

Coach's Corner Tip of the Month

Versatility

There are more variables than ever to bowling and being successful on different lane patterns, surfaces, oils, lane machines and competition. For instance, a 44' pattern on Brunswick Pro Anvilane on the PBA Tour will not play the same or break down the same as the same pattern applied with a different oil and machine during an ABT tournament. While there are guidelines that you can apply to bowling on a particular pattern, you should enter every tournament with an open mind and look for any combination that gives you the best chance of scoring at any point during competition. Just because a particular combination worked yesterday, it may not work at all today and you need to be open minded and versatile to give you the best chance to succeed on the lane condition in front of you at any given point during competition.

I'd like to discuss three ways to add versatility to your game, how to implement them, and a drill to get better at them. These three elements are changing your speed, axis rotation, and axis tilt. Of these three elements, speed is the easiest, followed by rotation, with the most difficult being tilt.

Ball speed either makes the ball push farther down the lane with more speed or read the lane sooner if you decrease speed. Changing speed requires that you either get your swing or your feet to accelerate. To accelerate your swing, start the ball higher and create a longer swing arc. Allow the swing to drop freely from a higher backswing to generate the extra speed. To do this, start the ball higher in your stance and keep the swing free. Alternatively, you can either add steps, distance to the approach, or both to generate more ball speed. Starting farther back on the approach, allow your feet to generate more speed as the ball drops into the swing. This will ultimately generate more speed at release.

Axis rotation either saves energy in the front part of the lane and provides more at the back, or allows that energy to burn up sooner with less left at the back. Changing rotation requires that you either rotate your hand more or less through the release area. To generate more axis rotation, keep your hands started to the inside of the ball longer, but then rotate your hand farther around the ball through the release. To decrease your axis rotation, keep your hand behind or slightly to the outside of the ball in the backswing with less rotation of your hand through the release area.

Tilt either reduces the contact with the lane or increases the contact the ball makes with the lane. Changing tilt is difficult, even for experienced players. Adding tilt to the ball requires that you rotate your fingers more "around" your thumb – think of spinning a top to get the visual of what you're trying to do. If you tend to spin the ball and you want to decrease the tilt it is even harder. Think about keeping your fingertips directly behind the ball for as long as possible, and minimize the rotation on the ball.

Here is a drill you can complete in 60-90 minutes to sharpen up your ability to make adjustments. First, take 4 shots with your normal release to get loose and lined up. The rest of the drill goes like this:

- 4 shots with more speed
- 4 shots with less speed
- 4 shots with normal speed and more rotation
- 4 shots with normal speed and less rotation
- 4 shots with normal speed and more tilt
- 4 shots with normal speed and less tilt
- 4 shots with higher speed and more rotation
- 4 shots with lower speed and more rotation
- 4 shots with higher speed and less rotation
- 4 shots with lower speed and less rotation
- 10 shots at higher speed and lower rotation on an outside line
- 10 shots at lower speed and higher rotation on an inside line

So, what did you learn from this? When you use more speed, can you control it? Can you effectively combine a speed and roll change to make the ball "read" the lane at a different distance and enter the pocket at a different angle? Can you make the ball read more like an up-the-back player, who will be very successful when the lanes are fresh, and also make the ball read more like a power player, or even a spinner, when the lanes have broken down? How much difference in hook do you have between the last

two sets of 10 shots? Does this give you the confidence to implement these changes on the fly as the lanes change in competition?

Practice versatility until you have the confidence to implement it in competition, then enjoy the fruits of your labor!

As always, if you'd like to see a specific topic discussed, e-mail me at proshop@denverbowling.com.

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