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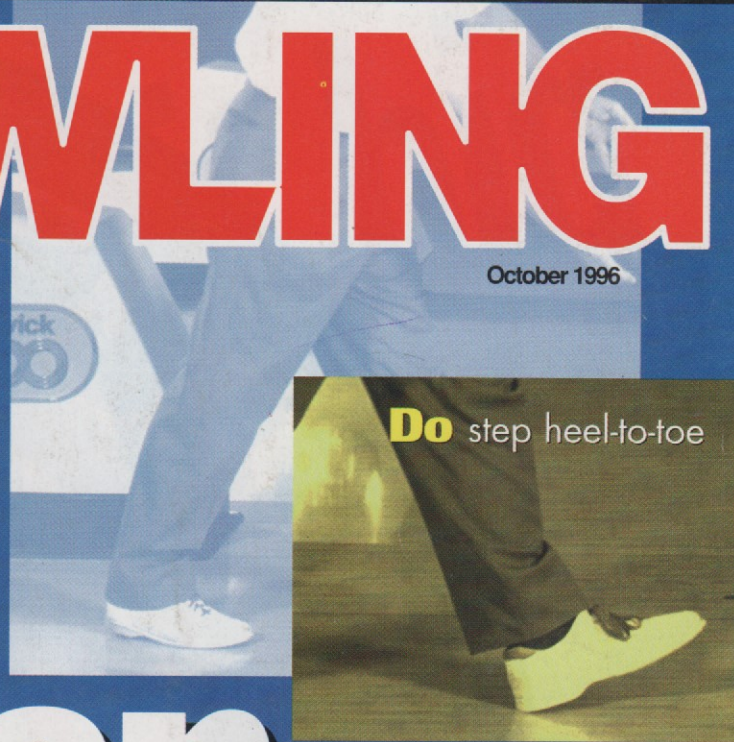
BOWLING CLINIC: How arm bend affects your game

BOWLING

October 1996

DIGEST

Expert Tom Kouros gives you the keys to higher bowling scores with his...



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Arm Bend Doesn't Dete

■ *Probably the biggest flaw I have in my game is that I bend my elbow in my backswing, which makes me place my ball on different marks during the course of a game. I think I can average more than 200 if I can fix this. How do you suggest I fix it?*

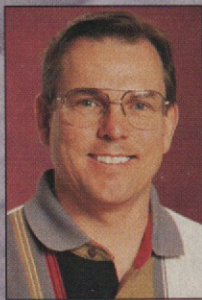
Having the arm bent at the elbow is not necessarily a detriment to accuracy. What your upper body does during the downswing and the release, and what your follow-through does, affects your accuracy more.

To fix the bend in your arm, you need to let the ball swing your arm freely from your shoulder. Totally forget about hand action while working on your swing. Start off with your wrist in a relaxed position; once you put the ball in motion, don't squeeze the ball at all—let the weight of the ball hang on your hand, with no muscle tension from any part of your arm. You'll probably feel like you're going to drop the ball; if this happens, add tape to the thumb hole to tighten it up so you don't have to fight just to hang on to the ball.

It may take you 10 games or 100 to get your arm straight throughout the swing. When you're working on this, you'll likely find that it's very difficult to understand the difference in feeling between a good shot and a bad one. It would be helpful in many ways to have someone watch you and tell you what your swing looks like, but mostly so you can start to re-train how you evaluate the way you feel physically in your swing. Initially, what's right will feel wrong, and what's wrong will feel right.

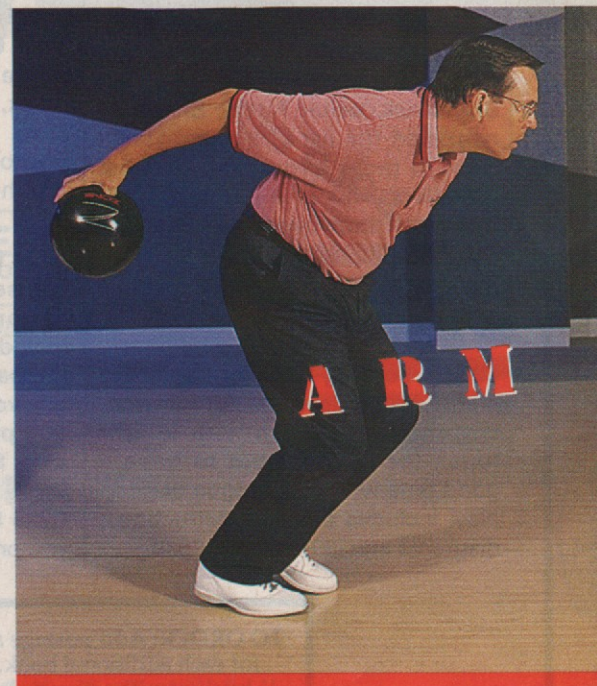
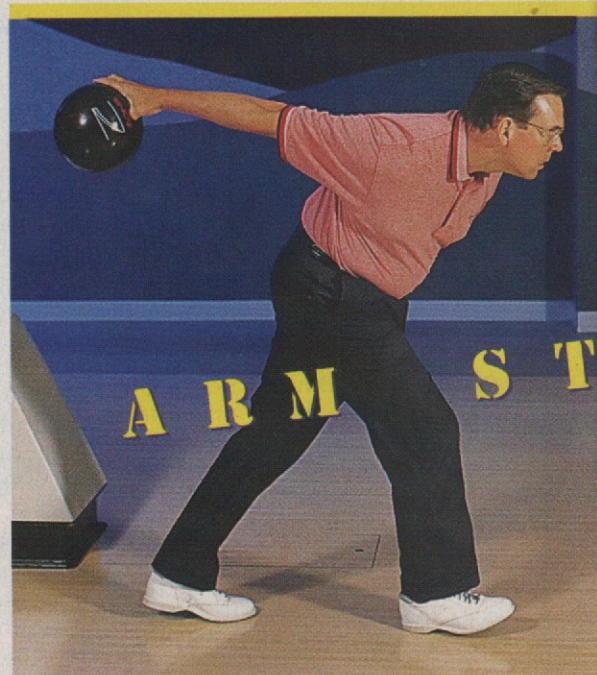
No matter what you do with your swing, though, there is one thing you *can* do to help your accuracy: In your finishing position, end up with your arm extended—not bent at the elbow. If you do this and you still miss left of your target line, it just means your upper body is facing left of the line down

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



Bowling Clinic

By BILL SPIGNER



which you want the ball to travel. The best adjustment in this case is to face a little more right at the finish (the opposite if you are missing right). Another thing that can be helpful is to make sure your forearm is facing

Improve Accuracy

thumb hole. I average 195, but I have been struggling with the new lane conditions. Can you recommend how to drill a thumbless ball for oily, medium, and dry conditions?

Drilling techniques are the same for players who don't use their thumb as they are for

desired results. The surface of the ball includes the material the ball is made from and the finish on the ball (dull or shiny).

As for controlling the ball on different lane conditions, the rotation and revolutions on the ball are major factors. With a thumbless delivery, it is very difficult to control the ball on a variety of conditions. Very few bowlers experience any real success with this type of delivery. Many thumbless players get a lot of revolutions and side roll on the ball; with a lot of revolutions and side roll, the ball has a tendency to hydroplane across the oil, and when the ball

hits the dry part of the lane it grabs and turns so hard that it's very difficult to control.

The most successful thumbless bowler is PBA champion Mike Miller, but even he first learned to bowl with his thumb in the ball. Of course, Miller also learned to play on a wide variety of lane conditions, and he developed a sound spare-shooting system.

Miller had a very good physical game, but he didn't roll a strong enough ball to strike from enough angles. He experimented with the thumbless shot and developed a good strike ball, but he continued to roll spares with his thumb in the ball. Even now he often bowls with his

thumb in the ball on his strike shots—particularly when the lane conditions call for a certain type of shot. Miller also uses his pinky finger these days as a third finger in the ball.

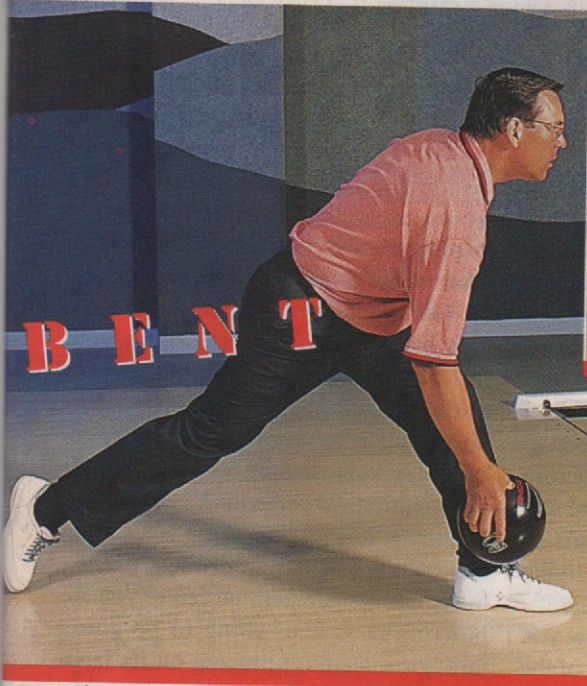
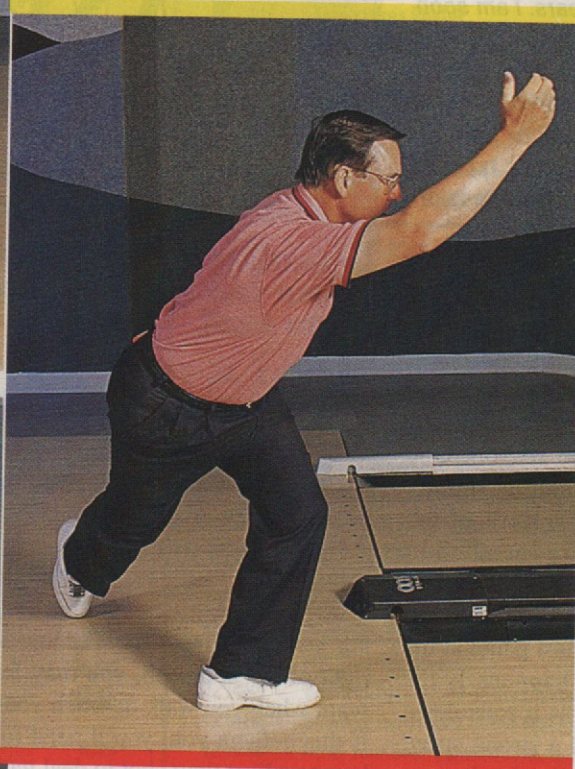
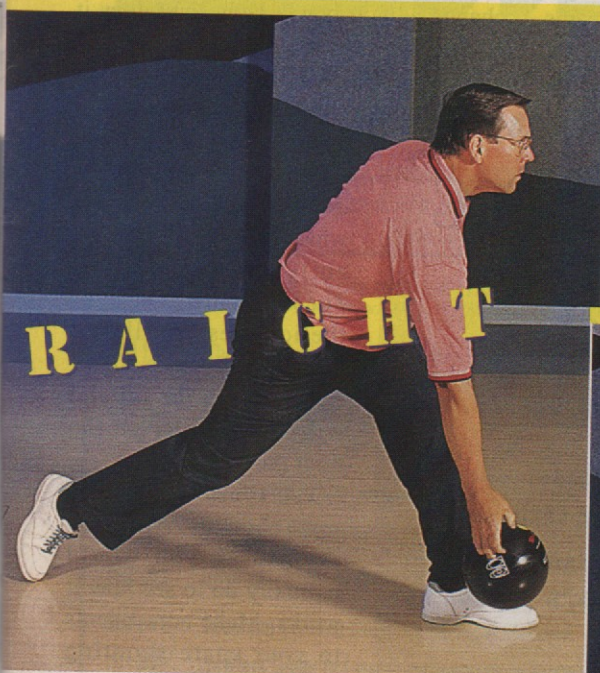
In your case, you should work on get-

To eliminate elbow bend in your swing, you need to let the ball swing your arm from your shoulder. However, elbow bend is not necessarily a detriment to accuracy—provided your upper body is in the proper position. Whether your arm is straight or bent in your swing, you must be sure that your arm is fully extended in the finishing position [above].

players who do use it. The key to drilling a ball is to situate the weight block in the proper position relative to the ball track in order to get your desired rolling pattern. Also, you need to have the proper surface to achieve the

toward your target throughout the shot.

■ *Pro shop operators can't seem to help me with my unique problem. I'm a right-handed bowler who doesn't use a*



ting more forward roll and a good tilt in the axis. Many thumbless bowlers have a low tilt in their axis and a lot of side roll, which makes the ball difficult to control. Forward roll and a higher tilt of the axis will produce a more controllable ball arc.

As for drilling your ball, you want to make sure the weight block is placed in such a manner that the ball track doesn't roll over the finger holes. Keeping the pin somewhere around the ring finger can help keep the track off the finger holes.

■ I am a high-average bowler who has been bowling for many years. I am soon to encounter a new kid on the block in our area—a new kid called "synthetic lanes." I would greatly appreciate your advice as to the best way to play on synthetic lanes. Also, what type of equipment do you recommend I use on this type of surface?

You may find that the new kid on the block is a friendly one. For the most part, on synthetic lanes the scores will be slightly higher than on wood lanes. The basic reason for this is the lane surface is more consistent because it doesn't wear during the season. One other big reason the scoring is slightly higher is the front-to-back tilt of the lane; synthetic lanes are installed in panels, and each panel is installed progressively lower, with the foul-line section the highest and the last panel at the pins the lowest. What happens is the ball retains more speed as it rolls down the lane—and you need a strong speed to control the monster balls of today.

You need to have an open mind from the start about synthetic lanes. Initially, the bowling center will be experimenting with oiling patterns to try to develop a condition that meets the needs of the majority of their customers.

As far as actually rolling the ball is concerned, there are five key areas to consider. Your first job is to understand the approaches. You may find that you slide more on the synthetic approaches. Work at getting a good feel for the approaches and whatever else you have to do to deliver the ball consistently with confidence. You also must learn

what happens to the approaches when the weather changes. When it's raining and hot, how much less do you slide? How much difference is there from the wood approaches? When the heat is on in the winter and the air is dry, you will slide easier. Also, since synthetic lanes are installed in panels, they have seams. On the approach there is a seam that runs from the foul line to the back end along each edge of the lane. When play-

ly looking to see the skid-roll-hook pattern of the ball from the different parts of the lane.

Once you become familiar with the setup of the lane, it's time to consider the inevitable adjustments you'll have to make. How does the oiling pattern change as you bowl? How long does it take before you have to make an adjustment, and what are the adjustments you have to make? Initially, do everything you did on wood, see what works and what doesn't, and determine what the ball does differently when something doesn't work. On synthetic lanes you'll find that the ball slides slightly longer on the oil and will hook harder on the drier parts of the lane.

The fourth element is spare shooting. Again, do everything you would normally do to see how it works. Make adjustments to your spare-shooting system based on your balls' performance.

Part five is the equipment you choose. For all of this testing, I recommend you use the ball that lets you read the lane the best and allows you

to play a variety of lines. You don't want to use a ball that was designed to be used on a specific lane condition. This ball should be referred to as your "A" ball. Once you have done all your testing of the approaches, oiling patterns, and adjustments with your "A" ball, then you can start to see how your other equipment performs.

Look at this change in the lanes as an opportunity to learn more about playing the game. Remember, the center you are bowling at is also going to be going through a learning process on its lane-maintenance program, just as you are going to go through a learning experience. If the center goes through some different oiling patterns, use this to your advantage to learn how to play better on different conditions. ●

SYNTHETIC LANES

- Understand synthetic approaches, and get a good feel for them.
- Be aware of the oiling pattern on a freshly dressed synthetic lane.
- Consider the inevitable adjustments: How does the oiling pattern change as you bowl?
- Make adjustments to your spare-shooting system based on your balls' performance.
- Choose your equipment by experimenting with a ball that allows you to play a variety of lines.

ing your shot from the extreme left or right of the approach, you may feel the seam when you walk or when you slide. If this bothers you, you'll need to learn how to adjust your shot to deal with it.

Next, learn the oiling pattern on a freshly oiled synthetic lane. You need to understand how the oil is applied across the width of the lane, and where the heaviest and lightest concentrations of oil are. Experiment by rolling strike shots from different areas of the lane.

The second part of this will show you how the ball rolls down the length of the lane. Divide the lane into three 20-foot sections: the first 20 feet being the heads, the next 20 feet the middle of the lane, and the last 20 feet the back end. Watch how the ball performs in the different areas of the lane. You are basic-