

Bowlers Journal

AUGUST 2011 • \$3.95 • www.bowlersjournal.com INTERNATIONAL

Oh, Baby

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THE PRO APPROACH

BY BILL SPIGNER { bills@bowlersjournal.com }



Rash: Rare 4-Step Power Player

SEAN RASH WENT OUT on tour as a high-speed, high-rev power player. In most cases, it takes a young power player three to five years to have consistent success. They haven't refined their game, and normally wouldn't have the experience to tackle the variety of lane conditions and how they change.

But Sean was seasoned beyond his age when he stepped onto the biggest stage in our sport. Team USA and college bowling had given him great coaching and experiences in order to be ready to hit the tour running.

Sean is one of the few right-handed four-step players on tour today. In his set-up, he looks like he's getting ready to do battle. He has his feet staggered, with the heel of his left foot even with the toes of his right foot, and both feet are pointed straight ahead.

Being a coach who looks at fundamentals first, I like this type of set-up with the feet. I see too many young players who have their feet facing way outside of their target line. (The problem with that is when you take your steps, the feet automatically want to walk and face straight ahead because you are walking to a foul line that's directly ahead of you, not on a diagonal line.)

Sean's knees are slightly flexed, with his body leaning a little back and the weight of

the body toward his heels. He holds the ball just above waist high, with his wrist cupped and the palm under the ball. He has his pinky finger tucked and his index finger spread out; he is loading the ball up in his hand — a very strong hand position to start with. His right shoulder is a lot lower than his left.

A four-step player would normally have to have a big enough first step to finish the pushaway by the time that step is completed. Sean takes a short first step, but he starts moving the ball and tilting his upper body forward before that first step starts. His pushaway is about a quarter of the way done before the heel of his right foot starts to move.

By the time step one is done, his pushaway is complete and his upper body has gone from leaning back in the stance to about 25 degrees forward.

Many four-step players who get the pushaway done on time have faster approaches. They have to get the upper

body tilting and the ball moving early. This makes the beginning faster, which in turn makes the whole approach

have a faster tempo than the typical five-step player's.

Other four-step players on tour include Parker Bohn III



On Sean Rash's next-to-last (third) step, there's plenty of power stored up for the downswing. With his contemporary body position and timing, he's ready to fire.

and Steve Jaros. Sean starts more like Parker, moving the ball before the first step and tilting forward. Both players have faster tempos to the line because of how they start.

Steve, on the other hand, keeps his upper body vertical through his first (small) step, and his ball placement is late; he is a very deliberate player. Sean, conversely, is all about speed and power.

Sean's first step also goes directly in front of his left

foot. This increases his side tilt to about 30 degrees, and clears out the lower body for the swing to pass the body effortlessly. His pushaway is a little right, and the start of his swing at this point starts moving inside. The swing remains inside on a straight line to the top, and comes down from the top in a straight inside-out line — a very nice swing path. Most players with this type of swing path have trouble going straight,

but sure can hook the ball.

Step two is slightly left, only because it has to get around the first step. Step three is different than that of most power players: very long. This step also goes right in front of the previous one.

His body position (from a side view) at the completion of this step is a model that one should emulate. From the back of his left hand, you can draw a straight line through his left arm, shoulders and right arm to his right wrist. His left hand is rotated clockwise, so the palm is facing the side wall and his thumb is down — a very strong position for the left arm.

When the hand and arm are rotated to this position, it tightens up the left side from the shoulder to the hand, and gives one a firm left arm and shoulder for the right side to turn into on the downswing.

Sean's shoulders appear to be very open on the third step, but his forward and side tilts make them look more open than they are.

The good thing is his hips are facing straight ahead. His upper body has turned around his spine and is winding up for the downswing — again, very strong, good body position. His head is still over his leading foot, which is really good for someone who takes that long of a second-to-last step.

Many times, with a long next-to-last step, the upper body straightens out slightly and the upper body weight gets trapped between the two legs. Sean's ability to keep his upper body in the right place with the long third step is a testament to his strength and athleticism.

His release position is very balanced, as his trail foot stays in contact with the floor and his upper body is stacked over his slide leg, giving him the leverage he needs to uncork a powerful strike ball consistently. He has one of the most devastating strike balls on tour today.

The strong hand position he started with in his stance remains that way all the way to the release. Before the release, his fingers are pointing to 8 o'clock, with the wrist still cupped and cocked. When his thumb exits the ball, the wrist uncocks and the fingers rotate to the middle of the ball, then lift straight up the back of the ball while the wrist unloads with the fingers exiting the top of the ball at about 11:30.

Sean said when he first went out on tour, he had to temper his game to be a little less physical so he could be more of an everyday player. One of the things he had to learn was patience, and he continues to work on that.

Sean had to learn to work into the right combination of ball, release, speed and angle to score and not press to strike. Before thinking like that, he would make big changes, trying to force the big games instead working into them. You can put yourself out of a tournament early by pressing to find the magical shot and trying too many different things too quickly.

Now, he doesn't let that happen. It's good advice for any bowler to heed: You can't force results.

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Rash's position here is just about perfect. At the lowest point of the downswing, the center of the ball is just past his ankle and ready to be placed out onto the lane.