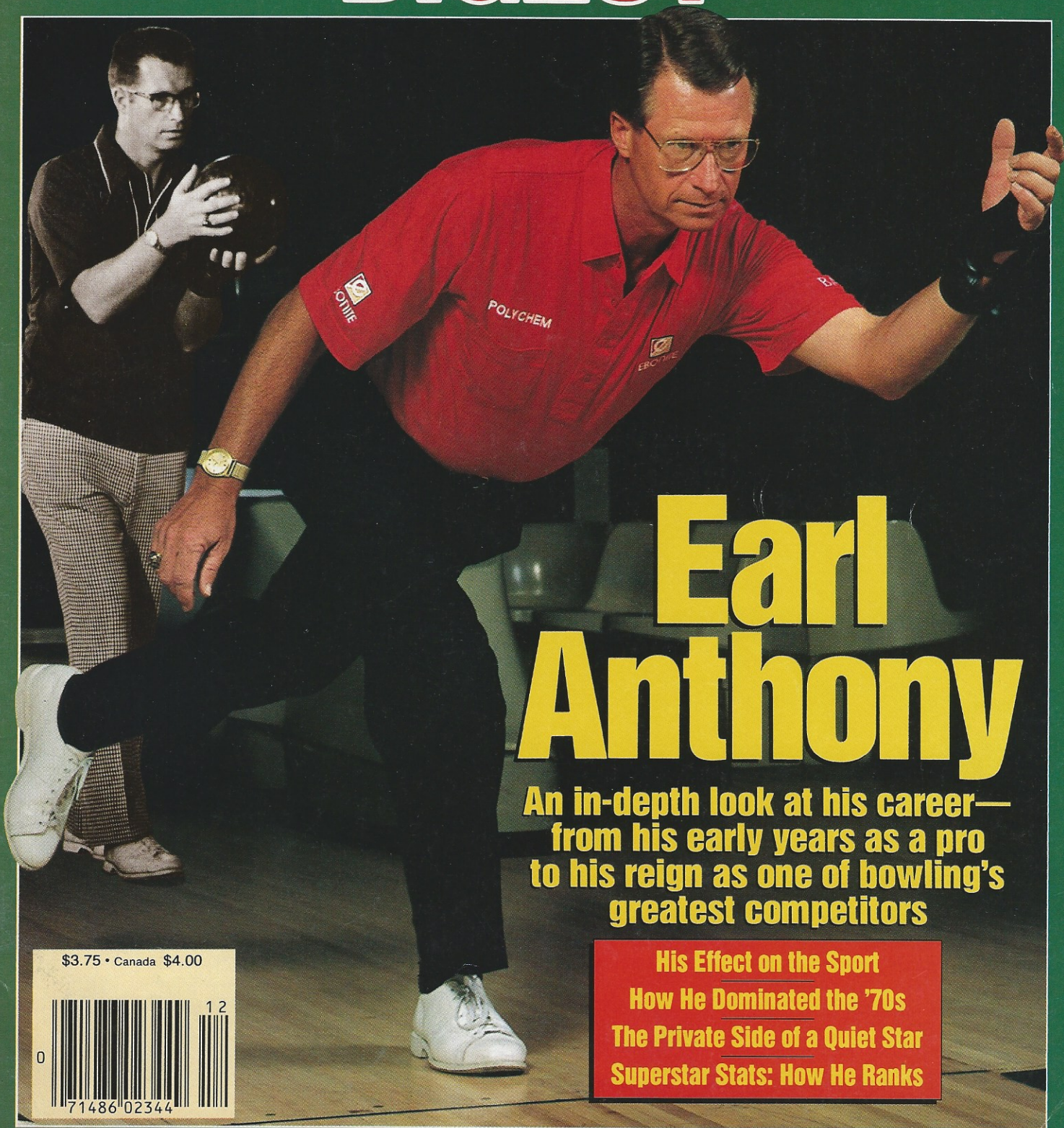


Pro Instruction: Pete Weber • Christmas Gift Guide

BOWLING

DIGEST

Nov./Dec. 1991



Earl Anthony

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Bill Spigner's Bowling Clinic

■ I am a 150 average bowler, but I'm in a terrible slump, and my average recently has dropped four pins. Everything in my game has gone sour: channel balls, missed spares, timing, and trouble with the approaches and lane conditions that force me to adjust constantly with no success. I'm bowling games 40 to 50 pins under average. When I do figure out how to play the lanes, it's only temporary. Now I've lost confidence and aggressiveness, and I drill negative thoughts into my head before a frame or game. What can I do to restore my confidence and feel sure about my game again?

You need to relearn your physical game, including the basic fundamentals of delivering a good shot, and evaluate your assets and liabilities. The best way to do this is to have yourself videotaped. After you see yourself on tape you'll be able to pinpoint your major liabilities and then work on them.

Your next step is to review how you currently line up for your strike ball and spares. You need to be lined up correctly with your target and pins in relationship to the amount of hook you have and the lane conditions you're playing on. If you line up incorrectly you will subconsciously compensate for it, which will force you to do something physically wrong with your delivery in order to make your ball hit your target or hit the pins you are shooting at. Standing and targeting in the right place in relationship to where you want your ball to go is very important in allowing you to work on your physical game.

If you don't have the time to get videotaped, here are a couple of things to work on: First, make sure your shoulders are perpendicular to the direction you want your ball to travel down the lane. Next, assuming you take a four-step approach, make sure you move your ball on your first step and allow your ball to swing on your second step. Let the ball swing your arm; you shouldn't swing the ball. At the end of your third step, at the beginning of your fourth step, and at the finishing position, keep the toe of your nonsliding foot in contact with the approach. And for your follow-through, imagine that you have a glass of water in your hand and you are throwing the water over your bowling shoulder.

Give yourself a fresh start—forget about what you were trying to do before. If possible, it will help you greatly to have a top instructor tape you and talk about your game, physical as well as mental. It takes a long time to develop a solid overall game, and getting good information is very important in that process.

■ I am 10 years old, average 105, and use a 12-pound ball. I bowled a 172 not too long ago. However, Gordon Vadakin said in his tape that you should use a ball one-tenth of your body weight. Since I weigh 137, should I stay with my 12-pound ball or go to a 13- or even a 14-pound ball?

Gordon Vadakin's tip on using a ball that is one-tenth of your body is a good guideline in selecting the weight of your first ball. As bowlers develop, though, the speed they roll the ball, their strength, and their physical game will determine the weight of the ball that is best suited for them, rather than their body weight.

In your case, your 12-pound ball should be fine for another season unless you find yourself overpowering it. The important thing for you to do is to make sure the fit of the ball is correct, since you're still growing. Have the fit checked every six months. With your size, when you do get another ball think about a 14-pounder.

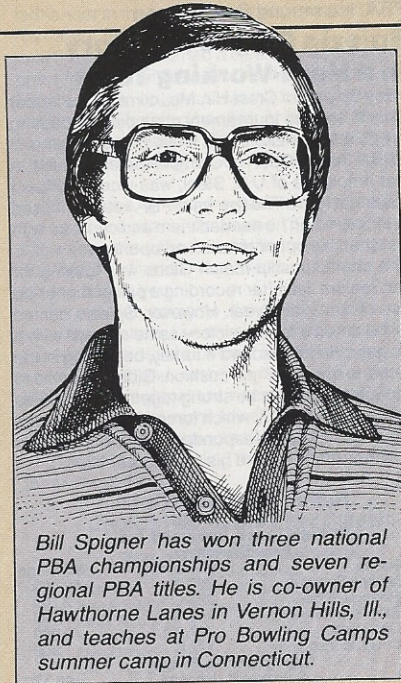
■ I am a right-handed bowler with a long armswing. I have had problems with my release, as I either overpower or underpower the ball. I average 160 now and want to know whether my average would go up if I went to a fingertip grip or stayed with my conventional grip. Can I put grips in the ball I have now?

An overwhelming number of high-average players use a fingertip grip. In my opinion, some form of fingertip grip is the only type of grip to use.

With the fingertip grip, you insert your fingers to the crease of your first joint and insert your thumb all the way in just like the conventional grip. There are three major benefits to the fingertip grip: (1) It gives you much better feel of the ball coming off your fingers because the tips of your fingers are the most sensitive part of your hand; (2) because you only have the first digit of your fingers in the ball, the ball comes off your hand more cleanly and consistently; and (3) because there is more space in a fingertip grip between the finger and thumb holes, there's a greater time difference between when the thumb comes out of the ball and when the fingers actually release the ball. The added length of the grip allows you to get your fingers under the ball more, which gives you more lift and revolutions.

With a 160 average you are near the top end of the range you can achieve with a conventional grip. The fingertip grip should give you the potential for higher scores.

To put grips in your current ball, have your finger holes drilled larger to put in the finger grips, and have your thumb hole plugged so



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that it can be redrilled with the span lengthened. You need to do both for the fingertip to work properly.

■ Norm Duke missed three very easy spares—the 7-pin once and the 4-7 twice—while winning the Tucson Open this past summer. He threw a straight ball from the left of the center of the lane, and the ball backed away from the pins. Why does he use this angle instead of shooting across the lane as taught by bowling instructors?

On the pro tour many players shoot their left-side spares from somewhere around the middle of the lane, using anywhere from the third to the fifth arrow. On tour the pros bowl on a different pair of lanes each game, a different bowling center each week, and different oiling patterns and conditions in each tournament. With these three variables to contend with, the pros have, for the most part, perfected the art of rolling a straight ball for a majority of their spares.

Instructors need to learn the art of rolling a straight ball for spares and start teaching that. Rolling a straight ball for spares is important for anyone rolling a hook for their strike ball. It's difficult enough to figure out where to play your strike line from with a hook; a straight spare ball will help eliminate lane conditions as a major variable in shooting spares. ●

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.