

**BILL SPIGNER'S
BOWLING CLINIC**

**SHORT SLIDE,
LONG SLIDE,
NO SLIDE—**

**WHICH IS
RIGHT
FOR YOU?**

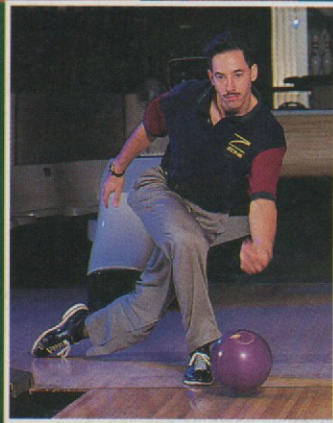
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BOWLING

October 1995

DIGEST

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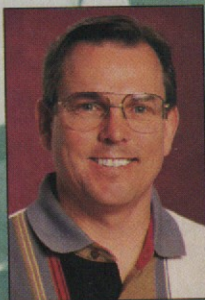
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Smooth Sliding to the F

■ *I've been reading BOWLING DIGEST for about two years now and have never seen anything about the importance of sliding. I've never had a long slide, but recently I started making myself slide. Since I started sliding, my body turn and my tendency toward side-arming the ball have been straightened out. What's better: a long, medium, or short slide, or no slide at all?*



Bowling Clinic

By BILL SPIGNER

Sliding is important for most bowlers, and the length of the slide varies greatly from one player to the next. Long slides and short slides are equally appropriate—as long as the slide or last step complements the rest of the bowler's game.

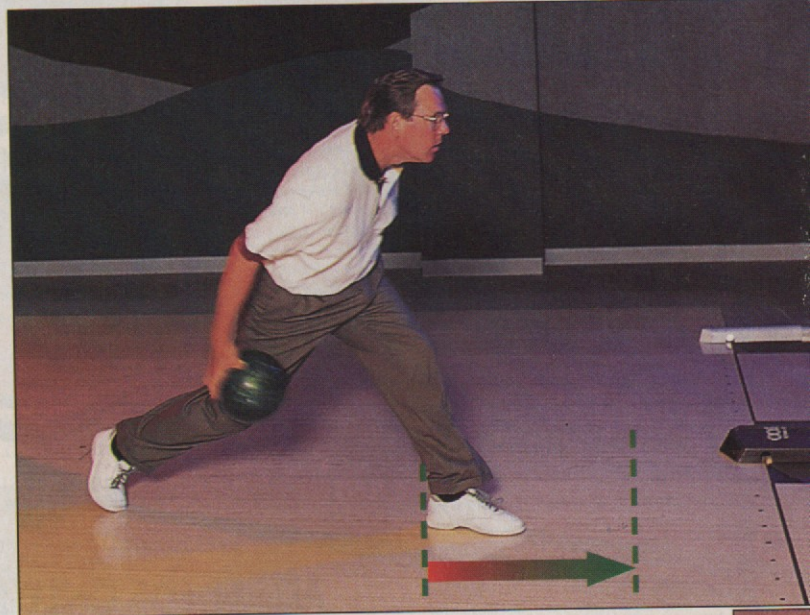
Bowlers with very long slides tend to be "stroker" or "power-stroker" players who have an effortless-looking style that incorporates a loose, smooth swing, a well-balanced finishing position, and a knee bend that is retained until the ball is well down the lane. One of the all-time greats, PBA Hall-of-Famer Marshall Holman, is an example of this type of player. Holman's slide is so long that he continues to slide even *after* he has released the ball. Another modern-day player with a very similar slide is multiple PBA title holder Danny Wiseman.

Players with no slide are called "planters." These players enter their last step with their toe in the air; their heel hits the floor first, and the sole of their shoe next. This results in no slide. Planters use more muscle in their shot, tend to hit the ball on the upswing more often,

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

and loft their ball farther out onto the lane. Since a planter's last step is heel-to-toe with no slide, it tends to be shorter. The shorter steps make a planter's swing a little late and require him to apply more muscle to pull the ball through to the release zone than a player with a very long slide. Former PBA player of the year Dave Ferraro and former U.S. Open champion Ron Palombi are good examples of bowlers who could be classified as planters.

Most bowlers fall somewhere between



A longer slide makes you concentrate more on your lower body, enabling you to develop a better finishing position.

these two extremes. In your case, the introduction of a longer slide made you concentrate more on your lower body. Doing this allowed your arm to swing through freely and allowed you to release your ball without consciously trying to work it. By letting your arm swing freely through your downswing, the arm was forced to swing straight, which corrected your side-arming problems.

Also, by concentrating on your legs, you are developing a very solid finishing position. Classic stylists such as former bowlers of the year Brian Voss and David Ozio have very well-balanced finishing positions, with loose

oul Line

swings and sound, average-to-long slides.

The key to sliding is that it has to complement your game. Most bowlers never think of their slide, and thus the

channel my energy for this sport and turn it into a productive and challenging career.

I'm curious to know what qualifications are needed to own and operate a pro shop, with my eventual goal being to own and operate my own bowling center. What courses could I take that would help enhance my desired career choice?

To own and operate a pro shop, you first should have a very sound under-

teach the game, you should develop a business plan, along with a good study of the market area you are thinking about entering.

For someone interested in the bowling center business, it also is a good idea to work in one for a few years. You should work in as many different departments in the bowling center as possible to get a good overall feel for the business—after all, most bowling centers really are many businesses rolled into one. In general, there is a bar, food service, a pro shop, vending, parties, an arcade, billiards, and, of course, league and open-play bowling.

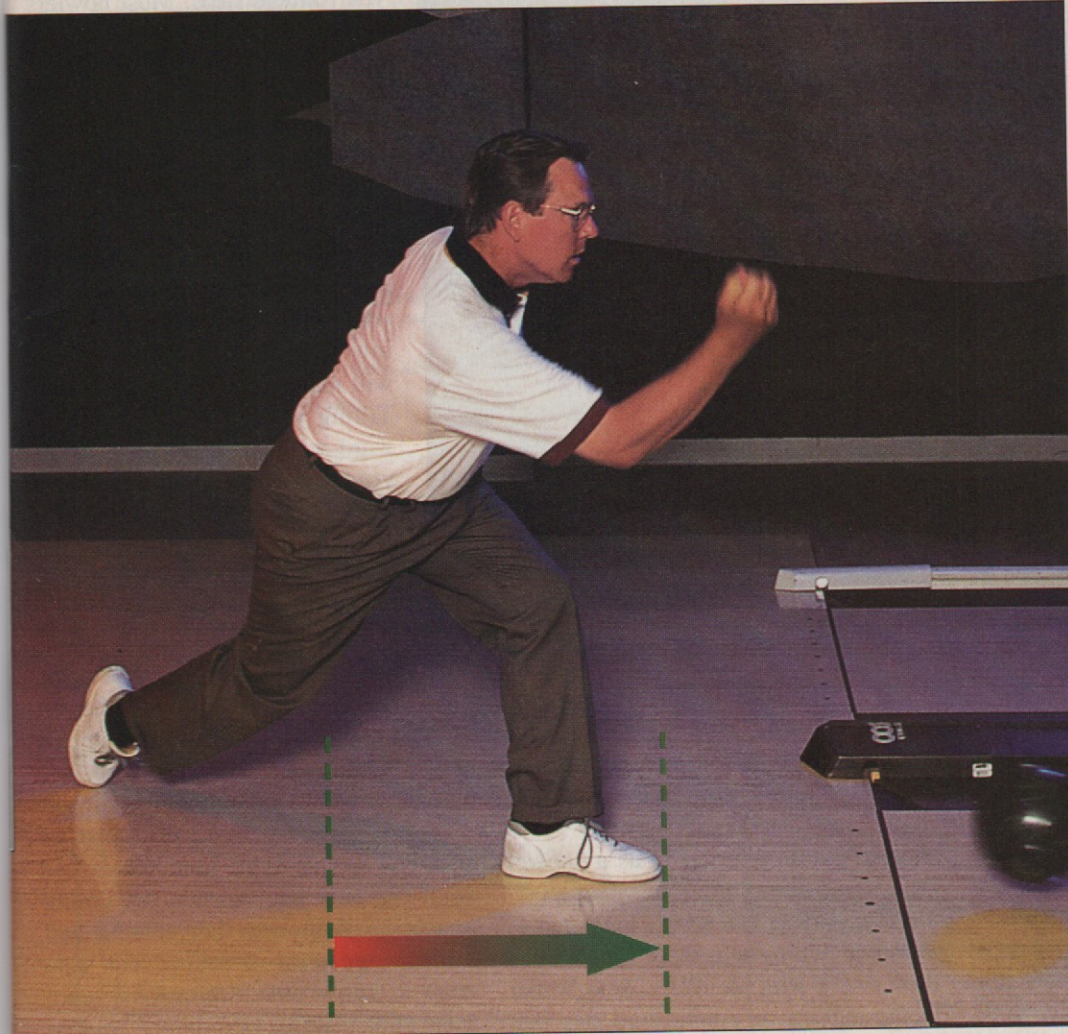
As far as what courses to take, I would suggest business, marketing, and management. These will teach you not only the fundamentals of business, but how to market your business and how to interact with your customers and employees. These types of courses, coupled with your personal experiences, will help you tremendously in running a bowling business.

■ I have an asthmatic condition, and I recently had to adopt a "walk-and-roll" bowling style because it affords me the most stamina. This walk-and-roll style also has corrected my timing problems.

I recently rolled my first 700 league series. A few months ago during practice I rolled 12 strikes in a

row—and then some. During the midst of this I realized that I had acquired a timing step similar to Randy Pedersen's. It seemed what I achieved with that timing step was a good hit (up on the ball), and hence, good skid, roll, and finish. But by my next practice session I hadn't a clue about what to do.

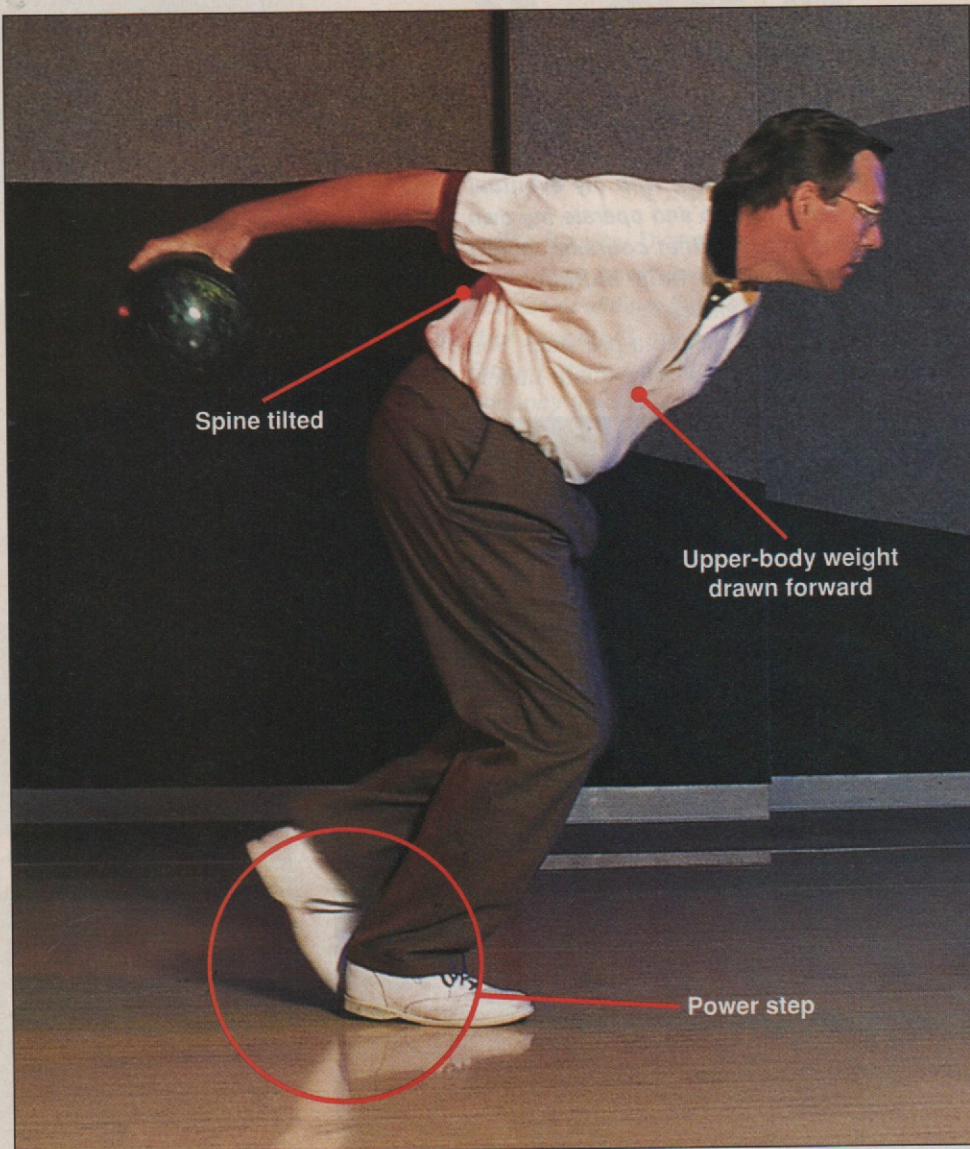
My health concerns aside, what are the tradeoffs of my present walk-and-roll style vs. the timing step (or the hit-



slide usually becomes nothing more than a byproduct of how they are trying to release the ball. Whatever the nature of your slide or your final step, your whole body must be in the right position to release the ball with ample power and accuracy.

■ I am an avid bowler who has become very interested in a career in the bowling industry. I am looking for a way to

standing of how to play the game, and you should read as many of the all-time best-selling books on bowling and pro shops as possible. The next step is to work in a pro shop as an assistant for a few years to learn the basics of the business, as practical experience always is the best teacher. In addition, you should learn how to teach bowling, and you certainly must enjoy working with and helping people. As you are learning to



A short “power step” affords you time to tilt your spine and move your upper-body weight slightly forward, which gives you increased momentum to the foul line.

up-on-the-ball style)? Also, short of tripping myself up on the approach, how might I find my timing step again?

First, let me explain the timing step. You used Randy Pedersen’s short step as an example, but it doesn’t have to be a short step. A timing step is one that is of a different length than the rest of the steps, using the feet to help time the swing for proper ball delivery.

A timing step most often is either the third or fourth step of a five-step delivery, and a short timing step could be as much as one-quarter the length of the other steps. The shorter step helps build momentum, gets the feet a little ahead of the swing, and puts a little more power into the swing. Many times this

shorter step is referred to as a “power step.”

Some players use a very long step as a timing step to help them synchronize their swing with their feet. Pete Weber incorporates a very long third step that gives his armswing time to get the ball to the top of his swing. In Weber’s case, his swing actually needs to reach the top earlier than most players’ swings, because it is extremely high.

Probably what happened to you during your 12-plus strike practice was that your timing changed because of the fast pace of practice bowling. Your ball placement was quicker, and with an earlier movement of your ball, your swing was in a slightly different place in rela-

tionship to your feet than it normally had been. And even though your steps may have been the same size as normal, your swing was in a different place in relation to your steps. This caused the pace of your steps and your weight distribution over your feet to change, making your footwork feel different.

It’s very difficult to change—or even think about—the size of your middle steps. Most bowlers develop their footwork naturally; they don’t suddenly decide to take a certain-length step, unless it’s the first step.

My opinion on the length of steps is to let them develop naturally. What you *can* change is the tilt of your spine and the placement of your ball at the start of your approach. Moving your ball into your swing a little sooner will make your feet move faster. Tilting your spine slightly forward will assist you in starting your ball sooner and moving your upper-body weight slightly forward. This, coupled with the earlier ball placement, will add to your momentum to the foul line.

Your walk-and-roll style doesn’t require a strong burst of energy to throw the ball, whereas hitting up on the ball requires a burst of energy at the release.

I would recommend that you experiment with the placement of your ball and the tilt of your spine to see what can help you develop the timing and body position to deliver your ball with the power you desire. You also need to know your limitations, learn your shot-making perimeters, and be able to work within them. How long can you roll the power shot? You can’t always roll the ball at 100% power. It’s best to start at about 70% to 75% of your maximum and work up to what the lanes require. ●

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