

THE FOLLOW THROUGH – ANALYSIS

There is no argument that the follow through represents the most important skill set. You can have all sorts of malformed approach and delivery nuances or have the very best of a simple flowing approach and delivery but... the bottom line remains *'a productive efficient follow through will make or break anything that precedes it.* It is therefore obvious, if there is any one skill set to master make it the follow through.

It seems from my observation that Instructors and coaches are now just beginning to understand the elements of an efficient follow through. As importantly instructors, coaches as well as the athletes are now beginning to get a firmer idea of how to meld the elements of the follow through into one productive and efficient package.

The elements of the follow through include; legs, torso and arm. Let's look more closely at each of these elements.

The Legs

The sliding leg must do exactly that 'slide'; secondly the knee bend is critical. The inside angle of knee bend should fall somewhere between 110 and 130 degrees. As well the foot should be pointed straight towards its target, thus ensuring that your body remains square to your target.

With the knee bend the athlete benefits in three distinct ways. One, it helps get the bowler down low to the lane so that release can be just inches (centimeters) from the lane surface. Two, the knee bend helps set up a scenario where if the torso is in the correct position the follow through is sturdy. This sturdy feel can help assure the maintenance of balance. Thirdly, the knee bend provides a source of power, which when transferred properly through the slide can help the release provide tremendous mixing action to the ball. Also of note for those who enjoy tossing the ball as hard as they can, becoming educated about the power within the slide can...act to stabilize speed issues. (see illustration 1)



Illustration 1

The trailing leg also has a purpose, by keeping the trailing leg in contact with the lane surface during the follow through it can help anchor your delivery so that your body remains square to the lane. This position is typically referred to as the 'anchored follow through' (see illustration 2)



Illustration 2

The Torso

The torso refers to the position of the athlete's back during/in the follow through. Quite simply its position should be akin to an airplane taking off from a runway. The torso position allows for the transfer of body and arm motion to extend through the follow through. The term extend is frequently referred to by instructors as reaching. The idea to plant within the bowlers mind is that the body should extend/reach out to the pins, as if on a fisherman's line and being reeled in. The line is pulling the bowler to the fisherman, (pin target). This particular position for some is difficult to grasp, however if the bowler is taught that the torso position is initiated as early as the second step they can find themselves entering into their follow through with the ideal torso position intact. (see illustration 3)



Illustration 3

The Arm position

The arm is the easiest part of all. It simply reaches towards its target. The trick comes in avoiding over extending (ending too upright) or under extending (staying too low such as a curlers delivery position). Illustration 3 demonstrates a solid arm position albeit for some a bit high it remains very effective. The height of your armswing is dictated by the momentum of your approach and delivery.

Now lets get on to the business at hand that drew us to this particular chapter; strategies for correction. At the end of this section on the follow through you will find eight specific follow through drills to incorporate into your teaching.

Independent Drills For The Follow Through - LEGS

The Legs

The usual problem addressed with the legs is in not getting low enough. Phrases like bend, and get down resonate with bowlers who tend not to bend sufficiently. Not bending sufficiently leads to too much vertical lift (the distance the ball is from the lane surface when released) An illustration follows (see illustration 4 & 5)



Illustration 4



Illustration 5

There are a couple of useful independent strategies you can teach your athletes to reduce their vertical lift.

Strategy 1 – lowering the release point

The Garbage Drill

1. Place a piece of crumpled paper on the approach floor.
2. The athlete stands a bit more than one full step away from the paper.
3. The athlete executes a one-step drill with the goal being to pick up the crumpled paper and toss it into the symbolic garbage can under handed in one smooth motion.

Strategy 2 – lowering the release point

1. The athlete stands at the end of the approach with ball in hand.
2. The athlete bends the sliding leg as if they were about to release the ball. The foot is now snug against the end of the approach.
3. The athlete must roll the ball down the lane, making the release as quiet as possible.

*to draw attention to the different sound of a ball released low and one with too much vertical lift toss a ball purposefully out onto the lane with very little knee bend.

Strategy 3 –athlete is standing more or less upright at the end of their follow through

1. The athlete executes their approach and delivery with the intent of keeping their trailing leg on the ground but also back of their body. (refer to see illustration 3)

Strategy 4 – extending body through the use of the sliding leg.

1. Use the one step follow through drill

2. During slide use your knee much like a hinge, bending to release and as you release allow your knee to straighten slightly.

Instructor Assisted Drills For The Follow Through – LEGS

Always explain in advance to the athlete what you the instructor/coach will be doing in assisting the execution of the drill. There should be no surprises in terms of a instructor/coach having '*instructive hands on*' their players. Also...importantly check into whether the athlete has any particular physical injury or disability that prevents them from executing the drill requested.

Strategy 1 – lowering the release point

1. The athlete delivers a ball as they normally would. Ask the bowler to freeze (hold) their follow through position.
2. Once frozen – the instructor moves in and pushes on their back to lower it and...grabs their throwing arm moving it back and forth to simulate the release point.

* often times drawing attention to the fact that the instructor will come up and re-position the athlete is enough to lead them to execute properly.

Strategy 2 – lowering the release point

1. The athlete delivers a ball as they normally would. Ask the bowler to freeze (hold) their follow through position.
2. Once frozen the instructor reaches over to their sliding leg (with their leg) and gently kicks the knee forward causing the athlete to bend their knee more.

Strategy 3 – trailing leg is close to body, body is too upright.

1. Athlete is instructed to keep trailing leg well back of body, so that it anchors their follow through. And...hold their position until the instructor re-positions the athlete as needed.
2. The instructor re-positions the bowlers leg position, and pushes down on the back to keep the bowler low. The instructor may also find that they need to kick the inside of their sliding leg so that their knee is bent sufficiently. **always be prepared to physically support the bowler if required.

Independent Drills For The Follow Through - TORSO

The bending of the torso is for some a difficult task because it is simply not something they are prone to doing. In some cases this 'stiff back' is compensated for by way of a strong arm and upper body, acting as stabilizers.

Strategy 1 – aligning back position

1. Using the one step drill place the athlete into a bent back position (simulating the proper back position for release) prior to initiating the one step drill.
2. Execute the one step drill (keeping back position bent until after the delivery)

Strategy 2 – aligning back position

1. The instructor simply yells out bend bend through out the early part of their approach. The goal being to trigger the athlete's awareness of when to bend in their approach and delivery. The instruction given by the coach needs to come just prior to entering the second step of the athletes' approach and delivery.

Strategy 3 – aligning back position

1. The athlete uses a mirror to give immediate feedback to them regarding their back position. (place the mirror in front of the bowler, and also to the side). A video works well as well however the mirror can provide instant feedback whilst in the motion of their approach and delivery.
2. Initially do this exercise without a ball. In fact this can be a drill done effectively at home using the hallway within the home.

Instructor Assisted Drills For The Follow Through – TORSO

Strategy 1 – extension

1. The athlete delivers a ball as they normally would. Ask the bowler to freeze (hold) their follow through position.
2. The instructor is standing approximately 1 foot past the foul line (on the bowler's delivery side). As the bowler freezes in their follow through grab their wrist of the throwing arm and pull it gently forward. This action will force the athlete to bend and extend with their back.

Independent Drills For The Follow Through - ARM

Strategy 1 – at completion of follow through – throwing arm too low

1. Using the one-step follow through drill the athlete reinforces sliding and reaching forward with their body and extending with their arm with their throwing arm, careful not to over extend.

Strategy 2 – at completion of follow through – throwing arm too low

1. Dry land – (off the lane) Mark a spot on a wall as the end point for their follow through arm.
2. Using the one step follow through drill extend the throwing arm to touch the spot marked on the wall.

Over extending

Over extending is often a speed related problem. If so also watch for shoulders turning and pointing away from the target. Foot of sliding leg should be pointed to target and trailing leg should be straight behind.

Strategy 1 – at completion of the follow through – throwing arm is over extended

1. Place a towel length wise close to where the trailing leg should end. A bowler who turns their shoulder may also be turning their trailing leg. The towel location builds an awareness to the degree to which they are turning away from their target.

2. Goal of the bowler is to maintain a sliding toe pointing straight ahead and...not hit the towel away from where their trailing leg should end.

SEE SPEED SECTION for further drills/exercises

Instructor Assisted Drills For The
Follow Through – ARM

Generally speaking if the follow through arm position is too low, than the lift is minimal.

Strategy 1 – at completion of follow through – throwing arm too low

1. Coach stands past the foul line and holds their arm out over the lane at the preferred height for the follow through.
2. The athlete executes their approach and delivery and must extend with their throwing arm through after release, hitting the hand of the instructor.

Strategy 2 – at completion of follow through – throwing arm too low

1. The athlete delivers a ball as they normally would. Ask the bowler to freeze (hold) their follow through position.
2. The instructor is standing approximately 1 foot past the foul line (on the bowler's delivery side). As the bowler freezes in their follow through grab their wrist of the throwing arm and pull it gently forward and UP.

Strategy 3 – at completion of follow through – throwing arm continually falls back to side of body.

This drill is as much a torso drill as it is an arm drill. The root of the problem may lie in the position of the athlete's torso during entry into the follow through position, as well as in the follow through. If the bowlers torso is bent forward too much it shifts the center of gravity such that it becomes very difficult for the athlete to maintain the arm position in the completed follow through. The key to correction is giving the athlete an imagery cue so that they can differentiate between too much bend and the right amount of torso bend at the waist and extension.

1. The athlete initiates a one step drill, without a ball.
2. The instructor moves in and repositions the body as needed. (often times the one-step drill corrects the problem).
3. The athlete attempts their regular approach and delivery incorporating the feel of the one step drill as it relates to body position.

Strategy 4 – at completion of follow through – throwing arm continually falls back to side of body.

1. The instructor isolates each step of the approach in slow motion even static (stopping at each phase) – no ball.
2. The athlete mirrors the instructor.
3. Repeat this process several times, to assure the athlete has awareness to the feel for each position.
4. The athlete repeats the process but at a bit quicker pace, (still not at the regular speed). The instructor may count out the steps (pace) so that the athlete moves in time to the count. Once this is achieved move to 'real time' speed. – without ball
5. The athlete attempts to implement the new position(s) into their approach and delivery (with ball in hand).

6. The instructor watches closely (quality control) if regression occurs bring the athlete back to an earlier phase of this drill.

*As this skill develops the instructor may find it necessary to move out onto the lane and repeat strategy two.