

REPORT DATE	PROJECT NAME	PREPARED BY
March 2025	Webber International Investigation	USBC Rules

OVERVIEW

On February 17, 2025, USBC Rules received a complaint related to a public social media post on Reddit. The complainant sent a screenshot of the post from an individual who claimed to be a member of the Webber International bowling team.

In the Reddit conversation related to strategy for scoring on certain oil patterns, the author described tactics that “we literally do here at webber”.

The author went on to say, “we literally drill 16lb purples for higher diffs and soften them just so we can push the boundaries and throw them more”

The complainant suggested this Reddit post was an admission that players from Webber International were deliberately tampering with Purple Hammer bowling balls to gain an advantage in competitions, which would be a violation of USBC rules.

APPLICABLE RULES

There are two sets of USBC Rules applicable in this situation. The USBC Playing Rules and the USBC Collegiate Rulebook both prohibit unfair tactics.

USBC Playing Rules

With regard to the USBC Playing Rules, Rule 17a(1) states:

17a. Unfair Tactics

An individual can be charged with attempting to gain an unfair advantage in league or tournament play for the following reasons:

1. Directly or indirectly tampering with lanes, pins or bowling balls so they no longer meet USBC specifications.

It is important to note that tampering with equipment in and of itself can be a violation of Rule 17a. The member does not need to use the tampered equipment in a certified competition to break the rule. The rule is violated when equipment is tampered with in an attempt to gain an unfair advantage.

The question of a rules violation hinges on whether the individual’s actions were an attempt to gain an unfair advantage.

The penalty for violating USBC Rule 17a can include suspension from USBC membership.

USBC Collegiate Rulebook

The USBC Collegiate Rulebook also prohibits tampering with equipment. Additionally, USBC Collegiate Rule includes a stricter standard prohibiting conduct:

“Placing the game of tenpins in jeopardy of unfair criticism by the use of dishonest, disreputable tactics in connection with the game of bowling.”



Here is the applicable section of the Collegiate rulebook:

Penalty for Unfair Tactics – Rule 300–Collegiate

USBC Collegiate members, or non-members applying for USBC Collegiate membership, violating the provisions of this rule shall be liable for suspension of or denial of USBC Collegiate membership privileges:

1. Attempting to gain an unfair advantage by directly or indirectly tampering with lanes, bowling pins and/or bowling balls so they no longer meet USBC specifications. Penalty – Forfeiture of game or games, including awards and/or suspension of membership.
2. Placing the game of tenpins in jeopardy of unfair criticism by the use of dishonest, disreputable tactics in connection with the game of bowling.

With regard to violation of Rule 300(2), the question of a rules violation is determined by whether or not the USBC Collegiate participant's actions led to unfair criticism of the game of bowling as a result of their use of dishonest or disreputable tactics.

USBC AUTHORITY

USBC has authority to discipline members for violation of USBC rules for actions that occur outside USBC certified competition.

Anytime a USBC member violates Rule 17 in connection with the game of bowling, USBC may charge the member with a violation. For example, if a member misuses funds in uncertified bowling events, USBC has authority to take action to suspend the membership of that individual.

Similarly, if USBC determines that a member has tampered with equipment to gain an unfair advantage in uncertified competition, USBC has authority to take action to suspend the membership of that individual.

RESEARCH AND EDUCATION

It is important to distinguish between altering a ball for research or educational purposes versus tampering with a ball in an attempt to gain an unfair advantage.

For example, YouTube content creators such as Packy Hanrahan have conducted experiments altering bowling balls. If a member is public with their actions and the intent is clearly education or research then there is no attempt to gain an unfair advantage.

USBC members should be very mindful that any research or educational experiments that involve tampering with equipment must be done transparently and altered equipment destroyed.

If a USBC member tampers with bowling balls in a secret and uses them in practice or uncertified play, then USBC Rules must presume the intent is to attempt to gain an unfair advantage.

INVESTIGATION

USBC notified the coaching staff at Webber International of the complaint. Webber's staff agreed to cooperate with any USBC investigation.

The week of February 24, 2025, USBC Rules staff conducted interviews with the individual responsible for the Reddit post as well as members of the Webber International varsity team and coaching staff and support staff.



In total USBC interviewed six players, the associate head coach, a Kegel employee and an individual outside the program with information about the complaint.

SUMMARY OF FACTS

Through a series of interviews, USBC learned that on January 22, 2025, two Webber International varsity athletes requested permission from the associate head coach at Webber International to conduct what they described as an experiment in the Kegel Training Center where the team practices. For the purpose of this report, we will refer to these individuals as Athlete #1 and Athlete #2.

Initial Interviews

USBC rules staff first contacted the student athlete who posted on Reddit, we will refer to him as Athlete #4. He stated that the post accidentally implied that Webber was doing something illegal. His explanation was that the "we" in the post is the collegiate community. When asked who in the collegiate community was soaking bowling balls in chemicals, he stated he did not know of anyone in particular and no one at Webber.

After pressing more about the practice of softening bowling balls, Athlete #4 indicated he knew about an experiment conducted by a Webber Athlete, we will call Athlete #1. The experiment involved a 78D Black Hammer. According to Athlete #4, Athlete #1 softened a 78D Black Hammer for two days straight. Athlete #4 watched Athlete #1 throw the ball on a 48-50 ft pattern and it did not stay on the lane. He said this occurred a month or two ago. Athlete #4 said, this was the first time experimenting with soaking balls and Athlete #4 claimed it never happened on Purple Hammers and the 78D Black Hammer ball that was involved never left the building.

USBC rules staff then interviewed Athlete #1.

Athlete #1 stated he did an experiment about a month ago to see what would happen to a bowling ball he used as a practice ball if it was softened. According to Athlete #1, he asked permission from his coach if he could do this experiment, and it was approved.

Athlete #1 stated he used MEK (Methyl Ethyl Ketone) that he got from Home Depot and did the experiment at the Kegel Training Center. Athlete #1 said no one had access to the bucket. When the ball was taken out, the hardness read at around 38-39.

Athlete #1 said it was common knowledge that he was doing this experiment. He stated the MEK has a strong odor so people did know about it. Athlete #1 said the ball was thrown at Kegel, but did not leave the building. Athlete #1 acknowledged using the altered Black Hammer at an uncertified sweeper conducted at the Kegel Training Center the night of January 22, 2025.

Through additional interviews USBC learned the Webber associate head coach gave permission to conduct an experiment on the 78D Black Hammer on the condition the experiment was done in a safe manner and that the altered ball was not leave the Kegel training center. The coach said the permission was specific to conduct the experiment only with the 78D Black Hammer. The coach said that since the team did not intend to use a 78D ball in competition, the students could experiment on the ball without concern of its use in USBC Collegiate competition.

Other Webber athletes and staff were aware the athletes were given permission to experiment on the 78D Black Hammer ball. This was generally known and in the open as an approved research experiment.

Athlete #1 and Athlete #2 stated they purchased two containers of MEK from Home Depot, along with gloves and a bucket. They then proceeded to fill a bucket with the MEK and prepared to soak the bowling ball in the chemical in the locker room area of the Kegel Training Center.

However, USBC rules staff learned the athletes went beyond the one ball they were approved to alter for the experiment.

When interviewing Athlete #2, he said they first soaked the Black Hammer 78D in a bucket of MEK for about 30-45 minutes. After they took that ball out, a Purple Hammer was soaked for 20 minutes. Athlete #2 also confirmed that night an uncertified sweeper was held at Kegel where both balls were used. After the sweeper, the Black Hammer 78D was placed back in a bucket and soaked overnight.

Athlete #2 said neither of those balls were thrown outside of the Kegel Training Center after they were soaked. Athlete #2 said he practiced with the altered Purple Hammer for maybe 2-3 days. He then placed it in his locker for a while. Athlete #2 said he needed more room in the locker, so he took the altered ball home. That was about 2-3 weeks ago. Athlete #2 said the soaked ball was one that he no longer used. He had used in collegiate competition back in 2022, but not since.

USBC re-interviewed Athlete #1 considering details shared by Athlete #2. Athlete #1 took us through the soaking process that was done January 22-23, 2025.

Athlete #1's Black Hammer 78D was soaked first for about 20 minutes. After that Athlete #2's Purple Hammer was soaked for about 20 minutes. Then Athlete #1 also soaked an International release Purple Hammer, the Purple Solid Urethane Hammer, for about 30 minutes.

After throwing the Black Hammer 78D a couple times during practice and for some frames in the sweeper, the ball was soaked a second time, this time overnight. Athlete #1 confirmed that Athlete #2's Purple Hammer was used in the sweeper. From his recollection, Athlete #2 finished fifth in the sweeper and cashed.

After asking if anyone else was involved, Athlete #1, told us that another individual who we will refer to as Athlete #3 helped remove the Black Hammer 78D from the bucket after it soaked overnight.

He said a different Kegel staff member assisted in securing the bucket in a safe location overnight.

Athlete #1 was apologetic and said he will take responsibility for any penalty assessed.

USBC rules staff interviewed the Webber Associate Head Coach.

With regards to the softening of a bowling ball, the coach confirmed they were approached by Athlete #1 and Athlete #2 where Athlete #1 asked if he could do an experiment on his Black Hammer 78D bowling ball by soaking it to soften it. The coach approved the experiment but insisted the ball cannot leave the Kegel Training Center. The coach stated they were unaware of Athlete #2's Purple Hammer being altered or the Purple Solid Urethane Hammer.

USBC rules staff asked the coach about the sweeper, who runs it and who can compete in it. They indicated that the Kegel staff member ran the sweeper and it is open to any Webber player or alumni along with Kegel employees. They stated they have had other collegiate bowlers bowl who may happen to be at Kegel when the Sweeper is conducted along with recruits if they happen to be visiting.



The coach also stated that Athlete #1 threw the ball the next day during an open period. The coach stated they heard Athlete #1 say something to another coach about taking the ball this weekend to a tournament and the coaches said that cannot be done. Athlete #1 told USBC that he was joking when he made that statement.

The coach indicated they only learned about Athlete #2's Purple Hammer being altered and Athlete #1 soaking the Purple Solid Urethane Hammer after USBC started to investigate. The coach said they never gave approval for any other ball than the Black Hammer 78D to be altered.

The coaching staff and Kegel staff were not aware Athlete #1 and Athlete #2 had soaked a Purple Hammer and a Purple Solid Urethane Hammer.

USBC Rules staff interviewed Athlete #3

When asked to share what he knows related to the Reddit post, Athlete #3 stated he knew about a Purple Hammer Athlete #2 submerged in MEK for 20 minutes. Athlete #3 said he understood this was done to an old ball and it never left Kegel. Athlete #3 also acknowledged a Black Hammer 78D was soaked for 18 hours in the MEK but is unaware of any other ball being soaked.

Athlete #3 did admit he was briefly involved in the experiment as he was asked by Athlete #1 if he could help remove the ball from the bucket, which he obliged to do. Athlete #3 said he believed the coaching staff knew about the experiment because Athlete #1 said it was approved. Athlete #3 says he did not alter any equipment he owned.

Use of the tampered equipment

Athlete #1 and Athlete #2 both said they practiced with the chemically altered bowling balls. The evening of January 22, 2025, the Kegel Training Center hosted a private uncertified sweeper tournament. The event had a \$20 entry with an opportunity for bowlers to earn prize money based on performance. Athlete #1 and Athlete #2 competed in the tournament using the illegally altered balls. Athlete #2 finished in the top 5 and earned prize money using his illegally altered Purple Hammer. The tournament manager and other competitors were not aware illegal balls were used.

The Webber International Associate Head Coach also competed in the sweeper tournament and saw Athlete #1 using the altered Black Hammer 78D. They said they considered his use part of his experiment and that the ball performed poorly and Athlete #1 didn't cash. They were not aware Athlete #2 was using an altered Purple Hammer in the event.

Following his initial use of the altered Black Hammer 78D ball, Athlete #1 decided to further soak the Black Hammer 78D ball again in the MEK, this time overnight. He asked for assistance from Kegel staff member to put the bucket in a secure location. The staff member provided this assistance stating they understood it was for the approved experiment. The staff member stated that they were not aware the athletes had also altered the Purple Hammer and the Purple Solid Urethane Hammer.

Athlete #1 then threw the altered Black Hammer 78D ball again in practice. At this point, after soaking overnight, Athlete #1 stated the ball was visibly damaged with the shell disintegrating with use. Athlete #1 said that he then put the ball in his locker and has not used it since. Athlete #1 stated the ball never left the facility. Athlete #1 stated the Black Hammer 78D involved was never used in any USBC competition prior to being altered.

Athlete #1 stated that the Purple Solid Urethane Hammer ball of his that was altered never left the facility.

Athlete #2 stated that after initially practicing with his altered Purple Hammer and using it in the sweeper tournament, he placed the ball in his locker at the training facility. However, a few days later he said he took the altered ball home to make room for other equipment. Athlete #2 stated the Purple Hammer involved was used in USBC Collegiate competition prior to being altered, but had not been used in USBC Collegiate competition since 2022.

Athlete #2 says he did not bowl with the altered Purple Hammer outside the training facility after it was altered.

PREVIOUS EXPERIMENTS

Athlete #1 told investigators that January 22, 2025 was not the only time he was aware of experiments softening bowling balls. Athlete #1 said that in 2024, he understood that the Kegel staff member had soaked a Purple Hammer and used it to see the ball reaction. Athlete #1 said that he observed the staff member throwing the ball at the training center.

When interviewed, the Kegel staff member agreed that they had conducted such an experiment with a Purple Hammer in 2024, although they did not recall Athlete #1 observing. The staff member said the experiment was something they did on their own and was not approved in advance by Kegel or Webber International coaches. They said the ball was never used in any competition and offered to provide it to USBC as part of the investigation.

BALL TESTING

While there was no specific allegation of Webber International using an illegally altered ball in USBC Collegiate competition, as a matter of due diligence, USBC Rules requested that Webber International send all urethane bowling balls used in competition during the current season be sent to USBC for testing. Furthermore, USBC requested Webber send all urethane balls that were going to be used in the approaching post season competition.

Additionally, USBC requested the balls altered by Athlete #1 and Athlete #2 be sent to USBC along with the ball altered by the Kegel staff member in 2024.

To the extent USBC Rules had access to ball cards from USBC Collegiate events, USBC Rules confirmed Webber International sent all urethane balls used in competition.

USBC's equipment specifications staff tested all of the balls submitted by Webber International in USBC's lab. USBC found no indication of tampering with the balls submitted that were used in competition.

INTEGRITY OF USBC COLLEGIATE COMPETITION

USBC has not found any evidence an illegally altered bowling ball was used in USBC Collegiate competition. Furthermore, there is no allegation that any players from Webber International used an illegal ball in USBC Collegiate competition.

USBC has tested and has confirmed all balls Webber International intends to use for the 2025 USBC Intercollegiate post season meet the expected hardness of used urethane balls.

Therefore, USBC is confident in the integrity of the 2025 USBC Intercollegiate competitions.

USBC RULES DETERMINATION

Athlete #1 & Athlete #2**USBC Rule 17a**

The actions of Athlete #1 and Athlete #2 are not analogous to a researcher or public content creator.

Athlete #1 and Athlete #2 secretly tampered with the Purple Hammer balls. The Webber International coaches and Kegel staff were unaware of their actions or intent.

Athlete #1 and Athlete #2 then practiced with the tampered balls in an attempt to determine if there could be an advantage using the tampered balls.

Athlete #1 and Athlete #2 went a step further and used the tampered balled in an uncertified competition. Athlete #2 benefited from the unfair advantage of the tampered ball to earn prize money in competition.

As previously stated, USBC has authority to discipline members for violation of USBC rules for actions that occur outside USBC certified competition. Anytime a USBC member violates Rule 17 in connection with the game of bowling, USBC may charge the member with a violation.

A complaint is being filed with USBC Rules that Athlete #1 and Athlete #2 violated USBC rule 17a.

The athletes have the option to appeal any determination according to USBC Disciplinary Procedures.

USBC Collegiate Rule 300(2)

As previously stated, with regard to violation of Rule 300(2), the question of a rules violation is determined by whether or not the USBC Collegiate participant's actions led to unfair criticism of the game of bowling as a result of their use of dishonest or disreputable tactics.

While the Rule 17a violation stems from Athlete #1 and Athlete #2 using tampered equipment in practice and uncertified competition, the potential Rule 300(2) violation comes from the simple fact that Collegiate athletes are engaged in deliberately altering equipment. These actions risk calling into question the integrity of USBC Collegiate competition and certainly led to unfair criticism in the public as a result of these disreputable tactics.

USBC rules has made an administrative determination that Athlete #1 and Athlete #2 violated USBC Collegiate Rule 300(2) and are ineligible for the 2025 USBC Collegiate Postseason.

The athletes have the option to appeal this determination to the USBC Legal and Ethics Committee.



Webber International Associate Head Coach**USBC Rule 17a**

USBC Rules staff does not see facts to support a USBC Rule 17a violation.

USBC Collegiate Rule 300(2)

USBC believes the Webber International Associate Head Coach's intent was for the altering of bowling balls to be strictly for educational and research purpose. Nevertheless, because Athlete #1 and Athlete #2 were not supervised during the activity, altering a bowling ball resulting in disreputable tactics within the program occurred.

Again, the potential Rule 300(2) violation comes from the simple fact that Collegiate athletes are engaged in deliberately altering equipment. These actions risk calling into question the integrity of USBC Collegiate competition and certainly led to unfair criticism in the public as a result of these disreputable tactics.

USBC rules has made an administrative determination that the Webber International Associate Head Coach's violated USBC Collegiate Rule 300(2). As a penalty, the coach is placed on probation for one year. Any additional violations during your probation will result in in suspension from USBC Collegiate.

The coach has the option to appeal this determination to the USBC Legal and Ethics Committee.

Athlete #3

Athlete #3 used poor judgment to become involved with ball soaking project. He did not receive permission from the Webber Coaches to be part of the experiment and his participation was kept secret. Assisting Athlete #1 and Athlete #2 risks a perception that Athlete #3 may have tampered with equipment as well, despite no evidence of that.

USBC Rules staff has determined that Athlete #3's actions do not rise to level of a rule violation.

Athlete #4**USBC Rule 17a**

USBC has not received information that Athlete #4 tampered with equipment.

USBC Collegiate Rule 300(2)

Athlete #4's Reddit post is a direct violation of Rule 300(2) at face value. His post stated that the Webber International program was soaking Purple Hammers in an attempt to push the boundaries.

While Athlete #4 now claims that was not his intended message, his statements, have led to unfair criticism of the game of bowling as a result of his actions.

USBC rules has made an administrative determination that Athlete #4 violated USBC Collegiate Rule 300(2) and is ineligible for the 2025 USBC Collegiate Postseason.

The athlete has the option to appeal this determination to the USBC Legal and Ethics Committee.



Kegel staff member**USBC Rule 17a**

The actions of the Kegel staff member on January 22-23, 2025 does not rise to level of a rule violation.

However, the actions of the Kegel staff member in 2024 that were detailed in the "Previous Experiments" section of this report do violate USBC Rule 17a.

The Kegel staff member stated that they tampered with USBC equipment and used the equipment on various patterns to better understand what would happen. They stated they did so without the knowledge or permission of Kegel. It was not an official research project, but rather for their own personal knowledge.

A complaint is being filed with USBC rules that the Kegel staff member violated USBC rule 17a.

The member has the option to appeal this determination according to USBC Disciplinary Procedures

ADVISORY TO USBC MEMBERS

USBC members should be advised not to tamper with or alter USBC approved equipment. Any tampering with equipment may result in suspension.

USBC members wanting to conduct research on products, should consider informing USBC Rules in advance to confirm their actions will not violate any USBC rules or policies.

