

Jeri Edwards: Healthy hands mean healthy scores

Bill Spigner's
Bowling Clinic

MORE
LOFT can
give you
MORE
PINFALL

BOWLING

DIGEST

December 1994

Carrydown
zone?

Buff
area?

Breaking
point?

Drier
patch?

Heavy
oil?

Light
oil?

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Bill Spigner's Bowling Clinic

■ Over the years I've watched both the PBA bowlers and the top amateurs, and it seems to me they all get the ball well out over the foul line at the release. I throw a two-piece reactive resin ball, and it seems to roll out early and not snap in the back end. Is this because I don't throw hard enough, or do I not get the ball out over the foul line far enough? My local pro shop says a two-piece reactive resin ball may not be right for me because it heats up too fast and hooks early. However, most manufacturers claim these balls skid through the heads and hook late. I'm confused—what can I do to generate more speed and get the ball farther over the foul line?

Getting the ball well out onto the lane upon release helps you complete the lifting and turning of the ball, and in addition helps you better play the heads of the lane: the first 15 feet of the lane past the foul line. It's very important for the ball to slide through the heads so you can play the lane right. If the ball rolls early, it's difficult to hold it on line long enough for it to finish strong on the back end. Playing the heads correctly—either by finding where the oil is, or by using speed or more loft to get the ball to slide far enough before it hooks—is extremely important for the ball to be effective when it reaches the pins.

In order to control and change the amount of loft and to vary speed, you need a great deal of practice. The recreational player can't expect to develop a sophisticated game like that of a pro, but adding a few shots can help anyone develop a stronger all-around game.

The amount of loft can vary greatly depending on the bowler and the lane conditions. As a basic rule of thumb, I would recommend you get the ball a minimum of two feet out on the lane and a maximum of six feet out.

There are a few good ways to develop more loft. One method that has been used for years is to put a towel on the lane just past the foul line and try to loft the ball over the towel. Start with the towel one foot over the foul line, and gradually increase it to two or three feet depending on how much loft you're trying to get.

To physically help you get the loft, you'll want to lift from your upper arm and shoulder. You should use the larger muscles in your upper arm and shoulder to aid your

hand in lifting the ball out onto the lane. Think of the ball as an extension of your hand, and your hand as an extension of your arm. Have your arm lift your hand and ball, not just the hand lifting the ball. And remember, as you're doing this, that it's important your body doesn't pull up.

You also should use your legs to help get loft on the ball. You can do this by straightening out your sliding leg as you're releasing the ball. This will make your body rise up slightly. If you start this straightening of your sliding leg just as you're releasing the ball, you will release the ball on the upswing more, which will help you get it out on the lane easier. This method takes a little better timing than using the arm and shoulder method I mentioned above. PBA champion Butch Soper, who rolled a 300 on TV this past summer, has employed this technique through out his career to help him get the lift and loft he needs.

Another method to create loft would be to release the ball from a higher position by using less knee-bend or by trying to release the ball from the knee. Either way, the ball will be released from a higher point, which will help it get out on the lane.

The best way to get more speed on the ball is to get your body and arm traveling faster. This is most easily accomplished by simply starting the ball moving sooner. By moving the ball a little earlier than you normally would, your feet will move faster to stay in time.

With this technique you're not making any changes in your form; you're just doing it faster. With your body moving faster, it will be easier to accelerate your entire arm on your downswing and through your release. You don't want to make your swing faster in your backswing—you just want to get your ball in motion sooner.

Remember that although it worked the last time you bowled, it isn't necessarily going to work the next time you play. Be prepared mentally to relearn how to play the lanes all the time—not only from week to week, but from game to game.

Regarding reactive resin balls: These balls grip more on a dry surface and slide a little longer in oil than the older urethane balls, all things being equal. This is why the balls received the nickname "reactive," because of their reaction to oil and dryness. If the lane or heads are dry, all types of balls are going to roll early, unless you find a way



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to get the ball to slide long enough. But a reactive resin ball will be more volatile because it's more sensitive to dry conditions. The big attraction of a reactive resin ball is that if you can get it to your break point correctly, the ball has a greater potential back-end reaction.

With the great variety of reactive resin balls now available, talk to your pro about some different drilling procedures and types of reactive resin balls that might help solve your problem. You want to do this in addition to working on your speed and loft.

■ Why do ball companies make their balls so brightly colored?

The main reason is marketing. With bright colors, the manufacturers can introduce a new ball and make a big impact. At one time high-average bowlers wouldn't consider bowling with balls that were so brightly colored. Today all colors are accepted. The bowlers only care about how the ball reacts.

Bowlers today buy balls at a much faster rate than ever before in a never-ending effort to try out the latest and greatest ball. When a bowler is expanding his equipment line to cover more conditions, it's nice to have not only a different ball reaction, but different colored balls. ●

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.