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2017 World Bowling
Championships Program

THE PRO APPROACH

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Old School, But Willing to Adapt

I HAD THE GREAT opportunity to coach Senior Team USA at the Senior World Championships (SrWC) in Munich, Germany, in August. I was familiar with the physical games of all the players, but not with their personalities or mental games. Nor did I know how they play the lanes, handled pressure, or would treat each other and the other competitors.

I had to learn their individual idiosyncrasies in order to be the coach that they needed me to be — not what I wanted them to be. All coaches need to learn about the people they coach. I have to say that I could not have been with a better group of people or bowlers to represent our country on the international stage.

Ron Mohr was one of the more intriguing players on the team. Ron, unlike everyone else, never took a real shot at the pro tour in his youth. He was a late bloomer to the professional bowling ranks, becoming a star on the PBA50 Tour. He spent his career as an air traffic controller, retiring at age 52.

During that time, he dabbled in a few Regional events, but gained national prominence only when he made Team USA in 1989. Senior Team USA was inaugurated in 2013, and Ron immediately was named to that team and has been on it ever since, competing in all three SrWC events to date.

I asked Ron about how he approaches Senior Team USA events in comparison to PBA50 events. He said he performs at a much higher level of intensity when playing for Team USA “because bowling for my country and the team is the highest honor in bowling.”

After watching how intense he was on every shot he rolled in Munich, I asked him whether he always is so intense while competing. He answered in the affirmative, and said he modeled his intensity

after that of Marshall Holman — although he does not try to emulate Marshall’s physical game.

He said that if Marshall were ahead by 200 pins in a tournament, he would want to get 300 ahead. Ron bought into that killer intensity to make every shot as if it were the winning shot, never taking his foot off the gas pedal. Going into the tournament in Germany, his goal was to be the best bowler in the event — and he was, winning the All-Events for the second time, along with a second Team title. His six gold medals are the most that any player has won so far, making him the most dominant player in the SrWC.

To me, Ron has kind of a throwback style. The names Mark Roth, Walter Ray Williams Jr. and Carmen Salvino come to mind when I watch him bowl. He doesn’t open his shoulders, and uses more loft than contemporary players. He makes what we used to call “foul line adjustments” to get the ball to travel where he wants it to go, which

makes his finishing position look different on many shots — like the greats I mentioned.

Ron isn’t the kind of player who wants to know all the technical stuff about the game. He wants to figure it out on his own as he goes. In Munich, we had Kegel’s LaneMap Guide of Dream Bowl Palace that was put together in August after the lanes had been



The Finish: Mohr’s very physical position just after release involves a high leg kick and a balanced finish. His trail foot drops back to the approach after the shot is done, and his closed right hand illustrates his old-school way of “gripping and ripping” even though he doesn’t really grab now; it’s just the aftermath of the release. Both arms are tight, even though for him they feel relaxed. The big thing is he uses a good amount of loft, which helps Mohr clear the heads and complete his turn even though he releases slightly on the upswing. One takeaway from Mohr’s game is this: Don’t try to be someone you’re not; instead, perfect what you have.

re-leveled. During the first of our two practice sessions, I started studying the ball reactions and how the lanes played relative to the graphs.

Ron did not want to know ahead of time what the graphs said about how the lanes would play. He would rather watch his ball reaction, and then make

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his moves. He feels that if he has info that a lane is supposed to play a certain way, he might get stuck in that place for too long and be slower in adjusting. He likes to trust his eyes and what he feels to give him a clear mind about what to do.

After each game, I would ask him how he played the lanes, and in every instance except one, the lanes played like the graphs showed they would — very interesting to me. I would highly recommend to any tournament bowler that they learn about lane mapping to help them better understand topography and how it relates to ball reaction.

The great thing about Ron's game is how physical it is. He can play a lot of different shots, and his swing naturally matches up to the angle he plays. He doesn't consciously change his stance or pushaway to get his swing to match up to the trajectory he wants the ball to travel.

I have seen him win by rolling the ball

straight down the lane with minimum axis rotation and firm speed with his swing a little outside-in, like this past summer in Hammond on the senior tour.

I have seen him play a track shot, like in Germany at the SrWC, which required a medium type of hook, rev rate and speed with a straighter swing.

I've also seen him play way inside with a lot of swing, and with the swing inside-out.

In all cases, his shoulders naturally matched up to his swing path and the direction he wanted the ball to travel — and if they didn't, his physical strength allowed him to make the foul-line adjustments to get the ball on line. I asked him whether he deliberately changes his body alignment, pushaway and swing path to be able to do that, and he said he doesn't.

Ron is a naturally gifted athlete who molds his body to how he wants the ball to travel, without getting techni-

cal. When he plays straight versus swinging the ball, his eyes will help set up his body for the direction he wants the ball to travel. Personally, I think this is a better way than when I see players grossly over-exaggerate their stance to swing the ball and/or to go very straight. It takes a lot less adjusting of the body angles to change the trajectory of the ball than most bowlers realize.

In Munich, Ron rarely missed making the right moves and was deadly accurate on spares. He never alibied about any bad shot, as he immediately recognized when he didn't roll it like he wanted to, whether it was a physical or directional miscue.

The physical side of his intensity is

LESSON PLAN

RON MOHR'S first year on the PBA50 Tour was okay, but produced no wins. He made a major grip change for his second season because he found that every time he needed a strike, he would grab the ball and leave a 4-pin or 9-pin. He learned how to bowl by gripping it and ripping it — old school. His pitches were ½ forward in the fingers, ¾ reverse and 5/8 right lateral in the thumb.

These pitches require a lot of grip to hold onto the ball during the swing, and the forward pitch in the fingers promoted hitting up on the ball. So he changed his fingers to ½ reverse and his thumb to ¼ reverse and zero lateral, with no span changes. This was to help him release the ball cleaner and not grab it so much.

In his first two PBA50 Tour events with the new grip, he finished first. Lesson learned: If you are having release problems, don't hesitate to get another opinion on your grip, as Ron did.

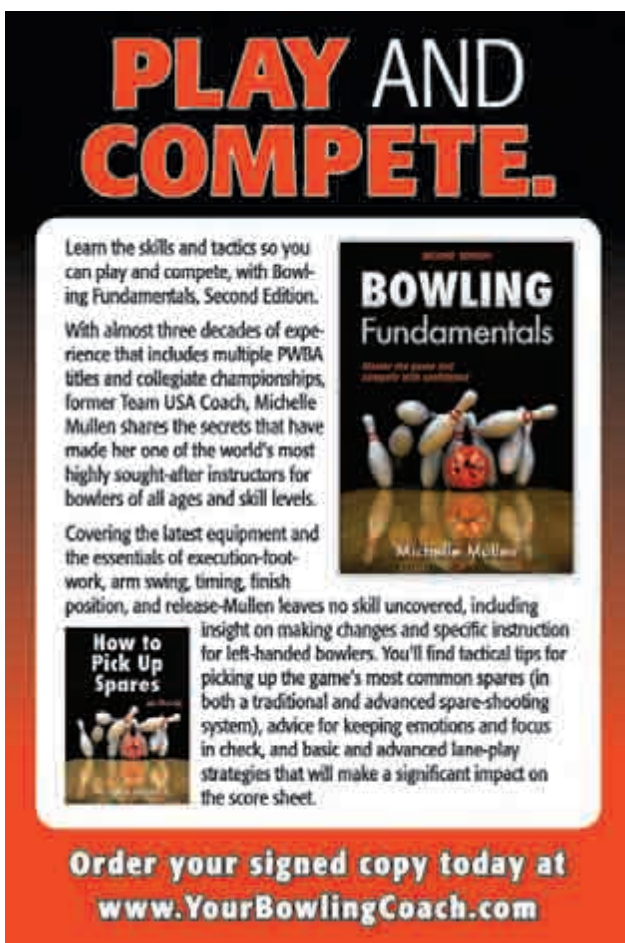
— Bill Spigner

pretty amazing; the energy and strength to play like he does is second to none at the senior level. His workout routine is legendary, as he spends 40 minutes on a tread climber, followed by 150 push-ups, four times per week. On the other days, he does 600 sit-ups, followed by 150 pushups. "It seems to keep the core strong," he says.

My big takeaway from spending time with Ron is that if you want something bad enough, and work hard enough, you can get it. Once you get beyond the basics, bowling is an acquired skill. Ron has taken a most impressive route to his success, refining his skills both mentally and physically. We would all be better off embodying even half of his work ethic.

Even in the off-season, he bowls in four leagues per week. You just can't get him off the lanes.

Bill Spigner is a USBC Gold-certified coach. View archived columns at bill-spigner.com.



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How to Pick Up Spares

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