

Christmas Gift Guide • Leanne Barrette Interview • Parker Bohn III

BOWLING

DIGEST

Nov./Dec. 1990

Rookie Sensation

JOHN BURKETT

After his last big-league pitch, it's look out PBA tour

'Bowling is my passion; baseball is just a job.'



\$3.75 • Canada \$4.00

Special Offer

\$2.50 • Canada \$2.95



71486 02344

Bill Spigner's Bowling Clinic

■ I bowl on synthetic lanes most of the time, and I use a urethane ball (a Columbia black U-dot). A pro shop operator told me I should be using a polyester ball on synthetic lanes to get the best average. Could you tell me if this is true? If this is so, would you list some of the best polyester balls?

The best ball for synthetic lanes or any other type of lane is the ball that reacts best to the lane condition. The urethane ball, far and away the most popular ball used today, is made to cover all the different types of lane conditions.

Usually polyester balls are used when the lane conditions are very dry and the ball is grabbing the lane too quickly. If you're looking to buy a polyester ball to help fight dry conditions, you can choose one that is made by any of the major manufacturers. All the major manufacturers make a good polyester ball.

■ I have a 13½-pound Columbia 300 bowling ball. I throw a straight ball and carry a 132 average, but people are telling me I should go to a 14-pound ball, drilled with side weight and a semi-fingertip grip with inserts. I don't want to go to a heavier ball; I feel I just need to figure out what I'm doing wrong. Sometimes I wear a wrist brace, but it doesn't seem to help. Should I follow the above advice? I stand on the dot to the right of the center dot, use a five-step approach, and release the ball at the second arrow. Should I get a heavier ball?

A 132 average puts you right around the national average for female bowlers. The decision you have to make is whether you want to be a better than average bowler. It's not an easy decision to make, because it takes a commitment to learn how to do the things that can make you a better player.

First, you need to learn how to hook the ball. I would recommend using a fingertip ball where you insert your fingers up to the first joint only. Plug and redrill your old ball for this new grip. After you have tried the new grip and worked at the hook for a while, you might consider going to a heavier ball or trying finger inserts. Going up a half-pound is not a big change; you probably wouldn't feel a great deal of difference in a 14-pound ball and what you currently are using.

You also should work on increasing your ball speed if you're not rolling a fairly fast shot. Ball speed is important because it enables you to get the hitting power needed to increase your average. Also, if you have a firm ball speed it will be easier to go to a heavier ball, maybe up to a 15-pound ball.

Alterations in your game such as these take time and practice. I suggest you take

lessons from a pro in your area who will be able to make it easier for you to learn these changes.

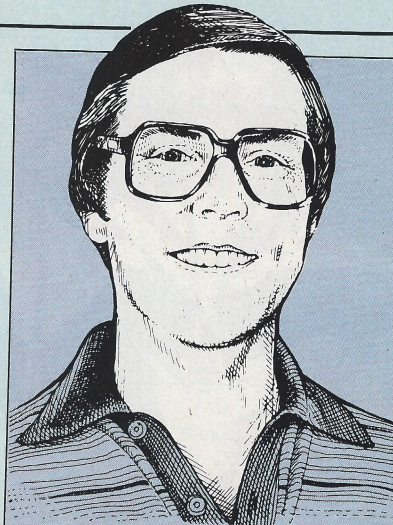
■ I was watching the PBA tour on TV, and Nelson Burton Jr. commented that the professional bowlers like a tight-fitting thumb hole. He said the pros like to "jam" their thumb in the hole, while the amateurs like a loose thumb hole because they're afraid of hanging up in the ball. I have been bowling for 10 years, and over the years I've had various troubles with my thumb hole. I like a loose fit because I don't want to hang up in the ball, so I've been using an oval thumb insert. I normally use three-eighths reverse and one-quarter under the palm, so I plugged an old ball and tried one-half reverse and one-quarter away from the palm. I also drilled the hole without an insert and two sizes smaller. It feels good—I don't worry about hanging up as much and I get a clean release. Maybe the other pro shops in the past gave me the wrong thumb pitches. I've just started my own pro shop. Could you tell me the advantages—if any—to having a tight thumb hole?

The main reason a bowler wants a tight-fitting thumb hole is to be able to grip the ball lightly. A light grip gives you a looser armswing; if the thumb hole is loose you need to squeeze the ball, which can adversely affect your swing.

In order to be able to have a tight-fitting thumb hole and still get out of the ball cleanly, you must have two things. First, you need a very consistent hand position (which also means a consistent game). Secondly, you need a strong hand position at the point of release. A strong hand position means having your hand behind the ball and your wrist straight to slightly cupped.

Average bowlers need a looser-fitting thumb hole because of the inconsistencies in their game. With a loose thumb hole they can get out of the ball easily even when their hand is not in a good position to get a clean, strong release.

As a pro shop owner, explain to your customers that with the proper position of the hand at the release point they don't need an oversized thumb hole to get out of the ball. When you fit the ball, the thumb should have a slight drag when coming out, and the thumb should be measured when the hand is slightly swollen. When most people get their first ball they're used to using house balls, where the span is too short and the holes too large. They're used to feeling nothing when they release the



Bill Spigner has won three national PBA championships and seven regional PBA titles. He is co-owner of Hawthorne Lanes in Vernon Hills, Ill., and teaches at Pro Bowling Camps summer camp in Connecticut.

ball, so it's important for you to explain what they should do to release the ball properly.

The new pitches you're trying and a strong hand position will get you out of your thumb hole faster than your old pitches. As you become a better bowler and experiment more with different pitches, you'll find you'll be able to use almost anything and still get out of the ball cleanly—provided you compensate for the different drilling by making sure the sizes of the holes complement the pitches and the span.

■ I'm a left-handed bowler. My current average is 125, but I'm working on improving it to 150 or higher. However, I'm rotating the ball so much that I am getting a spinner. Now I'm trying to get my release back to a three-quarter roll on the ball. What do I do to get the three-quarter roll on my ball?

You need to stay behind the ball longer. Initially, try to eliminate all the turn. Think of your thumb coming out of the ball pointed to 12 o'clock, with your fingers in the 6 o'clock position. This will help keep your hand behind the ball and produce a track closer to the thumb and finger holes. If after you work on this you find that your ball starts rolling a little too straight, you'll have to apply some side roll to the ball. Do this by still keeping your hand behind the ball and rolling it off the inside of your hand. ●

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.