

Mallet from a Bowling Ball

By Mick McCabe



This is a project I did years back but still have photos of. Its using an old Lignum Vitae bowling ball to make a wood carvers mallet. The ball will have two end caps that can be forced out showing the centre of the ball. I hold it in a big clamp and with a Forstner bit drill right through if you can or half way from each side.



Once the hole is through the ball it's mounted on the lathe with a scrap jam chuck type tapered dowel at one end to drive it and a revolving centre in the other end that will allow it to spin freely. True the ball up which will mean its concentric with the drilled hole through the centre.



I have found what works best for me making these is to remove the ball from the lathe. Then turn a shaft for the mallet roughly but leaving it too fat, turn down the section to match the hole through the ball and leave it slightly long so it sticks out the end of the mallet by about say 15mm or so. I then cut a slot in the shaft part so a wedge can be driven in to expand the shaft into the hole through the ball. I normally use 2-part epoxy type glue and glue the hole and the wedge before knocking the wedge in. After its set overnight you can trim a bit off the end with the wedge in and find a new centre to remount it on the lathe as shown, the shaft is left too long at the far end so it can be held in the chuck.



This is the mallet almost finished but shows the extra at the ball end ready to be parted off, the same in the handle end. The reason the shaft was so much oversized is to allow for the flare into the mallet end. I saw a photo on a really old antique mallet on the internet and thought it looked like it would be comfortable shape so worth the waste of the extra wood.



You can see here how the shape of the handle blends into the mallet head. The keen eyed may notice the joint has an inlay, god knows how but something moved when the glue was drying so it left an imperfect join so I turned a recess into the join and filled it with plastic wood. You can also see the ebony wedge going right through the waste wood in the revolving centre.



The top one is my own mallet that has been used for a few years and not a mark on it, the second one was a copy for my mate who liked my mallet and ended up very close. Its quite a small mallet but decent weight due to the heavy wood.



I ended up making a set on various sized mallets all the same style, the one we have just seen being made is the second smallest and it's really the only one I have used apart from the odd time the smallest has been used too. If you are looking for a bowling bowl to make a mallet check that its actually wood as some are

some sort of plastic / Bakelite type material and probably either not good for turning or probably risky stuff to breathe the dust?



These photos show some other turned mallets and a repousse silversmiths hammer which I turned a ebony shaft for in a traditional style with the bulbous end, I got the head at a car boot sale with snapped handle but its really good quality old tool so made a fitting handle. The other two mallets are either wood carvers or stone carvers type mallets, but these have Aluminium bronze heads, very heavy for their size and really tough stuff, the bronze was turned on a metal turning lathe.

So, I have a mallet for every occasion now. The thing about making tools or parts for tools is they will probably still be around long after I am gone so a worthy use of nice timbers.

Thanks, Mick