

OUR INSIDE LOOK AT THE **PBA TOUR TRIALS**

BOWLING

DIGEST

KIM ADLER
digs into her

BAG OF TRICKS

and delivers
a bowling
equipment
primer

How
PWBA
stars are
spending
their
summer
vacations

Lane
games:
**Bill
Spigner**
on
wood vs.
synthetic

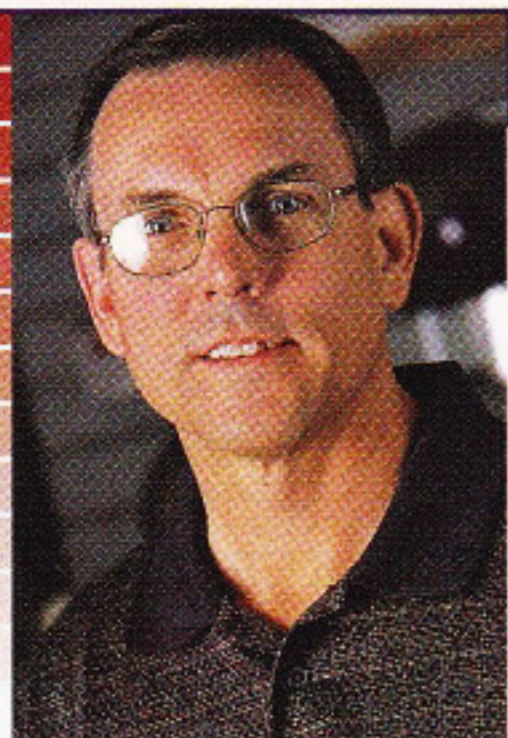
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Broken Game? Tape It Back Together

By **BILL SPIGNER**

■ *I am 72 years young and still carry a 175 average. I must admit that I had to drop from a 16-pound to a 15-pound ball, and now I am down to a 14-pound ball. I have a calcium buildup on the knuckle of my thumb. It hurts and makes it hard for me to hold my ball. How far from the foul line should I release my ball? I used to loft it about a foot out over the foul line; my wife tells me I am throwing it out too far now. How can I correct myself?*

Having gone to a lighter ball is probably the reason you are lofting the ball farther out onto the lane, or you could have lost some knee bend. The right amount of loft is determined by the style of bowler you are; there is no right or wrong amount that would be correct for your normal delivery. The important thing to ask is this: Is your ball performing the way you need it to for the lane condition you are playing on?

If you have the opportunity to watch the PBA on ESPN, you will notice tremendous differences in the bowlers, their styles, and the amount of loft used. Mika Koivuniemi's style of bowling uses a lot of loft on almost all lane conditions. He is one of the few top players who employs a lot of loft all the time. Chris Barnes, on the other hand, uses a minimal amount of loft most of the time, rolling the ball very smoothly off his hand.

Walter Ray Williams Jr. uses a medium amount of loft but varies loft better than anyone. On a given pair, he can roll the ball early on one lane and loft it a few feet farther out on the other. On the next pair, in the course of a few frames he'll totally change his approach.

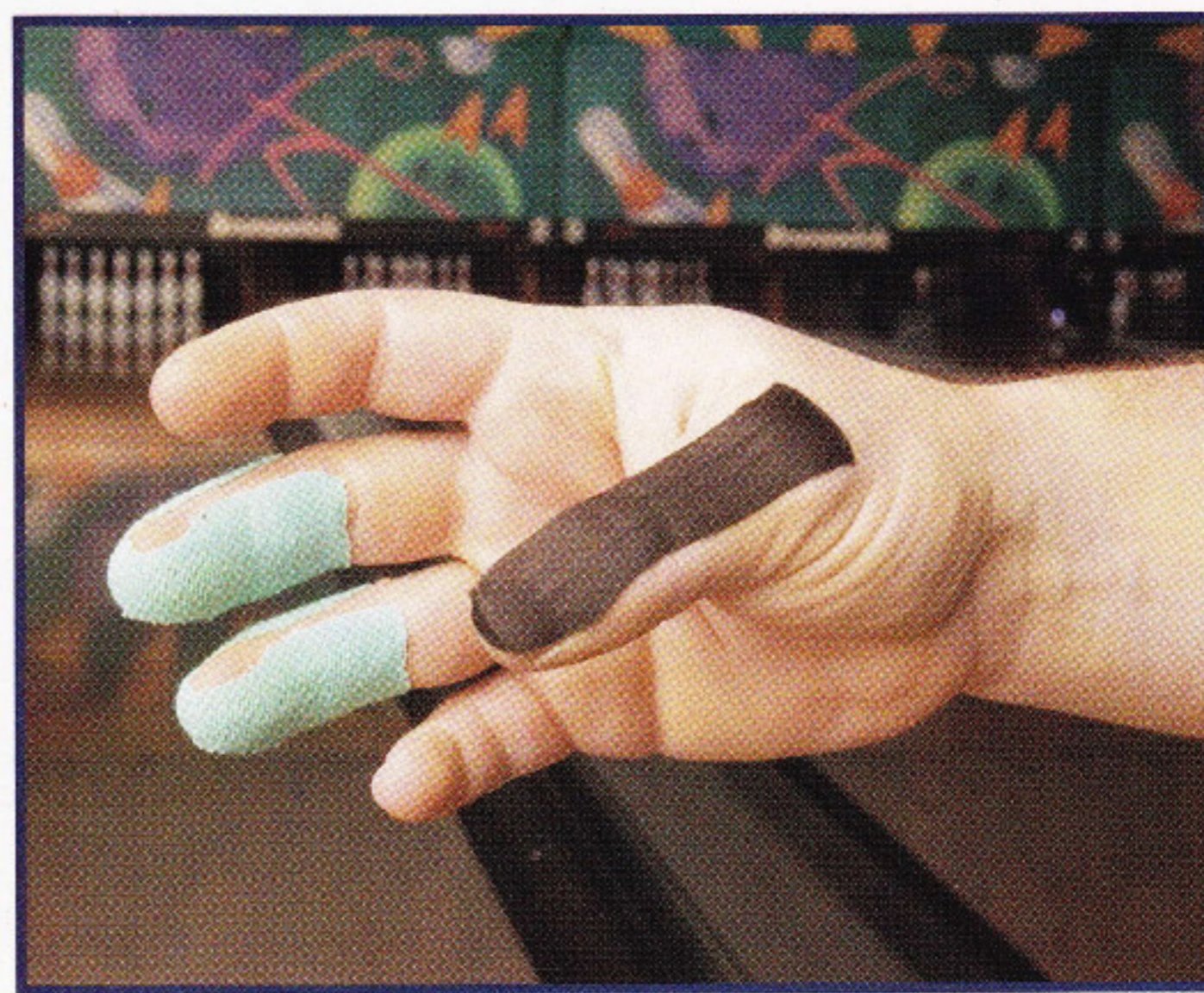
The best players in the world have the ability to adjust their lofts. In your situation, I would say having more loft would be better than no loft. It will help you get the ball down the lane and retain energy so the ball can hit harder. If the loft is not affecting your ball reaction and is comfortable to throw, stay with it.

For your calloused thumb, there are a couple of products that you might try. The first one is a soft insert for the thumb hole called Ron C's Magic Carpet. This is an excellent product for a thumb callous. You can order it online at bowl4fun.com. I have tried this product and have no problem recommending it to bowlers who need it.

The second product is bowling tape for the fingers and thumb. There are a few manufacturers of this product, used instead of new skin-type products. Bowling tape is packaged



A thumb insert [above] will protect you from calluses, while bowling tape [below] guards skin more closely by conforming to the hand.



in rolls, and you cut it into strips to place it directly on your fingers—not on your ball. Players will use bowling tape on their thumbs and fingers to help prevent injuries. It comes in different textures to help you get the grip you want. This prod-

uct is new to the American market—a number of pros are using it now—but has been used for some time in Japan.

Experimenting with a thumb insert and/or bowling tape might help you overcome your thumb injury.

■ *I've been bowling in the same center for 26 years. It has always had wood lanes, but three years ago someone bought the center and is now going to convert it to synthetic lanes. I'm wondering how big a change will occur with this conversion. The center was known for 10-pins—will it get worse?*

My idol is Norm Duke, so my style is along the same lines as his, either straight from the corner or inside-out, but it's hard to get the 10-pin out on the old conditions. Is there a way to talk to or communicate with Duke? I don't think there is anyone better.

To get in touch with PBA touring players you can look up the tour schedule on PBA.com and drop them a note at a tour stop. Or you can go to one of the tournaments as a spectator and try to connect in person.

The biggest difference between wood and synthetic surfaces is that a synthetic lane is harder than wood, which wears more with play. Most of the centers that have wood lanes are older. Wood lanes need to be resurfaced to smooth them out, and many older centers don't resurface annually because there isn't a lot of lane left to sand down. When wood lanes go a couple of years without resurfacing, the heads get beat up and the ball grabs the lane very quickly, resulting in early hook. With the synthetic lane being harder and smoother, the ball slides through the heads a lot more easily.

You may find it easier to carry the 10-pin once the synthetic lanes are installed because the ball will get through the heads easier and the ball will have more energy left when it gets to the pins. When the ball hooks early, it slows down, which makes it difficult to get the 6-pin to kick out of the gutter and knock out the 10-pin.

Another reason the 6-pin will not kick



Whether or not you play the same style as Duke, if you want to ask him for advice, your best bet would be to motor over to a PBA event.

out the 10 is the flat gutters and kickbacks are not as lively as new ones. The pindeck area of the lane must be tight and the gutters, kickbacks, and pindecks need to be solid. When bowling centers get old, the back ends get a little spongy and the pins just don't fly as easily as they do on new installations. The pit area of the bowling lane is a very important part of scoring. When your center installs the new lanes, it may also put some work into the back ends to firm them up. The pit area takes a lot of abuse and needs ongoing maintenance.

Also, the easier it is to hit the pocket, the more 10-pins you will leave. This

happens because the oiling pattern allows bad shots to get to the pocket. In other words, your mistakes show up as single-pin leaves instead of washouts and splits. The pins will tell you if you are rolling the ball correctly; just because you hit the pocket doesn't mean you will strike.

The bowling center may experience some lane-conditioning adjustments to get the oil pattern right when it first installs the new lanes, but when the lane conditions are right, you will see an increase in scores. Synthetic lanes allow the ball to get down the lane more easily, helping the ball hit harder—which might eliminate some of the corner pins.

■ *I bowl in a league with synthetic lanes, and my average is down 20 pins. I can't get my ball to do anything using the same approach that I use in my other league on wood lanes, where I carry a 177 average. My starting point for my left foot is one board left of the center dot, sometimes one board right of the center dot, shooting over the 2nd arrow. What adjustments, if any, should I make going from wood lanes to synthetic and vice versa?*

The adjustments for wood and synthetic lanes are basically the same. If the ball doesn't hook enough, move in the direction of the miss with your feet and target.

That said, given the same oiling pattern on a wood and synthetic lane, the ball would hook earlier on wood. Most of the bowling centers that have wood lanes are old and the surface is rough. You very rarely see a bowling center built with wood anymore.

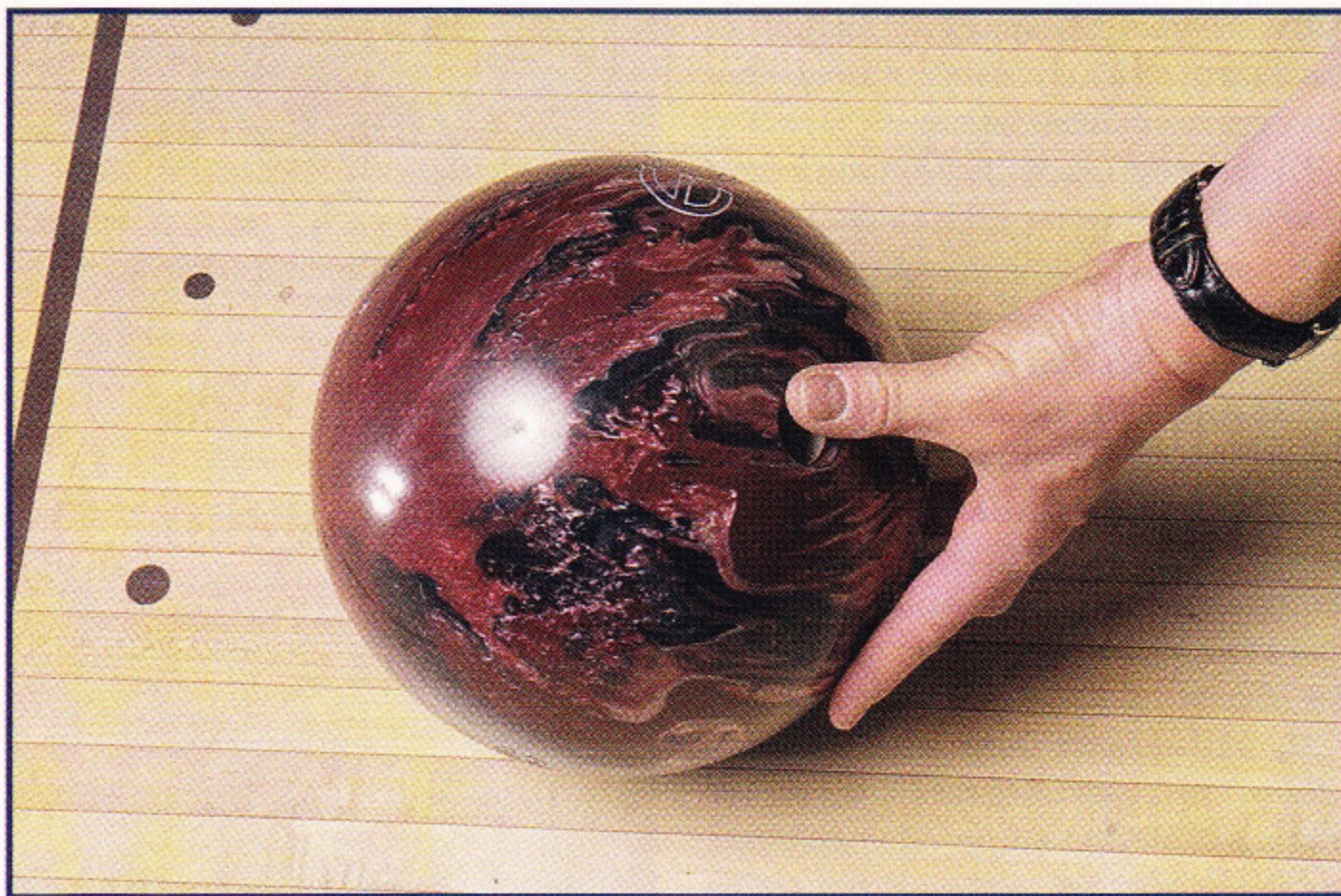
Every bowling center oils its lanes differently. Most of the bowling centers will put the best playing area somewhere between the 1st and 2nd arrows. On synthetic lanes, you should move your feet one dot to the right and move your target between the 1st and 2nd arrows. If the ball still doesn't hook enough, move yourself another dot to the right and look right around the 1st arrow.

■ *I've been bowling for two years, and my average is around 180 to 190. I'm left-handed and have problems with oily lanes. I throw a pretty good hook ball that breaks very late on the back end. I try to rotate my thumb from 12 to three o'clock, but my ball still rolls beyond my breaking point.*

With your thumb rotating from 12 to three you are applying a lot of side roll to the ball. The side roll makes the ball slide long and hook hard. On heavier oil, you need the ball to roll earlier.

Start by turning the ball less. Have your thumb only turn to one o'clock and the fingers stay behind the ball; don't rotate them to the side of the ball.

The second thing to try is changing



A rotation of 12 [top] to three o'clock [bottom] puts a ton of side roll on your ball. To get a quicker break, consider a rotation of 12 to just one o'clock.



the surface of your ball. You should talk to the local pro shop about your ball sliding too long and ask what surface you need on the ball to get it to start rolling earlier. More than likely the pro shop will be familiar with the lane conditions, and someone there might watch you roll a few shots.

It might take a couple of attempts to find the surface that's right for you. Once you understand the surface, find out how often you'll need to have the

pro shop adjust the surface of your ball.

The next option is to have a ball drilled to roll earlier (more in the mid-lane). Use a ball with about a one-inch pin located below your ring finger. You can use a particle ball if you have strong speed and a solid resin if your speed is on the slow side.

Again, keep in close contact with your pro shop and consult your ball-driller about what drilling will fit best with your game. ●