

Annual Christmas Gift Guide Issue

Pro Instruction: Earl Anthony • Aleta Sill • The ABC's Roger Tessman

# BOWLING

## DIGEST

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# BOWLING'S BIG-MONEY SHOOTOUTS

Sweaty palms, agonizing splits, clutch strikes, blown opportunities, big payoffs—they're all part of today's hot match-game tournaments





# Bill Spigner's Bowling Clinic

■ I've noticed an extreme difference in my ball reaction and the line I am forced to play this year as opposed to last year. Many of my friends who bowl in different centers have made the same observation about their game. Is this a trend?

I've received many letters of this nature, so I've decided to devote most of this month's column to this question.

If the shot at the bowling center you bowl in has changed recently, it could be because the legal, sanctionable oiling pattern guidelines for the ABC, WIBC, and YABA have changed.

For the past two seasons bowling centers that oiled their lanes according to the ABC's limited-distance dressing guidelines were allowed to oil in any manner across the width of the lane, provided they didn't oil beyond 24 feet in the 1987-88 season and 26 feet in the '86-87 season.

This year the 24-foot rule is still in effect, but the lanes now have to be oiled gutter-to-gutter. Bowling centers can still oil any way they want across the width of the lane, but now there has to be some oil on every board.

The original idea of short oil was to oil the lane 18 feet or less, as it was figured you couldn't block a lane by only oiling 18 feet of it.

But the real reason short oil procedures were started was because the Bowling Proprietors Association of America (BPAA) wanted a lane conditioning program that the American Bowling Congress (ABC) would sanction scores on, regardless of how the lanes were oiled across the width of the lane. The proprietors wanted to make sure their bowlers would not have their honor scores turned down by the ABC because of lane conditions. And because short oil was supposed to make the lanes more difficult to score on, the bowling proprietors and the ABC agreed that any honor scores bowled on short oil would be automatically approved.

The original starting point for the length of the oil was 26 feet, which was used for one year. But the ABC found that the number of honor scores actually went up with the 26-foot rule in the '86-87 season so they shortened it by two feet. But this didn't stop high scoring either.

The big problem with short oil is that almost all the bowling centers that used the short oil dressing procedures blocked the lanes, usually leaving the first five to 10 boards dry on each edge of the lane and applying a lot of oil in the middle of the lane, thus creating a great margin of error for the bowlers and higher scores.

Another reason short oil created higher scoring was the "carry down" effect, which

caused oil to be moved farther down the lane as more and more games were played. A bowler's ball has a tendency to overreact on a lane that has just been stripped clean of all oil and dirt, and then freshly oiled with a short oil condition. But as the lane gets some play on it, the ball moves the oil down the lane and creates a little path of oil in the midsection of the lane. This path of oil keeps the ball on line longer and helps it to the pocket.

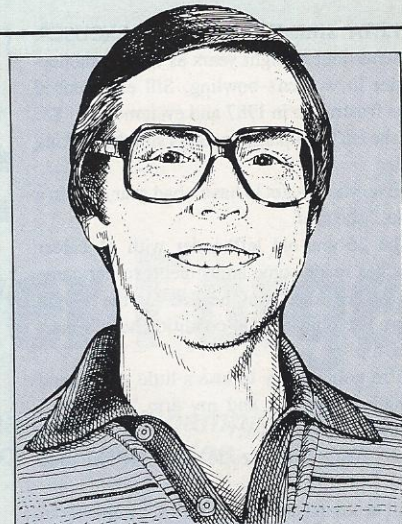
Because of this year's new short oil gutter-to-gutter requirement, scores are going to go down, and you may see averages drop 10 to 20 pins. If you find your average is down from last year and feel you are bowling just as well, it could be because of the new lane conditions. But remember that everyone's average will go down because of this. Scores are only relative to the competition and the scoring potential of the center. Even with gutter-to-gutter oil, short oil will play the same as it has played in the past couple of years, and what you learned about playing on short oil will remain the same with one exception: the dry outside boards will no longer be there.

With today's technology, 99% of the bowling centers now know how to condition lanes for high scores. Nearly all scoring records have been bowled on easy lane conditions, be it short or long oiling patterns. But that doesn't mean everybody can roll big scores just because one person is talented enough to take advantage of it.

It would be great if it was possible to rate bowling centers for scoring levels like they rate golf courses. Par at a tough bowling center could be 190, while par at a real easy bowling center could be as high as 220.

Tough bowling centers are not always bad centers, and it's unfortunate that many times bowlers rate a center only on how well they score at it. Sometimes the worst centers are the ones that score the best, because high scores are all they have to offer bowlers. It takes less work to block a lane than it does to keep up a good shot with gutter-to-gutter oiling; blocking lanes is an easy trap for proprietors to fall into. And once trapped, they know they will lose business if they change their oiling procedures to make them more legitimate.

From what I hear, some bowling centers are going back to long oil, which if done legally, will reduce the scoring. There could be some experimenting going on with the lane conditions in your center this year, but experimenting has been going on since the beginning of bowling, and will continue into the future. Changes in lane conditions make bowling challenging and can make you a more knowledgeable bowler because you have to learn to adjust to the conditions



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to score well. Being able to play lanes correctly is one of the most difficult parts of bowling, and it's a never-ending learning process.

If you remember this it will help you make this season an enjoyable one for you.

■ My 12-year-old daughter is in her third year of junior bowling. She averages 124 and rolls a straight ball. This year she has had a problem with getting started on the approach. She'll be on the approach standing there, swaying back and forth, or she'll start out, take one step, and stop. Can you tell me what causes this problem and provide a possible solution?

The problem as I see it is that she isn't sure of what to do. She is probably pressing so hard mentally to try to make a good shot that nothing feels comfortable and she gets locked up.

I recommend that she learn the mechanics of making a bowling shot with the help of a coach. If she learns the basics of what she needs to do, she can think about doing them before she gets on the approach. This way she will be ready to make the shot when she steps up to her starting position.

Most of the top players take very little time on the approach—they know what they want to do before they get set to make the shot.

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.