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BEAR HUG

**Ronnie Russell Wraps Up Bear Open Title
on PBA Summer Swing**

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THE PRO APPROACH

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Kent: Skills Beyond His Years

MORE AND MORE young bowlers coming out of college have the skills to immediately compete with the best, and there is none better among that group than Marshall Kent, who played for three years with Robert Morris College out of Chicago.

Kent's bowling resumé already reads like a seasoned veteran's. While still an amateur and in college, he made two PBA telecasts, the 2013 U.S. Open and the 2013 Scorpion Championship (which he led at last fall's World Series of Bowling before losing to Tom Smallwood in the title match), and won a PBA title in Europe earlier this year.

He joined the PBA in May, bowled in the Summer Swing in Oklahoma, and had another TV appearance, finishing fourth in the Badger Open.

You can never be certain where any athlete's career is going to go, but with Kent's performances in his early PBA appearances, it looks



Kent's swing is a little inside starting his last step, which makes it hard to tuck in on the downswing. It could be a little more in line with his head so the swing could tuck in.

like there is no limit for him.

Marshall is a four-step player. He used to take five steps, but switched to four to simplify his game. He had struggled with early timing, and eliminating a step has helped him delay his timing.

In his set-up, he holds the ball close to his body, with his bowling-side elbow tucked back of his shoulder, and the top of the ball chest high. For most players today, the bowling-side elbow is under or a little in front of the shoulder. Marshall sets up this way to try and delay his ball placement.

At the completion of his first step, his arm is not extended and his elbow remains close to his body. Once the second step starts moving forward, he unhinges his arm and lets the swing start.

On his second step, the swing travels a long way — about 125 degrees — which is normal for a higher swing, fast tempo player. At the completion of his third step, his swing has completed a full 180-degree arc, which is the best-length swing. After his third step is done, his swing starts down with the last step, right on time.

Marshall's spine angles from a side view start at 22

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degrees at the end of step one, 35 at step two and about 50 degrees when he is starting his slide. From there to his release, he loses about 10-15 degrees of forward tilt — normally not a good thing.

It happens to Marshall because his swing is a little too far inside at the top, and on the downswing he loads up his arm, bending the elbow significantly. This loading up of the arm and wrist engages the upper arm and shoulder muscles to assist in the loading-up process. Coupled with the swing being a little too inside, this causes his spine to straighten up slightly.

The good thing is when he's done loading up, he starts tilting forward through the release. This movement, coupled with unloading his arm and wrist, speeds up his arm and hand. He has a fast release that generates a lot of revs and speed. His follow-through is long and toward his target, excellent for accuracy.

From the back view, his first step goes right in front of his left foot, a little left on step two, straight on three, and his last step moves in about three boards — very good walk direction.

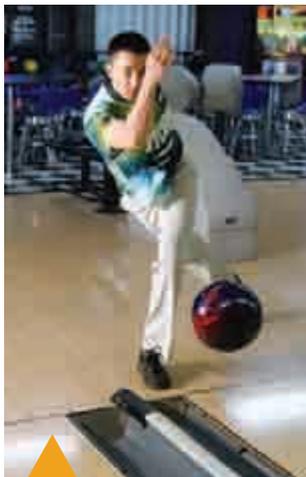
Marshall has a very straight inside-out swing, although it doesn't tuck in on the down-swing like the swings of Chris Barnes, Tommy Jones, Sean Rash or Jason Belmonte because it's a little more inside than theirs at the top.

Just like the side view, he loses some side spine tilt when he loads up his arm on the down-swing. This causes the swing to get a little away from his body, and his hand squares up faster than most of the top tour players.



Kent has loaded up his wrist and elbow for his very fast, high-rev release (left). Great position to unload from. Fingers getting ready to exit from the top of the ball after the arm and wrist have unloaded (right). Arm is straight and the wrist has flexed back so the fingers speed up and through the ball.

I know he had a rough college year after returning from playing in PBA Tour events this past year. This little swing issue could have been a product of bowling in school. The center of the ball is about 7 inches from his ankle at release, whereas 4 to 5 inches is considered good. Walter Ray Williams



Kent is able to lift the gutter cap from the adjoining lane and still maintain his form.

has always been far from his ankle, about eight boards. Normally, when a player is that far from their ankle at release and the fingers are not on the inside just before the release, he won't have the range of play that Marshall does. But, it does help one play straighter angles through the front of the lane.

Regardless of this issue, Marshall still made a TV show in his debut as a PBA member at the Summer Swing, which is testament to how good his total game is.

Marshall's range of play on the lanes is way beyond that of most PBA Tour newcomers. He can roll the ball 2-to-2 up the gutter (laying the ball down on the 2-board and having it still be on the 2-board at the arrows), all the way to launching the left gutter cap like Jason Belmonte — and he's able to do all of it with control, change it at the drop of a hat, and maintain his rock-solid finish position.

The hardest thing for a lot of young players going

out on tour involves playing straighter angles through the front of the lane, because they've learned how to hook the ball with a lot of revs and the swing is very inside-out entering the release zone. Marshall has the best of both worlds: He can play as straight as Norm Duke up the gutter, but with more speed and revs than Duke, and he can keep up with the big-hook guys way inside. And he can change his axis rotation and speed to match up to most angles and conditions.

In Marshall Kent, a genuine star has arrived. I liken him to Jordan Spieth on the PGA Tour. Both have come to the table with the experience and tools to win regularly at a young age. First job for Marshall: PBA Rookie of The Year.

It's going to be fun watching this personable, articulate young man advance through his career.

Archived "Pro Approach" features can be viewed on billspigner.com.

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