



THE COACH
BY MIKE McGRATH

HANDLING A STICKY SITUATION

Older synthetic approaches and the humidity factor.

Why are all synthetic approaches so sticky, and what can be done to get some kind of slide on these approaches?

— Stanley Bridgestone, Austin, Texas

Actually, all synthetic approaches are not sticky. The cause of sticky synthetic approaches is high humidity in the bowling center. In centers with very low humidity — those in Las Vegas come to mind — the older-style synthetic approaches can be very slick. The reason for the stickiness problem is that old-style synthetic approaches have a relatively small humidity range in which the slide is acceptable. The perfect humidity for old-style synthetic approaches is around 45%, with an acceptable slide generated when the humidity is between 38% and 53%. Wood approaches offer an acceptable slide from around 28% to 60%. In centers with old-style synthetic approaches, the only solution to the problem is to totally control the humidity throughout the building, which is not easy to do in an older bowling center. (Note: I mention "old-style" synthetic approaches because, in recent years, many of the bowling equipment manufacturers have changed their approaches to a textured surface, which gives them a slide characteristic that is more similar to wood approaches. Older synthetic centers can upgrade to this surface.)

HOW TO CHOOSE THE RIGHT BALL

With all the different bowling balls out there, how does a bowler make the correct selection for his/her game?

— Bobby Plaxton, St. George, Utah

The real question involves selecting the best pro shop operator for your game. Even pro bowlers rely on ball reps to select the proper ball and layout for the bowling condition and the type of game that they employ. Therefore, I highly recommend that you select a pro shop operator who is familiar with your game and with the centers where you do most of your bowling in. Once you've selected a shop operator to do business with, you can rely on his/her expertise in selecting the proper balls and layouts to maximize your potential.

GETTING OFF TO A GOOD START

Where should you hold your ball prior to beginning the pushaway? I have heard many different ideas from many coaches, and really can't decide what is best.

— Nancy Fellows, New Brunswick, N.J.

While there is no right or wrong here, I prefer a position whereby the ball can be set straight out in front of the middle of the body and then pushed to the right (for a right-handed bowler) so as to be in line with the right shoulder. The reason I employ this type of positioning is to start the ball in line with the intended swing plane, so you do not have to swing the ball around the hips. As for the height, I will adjust the position based on whether I want to use more speed or less speed with the shot. I hold the ball higher above my waist if I want to throw the ball faster, and lower if I want to throw it slower.

VISUALIZING THE SHOT

How do you target on the lane? Many of my friends say that you should look close to the foul line in order to get the ball down early and read the conditioner pattern.

— Victor Amenta, Gardena, Calif.

I've always been a believer in, with the eye's mind, drawing an imaginary line from the release point to the arrows to the hook point of the ball and finally into the pocket. You should begin your shot by drawing this imaginary line in your head, and then starting your approach with the vision of the correct shot going down the lane. As for where to target, I have seen bowlers target from the foul line (Glenn "Mr. 900" Allison is a good example of a bowler who uses that technique) to the arrows, and even some who have lofted the ball past the arrows (remember Robert Smith when he won the PBA's CLR Classic in Vernon Hills, Ill.?). One of the greatest bowlers of all time, Johnny Petraglia, will adjust his target based on how much the lanes are hooking — with a more distant target on hooking lanes, and a closer target on lanes that are hooking only a little.

AN APPROACH GONE ADRIFT

I will be bowling well, and suddenly I'll miss the pocket to the right, usually resulting in either a washout or a bucket. I think back on those shots and feel like my timing was OK, so I have little idea as to what to correct. Can you give me some help?

— Freddy Garson, Brockton, Mass.

An errant shot like that usually is the result of drifting too far right on the approach. When you make such a shot, try to check where your slide foot ends up near the foul line, and compare it to where the foot usually ends up on good shots. I have found that I should visualize the ball and swing going to the inside portion of the target. Try that, and it should correct your drifting right problem.

Need help with your game? Hall of Famer Mike McGrath answers reader questions each month. Send your question to him c/o Bowlers Journal International, 122 S. Michigan Ave., Suite 1506, Chicago, IL 60603. You may also e-mail him at mikempba13@aol.com.