

Bowlers Journal

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INTERNATIONAL

2017 BJI PERSON OF THE YEAR TREVOR KLING

Tribute to Trevor

The too-brief life that
underscored bowling's big heart

THE LIST ISSUE

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- ... and many more lists!

THE PRO APPROACH

BY BILL SPIGNER { billspigner@aol.com }



17 Tips from 17 Top Coaches

THERE ARE SO MANY great players in bowling today, and virtually all of them have one thing in common: the benefit of some great coaching.

This month, I decided to ask some of the best coaches in the sport to provide a tip. Some have to do with the physical game, while others deal with the mental side. Not every tip will pertain to your game, but enough will that I highly suggest reading every one of them. Rarely does anyone get to learn from so many great coaches...

1. Del Warren, Gold-certified coach: “In my years of studying the greatest players, there are a few things they all do. One of them is that the ball swings under the shoulder with the arm perpendicular to the floor on the way back, and back under it on the downswing into the release. It does not go around the bowling side leg. With many league bowlers, the ball will swing around the leg like a merry-go-round. Instead, we are looking for a Ferris-wheel type of swing plane. To improve your swing, get in front of a mirror, which will allow you to see yourself, and practice with a milk carton — swinging it under your shoulder on the way back and forward. This will help with your lateral spine tilt, which will create space under your shoulder for the swing. This will improve your accuracy and consistency, and even increase your rev rate. I know this will help, as I’ve seen some miraculous improvement by doing just this.”

2. Missy Parkin, LPBT champion and Team USA member: “Having a loose and free arm swing is key for consistency and repeatability. That

starts with having a proper ball fit. Your thumb should be completely inside the thumbhole (for those with a traditional one-handed style) and your thumb should fit snug inside the hole. You want your thumbhole drilled as big as your thumb gets, then use insert tape to create the proper snug fit and allow your hand to relax while bowling. You should have very little grip pressure on the ball, allowing the weight of the ball to naturally swing your arm back and forth. This will automatically create a fluid, consistent swing. Using insert tape is a must since hands change from day-to-day and can change while you’re bowling.”

3. Josie Ernest-Barnes, LPBT champion and Team USA member: “When I first started bowling, I looked at my breakpoint as a target. I’m not sure how, or why, but that’s just how I did it. As I’ve developed over time, I’ve had to learn how to change where I look depending on what shape I need to create. The faster I need to get the ball right, the closer I look; the straighter I want to throw it, the farther down the lane I look. It took a lot of practice, but being able to look different distances has helped me tremendously.”

4. Ron Hoppe, Gold-level coach: “Who is responsible for creating ball motion? The ball manufacturer? The ball driller? The drilling layout? The lane condition? The answer is none

of them; you, the bowler, are responsible. Every bowler who rolls a ball down a lane — no matter who they are, or how they go about doing it — produces four measurable factors: 1. ball speed at release (average for a PBA bowler is 19.5-mph); 2. rotation rev rate; 3. angle of rotation (zero to 90 degrees); 4. ball track size (with 27 inches being maximum for tilt). It is the combination of these four factors, working together, that produces ball motion. The top professional bowlers have mastered making these adjustments. They can change the motion of a ball a lot or a little just by changing No. 1 or No. 3. Develop your skills to get control of your game.”

5. Bob Learn, PBA champion and collegiate coach: “The tip that helps most people when it comes to the release is a very simple thought — release the ball into the lane. It seems intuitive to throw the ball at the pins; however, most issues with the release come from staying in the ball too long, specifically the thumb. Focusing on rolling the ball ‘into the lane’ works well as it allows the bowler to relax more, resulting in a cleaner and more repeatable release. Once a player has established a consistent transfer of the ball from the thumb to the fingers, they can enhance their roll/rotation at a much more advanced level. The range of motion that can be created through a proper release will enable the player to be more effective on a greater variety of lane conditions.”

6. Diandra Asbaty, Queens champion: “Stay down in your finish position

until the ball hits the pins. It's one of my favorite drills for myself and for my students. Most bowlers don't finish their shot. Post your finish and your consistency and accuracy will be better."

7. Ron Hatfield, Gold-level coach:

"The foul line is your friend, or more correctly stated, the foul line area is your friend. There is so much information available there that we consistently miss. How often do you look down after a shot to see what board your slide foot is on? Do you know how much lay-down distance you have between your slide ankle and the bottom of the ball at release? Without these two pieces of information, it is impossible to be sure that you are playing the line you think you are playing. But, if you know this stuff, you can check to see if it matches up to the target and/or breakpoint you are trying to play. Often, bowlers are off by a few boards, and this can make for confusion and frustration."

8. Fred Borden, Gold-level coach and author of 3 A's to Better Bowling:

"Adhere to the 15-second rule. After making a shot, either good or bad, you have 15 seconds to get rid of it. Good shots start to get you excited, and soon you're throwing the ball faster and faster. Poor shots get you angry, tension sets in, and we all know tension is a killer. Either good or bad, you have 15 seconds to move on to

the next shot. If something pops into your mind, tell yourself, 'Not now! Later!' This needs to become a habit. Practice it until it becomes natural, and you will play at a higher level more often."

9. Mike Shady, USBC Hall of Famer:

"Bowling is played one shot at a time physically, but few players at any level play the game that way. Going all in with your focus on each shot — treating each shot as a separate event in the game — reduces the challenge you face. Most of the negative emotions in bowling are caused by energy directed at shots other than the current shot. Your mindset should be: 'I am a one-shot warrior.'"

10. Jason Belmonte, winner of nine PBA major championships and a three-time (with a No. 4 likely) PBA Player of the Year:

"The first thing I tell my students that want to become a two-handed player is that it's not necessary to rip the cover off the ball all the time. I started to really see improvement with my game when I reduced my rev rate a little; it made me more accurate and consistent. With that improvement, it opened the door for me to improve my versatility. I was able to have much better speed control, which allowed me to reduce it when I wanted to hook it more, and speed it up when I wanted to go straighter. This has been huge for me. The combination of those things and

some different hand positions opened up the whole lane for me to play."

11. Lynda Barnes, USBC Hall of Famer and Team USA member:

"Work as hard on your mental game as you do on your physical game. Being mentally strong allows you to compete at your highest level. Your mental game can include, but is not limited to, self-talk, affirmations, relaxation, focus, goal setting, visualization, etc. Some days, our physical game is not quite there. Maybe you had a bad match-up on the lanes, or things happened that were out of your control. That's when you have to rely on your mental strength to get you through. Being mentally tough can happen only with preparation and practice."

12. Matt McNiell, first to shoot three 800 series and win three All-Events eagles in the USBC Open Championships:

"A player's arsenal plays a more important role in today's bowling than ever before. Many of the professionals use about three drilling layouts across their entire arsenal. These are tried-and-true layouts for them, providing the player with a very clear view of what the piece of equipment will do for them and how it will perform in the field. Having fewer drilling layouts allows a player to build a proper arsenal with fewer bowling balls. My tip for the aspiring tournament bowlers is to practice the KISS method: 'keep it simple, stupid.'"

There is no magic ball, just magic bowlers.”

13. Mike Jasnau, coach at Lane 81 at the National Bowling Stadium in Reno: “Be sure to have a very clear picture in your mind of what you want to feel and see before each shot. If you don’t have a clear picture, you’re not giving your body a clear enough direction of what you want it to do. From start to finish, your approach likely takes less than three seconds, so keep your thoughts simple and precise. In that short time frame, one key thought will be more effective and doable than thinking and trying to accomplish too many things at once.”

14. Bill Hall, internationally renowned coach: “Sometimes terminology doesn’t mean exactly what bowlers think it means. In reality, many bowling terms are abstract, and in some cases make bowlers overdo things that really are just small movements. A case in point is the term, ‘push away.’ The term implies that you move the ball far away from you, but the reality is it’s a very small motion. The term that seems to work best with most bowlers is ‘set the swing in motion.’ When you set the swing in motion, the elbows actually move away from the body only several inches. Try this: Stand up and put your bowling elbow out to where the arm is basically parallel to the floor. Then try swinging the arm back in a

rhythmic motion. When you do this, you will find it very difficult to get the arm back very far past the hips. Next, set the bowling elbow about 3 inches from the body with the arm hanging down at about 45 degrees. You still want to try to move the arm back rhythmically, and you will find that it travels farther back and much easier than when you put the elbows too far away from the body. It’s much easier to keep the elbows near you when you set the swing in motion than extending the elbows too far away from the body.”

15. Susie Minshev, Gold-level coach: “If I had to pick the biggest secret in bowling, it would be about body alignment. If you aren’t lined up properly and you execute flawlessly, it won’t matter. If you are lined up correctly but aren’t a highlight film getting to the line, you have an excellent chance of getting away with it. I love being forgiven, and bowling can be a forgiving sport if we give it a chance. Like the follow-through, proper body alignment to the pattern can cover up a bunch of execution mistakes.”

16. Carolyn Dorin-Ballard, USBC Hall of Famer and operator, with husband Del, of Ballard’s Bowling Academy: “Practice has always been a key component to my success, but practice is interpreted differently by each athlete. I always have and still do constantly practice, and have always felt this was

something that helped me achieve my goals. Your routine should be geared to you, specifically, in a way that will be productive, educational and fun. Set a goal for your practice sessions and stick to it. Most importantly, make your practice about you and what makes you excel. Pay attention to how you feel and how you react to the process. This will help during competition and strengthen your mental game.”

And finally, a tip from yours truly...
17. To me, the sport of bowling is the same as it was 55 years ago when I first started to learn how to play it. The headpin is still 60 feet from the foul line, and we have to hit the headpin the correct way to strike. However, the variables to get to and hit the headpin correctly have greatly changed. Today, the knowledge needed to succeed—including the wide array of bowling balls and how to use them, the various lane patterns and how they transition, the ability to not only repeat shots but modify them to play different angles, and the mental game—means that nobody can do it all on their own. The best thing an aspiring bowler can do today is develop a relationship with a coach.

Bill Spigner is a Gold-certified coach and member of the Team USA coaching team. Archived “Pro Approach” columns may be accessed at billspigner.com.