

Bowling Ball Tracks

A bowling ball rolled down the lane will come back with a line of oil round it - this is your ball track and the pattern it makes is useful information as to what kind of bowler you are, how you should get your equipment drilled and prepared to cope best on a range of conditions.

We will explain here the difference between these tracks and show how they evolve into the complex flare patterns of today's reactive balls. Armed with the knowledge of what your ball track means you can choose and prepare your equipment so you struggle less on certain oiling conditions.

Bowling Ball Track Pictures

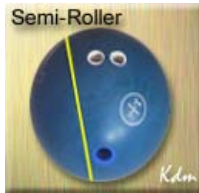
Background

A ball rolled end-over-end straight down the lane will probably have a track between the two finger holes and over the thumb: this ball would make a noise going down the lane - as it rolls over the holes - we would call it a "thumper". But once you develop a certain level of skill your release can impart rotational energy on the ball to create hook or spin. Just by looking at the oil track we can tell what kind of bowler you are, what your hand does at the moment of release, how your ball will react on different lane conditions and, by implication, where you will find it difficult to score on certain conditions.

These pictures are for right handed bowler - reverse them for a left hander.

Semi-Roller

This is the most-usual track for hook bowlers today, with the track being just to the side of the fingers and thumb. Because the ball is not rolling over the middle of the ball it is "tilted" a little as it rolls and impacts with the pins. This tilt creates extra mix as it sends the pins in a more horizontal direction, into each other. This style is used by strokers and can be used with moderate to high revs for more hook potential.



Spinner

Many bowlers, trying to achieve more hook will mistakenly overturn the wrist: this has the effect of creating more axis-tilt - the ball spins more than rolls and the track is reduced in size. A smaller track means there is less of the ball surface in contact with the lane, which means less friction and accordingly less hook. This style will find it very hard to score on heavy oil conditions and need to use dull surface aggressive balls. Carried to the extreme, though, it develops into what we call a "helicopter" ball and is capable of averaging 200+ on any lane condition.



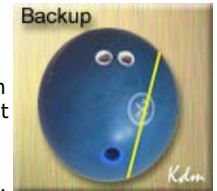
Flare

Modern balls (since the mid-1990's) have introduced the concept of "dynamic imbalance" which means the ball moves off its initial track and migrates to a new track with each roll of the ball. This means that more of the dry surface of the ball touches the lane for increased hook potential. Extra hook means it can be difficult to achieve consistent reaction so there is a balance between control and power: you can often hear crankers complain the lane is "dry" while the low track bowler may say there is too much oil!



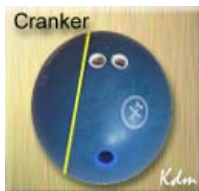
Backup Ball

A right handed hook bowler will hook the ball from the right to left, into the pins. A backup bowler has a "reverse" hook, laying the ball down with reduced revs in the middle of the lane letting it fade right into the pocket. More ladies than men use the backup style and if delivered with slow speed it can hook significantly.



Cranker

A bowler capable of generating high revs by getting the thumb out and keeping the fingers in the ball can generate an inverted track. This is not seen that often.



Full-Roller

This style was successful in the past, but is generally not seen as often with modern lanes and equipment. It is characterised by the track going between the fingers and thumb. If you measure the length of this track you will find it is equal to, or very close to, the circumference of the ball (27 inches). Generally a full-roller style will have only moderate revs and medium hook.

