

BowlersJournal

INTERNATIONAL

SEPTEMBER 2014 • \$3.95 • www.bowlersjournal.com



GAME CHANGER

What Does Brunswick's
Sale to Bowlmor AMF
Mean for Bowling?



THE PRO APPROACH

BY BILL SPIGNER { bills@bowlersjournal.com }

Making the Switch from 5 Steps to 4

I'VE HAD AN OPPORTUNITY to watch Diandra Asbaty's career since seeing her compete in the Junior Gold Championships, when she was still Diandra Hyman. That's when I first took video of her.

Diandra was an impressive youth bowler who turned into a top college player and went on to become one of the best amateur bowlers in the world. She quickly built a stellar resumé while bowling for Team USA that resulted in her being the youngest player ever elected to the World Bowling Writers' Hall of Fame.

She then embarked on a pro career and won a PBA Women's Series title in the Don and Paula Carter Mixed Doubles. She also is a USBC Queens champion.

Diandra not only has evolved as a player, but also has become an excellent coach and mentor for bowlers of all ages. (In the interest of full disclosure, I am now involved in the International Art of Bowling with Jason Belmonte and Diandra.)

For many years, Diandra used a five-step approach. She recently switched to four steps, trying to change her timing, which would lead to changing other things in her game.

With the five-step approach, her set-up was more erect and her shoulders

were more level. She began her approach from the back row of dots, and started moving the ball out on step two, although the pushaway was incomplete at the end of that step. Her arms didn't straighten out until the third step was almost done. This late pushaway caused her steps to be real long in order to wait for the swing.

With her four-step approach, Diandra doesn't stand as tall; she has a slight forward tilt in her stance, with her body weight more centered over her feet. Her right shoulder is lower, and she starts her approach from the front row of dots.

This set-up takes some of the complications out of the pushaway. She now has consistent ball placement, and unhinges the ball into the swing. Basically, there are fewer moving parts in the



Diandra Asbaty recently switched from a five-step delivery to just four, with added ball speed being one of her goals.

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



Even with the loss of a step, Asbaty remains solid at the foul line with a consistently strong follow-through.

beginning of her approach.

In making the switch, her goals, besides trying to alter her timing, were to simplify her game and roll the ball faster. Now, the set-up and beginning *are* simpler. Her arms do not extend way out in front of her before the ball goes into the swing. Her ball placement has gotten a little earlier, mostly because of the increase in forward spine tilt and the elimination of the big pushaway and standing taller.

The length of her steps also has changed. With the five-step approach and its very long steps, she wasn't as firmly grounded on each step. At the completion of each step, when the forward foot was flat and the body weight had transferred to it, her foot of the previous step was already off the floor and moving forward. That's not a bad thing for some, but the longer the steps are, the bigger disconnect the bowler has with the floor, and the transfer of the upper body weight forward is more of an issue. Diandra still experiences a little of that on her new step three, but not as much as before with the longer steps.

The other thing she was looking to accomplish in shortening her steps was to get her pivot/power step shorter. She

used to have a very long second-to-last step. Now, the third step is shorter and her upper body weight moves forward more efficiently into the slide.

The good thing about the steps getting shorter is it gives her more leverage because of better contact with the floor. You at least want the toe of your leg that is ready to come forward to stay in contact with the floor when the step you are completing is flat and the body weight has transferred forward to it. That's the main reason the second-to-last step is called a "power step" and, for most bowlers, should be shorter; it pushes the body forward into the release. When the step is very long, achieving that position is more difficult.

When the ball placement is late, that step needs to be longer in order to wait for the swing to get to the top. Doug Kent provided a good example of that, as his swing was still going up when he was entering his slide. He had enough strength to still finish the shot off strongly, but it was getting hard on his body later in his career, and he ultimately changed his timing to provide some relief.

Even though Diandra's ball movement is late at the beginning of her approach, it's right on time entering the slide. The

difference now, with four steps instead of five, is she has a little more forward tilt entering the slide — something that started at the set-up and with the ball placement. This makes her swing a couple of inches higher, although the length of the swing is unchanged. Now, she can get more drive forward with her legs because of the forward tilt.

Late timing is not a bad thing for many bowlers. But when one has late timing, the rest of the approach needs to match up correctly to compensate for it.

Diandra has always had a great, loose swing — a must for any bowler who wants to compete at the highest level. She developed her swing as a youth bowler, and has kept working on it throughout her career. There is no pull or force with her swing. That's why her late start had no impact on her movement to the line or balance.

It's very hard, if not impossible, for most bowlers to change the timing of their swing to match a new number of steps once their game has matured. But knowing Diandra and her work ethic, if anyone can do it, she can.

Archived "Pro Approach" features can be viewed on billspigner.com.

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