Balls and Frisbees

Question:

A smooth, gentle river flows past a cylindrical post. At the sides of the post, is the water level higher, lower, or equal to its level in the open river?

Observations About Balls and Frisbees

- Balls slow down in flight
- The greater its speed, the quicker it slows
- Spinning balls curve in flight
- Frisbees use air to support themselves

Aerodynamic Forces: Drag

- Fluid flowing past object causes drag
- Drag Force
  - results from slowing the flowing fluid
  - pushes object directly downstream
  - transfers downstream momentum to object

Aerodynamic Forces: Lift

- Fluid bending at object causes lift
- Lift Force
  - result from deflecting the flowing fluid
  - pushes object at right angles to the flow
  - transfers sideways momentum to object

Types of Drag & Lift

- Surface friction causes viscous drag
- Turbulence causes pressure drag
- Deflected flow causes lift
- Deflected flow causes induced drag

Perfect Flow Around a Ball

- Outward bend in front
  - high pressure, slow flow
- Inward bend on sides
  - low pressure, fast flow
- Outward bend in back
  - high pressure, slow flow
- Pressures balance, so only viscous drag

Question:

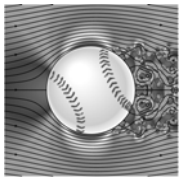
A smooth, gentle river flows past a cylindrical post. At the sides of the post, is the water level higher, lower, or equal to its level in the open river?

Onset of Turbulence

- Fluid flowing into rising pressure slows
  - It accelerates backward
  - It loses speed and kinetic energy
- Fluid flowing near surface slows
  - Surface layer experiences viscous drag
  - It loses speed and kinetic energy
- If surface flow stops, turbulence ensues

Imperfect Flow, Low Speeds

- Pressure rises in front
- Pressure drops on side
- Big wake forms behind
- Wake pressure is approximately ambient
- Ball experiences large pressure drag



Boundary Layer

- Flow near surface forms “boundary layer”
- At low Reynolds number (<100,000)
  - boundary layer is laminar
  - slowed by viscous drag
- At high Reynolds number (>100,000)
  - boundary layer is turbulent
  - not slowed much

Imperfect Flow, High Speeds

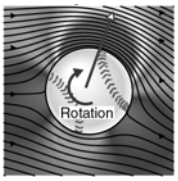
- Pressure rises in front
- Pressure drops on side
- Small wake forms behind
- Wake pressure is approximately ambient
- Ball experiences small pressure drag

Tripping the Boundary Layer

- To reduce pressure drag
  - initiate turbulence in the boundary layer (trip)
  - delay flow separation on back of ball
  - shrink the turbulent wake
- Examples: Tennis balls and Golf balls

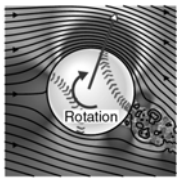
Spinning Balls, Magnus Force

- Surface pulls flow with it
- One side experiences longer inward bend
- That side has lower pressure and faster flow
- Overall flow is deflected
- Magnus lift force



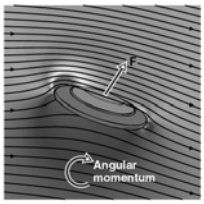
Spinning Balls, Wake Force

- Surface pulls flow with it
- Wake is asymmetric
- Overall flow is deflected
- Wake deflection lift force



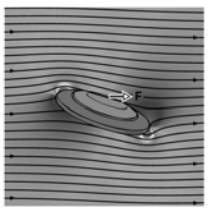
Frisbees

- Above Frisbee
  - airflow bends inward
  - low pressure, high speed
- Below Frisbee
  - airflow bends outward
  - high pressure, low speed
- Pressure imbalance lifts the Frisbee



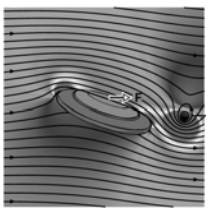
Starting Flight

- Airflow starts symmetric
- No net deflection of air
- No lift



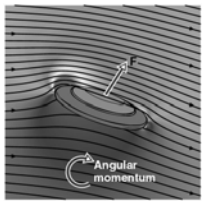
Vortex Shedding

- Trailing airflow unstable
- Vortex peals away with ccw angular momentum
- Remaining airflow has cw angular momentum



Stable lift

- After vortex is shed, Frisbee has lift
- Air is deflected downward overall
- Frisbee is pushed upward by air
- Airflow around Frisbee has angular momentum



Summary About Balls and Frisbees

- The air pressures around these objects are not uniform and result in drag and lift
- Balls experience mostly pressure drag
- Spinning balls experience Magnus and Wake Deflection lift forces
- A Frisbee's airfoil shape allows it to deflect the air to obtain lift