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THE PRO APPROACH

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Restrepo: Creating a Big Pocket

THE PWBA HAS BECOME a tour of true global flavor, attracting the best players from many countries. Rocio Restrepo has been one of the top international bowlers for a long time, and she's only 28.

Rocio became a member of Team Colombia as a youth bowler in 2002, and maintained her spot on that squad through 2008. She continues as a member of the national adult team, and picked up two gold medals at the 2016 PABCON Women's Championships.

She is a true bowling success story at every level, and this year just missed being PWBA Player of the Year — the highest honor a professional can earn — finishing right behind Liz Johnson on the tour's point list. Her cycle of stardom is now complete as she is one of the top stars on the PWBA Tour.

Rocio is a four-step power player with a very solid set-up: feet close together, knees slightly flexed, ball held above her elbow with the hand under the ball and her opposite hand on the side of the ball, balancing it for the pushaway. Her right shoulder is slightly lower, with the ball in line with that shoulder.

Rocio's first step is quite long and her pushaway is late. With the long first step, it's difficult to get forward tilt to place the ball out into the swing for an earlier ball placement, because the upper body stays between the feet. Her first step has a lot of flex in the right leg, which also keeps the body between the legs (looking at her from a side view).

Bowlers with an earlier ball placement will see the leading leg be straighter and



Unique Release: Restrepo's unique way of getting to the release (left) features open hand, hips and shoulders as well as a great knee bend. Rotating open on the downswing is not good for most, but it helps Rocio keep her swing in. Right: Shows how much Rocio has rotated to the left. That upper-body rotation adds speed and turns the ball; she makes this work with very strong legs for support and arm and hand extension down the target line. Opening and closing this much is not wrong; it's a good power generator when timed right.

the upper body over the leading leg with more spine tilt, which can create more forward momentum because the upper body is leading with the legs.

Halfway through Rocio's second step, her arms are fully extended to complete her pushaway and begin her backswing. When that step — which is shorter than her first step, but not short — is complete, her legs are flexed and the ball is still in front of her, about knee-high. The

flex in her legs early in the approach demonstrates the start of how much she uses her legs for power.

Rocio's third step is very long, the longest proportionally to body size that I have seen among the top stars. Her upper body is again between the two feet, and the forward tilt of her spine angle is only 10 degrees at this point. Her right leg on this step has about an 80-degree flex to it.



Entering her slide, Rocio really gets a lot of knee flex with both legs, almost like she's squatting down. From there, her sliding leg goes forward and has about a 90-degree flex. When her swing descends to where it's parallel to the floor and the ball is shoulder-high, both knees have about a 90-degree flex to them. From that point, she uses her right leg to push her body forward to the



Sterling Start: You can't get a much better starting position from the ground up. Everything is in the right place ready for action. Follow this set up for getting your game in gear.

release, and it also increases her forward spine tilt.

The position she gets her legs into for the last step is pretty amazing, showing great strength and athleticism. From a rear view, at the completion of her third step, her swing is behind her left shoulder and her hips are straight ahead.

On the downswing, as she is pushing off into the slide, her right knee drops down toward the floor and her hips and shoulders open. This move with the lower body opens up her hips and shoulders to make space for her swing to stay on an inside-out path and very close to her body. Among most bowlers, the shoulders and hips would be squaring up instead of opening on the downswing, but because of Rocio's swing being inside, she does the opposite.

She has a great move once the ball passes below her waist, as her upper body starts its rotation to square up. Her shoulders rotate to the point that they are facing more to the left as she releases her ball. She keeps her hand to the inside of the ball until the shoulders rotate, and increases her forward tilt to 45 degrees at the release. The counter-clockwise rotation of the shoulders provides turn. Her hand and arm follow the shoulder rotation, and by the time Rocio is ready to release the ball, her hand has turned through the back of the ball because of the shoulder rotation — without having to work the hand.

Her follow-through is straight toward her target, with one of the longest "flat spots" during her release on tour today. This gives her lots of time to get the revs and turn she wants.

Rocio's extension through the ball and her follow-through down her target line match up great for her targeting method. She doesn't try to hit one board; she is more of an area player who relies on

her powerful release to give her a big pocket. She picks a line that she wants the ball to travel on to her breakpoint, and concentrates on her follow-through to get the ball to travel that line. This is an excellent targeting method for anyone to use. Visualizing the direction you want the ball to travel, coupled with the

LESSON PLAN

ROCIO RESTREPO can play anywhere on the lane, but has had a little trouble playing out and going straight, which was her strong suit when she started college at Wichita State.

Her training there strengthened her release, and she learned to play inside — which became her new strong suit. In college bowling, with the very tough, flat patterns used in many of the tournaments, being able to play inside is critical for success.

Now, she has been working to restore the straight game to her tool box. To accomplish this, she has been using urethane and experimenting with a simple wrist device to take away some of her wrist action so that she gets less on the ball.

Rocio never stops thinking or trying to expand her game, and she realizes that depending on the lane pattern, sometimes less is more.

— Bill Spigner

release and speed you want, is a real key to playing well.

Rocio says she owes a lot of her success to her coach for the past five years, the great Fred Borden. In the last year, they've worked at smoothing out her release and opening up her hand, which has made her release more consistent. Before that, she would have a tendency to turn early. Early turn is not good for anyone because the misses are inside your target line, and then you have to force the ball to try and realign it during the release — something that's not easy to do consistently, especially under pressure.

As Rocio demonstrated numerous times during her highly successful 2016 season, dealing with pressure is not an issue for her.

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