

Bowlers Journal

JULY 2015 • \$3.95 • www.bowlersjournal.com

INTERNATIONAL

TWICE A QUEEN

Liz Johnson's remarkable
year continues with
second Queens win

THE PRO APPROACH

BY BILL SPIGNER { bills@bowlersjournal.com }



Zavjalova: Rhythm and Power

WITH THE RESURRECTION of the Professional Women's Bowling Association, it will be interesting to see which players emerge as the stars. Many of the "old guard" will be bowling, as will a lot of younger players who have graduated from the college ranks.

Collegiate bowling is our sport's version of baseball's minor leagues. Some great college programs now prepare players, both male and female, for the professional ranks.

The interesting thing about college bowling is that players practice and compete primarily on Sport-compliant patterns. As a result, the college players of recent years are better prepared for top-flight competition because of the training they receive and the experience they gain on these tough lane conditions. Most bowlers don't have the opportunity to learn to play on tougher conditions at the local level, and that puts them at a disadvantage, especially when it comes to determining which equipment they should use on a given pattern at a given time.

Among the younger players who will be going for titles on the new PWBA Tour — and one of the top young players in the world — is Diana Zavjalova. She is only 23 years old, but already is a proven top-level performer, having won the 2013 USBC Queens while still in college at Webber International University in Florida.

Diana says Webber's greatest contribution to her game was the knowledge to play lanes and understand ball motion better. Webber trains at the Kegel Training Center in Lake Wales, Fla., so Diana not only had that facility and all of its bells and whistles at her disposal, but also the eyes of two of the best coaches



Diana's power comes from the down-swing, because she is in such good position when the swing is ready to descend. This photo shows her legs flexed with her right leg starting to push the body forward, her upper body rotated about 90 degrees, and her left shoulder facing the target line. The swing is at perfect height at this point and ready to fire through to the release using gravity and shoulder rotation to provide swing speed, which transfers to a fast hand that produces revs.

Reprinted/Posted with permission from *Bowlers Journal International*.

in the business: Randy Stoughton and Del Warren, both USBC Gold certified. That's a pretty nice combination of facilities and faculty.

Randy said that one of Diana's most recognizable attributes is her rhythm to the line and how she generates power. Del told me that he worked on Diana's mental toughness and leadership through different exercises and competitions. He said her mental game and intelligence are what he believes make her one of the best in the world.

Let's take a look at some of the key elements in her game that give her that great rhythm and power that seem so effortless.

Diana is a five-step player who stands tall in her set-up, the ball held chest-high with the center of the ball in line with her right ear. Her hand is under the ball, and the elbow is right under the hand and the ball.



Zavjalova's follow-through finishes to the left of her head. This is very normal for players in today's game, who have a lot of lateral spine tilt and unload the wrist at the release.

She starts moving the ball out on her first step. She has a long push-away, and it extends straight out in front of her head, about chest-high. It's long compared to the push-aways of many of today's players, but quite good.

Diana keeps her upper body upright on steps one and two. This upright position accommodates the long push-away, because the upper body is staying over the legs for leverage, counter-balancing the ball with that long push-away — very important.

Her second step is a cross-over step to the left that creates some lateral spine tilt. This sets the upper body in position to allow the swing to go back under her head and shoulder on step three. The center of the ball, as it's going back past her, is directly under her left ear, a little inside of her head... which is just fine.

On step three, Diana starts her upper-body tilts, moving them to 35 degrees forward tilt and 35 degrees lateral side tilt. Also during this step, she starts opening her shoulders.

On step four, her forward tilt moves to about 40 degrees and her side tilt remains at 35. At the completion of her fourth step, her upper body has opened up about 90 degrees, and this is where her power comes from.

Looking at her at this point, the left arm is extended straight out in front of her, with her hand waist-high and the palm facing down. Her left shoulder is facing straight toward the foul line, with her right arm, shoulder and ball in a straight line directly behind

the left (looking at her from a front view). This is the completion of her back-swing, which is straight from the push-away to the top. In fact, it's as good as you can get; she has one of the best swings in women's bowling today — fluid, long and totally effortless.

From the top of the swing down, it follows the same path it took on the way back, straight to the release. (Normally, when someone has a swing that straight, they would not create a lot of hand action, and the swing would need to tuck in on the way down to get the hand action.)

Today, everyone talks about “working the inside of the ball,” but Diana is the opposite.

She has her wrist slightly arched back — the opposite of cupped — from the stance through the swing and at the release. Her palm is right in the middle of the ball, while her fingers are at the top of the swing (from a front view), pointed to about 11:30, and the thumb is down to 6 o'clock.

Many players who open their shoulders as much as Diana will have their hand to the inside of the ball and the wrist cocked. But Diana's wrist is perfectly straight along

the pinky finger side of her hand, where most would have some angle at the wrist there.

At the release, Diana's hand remains in that position. She increases her forward tilt to about 45 degrees at release, and this forward tilt from step four through the release, coupled with the shoulders rotating to square up to the target line, provides the speed needed for the hand to move fast through the ball, providing revs.

Her hand position at the release is in the northeast quadrant of the ball (looking from behind), and thinking of the ball as a globe, with her fingers above the equator of the ball before her thumb comes out. Her hand is already in its turned position before the thumb exits.

Her extension and follow-through go left as she unloads her wrist, producing the revs and the desired axis rotation. It's actually a very simple release, with few moving parts, and it's quite strong.

I asked Diana if she uses different releases. She said she likes to keep it simple and doesn't change her hand position to get different rotations on the ball.

Diana said that she does think about the position of her ring finger and middle finger at release. Thinking of the middle finger helps her turn the ball a little more, and thinking of the ring finger helps her roll the ball a little more forward without having to manipulate the release.

She also likes to stay with one ball for a long time and change how she plays the lanes to make the ball work, rather than trying to find the “magic ball”. Keeping her hand position constant and not looking to change balls at the drop of a hat give her the opportunity to figure out the lanes and her game for greater consistency.

With her great swing, excellent release, fluid motion and tenacious desire to succeed, Diana Zavjalova is well on her way to more success — especially now that there are more opportunities for women to experience success on the lanes.

Archived “Pro Approach” features may be accessed at billspigner.com.



Reprinted/Posted with permission from *Bowlers Journal International*.