A pushaway drill to improve your swing and timing

Four phases you can do easily and anywhere

by Joe Slowinski

I would like to share with readers a very effective drill that I developed to aid bowlers in improving their timing and free up their swing. The value of this easy-to-use drill is the fact that it can be done at home in the living room or basement. With just a 30-minute commitment each day, you can improve your setup, pushaway, timing, and free your swing.

Now, that’s one powerful drill. Just be careful that you have enough space to execute a pushaway and a full swing. I take no responsibility for broken lights, mirrors, windows, etc. So, look around before trying this at home. And, please warn everyone at home that you will be doing the drill.

Introduction

In this drill, you will take the first two steps of a full five-step approach and let the ball swing freely. But, the ball will be pushed away and swung twice. After the first swing, you will reload into the stance starting position, pause, then push away and let the ball swing freely again. This can be done at home, on the lanes or in the gym. For example, I often use it at the gym as well with a 36-pound medicine ball with a handle.

As illustrated by phases 1, 2, 3, and 4, this drill emphasizes the stance, pushaway and swing. Most importantly, in the drill, I ask bowlers to focus on the details of the setup and be conscious of the details in both the stance and pushaway. As a coach, I have seen too many bowlers not aware of these details which lead to consistent inconsistencies with both the setup and pushaway.

In my opinion, these two components, stance and push, of the full approach are where a bowler should be very precise and consciously thinking about correct technique and execution. In other words, this is where you have control as a bowler. Paying attention to details in these two areas will yield significant improvement in consistency and repeatability. But, after the pushaway, the bowler needs to just let everything flow naturally until the finish.

Pre-drill visualization and self talk

Prior to executing the drill, you want to set the stage mentally to improve your swing. First, before each drill cycle, imagine a bowler with the most fluid swing you have ever seen. Then, say to yourself, "My swing is free, smooth and light." Repeat the visualization and repeat the statement twice. "My swing is free, smooth and light." The visualization and self-talk will help set the stage for your body to execute an improved swing. Without this step, you might be reinforcing a muscled swing. So, please take this step seriously to get the most out of the drill.

After you achieve a good feeling for the drill, I recommend that you do several cycles of the drill with your eyes closed to feel the push and the timing. This will provide a feedback loop for your body to establish an improved swing. Just before you be-

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gin, take a breath, inhale and exhale. This will relax your body and improve the effectiveness of the drill. In addition, if you find that you are muscling the ball, then you would close your eyes before executing the drill.

**Phase 1: Setup in the stance and step one**

Don’t overlook the importance of the stance. Specifically, a bowler should set up in a precise manner to ensure consistency for the remainder of the approach. A proper setup in the stance leads to a good pushaway. A good pushaway leads to a good swing. A free swing leads to good timing and a solid finish. It is a cause and effect chain. If the stance is inconsistent, then the approach and timing will also be inconsistent.

I recommend placing the slide shoe one inch in front of the ball side shoe. In the drill, place the ball in front of the shoulder with your elbow at your side. This will form a 90-degree angle between the shoulder, elbow and hand. The bowling hand should be in the 6 o’clock position with the balance arm hand supporting the weight of the ball, as much as possible.

After setting up, take one natural step with the slide foot without moving the ball at all. I recommend not sliding the foot as the first step. Each approach surface is different and each surface has a different amount of friction. Consequently, the length of this step can be different due to various friction amounts. So, take a normal walking step to improve your consistency in the approach. And, of course, doing the drill at home requires actual steps. Since the slide foot is in front, this step will be slightly shorter than a full stride.

Just prior to starting and as you are taking the first step, think to yourself: step... push... relax.

**Phase # 2: Step-push**

The second step of the drill is the timing component of the drill. I teach bowlers to get their elbow vertically over their knee to ensure a precise movement away from the body that will not be affected by altering the height of the ball in the stance.

As you are executing the drill, remember to push the ball in the second step. Push out and down as you take your second step in the drill. Your goal is to get the elbow to intersect with the knee and let the ball enter into the swing. Notice the arm is not fully extended. I recommend that you consciously think: elbow over the knee. This is another step in creating consistency in your timing.

At this point in the drill, stop walking. Initially, this is difficult for some people to do. In other words, they keep walking into the third step. Be patient and give yourself some time to get the drill sequence down.

In addition, be sure to use the balance arm hand to push the ball, out and down. This is another important little detail that can have a profound effect on your game. Think about it this way. If you use your balance arm hand to push the ball, your ball side arm will be more relaxed, contributing to a free swing. In addition, your bowling arm will be less fatigued when bowling for longer periods. Both will lead to increased consistency and repeatability.

**Phase # 3: Swing**

Remember to stop walking after the second step. As you can see in the photo, the ball-side foot stops and becomes an anchor support for the drill. This will allow you to let the ball swing freely with balance. Let the ball, with the aid of gravity, swing naturally. If you feel yourself pulling up in the swing, try closing your eyes throughout the entire drill. Closing your eyes will accomplish two things: (1) Relax your body; and (2) Allow you to “feel” whether you are pulling the ball up or down in the swing.
Phase # 4: Reload

Let the ball return to the start setup position for a brief moment. Your feet, as mentioned in Phase # 3, will remain in this position for balance. The ball and your arm should completely stop moving, momentarily, as it would in the stance. Be sure the ball returns to a position in front of your shoulder and your elbow is at your side under your shoulder. Just pause for a brief moment to setup and stop completely. Now, push the ball away, out and down, again.

Swing and stop

(Revisit Phase # 3 photo)
Let the ball swing freely one more time. At the end of the second swing, stop. Take your hand out and dry it completely. Now, go back to Phase # 1 and repeat the entire process again.

Concluding Remarks

Repeat the drill for 10 full minutes. As you can see, this drill replicates the beginning two steps in a full approach, as well as focuses on freeing up the swing. After one month, you should see a significant improvement in your game. Your swing will be freer and your timing will feel better and more natural. But, the choice is yours. Do you want to improve? If so, be sure you focus on the feeling of the arm swing. If you feel tension in your forearm or shoulder, you are likely pulling up or down. Take a video to watch the swing. Is it free? Is the upswing and downswing similar in regard to smoothness and fluidity? If not, close your eyes for the drill and relax. And, give it some time.

### Slowinski Pushaway Drill Reminder Sheet

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>DRILL STEPS</th>
<th>PHASES</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phase # 1: Setup in the stance</td>
<td><img src="image1.jpg" alt="Photo" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setup in the stance with the ball in front of the shoulder, elbow at the side. Be sure the balance arm hand supports the weight of the ball. Before executing the drill, say to yourself, “My swing is free, smooth and light.” Breath in, breath out, go.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phase # 2: Pushaway</td>
<td><img src="image2.jpg" alt="Photo" /></td>
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<tr>
<td>Consciously think out and down, elbow over the knee. Remember, stop walking at the point. Let the ball drop into the swing.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phase # 3: Swing</td>
<td><img src="image3.jpg" alt="Photo" /></td>
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<tr>
<td>Let the swing just happen. If you feel like you are pulling the ball up or down, close your eyes at the beginning of the drill and really feel the swing. Closing your eyes will help you relax your body.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phase # 4: Reload and swing again</td>
<td><img src="image4.jpg" alt="Photo" /></td>
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<tr>
<td>Try to reload in the same position as the start. Be careful not to let the elbow leak backward past the middle of your waist. Now, push out and down and swing again once more. Try to swing freely as in Phase # 3. After completing the second swing, dry your hand at this point, pause for a minute, and execute the drill again with Phase # 1.</td>
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