

Swing Slot Revisited: New Insights into Swing Creation

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FULL-TEXT ADDED October 31, 2010 (click Read More to read full-text on the web site). The October Slowinski at-large digs deeper into how elite bowlers create an efficient swing slot. This is an extension of the 2008 article with a new and improved comprehension about how the best of the best use their head and shoulders to create a swing slot. Readers are also introduced to a new drill, the Shoulder Collapse Drill, designed to help bowlers get a better swing slot by creating more space.

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During my overview presentation of the physical game to clients I work with at the Kegel Training Center, I always ask each individual if they have ever been told by others to not drop their shoulder. Unfortunately, nearly one hundred percent of those asked reply that a coach or bowler has told them not to drop their shoulder. In an effort to see the inefficiency of such a recommendation, I immediately ask each person to think about the importance of his eyes in the targeting process. Since a bowler targets with his eyes, he wants the bowling ball and arm to stay underneath his head. Can he do this if he doesn't drop his shoulder? Obviously, a bowler can't keep the swing under the head without dropping the shoulder. Significant space creation is necessary for a great swing. With buy in to this dropped shoulder reality, I demonstrate the importance of the swing slot in an outstanding physical game. Two years ago, in the July 2008 issue of BTM, I first wrote about the concept of the swing slot associated with the physical game of elite players. In short, the swing slot is the space created by the bowler that allows the ball to remain under the head and close to the body. The creation of the swing slot requires a bowler to drop the shoulder throughout the entire approach. In this issue, I articulate a more thorough understanding of the swing slot and provide readers with an analysis of necessary body positions and angles related to an efficient swing slot. Moreover, in an effort to establish this improved swing slot position, I provide readers with instruction about how to execute a new drill to create improved angles leading to a better swing slot. The Shoulder Collapse Drill will aid readers in comprehending the relationship of head and shoulder placement to a better swing slot. How do Pete Weber and Danny Wiseman create arguably the best swing slots in the history of bowling? Find out in this installment of Slowinski at-large. Swing slot revisited. In my role as a teaching professional and coach at the Kegel Training Center, I complete approximately 1800 hours of video analysis on an annual basis. Through these analyses, I am constantly illustrating to clients how the best bowlers in the world create efficient movements. This daily exposure to the physical game of world class athletes provides me the opportunity to perpetually reflect on the cause and effect relationships associated with biomechanical efficiency in top players. I am always trying to comprehend in greater depth the core and root cause and effect sequences that lead to fluidity and efficiency of movement. After understanding these relationships, I strive to develop micro movement drills to reinforce desired sequences. Establishing a world class swing slot is fundamentally about creating space to allow the swing to remain under the head. To accomplish this, the bowler must create space under the ball side shoulder. Otherwise, without creating adequate space, the swing will have to move off line by going around the hip, often going behind the back and returning to the outside. There is an additional relationship that a bowler must be aware of to improve their swing slot. In the establishment of the best swing slots, as the bowler steps over, the head moves to the outside and the shoulder simultaneously drops. With the head going to the outside, a significant amount of space is created under it. This body position/angle establishes a head position that will remain through the entire swing. In other words, the ball side ear gets to the outside of the ball side shoulder and remains there through the release and follow through. As a consequence, the swing is more likely to stay under the head as the bowler continues to track the target line. The combination of space creation through body angle and stepping over provides space for the upswing and downswing to remain under the head. This is a key move for bowlers like Pete Weber, Sean Rash, and Danny Wiseman. In my opinion, Weber and Wiseman establish this position better than any other professionals since they get their head close to the final position extremely early in the approach. Both have some of the most elegant fluidity in the sport and have been named two of the Top 50 PBA players of all time. This physical fluidity allows them to establish a head position early in the approach that has little movement in the entire swing. As the pictures of Danny Wiseman's swing illustrate, the head position established early in the approach allows for very accurate visual tracking of the target line. As the ball passes his leg into the upswing, the head is already in a position similar to where it will be as he throws the ball. The circle from the front view and the rectangular box from the rear view are stationary through the entire approach, illustrating how quiet the head is through the upswing, downswing, and into release and finish.

Swing slot footwork established more often with world class body angles

An important element of the swing slot is the fact that the angles created with the body will be a catalyst for the world class footwork that creates even more space for that swing slot. The body is constantly striving for balance through the approach. In essence, the space created under the head by the dropping of the shoulder and movement of the head to the outside most frequently leads to the ball side footwork stepping over in front of the slide foot throughout the approach, actually creating more space. Specifically, an excellent swing slot will see a beside, step over, beside, step

over, and over sequence for a five-step delivery. The first step will be straight with the second step crossing over directly in front of the first step. The third step is beside the second step with the fourth step also stepping over directly in front of the slide foot. As the bowler's head moves to the outside and the shoulder drops, the ball side foot will more likely step over for balance purposes. This creates additional space, ensuring the bowler begins the upswing with maximum leverage. If the bowler retains this angle established early in the swing, they will also step over into the slide creating balance as well as additional space.

Shoulder collapse drill

The Shoulder Collapse Drill is intended to over-emphasize the movement of the head to the outside and the shoulder downward as the ball enters into the swing. As discussed above, this is needed to create the most space for an elite swing slot. Stepping over and dropping the shoulder slightly is not adequate enough. Rather, the more space the better. In short, you will walk up, swing the ball, and over-collapse to the outside as the ball goes into the upswing. A bowler should not do a full approach during this drill. To get an idea of the movement of the head and shoulder, review the first Danny Wiseman sequence. (page 19) Also see the video of this drill at www.bowlingthismonth.com/extras

Once again, you will not attempt a full approach in this drill. To start, simply walk approximately two-thirds of the approach with the ball close to your body. You should walk at a slower pace during the beginning phase of the drill. When you get a few feet in front of the first row of dots, start to swing the ball slightly to the inside and immediately move your head to the extreme outside and drop the shoulder. Try to get your ball side ear outside of your ball side shoulder. Release and finish. By moving the ball slightly to the inside, you ensure that the swing will be straighter. The Shoulder Collapse Drill paired with the Swing and Slide Drill, (BTM December 2008), will help develop the body angle and dropped shoulder necessary to maintain the quiet head position of the world's best players.

Step-by-step directions Before executing the drill, visualize the head position and body angle that you see in the Danny Wiseman approach sequence. I encourage you to watch the video as well. Pay special attention to where his head and shoulder are as the ball passes his leg in the upswing. This is the move we are attempting to assimilate into normal approach practice. Pick up the ball and put your fingers in the holes but not your thumb. You will not be doing a normal approach. Walk with a constant pace and as you pass the first set of dots, put your thumb in the hole and prepare to swing the ball. Start your swing about two-thirds of the way on the approach. Make an effort to feel as though your swing is moving to the inside. This will ensure that it does not go outside initially and then behind the back. As soon as the ball begins to move down into the swing, move your head smoothly but quickly to the outside shoulder. At the same time, your shoulder will drop. Think about getting your ball side ear to the outside of your ball side shoulder.

Maintain this overemphasized, angled position throughout the entire swing.

Closing thoughts A great physical game requires many elements. First and foremost, a swing that stays in the slot can lead to significant improvement in accurately hitting your line. It can also lead to providing the opportunity to get the elbow inside on the downswing, setting the stage for a strong hand position into the release. This requires the establishment of significant angles where the head is outside and the shoulder dropped. In short, a great physical game sees the shoulder dropped early in the approach. This provides the opportunity to track the target line early in the approach, through the release and follow through.