

Bowlers Journal

OCTOBER 2009 • \$3.95

INTERNATIONAL

Lumber Leader

Chris Barnes Piles Up the Most Wood in the PBA's World Series of Bowling

**The World Series:
A Home Run or Error?**

**'Teen Masters 2.0'
to Turn Back Technology**

**15th Annual Power Poll:
Who Is Number One?**



THE PRO APPROACH

BY BILL SPIGNER { bills@bowlersjournal.com }

His 'A' Game May Be Straight, But Williams Also Can Throw a Hook

WHEN THE NAME “WALTER” comes up in the bowling world, there’s only one person you could be talking about: Walter Ray Williams Jr., arguably the best bowler who ever lived.

Walter doesn’t throw the big ball. He’s not animated on the lanes. He just kind of looks like an average bowler, although he does have some distinctive parts to his game.

Walter uses a basic five-step delivery, starting with his heels at the back of the approach. His first two steps are long, then shorter on step three, and the fourth step is a little longer than the third but shorter than the first and second. Not exactly “textbook.”

The way steps have been taught for... well, forever... has been to take the smallest step on one, then gradually lengthen the steps as you move through the approach. However, in a five-step approach, the longest step (not including the slide) actually needs to be step two to allow enough time for the ball placement (or pushaway) to be completed before the third step starts.

Walter has a very long second step

and a very upright spine angle on his first two steps. On step three, his upper body starts its forward tilt and is at about 38 degrees when that step is done. His spine tilt on the third step puts his head out in front of the toe of his left foot at the completion of that step.

On his fourth step, his spine tilt increases to about 45 degrees and his head is even farther out in front of his right foot at the step’s completion. This stacks his right shoulder directly over his right knee and right foot at this point (from a side view). From this position, with the upper-body weight forward enough, he can enter his slide without his head pulling back behind his slide foot.

As Walter enters his slide, his knees are bent considerably. He pushes his body forward with his right leg to the release zone. At the completion of the slide, his spine angle increases to about 50 degrees, and the

ball is right by his ankle when the arm is perpendicular to the floor.

With his slide completed, just as the ball gets by the ankle, Walter can start his release from a very stable body position.

Many people think Walter rears up at his release point. Not true. He stays down throughout the release. But his tremendous momentum and acceleration after the thumb comes out causes his slide leg to partially straighten out. His follow-through also makes it look like he’s rearing up, but the follow-through has to finish up where it does because if he tried to lengthen it, his body weight would go too far forward and he would fall off balance.

Walter uses his legs in much the same way Mark Roth did. Both have a lot of knee bend entering the slide, and both did not open their shoulders and thus were able to get a lot of speed on the ball. Mark just hooked the ball more than Walter.

Walter has a semi-controlled swing, is very firm with his wrist, and the swing is not high. His arm never gets to 90 degrees from his spine (it’s a little shorter than that) and the center of the ball is in line with the top of his head (from a side view). Keeping his shoulders closed also contributes to a lower swing than most players on tour these days.

Looking at his swing from a rear view, Walter has about a 7-inch loop in it. He starts with the swing going outside on the way back. It then tucks in to a straight swing through the release zone. This outside-in to straight swing is the reason he is so great at going straight.

So, the trajectory of the ball for Walter is best going down and in with his swing moving straight through the ball, and with about a 4 o’clock finger



Williams’ “A” game is throwing the ball straight. Note the arm position in the backswing and the position of his fingers at the point of release.

position. This provides a little tilt and side roll, and this is Walter's "A" game.

He didn't become the all-time PBA title leader with just an "A" game, however. As he crosses pairs, he's like a chameleon; every time you see him, he's doing something different.

In his "A" game, Walter's step direction is a very slight right-to-left walk. His first step is straight, step two goes in front of step one, and then three, four and five are straight ahead in a slightly left direction — very normal, good footwork.

However, he makes a number of changes when he wants to hook the ball. First, he moves up on the approach with his heels in front of the back row of dots. Second, he holds the ball lower (waist-high) with his wrist slightly cupped and his palm under the ball.

With his starting point closer, his steps naturally are proportionately smaller, as is the length of his swing. His footwork goes from a few boards of "left-walk" to 10 to 15 boards, depending how much hook he wants.

His swing path has the same amount of loop, but comes back straighter and is a little more inside-out on the way down — but nothing like the players who hook the ball a lot.

He also changes his release motion; he turns around the ball to increase side roll (axis rotation), compared to lifting straight through the ball as he

does in his straight game. To get the turn, he also has to roll the ball slower.

With his swing coming through fairly straight and his hand having to get to the side of the ball with a slight wrist cup, the timing of the ball off his hand is critical for correct direction. If he gets out of the ball a little late, it's a pull; a little early, he misses the ball and it goes right.

Walter always accelerates through the release, a good thing for any bowler. His ball is about 5 inches from his ankle at release, with his shoulder rotated beyond a right angle to his target line — not an unusual shoulder position for the hook guys, but certainly so for a straight player.

This is where his follow-through direction also varies from the hook players: His hand continues straight out along his target line and up and over his right shoulder. It gives the appearance of cutting the shot off and rearing up. But while all that's going on, the ball is already gone. He consistently stays down and through the shot.

Walter will be turning 50 on Oct. 6. Hard to believe he's going to come out and beat up on us old guys while he's still on top of the heap on the "junior" tour.

Bill Spigner is a PBA Hall of Famer and perennial member of BJI's "100 Top Coaches" list. Visit his Web site at billspigner.com.



WE MADE THE CHANGE!

"Casual bowling income, birthday income, group income, all food and beverage income, and even league income, increased after installing BES."

Anthony Perrone
Owner
Pin Chasers, FL

Anthony Perrone replaced his Frameworx Scoring System with the Bowler Entertainment System in 2004.

**Built for Tomorrow,
Affordable Today.**

QUBICAAMF
THE POWER OF PARTNERSHIP

www.qubicaamf.com - info@qubicaamf.com
For FREE information, Text BJ55 to 30364.



When Williams wants to hook the ball, he moves up on the approach, walks anywhere from 10 to 15 boards left, and changes his hand position.