality of your shots.

BRICKYARD: An old term used to describe a bowling center that is very difficult to score in. Also referred to as a **GRAVEYARD** or **DUNGEON**.

DESERT: Very dry lane conditions.

EQUAL OIL: Oil applied evenly across the entire lane, from the foul line to a point down the lane. This is the most difficult playing condition; there is no margin for error on inaccurate shots.

HEAVY BLEND: Also a lane condition that applies oil across the lane, but with a much heavier concentration of oil in the middle. It's a forgiving condition that favors good shots.

LANE CONDITIONING PATTERNS: How the oil is applied to the lane surface.

LANE DRESSING: Lane dressing is primarily mineral oil, applied to the lane's surface to protect it from friction created by bowling balls.

PUDDLE: Very heavy oil in the center of the lane.

REVERSE BLOCK: Little or no oil in the center of the lane and very heavy oil on the outside portions of the lane. This condition can develop on flat oil when players are forced to play in the middle of the lane. No center purposely oils the lanes this way unless it is trying to trick up the lane conditions.

SPORT BOWLING: A lane condition established by the ABC that permits no more than a 2:1 blend of oil across the width of the lane. This type of pattern is a much more difficult to score on than what is commonly used today.

THE DELIVERY

ARMSWING: The ball swings the arm back after the pushaway is completed.

The heads represent the first 20 feet of the lane, from the foul line [below] past the arrows [top].

FINISH POSITION: Where the body ends up when your shot is complete.

FOOTWORK: The type, length, and speed of your steps.

GRIP: A **CONVENTIONAL GRIP** is used by beginners. The fingers are inserted into the ball to the second joint. A **FINGERTIP GRIP** is the recommended grip and is actually very easy to roll when fitted properly. It's the most common grip used by skilled players. Anyone wanting to improve should use a relaxed fingertip grip. A **SEMI-FINGERTIP GRIP** finds the fingers inserted about halfway between the first and second joint. This isn't a recommended grip because the fingers do not bend between the first two joints.

PUSHAWAY: The first movement of the ball away from the body.

RELEASE: The ball coming off the hand.

STANCE: The position you assume on the approach prior to the start of your delivery.

TIMING: The relationship of the armswing to your steps.

PLAYING THE LANES

ADJUSTMENTS: This is what we do until we have a look that matches the lane conditions, changing hand position, balls, lines, loft, speeds, or any combination of things in the process.

ARC: The ball rolls in a continuous arc to the pocket. When the ball makes its move to the pocket, it is controllable. A **SOFT ARC** happens when the ball makes a very slight move to the pocket. It's used when playing down and in from track shots to gutter shots.

AREA: Your target area. This also refers to the room you have to miss your target and still get the ball to the target.

AREA CHECK: When you miss your target by a significant amount and the ball still hits the pocket, usually done by accident. It can be done purposefully in practice to see if you are playing the part of the lane that gives you the most area.

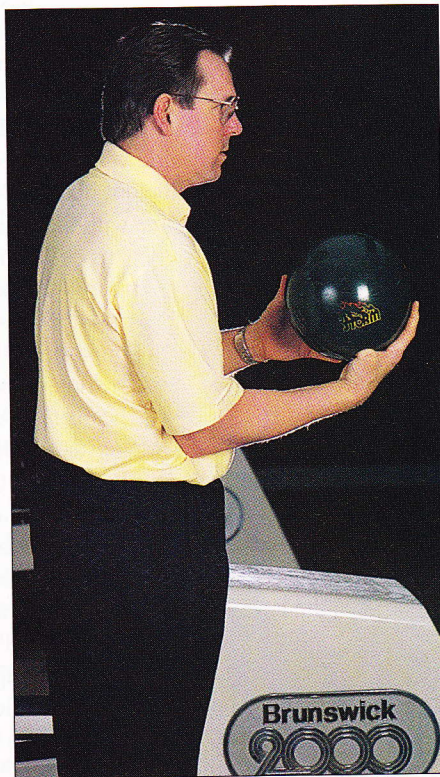
BALL REACTION: How your ball is performing on the lane.

BELLYING: Swinging the ball out farther than normal, usually on a hooking/dry lane.

BIG WHEEL: To play an inside-out shot from the middle of the lane out to the gutter and back to the pocket. This also refers to a bowler who hooks the whole lane.

BREAKPOINT: The point on the lane where the ball makes its strongest move to the pocket.

CARRYDOWN: The transition of the oil past the end of the oiling pattern. Even balls that flare cause carrydown. Each time the ball flares, it rolls on a fresh part of the ball, but the tracks cross each other at two points on the ball. These two points are polluted with



Your stance should be relaxed every time you step on the approach.

oil, which is carried past the end of the oil pattern on the back ends. There is no oil produced that avoids carrydown.

FALLBACK SHOT: Targets the 5th arrow, from the 23 to 27 boards. This shot develops after a lot of play and there is very little oil left on the lane. It's called a fallback shot because you don't want to swing the ball out to the dry boards or it will hook too quickly. You want to keep the ball in the oil in line with the 3-pin for righthanders.

FRY: A state of total confusion and anger that bowlers reach when they can't get a look they like to match up—or from bad breaks.

GUTTER SHOT: A condition that calls for you to play a direct line outside the first arrow, usually looking at the 1, 2 or 3 boards.

HOCKEY STICK: A ball that goes very long

and has a very sharp change of direction at its breakpoint. Many bowlers think they want this, but they really don't; it's very difficult to control.

HOLD SPOT (or AREA): Playing the heavy oil in the middle of the lane to keep the ball from hooking high on the headpin. This allows you to miss inside your target with the ball still holding the pocket.

INSIDE SHOT: Targets the 3rd arrow, from the 13 to 17 boards. Most track shots will move into this area of the lane as the oil dries up in the track. A **DEEP INSIDE SHOT** targets the 4th arrow, from the 18 to 22 boards.

LOOK: Refers to ball reaction. A good look means your ball is performing the way you want and you have the confidence to strike. A bad look means the ball isn't doing what you want, and you have to make adjustments.

MATCHING UP: The process of making adjustments until you are playing the lanes correctly and have the right look.

OUTSIDE SHOT: Targets the 1st arrow, from the 4 to 7 boards. A blend or heavy blend usually will allow you to play this part of the lane on fresh oil.

SHAPE OF SHOT: The way the ball breaks.

SLING IT UP THE FEVER: To play a straight, hard shot up the 5 board.

SPOT BOWLING: Using a target to roll the ball over rather than looking at the pins.

SWING AREA: The opposite of hold. Allows you to miss outside your target and still have the ball hook back to the pocket.

TARGET LINE: The target you want the ball to roll over and the line (direction) you want the ball to travel down the lane.

TRACK SHOT: Targets the 2nd arrow, from the 8 to 12 boards. Most bowling centers oil the lanes so bowlers can play this part of the lane.

TRANSITION: When a lane is freshly oiled, it will play a certain way. As you bowl, the oil moves, and the lane starts to play differently. After a game or two, the lanes may be totally different. This is the transition (changing) of the shot from your original approach to another.

WIGGLE: What the ball does at the breakpoint. The ball will look like it wants to start its break back to the pocket, but because of some carrydown, the ball slides a little and creates an unstable breakpoint. ●