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BOWLING DIGEST

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Bill Spigner's **Bowling Clinic**

■ I have seen many bowlers screening or sanding their bowling balls for greater hooking action on oily lanes. The reaction seems to be the same as that of an illegal ball—the soaker. Is it legal to do this? Is there an ABC ruling on this? What long-term effect does this have on the true roll of the ball? I have heard many pros and cons on this subject.

Sanding bowling balls has been legal during ABC-sanctioned competition in the past. However, the ABC passed a rule this year that makes it illegal to touch the shell of the ball with any abrasive, such as sandpaper or scotch brite pads, once competition starts. You can still sand the surface of the ball up to the starting time of the league or tournament. This rule went into effect August 1. The PBA has had this rule for a couple of years.

The reaction of a freshly sanded ball is similar to the chemically soaked bowling balls that were used in the mid 1970s. There are problems with allowing players to sand bowling balls. The biggest problem, in my opinion, with sanded balls is that bowlers are able to get their ball to hook and roll well even though they don't have the ability to create a good ball with their own skills. Another problem is that a freshly sanded ball will pick up more oil than a nonsanded ball and cause lane conditions to change much faster than they would normally. Also, sanding creates a lot of dust on the lanes, approaches, equipment, clothes, etc.

■ Everybody seems to write about hook balls and curves. Are there any famous straight ball bowlers around. If so, who are they? Also, does it really matter which foot you start on?

There are many great bowlers who are termed straight players. These straight players do apply some hook or curve to a bowling ball. You cannot reach the pro level with a perfectly straight ball . . . the ball must have a certain amount of angle upon entry in the pocket to get strikes.

Some of the players the pros term as straight ball players are Mike Durbin, Ernie Schlegel, Guppy Troup, and Dick Weber, one of the all-time greats. You have seen these players many times on TV. They don't roll the big hook, but are all great bowlers.

Remember, a little hook goes a long way if you're able to get your ball into a good roll and play the lanes correctly.

As far as what foot to start on, it really doesn't make any difference provided you slide on the proper foot . . . the left foot for righthanders and the right foot for lefthanders.

■ I do not feel the ball coming off my

fingers. When I am set to start my delivery I don't feel the pads of my fingers on the ball, but actually I feel my finger nails touching the back of the holes. I also feel the sides of my fingers toward my pinky finger as I deliver the ball. I know these feelings are not right. How can I correct them?

Your first problem could be caused by the span being too long or having too much forward pitch in your finger holes.

Your second problem is caused by the lateral pitches in the holes. The area you are feeling is caused by having left lateral pitch. You will want to change your lateral pitches to right lateral.

Have your local pro check these problems, he or she should be able to make the necessary changes.

■ I am a 17-year-old who averages about 175 using a conventional grip, 16-pound rubber ball. I have a small hook and roll a semi-roller. I do not think my average will exceed 180 with this type of grip and roll. Should I redrill my ball for a fingertip grip? What are the advantages and would it help my game?

Having a semi-roller ball track is the best type of roll to have on today's lane surfaces, so I wouldn't worry about your ball roll.

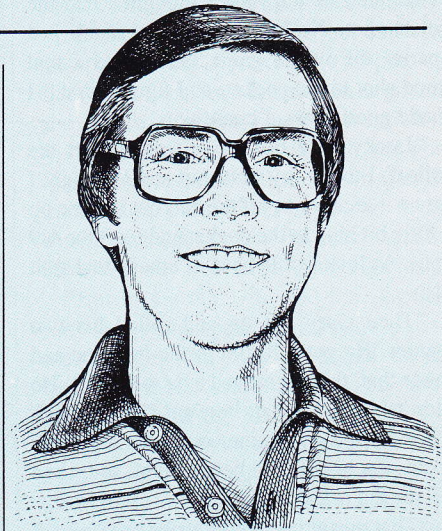
All of the top pros today use a fingertip ball, so it would be a wise move to plug and redrill your ball to a fingertip grip. The fingertip grip ball should be fit so you can insert your fingers to the first joint then be able to easily insert the thumb in all the way. Fingertip is not just putting the very tips of your fingers in.

A fingertip grip can help you develop a stronger ball, and you'll have greater feel for the ball coming off your hand because your fingertips are the most sensitive part of your hand.

When first changing to a fingertip grip you might experience some control problems. It might be wise to get a lesson or two to help you learn how to adjust to the lane conditions and how to make spares with it.

■ I am a 13-year-old lefthander, and I'm having a hard time picking up the 7-pin because my ball breaks away from it. At the present time I cannot get a harder ball to decrease the hook. I'm bowling with a Hammer and am using a Roll-Star wrist support. Is there any advice you can give me to remedy my problem?

The first thing I would do is take off the wrist device to shoot your spares. Without the wrist band on you will probably get less hook. If the ball continues to hook by the 7-pin your next course of action would be to bend your wrist back about 30 degrees. By



Bill Spigner is in his 11th year on the PBA Tour. He holds three national PBA championships and seven regional PBA titles. He is also a head teaching pro and instructor at PBC Bowling Camps.

doing this you will release the ball with your fingers more on top of the ball, and that will lessen the amount of lift and turn, and make the ball hook less.

You definitely want to develop a straight shot for your left-side spares. All the top pros roll the ball harder and straighter at their spares.

■ When I start bowling my timing is good, but the longer I bowl, the faster I get. I start throwing the ball harder, and I can't seem to get myself back on track. What causes this and what can I do to correct my problem?

One reason bowlers get too fast once they have loosened up is they change their timing. You start moving the ball faster and sooner at the beginning of your approach, and this causes your feet to move faster and increases your swing speed. This results in a much faster shot. When your feet get moving too fast you'll get to your release position farther ahead of the ball than you normally would. This will make it difficult for you to release the ball the way you want.

The key to keeping a consistent tempo is to concentrate on keeping a consistent first step and ball placement. It's easy to forget about the movements at the beginning of your motion, but that's where you trigger your approach. It's worth the time to think about how you want your approach to start—it will help you be more consistent.

Bill Spigner welcomes questions from readers and will answer as many as possible in this column. Mail your questions to: Bill Spigner, Bowling Digest, 1020 Church Street, Evanston, IL 60201.