



## **6 simple ways to improve your bowling**

After learning the fundamentals and mechanics of proper bowling, many bowlers look for additional tips, techniques, or other guidance to bowl better. Below is an updated list of a few bowling pointers previously addressed in a “Bowling 101” online special in 2001.

### **1. Straight balls for strikes are often ineffective.**

The highest theoretical average for a bowler with a straight ball is stated to be about 195. This is not a bad average, right? But, and note, the hypothetical average for a bowler with a hook ball is around 300! (Wow!)

The reason a straight ball is less effective than a hook ball is because it will deflect away from the 5-pin and cannot carry all 10 pins, although it may be in the pocket. A hook ball moves into the strike pocket with inward rotation and a better angle and hits harder and deflects less due to more angle and revolutions. Plus, it will carry more pins.

However, if you want to throw a ball similar to a straight ball but want a little more pin action, keep your straight arm-swing, but put your fingers at 5 o'clock on the ball instead of at 6 o'clock. Then do your normal shot and see what the added power of the offset of the fingers and the resulting small rotation and hook can do to your pin carry. (Left-handed bowlers should put their fingers at 7 o'clock.)

If you want a more powerful ball roll, cultivate a minimum three-quarter ball roll described below.

### **2. Backup balls for strike purposes are questionable choices.**

There are excellent bowlers with high averages who use a backup ball (pros often refer to this as a “reverse hook”). For most bowlers, this ball will deflect even more from the pocket and away from the 5-pin than a straight ball, and

the backup ball will not carry the pins as well as a regular hook ball.

To be successful, a right-handed bowler rolling a backup ball should move to and use the left side of the lane and the same target lines as a left-handed bowler. One big plus with the backup ball delivery is the armswing with an open hand keeps the arm and elbow in close to the body for a straighter swing and less “chicken-wing” or arm flap.

His preferred strike pocket is now on the left side of the lane between the 1- and 2-pin where the left-handers play and aim instead of the normal “1-3” pocket on the right side of the lane for right-handed bowlers. This line on the left side will put the backup ball into the left strike pocket with a drive into the 5-pin from the left side for proper deflection and pin carry.

Instead of rolling a backup ball, it is suggested the right-handed bowler work hard to develop a right-to-left hook ball, preferably with a high three-quarter roll described below.

### **3. Use a simple three-quarter ball roll.**

Check it out: Pros today deliver a ball with a three-quarter or modified high rolling, semi-roller ball track often cited as the most powerful ball track or ball roll when executed properly. The ball rotates counterclockwise (right-hander) and drives itself into the strike pocket.

When the three-quarter rolling ball hits the pocket, the pins fall inward and rotate sideways for the best possible pin-mixing action. A pin is 15 inches high, and two pins turning or rotating side-by-side can wreck havoc on the pin deck.

The three-quarter ball track is simple to roll. Place the bowling fingers between 3 o'clock and 6 o'clock on the bowling ball, with the ball positioned straight ahead on a clock face and the thumb at 10 or 11 o'clock. At the release point, the thumb releases, and the ball on the fingers exits a split second later. At re-

lease, the thumb drops and the fingers remain firm at the 4 and 5 o'clock position (right-hander) and 7 and 8 o'clock position (left-hander) to maintain the correct finger release position and to prevent overturning of the fingers, hand or ball. The fingers should not rotate past 3 o'clock for a right-hander or you will overturn the ball.

### **4. Conventional balls, except for medical reasons, should be plugged and re-drilled to a finger-tip grip for better bowling.**

A conventional grip with the bowling fingers inserted to the first joint will exit from the side of the ball and not rotate from under the ball. There is less finger span or length of one or more inches in the ball span in the conventional grip and less rotation compared to a finger-tip release. A finger-tip ball with more span than the conventional grip naturally adds additional finger length and revolutions, with additional hook and ball action.

### **5. Don't play the second arrow.**

Why not, since most of us were told to use the second arrow as the best starting spot? Well, most bowlers play the second arrow and wear out the track as the games begin and that becomes your problem. Since the second arrow target is used more than any other part of the lane, the oil breaks down faster over this track and is often depleted. The track then roughens up and the remaining oil becomes spotty.

The average bowler seeing the ball hook more throws a little outside to compensate for the extra hook. When his ball crosses the track and hits the oil on the other side, the ball slides more forward and leaves more 8-10s and/or 5-7s. Now the bowler is confused or lost.

If this happens to you, the solution is for you to move from the worn second arrow track to another part of the lane—say, between the first and second arrow or to the third arrow or even to another area of the lane away from the track, if these areas are playable. However, if you are afraid to move or can't play anywhere else, move your stance a little

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## ***Choosing a high performance ball***

**Q.** *I recently joined a league after many years on the sidelines. I need a new high performance ball, but I don't know what would be best for me. Can you help?*

**A.** I can only recommend a manufacturer—not which ball it makes. To decide that, you need to visit your local pro shop professional. Ask him or her to watch you bowl so he or she can determine the type of ball you need for your game.

All the ball companies have quality equipment, but I am partial to Roto Grip or Dyno-thane. If you are also in the market for shoes, I recommend Dynorooz from Dyno-thane, which I believe are the most comfortable bowling shoes on the market today.

**Q.** *I have heard that if you can only afford to carry two bowling balls, you should have one that rolls early and one that rolls late. Is that true? And when should you use each?*

**A.** That would be a good combination for a bowler on a budget. As a general



**Khaleel Lowe, who began bowling last year at age 2, appears with his sister, Semiya, following their league session at Crofton.**

rule, you would use the ball that hooks early on freshly oiled lanes or lanes that lean toward heavy oil conditions. You would use the late-reacting ball on lanes that are medium-to-dry and also later in a set when the lanes begin to dry out in the heads and get oil carrydown in the back.

If you can afford it, you should also have a spare ball.

**Q.** *My friends keep telling me that my ball keeps "going Brooklyn." What is "going Brooklyn," and how can I keep this from happening?*

**A.** "Going Brooklyn" means that your ball is crossing over to the opposite pocket from the one you should hit. If you are right-handed, the pocket consists of the 1- and 3-pins. Going Brooklyn means you are hitting the 1- and 2-pins (opposite for left-handers).

This can result from several different factors. You might be aiming at the wrong spot. You might be pulling the ball across your body. You could be hanging up in the ball and releasing it too late. You might just be playing your ball from the wrong angle on the lanes.

I suggest that you first go to your local pro shop to make sure your ball fits you correctly. Then I would ask the shop operator for some help on both where to stand on the approach and what spot to hit. I also would ask where you could sign up for some lessons. This way, if it is a timing or release problem, your coach can help you cure that problem.

Lessons are the most inexpensive way to learn the game. A series of lessons are cheaper than one new ball and last much longer. *Practice won't help if you practice bad habits.* So get a coach, take a lesson, then practice what you learn. The results will be worth the price.

*To ask Bob a question, write askbob@clearwire.net.*

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more inward on the approach and play to the inside edge of the worn second arrow track for a better ball reaction and finish.

### **6. When in trouble, read your ball instead of the lanes.**

Overall, the lane conditioner is not visible to the bowler, and the lane patterns and oil conditions change for many reasons. Without knowledge of the house conditions on which you bowl, do not try to outguess the lanes. Unless you are aware of the various lane changes and the effects on your bowling, do not try to second guess the lane changes.

Instead, read your ball and not the lanes. With a dependable and consistent ball delivery, observe the ball line, where the ball goes, and where the breakpoint of the ball occurs or where the ball turns toward the strike pocket. Note the boards of hook; often the two lanes vary and break down differently as the games progress.

Observe your ball reaction and use the standard adjustment rule: If the ball misses left, move your stance left without moving your target, and if the ball misses to the right, move to the right. Make the best adjustment you can base on the ball and not on the lane. Of course, it's better to read both the lane and ball reaction for the best results.

Good luck and good bowling!

*Harlin Matkins is a retired Naval architect, a certified instructor and graduate of Dick Ritger's Bowling Academy for Instructors, and a certified youth and bowling development instructor for Bowl America.*

### **Korth to appear on Phantom Radio**

Contributing writer Bob Korth is scheduled to appear on Phantom Radio at [www.phantomradioshow.com](http://www.phantomradioshow.com) the week of Dec. 6-12 (and immediately available through Dec. 19 via a link at [ncausbca.org](http://ncausbca.org)) to answer some questions from "The Phantom" himself.