

BowlersJournal

OCTOBER 2018 • \$5 • www.bowlersjournal.com

INTERNATIONAL

**Stefanie Johnson's
journey from
heartbreak to triumph
brings first major.**

At Last

FOUNDATION FRAME

BY MICHELLE MULLEN { yourbowlingcoach.com }

Getting That Identical Feel

SOME BOWLERS ARE more sensitive to their “feel” than others, and their performance largely depends on it. Especially for them, getting an identical feel in each of their bowling balls is critical.

However, for a number of reasons, there can be an almost immeasurable difference between each ball — even with the most skilled ball driller. One solution is to use interchangeable thumb inserts. When you take a molded insert from one ball and put it into another (perhaps a spare ball), you get the same thumb hole, which helps your overall feel.

Another reason to use interchangeable inserts is to accommodate fluctuations, large or small, in your thumb as you bowl. Some fluctuations are seasonal, while others involve temperature, humidity, diet and other environmental factors. Whatever the reason, your thumb does fluctuate.

If you bowl year-round and notice big changes in your thumb size, you may decide to have multiple inserts to accommodate seasonal changes. If you notice that your thumb either swells or shrinks a lot while you play, being able to use multiple inserts can help you maintain your feel.

Bowlers often misunderstand their overall role in their arsenal. Using interchangeable thumb inserts does not mean that you don't need to use thumb tape in the hole. While having multiple inserts can minimize how much tape you need to use, it does not eliminate the need to use it. So the idea that having multiple thumb inserts can replace the need to use tape is flawed.

Changing the tape in your thumb hole will enable you to keep up with changes in your thumb so that you can relax your grip on every shot and maintain a consistent swing and a clean release. If your thumb hole is loose, you will have to clench the ball to some degree. Learning to be aware and becoming more sensitive to your grip pressure will enable you to know when you need to adjust the hole.

If you have two different inserts, you want one smaller and one bigger. If you go through huge fluctuations, these sizes should be considerably different. You may even add another insert to your arsenal to help you use less tape during these times. However, to have your best feel on every shot, you need to adjust within them with the proper amount of tape.



Grip Tip: The reason pros adjust their tape before shots is that having the proper hole size on every shot is the only way to maintain a constant grip pressure. Maintain a relaxed grip to make a great shot, every time. Adjust your ball to your hand, not your hand to the ball.

Without the proper-size hole on every shot, you will not be able to maintain a constant grip pressure. That's why you see pros stop to adjust their tape before shots — to maintain a relaxed grip to make a great shot, every time. Adjust your ball to your hand, not your hand to the ball.

Tape is the tool to adjust your ball to your changing hand to maintain consistent performance. Develop an even better feel by knowing when you need it, and you will take your game to the next level. Then, learn how to use it so that you are comfortable in competition, adjusting it without feeling like you are “all thumbs” and holding up play because you are unsure of what you're doing.

If interchangeable thumb inserts sound like a good solution for you, go for it. You will need to equip each ball with an outer sleeve that serves as a receptacle to the inner thumb sleeve(s). And you'll have to start with at least one thumb sleeve. Each additional thumb sleeve can then be made and purchased upon request. There

are different brands to choose from, and both parts come in multiple colors. There is even a handy tool available that you can use to help you remove and install the thumb inserts as you go from ball to ball.

I talk all the time about how important it is to have a good fit and to use tape to adjust your thumb hole. Using interchangeable thumb inserts also can be a key to having that good fit and feel on a reliable basis.

Michelle Mullen is a Gold-certified coach and author of two books, “Bowling Fundamentals” and “How to Make a Spare.”

Reprinted/Posted with permission from *Bowlers Journal International*.