

BALL CARE

PROTECTING AND MAXIMIZING YOUR EQUIPMENT INVESTMENT

How to get more games and better performance out of your arsenal.

BY MICHELLE MULLEN

BUYING A NEW performance bowling ball is exciting. It also is a bit of an investment, costing anywhere from just over \$100 to just under \$300. Which means it's worth taking time to find



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ways not only to enhance a ball's performance, but also to lengthen its effective life.

While it would be nice to think that simply making the purchase is all you need to do, the reality is that you also need to keep up with proper maintenance procedures in order for the ball to maintain its hook potential and hitting power. Think of it as you would preventive maintenance on a car; you spend a little bit of time and money in order to get better performance and a longer lifespan.

As we know, the lanes have oil on them, and as the manufacturers keep improving their equipment, bowling centers have to apply enough oil to keep up with the ever increasing strength of the equipment. Bowling balls absorb oil, and some do so faster than others. So, unless you're cleaning it after every shot, your ball likely is absorbing oil at a faster rate than you are able to purge it.

What to do? There are three key things you can do to help your bowling ball perform better and last longer:

1. Clean the ball every time you finish bowling.
2. Have the oil purged out of it at your local pro shop.
3. Maintain the ball's surface on an ongoing basis.

Just as a new bowling ball with a fresh cover will hook more, it also will absorb oil as it cuts through the oil to hook. So, cleaning the ball

right after each practice session, league session or tournament is very important.

Use a certified cleaning product, formulated and tested for bowling balls, and clean the ball before you put it back in the bag. This is simply a matter of spraying or otherwise applying cleaner to the ball, wiping it clean, and restoring the reactive tackiness to the cover so it can grab the lane the next time you bowl. Using rubbing alcohol (as was common in the past) no longer is effective, as it's not strong enough to penetrate the volume of oil bowled on now.

Important: If you choose to clean your ball during competition, be sure to read the labels on the ball cleaner (for USBC approval) and check with your league or tournament official regarding their rules on cleaning a ball during competition.

But no matter how diligent you may be, some of the lane oil will soak in faster than we can get it out, especially after three or more games.

At some point, it will be important to perform a safe and effective oil purge at your local pro shop so that you can remove the oil that has penetrated the surface toward the core.

Depending on the type of purge, this process can take from 30 to 45 minutes, or involve leaving your ball overnight for next-day

Bowling Ball Maintenance Products

pick-up. It's important to have this done at a certified pro shop, which has invested in safe products to provide proper ball care without risk or damage to your ball. An oil purge such as this should be performed every 80 to 100 games.

Obviously, your timeline on purging will depend on how much you use a particular ball. If you have only one ball and bowl one night per week, you should have a seasonal oil purge. If you use that ball twice a week, for six games, you should purge the oil halfway through the season.

It's also important to maintain the ball's surface on a regular basis. Whether a ball is polished or dull, its cover will change with use. That's why you need to maintain the ball's surface throughout the season.

What typically happens is that the polish on shiny balls will break down, while duller balls will self-shine. To maintain the intended characteristic of the ball, it's recommended shiny balls be re-polished and dull balls be scuffed up every 10 games — or sooner, based on performance.

You'll notice that you roll your ball along a certain track, as it relates to your gripping holes. That is where the ball track develops, the ball wears down the most, and where flat spots can

develop on the surface. These lines eventually will lead to impaired performance as the ball will lose energy and labor to hook. This is especially prevalent with balls that have been rolled a lot, and that are rolled on higher friction or worn surfaces, such as wood lanes.

You will need to have these track lines removed, with a resurfacing service, to restore performance. A thorough ball resurfacing with the proper pads (whether by hand on a ball spinner or with a machine) should be done every 60 games. (By the way, that's also a good time to replace your finger grips.)

Many pro shops offer ball maintenance packages — either separate, or built into the cost of your bowling ball. Some may offer ball maintenance specials. Consider these options, as these procedures can significantly enhance your ball's performance and lengthen its effective life.

In summary:

- Clean your ball every time you finish bowling.
- Have its surface refreshed every 10 games or so.
- Have a thorough ball resurfacing performed with pads every 60 games.
- Have the oil purged from your ball every 100 games.

Adhere to this plan, and you'll definitely get better performance out of your bowling ball arsenal.

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