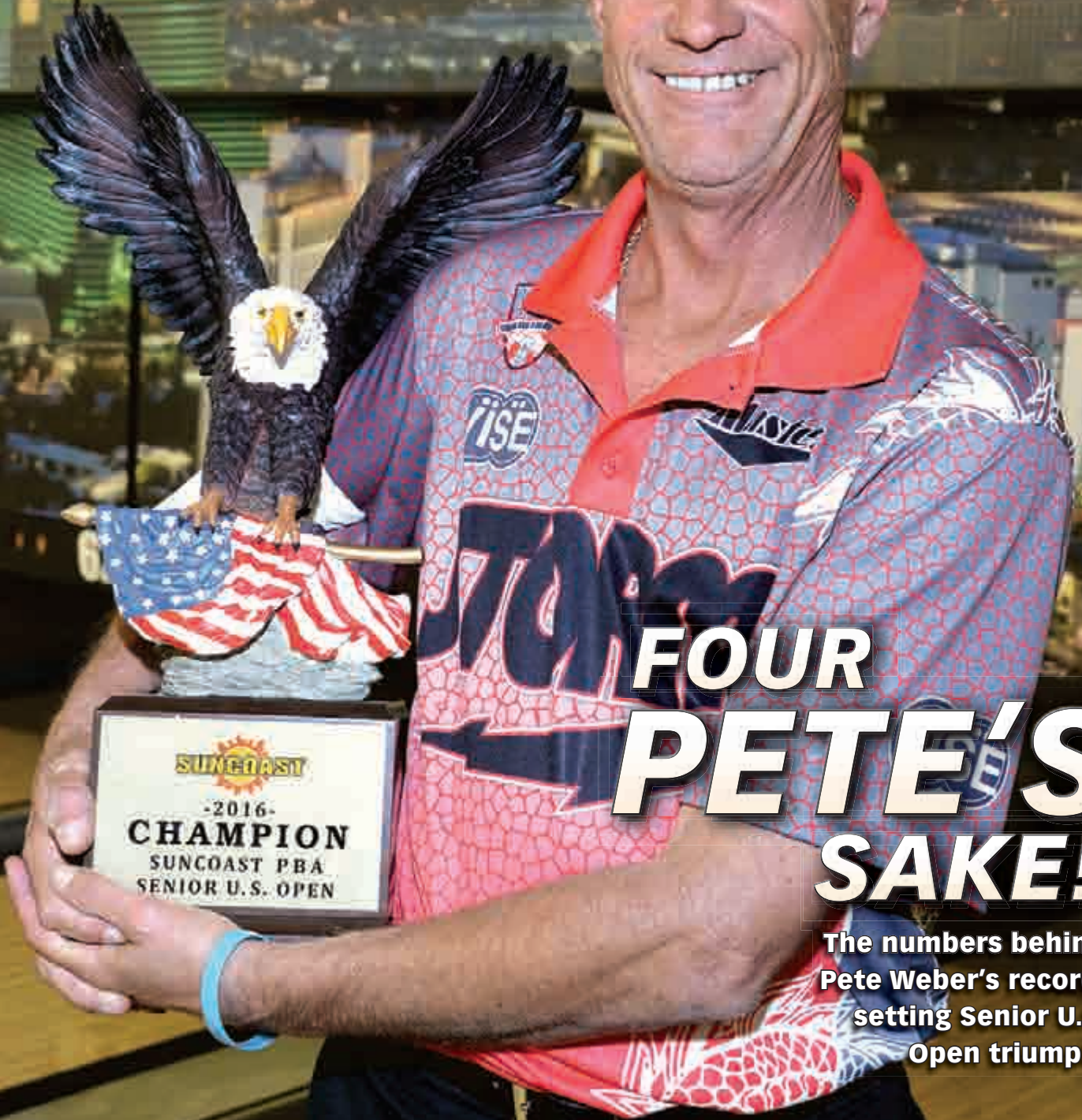


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BOWLING INTERNATIONAL



FOUR PETE'S SAKE!

The numbers behind
Pete Weber's record-
setting Senior U.S.
Open triumph.



THE PRO APPROACH

BY BILL SPIGNER { billspigner@aol.com }

Too Young to Be This Good

WE DON'T OFTEN use the word “prodigy” when describing bowlers, but Anthony Simonsen is a bowling prodigy. The youngest ever to win a major championship — eclipsing Mike Aulby’s record by 37 days — and the second youngest to win a PBA title behind Norm Duke, Simonsen also has won the USBC Open Doubles and multiple regional titles, and he isn’t even 20 yet.

I was at the Tournament of Champions this year for Pete Couture’s induction into the PBA Hall of Fame. While watching the event, Pete said this to me about Anthony: “He’s not supposed to be that good at that age.” That’s a great compliment from a legend in our sport.

Anthony is one of the ever-growing number of two-handed players. He has been bowling that way since he took up the game at the age of three. At that point in his life, he wasn’t following anyone else’s style; he was creating his own, and it also should be pointed out that he was allowed to do so.

Starting so young gave him lots of years to learn how to play the game. He was already a very experienced player when he started bowling in PBA events at age 16. By that time, he had been taking part in “PBA Experience” leagues for five years.

Anthony can play all the angles, having studied the patterns, how the pros play them and playing on them himself. He’s able to play near the right gutter all the way to lofting the left gutter cap with an abbreviated approach. To have that kind of versatility at such a young age is remarkable.

At present, Anthony is the only successful four-step two-handed player on the PBA Tour. There also are other aspects of his game that are unique to him.

His set-up has his feet staggered a couple of inches, but the toe of his right foot is a little forward of the left, which squares up his hips and shoulders. Most have it the opposite, with the feet, hips and shoulders open. Personally, I like that, because so many bowlers open up in their stance too much, and when they start their approach, they square up the body to move forward with the pushaway/ball placement step anyway.

Anthony has a good deal of knee flex, and about 10 degrees of forward and side spine tilt. He positions the ball with its center waist high, more toward the center of his body. He starts with a pretty long first step, but doesn’t move the ball. Instead, he leans forward to about 50 degrees, which lowers the ball to about knee high right in front of his right knee after step one.

In step two he has a pushaway, but the ball is still in front of his legs and his side tilt has changed to 50 degrees, matching the forward and creating the space for his body to rotate for his backswing.

An interesting thing he does between steps one and two is to move his left hand from the left-front of the ball to the front of the ball; the hand kind of slides across the ball to the front position. Another thing he does, which you do see other two-handers do at times, is

remove his left hand from the ball in his stance before he starts, and wipe it off on his pants to dry it out. Two-handers at times have trouble with their opposite hand sliding off the ball during the shot, which makes them lose the ball, negatively impacting their release — kind of like when a traditional bowler’s thumb slips during the swing. It’s even more problematic for them when using plastic and urethane.

For two-handers it’s very important to clean off whatever oil is on the surface

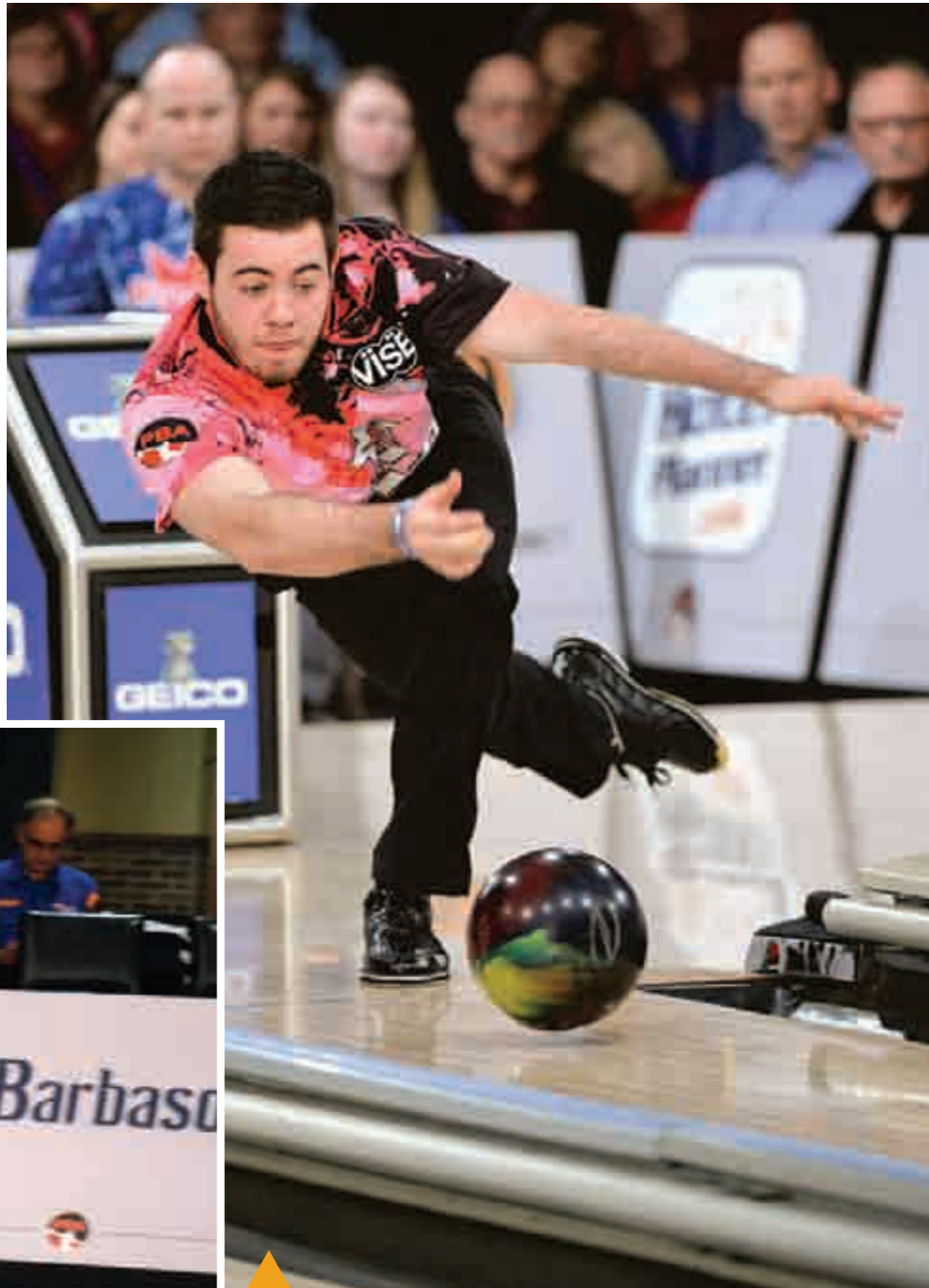


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of the ball on each shot in order to reduce the chance of the opposite hand slipping because of the oil.

Anthony's third step is a short skip-step, during which he bends his right elbow to about 90 degrees. He maintains that bend going into his slide. When his slide foot starts making firm contact with the floor, his arms start to straighten out and he leans more forward. When the slide is almost done, his arms are straight and his forward tilt is nearly 90 degrees, parallel to the floor.

The straightening out of his arms on the downswing and the increased forward tilt delays his swing, creating a lot of lag in the swing which, in turn, creates a lot of power. By the time the ball is ready to release, Anthony's spine angle moves up to about 75 degrees, which also aids in creating speed and releasing the ball out in front of him. With his forward tilt and knee bend, he has a lot of time to be able to release the ball very low and out onto the lane.



Anthony does two things that all two handers should do. He cradles the ball (left), which is when the bowling arm has about a 90-degree bend during the swing. Note the bend in Anthony's elbows as he starts his last step. The second thing that's very important involves Anthony's shoulders and extension at release (right). His shoulders are facing the direction the ball will travel and his hand is following the ball, which is very important for accuracy and playing a wide variety of angles with different releases.

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Anthony's accuracy is excellent because his shoulders at release are perpendicular to his target line. That, coupled with his long extension through the ball, allows him to project the ball where he wants it to go. Good advice for anyone to follow is to have the shoulders perpendicular to your target line and for the hand to follow the ball down the target line.

Anthony keeps his game simple. He uses the arrows and the boards between them as his primary targets. He first thinks about the pocket, then the break point he wants, and then visualizes a line back to the arrows; he wants his ball to travel that line. Once he determines where he wants the ball to go with the chosen release, he lets his game take over and just bowls — no over-thinking the process, just getting the job done. Again, that's good advice for anyone to follow.

Anthony isn't a super-high-revving, speed player. He does get a lot of revs, but in more of a powerful finesse way — very similar to Jason Belmonte, who

LESSON PLAN

TWO KEYS FOR TWO-HANDERS

ANTHONY SIMONSEN does two things that all two-handers should strive to do.

The left photo on pg. 61 shows how he cradles the ball, which is pretty normal. Cradling the ball is when the bowling arm has about a 90-degree bend in it during the swing. You can see the bend in Anthony's elbows as he is starting his last step.

In the photo below, you can see how, before the ball passes his trail leg's knee, the arms have straightened out. This creates lag in the swing, making it later. If he didn't straighten out the arms, the swing

would be early.

Straightening out of the arms at this time also speeds up his swing to generate increased ball speed. This is very important for two-handers. If the arms stay bent to the release, it's difficult for them to release the ball down and out onto the lane with speed.

Also note Anthony's shoulders and extension at release. His shoulders are facing the direction the ball will travel, and his hand follows the ball. This is very important for accuracy and to be able to play a wide variety of angles with different releases.

— Bill Spigner

is always smooth and under control. With his youth, physical tools and solid mental game, Anthony will be a factor in long-format events for years to come.

Bill Spigner is a three-time PBA Tour champion and a USBC-certified Gold level coach. View archived "Pro Approach" features at billspigner.com.



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