

Five minutes with ...

Bill Spigner: bowling champion

• **Lives in:** Vernon Hills

Age: 47

• **Background:** 10-time Professional Bowlers Association tournament winner; owner, Hawthorn Lanes, Vernon Hills; bowling instructor; Bowling Digest magazine columnist.

• **What's the biggest mistake novice bowlers make?** Thinking the game is easy to play and taking up the game without any formal education on the basics.

Also, most novice bowlers will pick up a house ball that's ill-fitted. Then they have to grab the ball hard and feel they have to throw the ball hard with their hand and arm to get results.

• **What should they be doing?** Learning the basics of playing: the approach and the targeting. For the approach, bowlers should be taking four or five steps before releasing the ball.

For throwing, you want to grip the ball very lightly and let the ball control the swing so it stays on a straight line.

• **What mistakes are common for more advanced players?** They don't adjust for the oil changing on the lane. After a consistent approach and throwing a hook, the hardest part of the game becomes understanding how

By Hilary Shenfeld

the ball is reacting on the lane and being able to control the ball.

• **What should they do?** Learn how to adjust to the oil as it's changing while they're bowling.

• **Is bowling good exercise?** It is tiring. When you're bowling at a faster pace, you get your heart rate up pretty good. You are taking a number of swings, walking at a brisk pace, your body is in motion and you have a weight hanging down which applies resistance. I wouldn't say it's like lifting weights or running, but it does have some benefit.

• **What's your advice for picking the proper ball?** At bowling centers, the weights range from 6 pounds to 16 pounds, and they come with varying sizes of holes. The key might not be the weight but the fit of the ball. The thumb should fit properly — when you put your thumb and fingers in the ball, you want to be able to grip the ball no harder than you would grip an egg — and you shouldn't have to squeeze too hard to hold onto it. That way, the ball feels lighter.

• **What makes a champion bowler?** You have to have the desire, dedication and determination to succeed. It takes many years of hard practice, learning and patience.



Pro bowler Bill Spigner says more important than the weight of a bowling ball is a proper fit.

Daily Herald Photo/Vincent Pierri

• **Do you like watching bowling competitions on TV?** I watch it and study the players, so it helps me to teach other people about the physical aspect of the game. I watch what kind of equipment they're using. Manufacturers come out with new equipment every four to five months. The technology is constantly evolving and you want to stay on the cutting edge so if there's something out there that will help you play better, you want to be able to use it.

• **What's the best time to get an open lane?** Usually Saturday and Sunday afternoons and up until 8 p.m. during the week.