

THREEPEAT: Jason Belmonte makes history with third straight Masters title (page 42)

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THE PRO APPROACH

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Refining Talent for Greatness

I MET RYAN CIMINELLI when he was in his early teens. It was during a Junior Gold event, and what I saw was a very mature, smooth game for such a young man. I remember thinking that he could become a star — and he has.

Ciminelli began his full-time PBA Tour career in 2007, and he has won two titles and made 12 TV finals to date. That's a nice record, especially considering the limited television opportunities available today.

When I first saw him on tour, Ryan's style had changed a lot. He had morphed from that smooth-stroking young player I'd seen to a fast-throwing, high-rev type of player with lots of muscle in his swing.

His left forearm now is huge compared to his right, much like you might see in a tennis player. In general, one's bowling-side arm is stronger and bigger than the other, but the difference between Ryan's arms is quite pronounced. It comes from using a lot of muscle to produce the devastating strike ball he has developed.

A lot of players come out on tour with a big hook and then find, in time, that they have to tame their angles in order to be successful over the long haul. Personally, I like kids to develop speed and revs, because it's a lot easier to tame down a game than it is to try and build power once a physical game has matured.

Ryan went from a smooth game at a young age to a power game. And now, after seven years on tour, he's working on taming down his game

to be able to play the variety of tour lane patterns better and make more consistent shots.

I asked Ryan why he had changed to the hard-throwing style to begin with. He said that when he first went out on tour, he couldn't "circle" the ball. In

order to play straighter angles, the only thing he knew how to do at that time was throw it harder — which created the muscle in his swing.

Left-handed bowlers don't experience the same things happening to the pattern as right-handed bowlers do. On the right side, you can always count on a lot of change as the block goes on and games add up. With a lot of change in the pattern, it serves a lot more bowlers. They have to move faster, but there are trends that happen similarly on most patterns.

On the left side, you basically get what's there. If it's good, it stays there for a long time. But if it's bad, there isn't enough traffic on the lane to change the pattern enough so that it can come to you.

Also, a lot of times, the right-handers overrun the left side when they move in and play the fourth arrow and deeper, erasing the head oil on the left. Left-handers must have a lot of patience to wait for a condition that will suit them and give them a chance to win; that can go on for long stretches of time and games.

Typically on tour, left-handers have to be more precise shot-makers than right-handers in order to have a chance to win more often. They still have to be able to play a variety of angles, but because the angles don't change as much and the condition doesn't open up, they need to survive in one area of the lane (based on the pattern).

Ryan is taking the right steps in



Ciminelli's release position is very good. His pursed lips and his right hand in a fist with his right arm curled show how much effort he is putting into the shot. The tightening of his right side from the hand through the shoulder gives Ciminelli a firm right side to complement the force that his bowling-side arm and shoulder are applying to the shot. He uses a lot of his upper body to throw the ball.

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working out some of the bugs in his game, under the guidance of one of the top coaches in the world, Mike Jasnau.

The core components of Ryan's game have always been solid: his timing, swing path, footwork direction and release all are really good. His greatest liability was using an extreme amount of muscle and having an inconsistent start, which led to having an inconsistent finish.

One of the big things that Jasnau did, which will make a huge difference in Ryan's game, was to change his set up and his start. Ryan used to hold the ball chin-high with his shoulders parallel to the foul line. Jasnau lowered Ryan's ball so his forearm was parallel to the floor, which put his bowling elbow at the side of his body. This slightly lowered his bowling shoulder and set it more behind the right shoulder, which opened up the shoulders a little.

Next, Jasnau had Ryan shorten his first step, which was a long, pronounced heel-toe step with the foot going way out in front of his head. He was basically moving his leg forward, but his body did not move forward with the leg. By shortening the step, the big result was that his upper body moved forward with the step and his head remained over the step as it moved forward — a much

The three directions of Ciminelli's follow through result from inconsistent timing, caused by his start and the muscle in his swing. When his timing is late, his follow through goes right; when it is on time, his follow through goes straight in front of his head; when his timing is early, his follow through goes left. Most players subconsciously adjust their finish based on their timing. The less compensation an athlete has to make at the end of the shot, the more consistent the shot will be.

better transfer of body weight on that first step.

This movement change on step one made it a lot easier for Ryan to temper his pushaway. He went from having a muscled pushaway that went up and extended far out from his body to a much more relaxed and shorter pushaway. The shorter pushaway helped his upper body advance forward with step two, and his left shoulder remain in the same spot it was in his stance, instead of moving forward with the pushaway as it did with the very long first step and former pushaway.

The changes in Ryan's set-up and start smoothed out his approach, and allow him to use a lot less muscle. They also have made his finish better. Before, his back would arch back and he would have an inconsistent finish with his arm. Now, he doesn't arch his back, which makes it a lot easier for him to extend his hand through the ball. This opens up his ability to learn the finesse moves

with the release and fine-tune the angles he has to play. When he was basically all power, it was difficult to fine-tune the shot to hit the pocket and carry.

"My overall goal with Ryan was to get him to be powerful, athletic and fluid, more than being powerful, athletic and muscled in his motion," Jasnau said. Looking at Ryan now, it's obvious that he's going in the right direction.

As with anyone getting a lesson, the student needs to work at it a lot and then bring it to competition. Many times, if you bring a change to competition before you understand it, you revert to old habits because of the pressure to score.

Ryan, being only 28 and with a ton of natural talent, will work his way through the process and come out of it a much more refined, consistent player.

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