

# BowlersJournal

INTERNATIONAL

SEPTEMBER 2019 • \$5 • [www.bowlersjournal.com](http://www.bowlersjournal.com)

## Whiz Kids

Stories of redemption, tears and grit from another record Junior Gold Championships.



Cameron Hurwitz and Family



Caroline Thesier



Annalise OBryant



# THE PRO APPROACH

BY BIL SPIGNER { [billspigner@aol.com](mailto:billspigner@aol.com) }



## The Keys to 2-Handed Success

**THE TWO-HANDED STYLE** is still spreading like wildfire. It's now safe to say that Jason Belmonte has revolutionized the sport in a way that has never been seen before.

Yes, there had been other styles that moved the game, such as when Mark Roth came on the scene with his wrist-turning, high-speed, lofting style that made junior bowlers of that era want to emulate his powerful delivery.

But the two-handed style has taken it to a new level — the maximum level that the game will ever see. In my opinion, the two-handed style represents the last frontier in the development of hook and power in our sport. The pins, the lane, the ball size and ball specifications all are standardized, so there is only so much that can be done and still be effective.

The two-handed style was introduced to American bowling fans in 2004 when Osku Palermaa made the show at that year's U.S. Open, then popularized widely when Jason Belmonte burst onto the tour in 2008. I had heard about both of these guys from my son, Robby, who would fly to Europe to bowl in tournaments while he was in college. He told me that they were unbelievable, and he was right.

At the time, the style was so unusual in the United States that coaches had to study it, learn from the bowlers who used it, and develop a methodology on how to teach it. The early opinions were that a player using the style had to have excessive side and forward tilt, a skip-step on the next-to-last-step, and a high trail-leg kick.

When Jason and Osku came on the scene, I thought Osku was going to be the better of the two, based on their styles. But as time went on, Jason

changed his game while Osku stayed the same, and the results have been significantly different. Just check their records.

With that said, there are a couple of

reasons that one would flourish while the other stayed static — although Palermaa is still a very good player. Timing is the biggest key because it affects a lot of other things.

First, we need to understand what timing really is. It is the meshing of the arm swing and one's steps. Both are independent of each other, but at the



Kyle Troup's (left) ball placement is on the late side, which is better than being too early. This allows him to keep his body facing straight ahead and gives him a long second-to-last step. Jason Belmonte's (right) ball at this stage of his approach is about the size of one ball farther back than Kyle, with the

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

same time totally reliant on each other for one to be able to develop a smooth, effortless approach.

I like the analogy of the late, great USBC Hall of Fame coach and author, Tom Kouros, who noted that timing is two gears: the arm swing and legs. He stated that the more misaligned the gears are, the more disoriented the approach is.

When this happens, the bowler incorporates compensating moves to make their game function. Basically, the greater the compensation needed to overcome timing relative to your style, the less range of play and repeatability you can develop.

All people are different, and that's why we have dominant players in all sports. The great players always have fewer compensating moves to make, and

## LESSON PLAN

**MANY WHO TAKE** up the two-handed style use the upper body to throw the ball with the shoulders. They don't develop a good push-away and timing. The bottom line for a two-hander is to develop a good push-away and stay loose with the arms and shoulders to develop a smooth, effortless approach. Basically, the later the push-away, the longer the pivot step will be. That makes everything straighter on the last two steps, which requires fewer compensating moves to get the ball to travel along the intended line. Remember, the better the start is relative to your style, the better the rest of the approach will be. That's true whether you roll the ball with one hand or two.

— Bill Spigner

greater ranges of playing ability than their peers. (This is not to say you can't be a very good player with less-than-perfect execution; we see this all the time.)

The key element that helps the two-

handed player have fewer compensating moves is the push away/ball placement. The start sets up the rest of the approach — just as it does for a bowler with a traditional style — but the two-hander can't create a high swing because of cradling the ball.

So the total arc of the swing is less, which makes the approach more affected by the ball placement and timing of the start. When the ball placement is too early, it leads to leaning too far forward and opening up the hips and shoulders too early. This leads to the approach being faster and having a skip/no-step on the second-to-last step.

The problem with the skip step is that both feet are airborne on the step before the slide, and the feet and body face away from the direction of the lane — at times up to 90 degrees to the foul line. Without a grounded pivot step to push the body forward, and the lack of leverage that results, it's difficult to be able to do more things with the release, play a wide range of angles, and repeat shots.

The two best two-handers in the world today, Belmonte and Anthony Simonsen, have very similar timing and pivot steps. Both get their right foot on the pivot step ahead of the slide foot, with the feet and body facing straighter ahead. This helps ground the right foot to help push the body forward for the slide, and to square up the body better for direction.

Both of these players easily have the ability to play more angles with different speeds and ball rotation than any other two-handers. In the case of both players, timing is the key to their versatility.



ball being under his right ear. For Jason, this placement gives him a smaller second-to-last step than Kyle, with his body more open, which allows him to play wider angles when needed. The bottom line is that two-handers' timing has as much an effect on their game as it does for one-hander.

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