



THE "O" ZONE

Larry O'Neill

All About Bowling Tape

Many bowlers have a heck of a time with the swelling and/or shrinking of their thumbs. First and foremost, a bowler must determine the largest size his thumb will get and make sure that all of his bowling balls have a thumb hole large enough to accommodate this occurrence (sounds stupid, yet I am amazed how many bowlers can not even put their thumb in their bowling ball after *any* degree of swelling!).

Secondly, a bowler should carry at least one type of bowling tape at all times and should learn how to properly insert this tape in the thumb hole to ascertain the proper "feel" of the ball.

The two most commonly used types of tape are the coarse (white adhesive tape) and the smooth (plastic tape). If you only use the coarse type, make sure it is only inserted on the side of the thumb closest to the finger holes. This will enable you to touch this tape only with the flat, more durable side of your thumb. If you put this tape on the other side of the thumb hole, you likely will be taking a chance of wearing a blister on the (softer) back of your thumb.

If you use only the smooth plastic tape, you may put this tape anywhere

in the thumb hole. Many people will use a combination of the coarse tape (for the front of the thumb) and the smooth tape (for the back of the thumb). In fact, some people prefer to use a combination of these two different types of tape to get the same "feel" to all of their bowling balls—no matter what materials these balls are constructed from.

A bowler should carry at least one type of bowling tape at all times.

Thirdly, a bowler must learn how to insert and remove tape from his ball. The first piece you insert should be approximately started around $1\frac{1}{16}$ to $\frac{1}{8}$ of an inch below the outside surface of the ball. (This will allow for some upward slippage of the tape as you repeatedly release the ball. If your tape continually "rides" up to the surface of the ball, get a different kind!)

If you add more tape, place each new piece about $\frac{1}{32}$ to $\frac{1}{16}$ of an inch *below* the previous piece. This will allow you to remove any number of pieces without disturbing the others.

And remember this tip: if you must remove tape, *always take out one*

more piece than you really need to and then insert a new piece.

Otherwise, if you just remove the number of pieces you need, there will be a residue of adhesive left on the new top piece of tape from the piece that was previously on top of it.

You should also carry with you a small container of rubbing alcohol or acetone (fingernail polish remover) because if you have an occasion to remove all of the tape from your thumb hole, you will need to clean up the adhesive residue left in the thumb hole using one of these materials. (They also are excellent for cleaning and softening rubber finger inserts!)

For those of you who have an occasion to use "new skin" or "skin patch" to protect blisters, cuts, etc., there is an amazing new product on the market—Flexi-Patch, made by Pro Grip.

Basically, it consists of a flexible material with a protective backing. It looks similar to a cork or rubber thumb insert. All you have to do is cut it into any size and shape you need, peel the backing off, and place it on the area you desire.

I was amazed the first time I used Flexi-Patch. I was sure it would not stay on, or, at the very least, the end of it would start rolling up. But to my surprise it did not budge!

It was not that hard to peel off when I was done bowling, but I did have to be cautious as I removed it from the sore area.

So unless you are really into pain, pick up a package of Flexi-Patch the next time you are at your favorite pro shop. They come five to a pack and sell for approximately \$1.25. I promise that you, too, will be amazed at the results!

Larry O'Neill has appeared in the NCABA's Top Ten rankings a record 16 times.