

THE PRO APPROACH

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A Detailed Look at Steve Jaros' 4-Step Approach to Tour Success

STEVE JAROS HAS QUIETLY FLOWN under the radar while amassing stats that put him within range of PBA Hall of Fame qualification. The 43-year-old has been playing full-time on the PBA Tour for 21 years. He has never received the notoriety that he deserves, but he has the respect and admiration of his peers for his talent.

Steve started bowling when he was 10 years old. His dad used to take him on Sundays to get out of the house. His first-year league average was 124. He advanced to the 200 level by the time he went to high school, and started bowling some PBA regionals. Steve now has 39 regional titles, second on the all-time list, to go along with his seven national tour titles. His biggest win came in the 2005 Tournament of Champions, and he holds two PBA television scoring records: the high game of 300 (tied with 18 others), and the low game of 129. (Sorry, Steve — had to mention it.)

Steve has a simple, deliberate, four-step approach. Of the few four-step players on tour these days, most get the ball started early with a long first step, so their ball is ready to swing when that step is done or a little before it's done. Most also have fast approaches. One of the top four-step players is Parker Bohn, but Steve's approach is very different.

Starting with his set-up, Steve holds the ball with

his hand on the side of it and his wrist arched back slightly. Like Parker, he starts moving the ball slightly before the first step starts. But Steve takes a short first step, whereas Parker takes a long one. What this allows Parker to do is complete the pushaway when the step is done; basically, the longer step allows more time to complete the ball movement. Steve, with a short first step, has to wait until his next step to complete the pushaway, so he's late on step two.

The problem with that is the right leg is passing the left going forward, as the right arm is passing the right leg going back. This puts his body in an unbalanced position because most of the body weight (and ball) is not centered over the leg and foot that is in contact with the floor.

How does Steve work his way through this unbalanced position? It goes back to his hand position at the start. With his hand on the side of the ball and wrist arched back, when the ball passes his body on the way back, the hand is more on

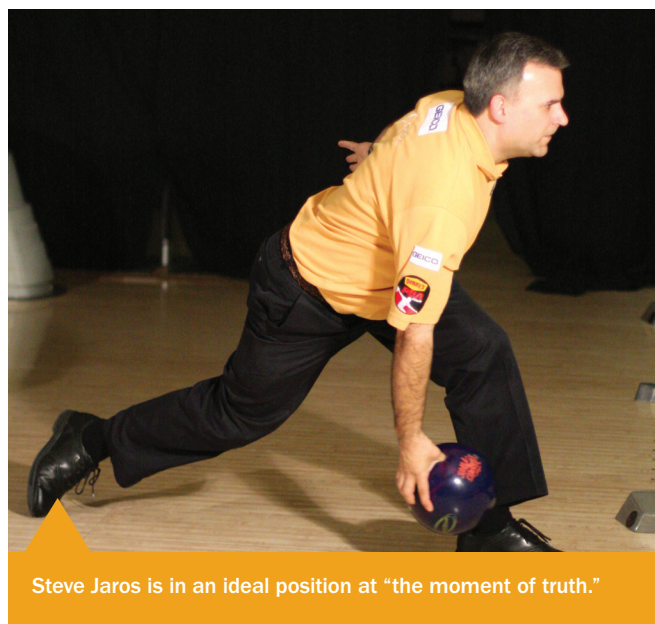
top of the ball. With the wrist not being cupped, the palm more on top of the ball, and the fingers slightly outside the thumb, the ball becomes weightless as it's passing his body. If he were to cup the wrist, the ball would become heavy when it passes his body on the backswing.

On step three, Steve's swing travels a long way and almost reaches its peak by the completion of the step.

The swing reaches the top just before the toe of his slide foot makes contact with the floor for his last step. With that, he is in time.

Steve incorporates a very firm hand position and forearm throughout his approach and finish. Being firm does not mean he "muscles" it. His swing travels only about 35 degrees between steps one and two. But it moves a long way on step three, which shows he lets the ball swing the arm from the shoulder, regardless of how firm his hand and arm are.

When Steve gets to the moment of truth — the release — he is in about as good of a



Steve Jaros is in an ideal position at "the moment of truth."

position as you can get: very good knee bend, 50-degree forward spine tilt, and the ball at the ankle at the bottom of the swing. From this great body position, he can accelerate the arm and hand.

Steve refers to himself as a “power stroker,” using more finger lift than wrist roll (unloading of the wrist) to get the action he needs on the ball. He doesn’t grab the ball with the fingers when his thumb comes out to get lift; he lets the ball transition from the thumb to the fingers, and his arm and hand acceleration through the release speeds up the fingers to provide the action he wants to put on the ball.

Steve has very strong hands and forearms, which

allow him to be very firm with them during the swing and release. Because of his strength, he has great control and touch with the release. He has been working on his legs to get them stronger, believing he needs a strong foundation for maximum leverage to support his release — a good idea for anyone who takes the sport seriously.

“I have been able to create three basic hand positions that allow me to go from throwing the ball pretty straight to covering some boards, so I never feel like I’m completely shut out,” Steve says. “I am currently working on strengthening my roll to try and open up the lane more, but it’s hard

to get where I can generate the rev rate that the Tommy Jones-type of players can.”

This ability to change how he rolls the ball makes Steve comfortable on all the tour patterns with the exception of the Shark, because of its length: 44 feet. “I feel that you sometimes need a big rev rate to get the ball to moving,” he says. “It’s sometimes tough to get my rev rate to match the speed I need to get optimum results. That said, the Shark has become one of the lower scoring patterns on tour, yet I’ve had success on it and have made my share of shows on it as well. I’m always trying to learn.”

Steve says his success is based on his spare game and

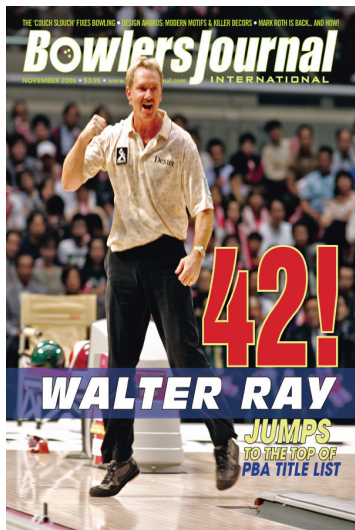
ability to adapt. I always stress that spares need to be practiced as much as strikes. In competition, you can’t afford to give away easy spares. Steve uses a plastic ball for almost all of his spare shots.

In addition to his dad, Steve has had some high-profile mentors during his career, including Carmen Salvino and John Jowdy. Owning a pro shop for 18 years has helped him keep up with the changes in equipment.

In recent years, Steve has become the teacher, and has attained his Silver Level certification.

USBC Hall of Famer Bill Spigner is a Gold Level coach. Online: billspigner.com.

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