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From the left: Dallas Strikers franchise player Norm Duke, No. 1 draft pick Rhino Page and celebrity team owner Terrell Owens.

A League of Their Own

Will the PBA's New Team Concept Fly?

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THE PRO APPROACH

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Swinging for Success: 4 Options

THE BOWLING SWING comes in various shapes and lengths. A good way to learn about how the swing functions, how to correct a flawed swing and how to work on developing a good swing is to utilize some terms that describe the good and no-so-good things about this extremely important aspect of the delivery.

All swings follow a path on the way back and on the way forward. This path is greatly affected by how we set up and the movement of the ball out of the stance.

The four good paths/swings are: 1. straight; 2. in-out; 3. loop; and 4. tuck. Three common bad armswing directions are: 1. sidearm; 2. out-in; and 3. reverse loop.

All of the top pros have one of the good swings. There are some very good players who have unorthodox swings to the top, but once the ball starts down and is ready to accelerate through the release zone, their swings are generally right on spot.

Let's start with the straight swing. This swing starts out in the stance with the ball held in line with the bowling-side shoulder facing straight ahead. The ball is then placed straight out at the start of the swing, and the swing goes straight back and comes forward along the same path it followed back, with minimal shoulder rotation.

This type of swing is ideal for accuracy with minimal hand action. Many coaches

teach it when working with newcomers to the game, for whom control and being able to throw the ball straight at spares are key building blocks. There are no top touring pros that use this kind of swing path for their strike

ball, simply because it can't produce the kind of hook and ball rotation needed today.

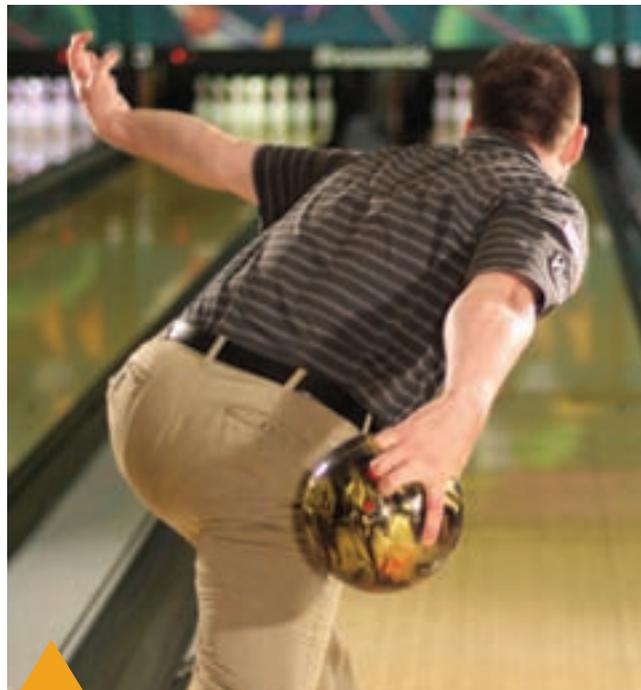
The in-out swing starts with part of the ball held slightly outside the shoulder, with the bowling-side shoulder slightly lower and a little open. The

ball placement will be straight, but because the shoulder is lower and open, the placement will follow the shoulder position from the set-up, thus placing the ball out slightly.

Once the placement is completed, the ball will swing back in a straight inside line and then forward along the same line it went back. This is a good swing, provided that the direction of the steps moves the body out of the way of the swing. A right-hander would have to walk slightly left, while a left-hander would need to walk slightly right.

If the body doesn't get out of the way, the swing gets trapped behind the body and two bad things can happen. The sidearm swing occurs when the swing gets inside and the body is in the way of the downswing, leaving the arm with nowhere to go except around the body. This results in the loss of direction relative to the timing of the ball off the hand.

The second bad thing that can happen is the reverse loop motion. The same in-out swing gets trapped with nowhere to go, and bumps out at the top when the shoulders close early. This causes an outside-in swing to the release, which makes misses to the inside of the target line — unless one can realign it inside-out in time, which takes a lot of work.



One of the most successful players today with an in-out armswing is reigning PBA Player of the Year Sean Rash.

Some great bowlers who have an in-out type of swing are Carolyn Dorin-Ballard, Liz Johnson, Kelly Kulick, Sean Rash and PBA50 star Tom Baker. All have mastered getting out of the way of the swing so it can move straight through from the top down.

The loop swing starts out with the ball being held inside the shoulder, or more toward the center of the body. The ball is placed straight out from this position. The shoulders stay square to the lane until the ball has started to pass the body, then the swing flares outside the body on the backswing. At the top of the swing, when the shoulders have opened and the ball has started its descent, the player will start “loading up” their wrist and/or elbow to get ready for a strong release.

The “loading up” draws the swing toward the body,

and the arm swings through on an in-out path. This swing also requires the footwork to move the body out of the way, and the upper body has to have enough side and forward tilt so there’s plenty of space under the body to receive the ball into the release zone.

With the ball held inside the shoulder in the stance, this type of swing can cause a sidearm swing when the shoulders severely open and then close too soon. The reverse-loop also can occur with this set-up when the shoulders don’t open on the backswing and the swing goes outside. (Because of the lack of shoulder rotation, the swing stays outside and comes forward in an outside-in path, which requires realigning the ball at the release — very difficult to do consistently.)

Three really good models

of the loop swing are Mike Fagan, Walter Ray Williams and Wes Malott.

The fourth good swing is the tuck. This is the most commonly used swing and always has been the best of them all.

The tuck starts out with the ball held in line with the bowling-side shoulder. The placement of the ball is straight out, the arm swings straight back and the shoulders don’t open until the ball starts passing the body on the backswing. The backswing finishes along a straight line, right behind the head.

On the downswing, when the player starts firming up for the release, the swing is drawn inside, close to the body, and the arm finishes in an inside-out direction to the release.

Players who have this type of swing are Chris Barnes, Norm Duke, Chris Loschetter,

Pete Weber and the recently retired Robert Smith. Through the years, even as lane patterns and bowling technology have evolved, the tuck swing has been the most reliable.

The key for any bowler is to learn about their swing and how it affects what they want to do with the ball. Working on your swing should be an everyday practice. Take some video and watch where your swing goes in relationship to your ball placement, walk, spine tilts and shoulder rotation.

The key to good bowling — and bowling enjoyment — is to develop one of the four good swings and execute it on a consistent basis.

Bill Spigner is a Gold-level coach, and a member of the USBC Hall of Fame. Archived “Pro Approach” features can be accessed at billspigner.com.



Wes Malott uses the loop swing with great proficiency. Note how his wrist is “loaded up” for a strong release.



Bowlers who use the tuck swing, like Chris Barnes, have a downswing that draws the ball in very close to the body.