

# Bowlers Journal

OCTOBER 2017 • \$5.00 • www.bowlersjournal.com

INTERNATIONAL



# Redemption

**O'Keefe Bags First Career Major  
After 'Going a Little Crazy'**

2017 PWBA Tour Championship  
winner Shannon O'Keefe

# FOUNDATION FRAME

BY MICHELLE MULLEN { [yourbowlingcoach.com](http://yourbowlingcoach.com) }

## Does Your Ball Hook Enough?

**BOWLERS OFTEN** come into the shop or take a lesson, claiming that their ball does not hook enough. If this is happening to you, it can make you start pulling the ball — if not consciously, then subconsciously.

Perhaps you know that you need to relax your swing (and you should), but you just can't seem to. If it's not an issue with your ball fit, it likely is an issue with your reaction. If your ball is not hooking enough, consider these strategies to create more hook...

**1. Adjust.** On a typical house shot, the oil is concentrated in the center of the lane, with less on the outsides toward the gutters. But the width of the oil on the lane is not always from the second arrow on the left to the second arrow on the right. Since oil makes the ball slide more, move your entire line away from the center, toward the gutter (to the right if you are right-handed; to the left if left-handed). Try moving both you and your target outside of the oil.

Your goal is to find the edge of the oil line, so that you can find friction outside of your target and oil inside your target. This way, it will hook if you miss outside your target, but slide if you miss inside your target. You get the most help to hit the pocket, and your swing begins to relax.

We see so many league bowlers who simply do not line up properly on the lane. Sometimes, just a small move will make a big difference, and can help you to string more strikes. I've heard it said, "Don't fall in love with the strike you had eight frames ago." You might have struck, but it might not have been with a strategy that actually gives you the most room for error, or the best carry. Make the moves

to adjust your line to improve both.

Also, don't get too caught up in how another bowler is playing the lane, unless your release, speed and ball choice are very similar. If you try to cross boards like a player who has a higher rev rate, or to play straighter like another bowler who has more speed, it might confuse your efforts to play the lane properly for your game. You need to keep it simple and adjust based on what you see your ball doing, considering the characteristics of the typical house shot we've outlined. Do this without any pre-conceived notions on how you should be playing the lane, whether based on another's style or by pre-selecting an angle. Perhaps start around the second arrow, but be prepared to move your entire line out if your ball is not hooking enough. This might involve expanding your comfort zone on the lane.

**2. Alter the ball's surface.** If the lanes are oilier, try having your ball sanded to add texture so it can grip the lane better. The lower the number on the sanding pad, the more grit applied to the ball. Caution: Do not add too much texture, or you can kill the back-end reaction. If you can't get your ball to hook enough, you may need a stronger ball for the conditions you bowl on. Or, just move your line more outside.

It's also important to maintain the covers of your equipment. Be sure to clean whichever ball you use right after you finish bowling, and do the mainte-

nance suggested by your pro shop.

**3. Improve your ball roll.** A sound release involves a good balance between forward roll and side roll. If you impart too much of either, your ball will not hook as much as if you had a more optimal balance between these two forces. With excessive forward roll, your ball will go fairly straight, typically hooking earlier and then flattening out on the back end. Conversely, with excessive side roll, your ball will skid much longer — in effect, spinning too far down the lane.

I ask my students, "Does more turn create more hook?" Not always. If you were too flat and need some side turn to make the ball finish, then, yes, more turn can create more hook. If, however, you are already too far around the ball and you try to turn it more, the ball will simply skid too far. It will grab much later, if not too late to hook. In this case, turning the ball less will actually create more hook.

It's not always easy to determine if your ball is hooking too soon or too late, but in either case, the ball is not hooking effectively to create a good reaction on the lane. You start to "help" the ball when it does not react well, at the expense of a loose armswing. If you turn too soon, try to exaggerate staying behind it more to get the ball to read the lane sooner. If you are too flat and your ball does not hook on the backend, create more side turn.

Bowlers who misunderstand their reaction (or lack of) and try to fix it with the wrong solution only exacerbate the problem. For example, if your ball is sliding too far and runs out of time to hook on the backend because your hand is too far around its side, trying to turn

it more (to make it “hook”) only makes it spin more. Staying behind it would be a better fix. If your ball is rolling too flat and you find yourself forcing or pulling it to the pocket, try to create some side turn so you’ll see it arc more. Then you can project it with trust because you’ll know it will hook back.

Note: On Sport/Challenge patterns, where you have to play the breakpoint (versus the oil line on the typical house shot), rolling through the ball to create a heavier roll helps you to create reaction (sooner) in the midlane, just past the arrows. Since you don’t have much room to miss your target, a heavier roll will help the ball recover toward the pocket when you miss outside your target because the ball will read the lane sooner. When you over-turn the ball and miss outside, you will see it just skid over rather than getting into a roll toward the pocket.

Even on a house shot, excessive side turn will create an over/under reaction. That is, the ball will skid too much in

the oil, but when you try to move out and play straighter, it over-hooks when it does grab on the backend. Improve your mid-lane reaction by turning through the ball, instead of around it, which can also improve your carry.

**4. Overcome obstacles.** Too many bowlers are stubborn about moving outside on the lane because their comfort zone is to hover around the second arrow. It’s a common place for the oil line; however, the oil line may not be at the second arrow, but might be farther out toward the first arrow. Therefore, just moving your feet over but still using the second arrow may not be enough to get the ball to hook more. You need to move your entire line into more friction (where there is less oil). If you simply move your feet but keep the same target, you change your angle but are not necessarily creating the proper arc in the right part of the lane to consistently hit the pocket and carry.

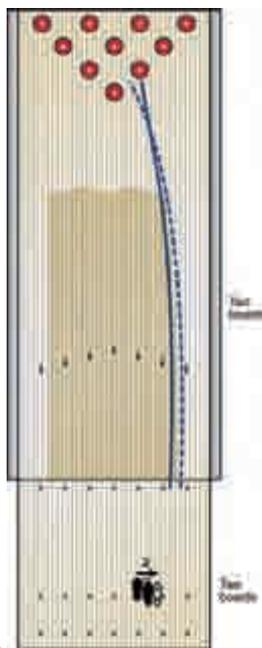
The answer? Practice. Fear of the gutter is a common reason bowlers tend

to stick to the second arrow. Playing farther out poses the perceived threat of throwing a gutter... but it may be the best place to score. To expand your comfort zone, practice playing first arrow, or even outside of first arrow, next to the gutter. Though intimidating at first, once you do it, playing just outside the second arrow won’t seem so scary.

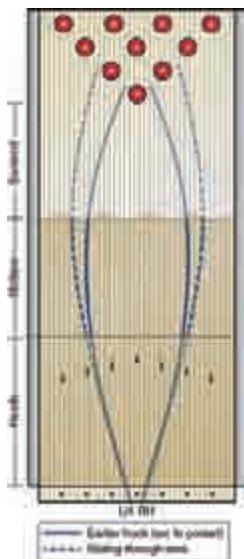
When I have a student who confesses their fear of playing near the gutter, as if the first arrow is too far for them, I have them play outside that arrow, throwing anywhere from 1-4 board without touching the arrow. Become proficient at that, and you will become fearless about playing anywhere outside.

Being able to adjust your strategy for the lane conditions is essential to good scoring. You cannot physically out-perform a bad ball reaction.

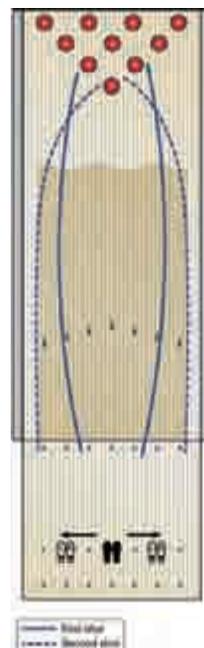
*Michelle Mullen is a Gold coach and author of two books, Bowling Fundamentals and How to Pick Up Spares. For more tips, visit [yourbowlingcoach.com](http://yourbowlingcoach.com).*



**Lining Up:** Many league bowlers do not line up properly on the lane. Sometimes, a small move makes a big difference and can help you string more strikes.



**Playing the Midlane:** On sport patterns, where you have to play the breakpoint (vs. the oil line on the typical house shot), rolling through the ball to create a heavier roll helps create earlier reaction, in the mid-lane just past the arrows.



**In the Zone:** Here, you’re making a zone move right (for righties) or left (for lefties) by making the first arrow the target to get the ball to hook.