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## 2015 Annual

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# THE PRO APPROACH

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## Barrett: A Game for the Ages

**DOM BARRETT WAS A THREE-TIME** World Bowling Writers Bowler of the Year (in 2008, 2009 and 2010) before adding the PBA Tour to his globe-trotting bowling career. He now has won three PBA events, including one major, the 2013 PBA World Championship.

You wouldn't think of the United Kingdom, or Walton on The Naze, as hotbeds of bowling. They don't have the big centers that we have in America, and they don't have the number of centers. But Barrett came from that country and that small town on the coast of the North Sea, and it just goes to show that bowling talent can come from anywhere — as long as there's a willingness to embrace hard work.

Dom's style is contemporary, with a high backswing and strong release. He starts his five-step delivery with a solid set-up: feet staggered a little, and the ball held waist high. He stands tall and relaxed, and cradles the ball with his left hand more in front of it and his right hand under it and cupped.

Normally, holding the opposite hand in front of the ball impedes one's pushaway. What typically happens (with a right-handed bowler) is that the left arm can straighten out and the right arm will not.

Dom has what I would call a ball placement and a hinge drop. He does



**Barrett's follow through is long and low after his release; his right shoulder is low, he is well-balanced, and his eyes are riveted on his target.**

place the ball out at the right time on step two, but his bowling arm is not straight when the left hand leaves the ball as he drops it into the swing. He has a short ball placement; the ball stays close to the body when his second step is done and the swing is ready to start — just the opposite of big pushaway guys like Parker Bohn and Michael Fagan.

On step two, he remains standing tall, which complements his short ball placement (most of the high-swing players are

already leaning forward into the shot at this point). This body position is a throwback to the days when bowlers were taught to walk tall and let the arm swing. Contemporary players use more forward tilt early in their approach, propelling the swing to go high without having to pull it up.

From step two to the completion of step three, Dom's swing travels about 180 degrees, which is a full swing for most players. He opens up his shoulders during step three, like the typical high-swing player, but still stands tall. His forward spine tilt is only about 13 degrees at this point, whereas the typical forward spine tilt for high-swing players is about 35 to 40 degrees.

On step four, Dom's swing reaches the top, and he's still a lot taller than most with about a 20-degree forward tilt. His swing is one of the longest and highest of all the tour champions — about 215 degrees of swing. The only champion who's longer and higher is Ronnie Russell, with about 225 degrees (and his swing is perpendicular to the floor at the top).

Dom's swing is completed on step four and begins to descend as step five starts. Since he's so upright, the initial descent of his swing is steep. On his downswing, he actually breaks his wrist back when the ball is waist-high, showing how free the swing is; he is not resisting the ball at all.

As the swing is coming down, Dom increases his forward spine tilt, and as the ball passes his waist, he starts bending his elbow and straightening out his wrist to get the fingers under the ball for his release.

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At release, he has about a 45-degree forward spine tilt, which is right on the money for players who get their fingers below the equator of the ball for the release. Also, his side spine tilt is about 50 degrees, and his bowling shoulder lowers through his release.

Dom's follow-through is low and long — no upswing force in it. And his release angle is great: On the downswing, the ball passes his right leg knee high and it continues on a downward angle, reaching its lowest point when it's in front of the tip of his sliding foot. The angle of the downswing, once it passes his right leg, is like a plane landing. This descending angle of the ball for the release is important for most players who get their fingers real low on the ball. Once Dom's thumb exits, his wrist flexes back, speeding up the fingers to the top of the ball and producing high revs with no force.

Dom's swing is one of the best there is. If you were to consider who has the loosest swing in the game today, Dom's would rival Michael Fagan's for those bragging rights. I might give a little edge to Dom because he doesn't have nearly as much forward tilt and doesn't use his legs as much during his approach. Regardless, it's hard to argue one or the other, as good as those two players are.

Dom has been a student of the game his whole bowling life. He developed his style by watching PBA StrikePass, the PBA's original online bowling channel. He would study his favorite bowlers and try to emulate what they did.

I've always liked the idea of visualization. Trying to feel and look like other top bowlers is a good thing. With video, it makes it easy to see if you are actually doing what you're visualizing yourself doing.

Dom's release also is one of his strong points. He has the ability to look at a lane and be creative with his release — to play the lane the way he visualizes needing to play it.

You need to have fantastic timing and a great sense of feel to be able to finesse the ball the way Dom does, and that



**Barrett's power derives from the moment his shoulders are turned almost 90 degrees from the hips, when his swing reaches its top-most point just before completing his fourth step.**

talent enables him to play a wide range of angles. He likes the longer patterns, between 41 and 45 feet, the best. Shorter patterns, like the 32-foot Wolf, have been a little difficult because of his strong release, but he says he is planning on using more old-school urethane on them in the new year.

Dom is the modern-day pure stroker: free swing, great timing, good balance and very little visual effort to his shots. Games like his will last a long time because there won't be the wear and tear on his body that the more physical players must endure.

Pete Weber is a great example of that. Both Weber and Barrett rely on swing and use very little of their legs for power. Gravity is their best friend. I think Dom will have a long, successful career.

*Read archived "Pro Approach" features on [billspigner.com](http://billspigner.com).*