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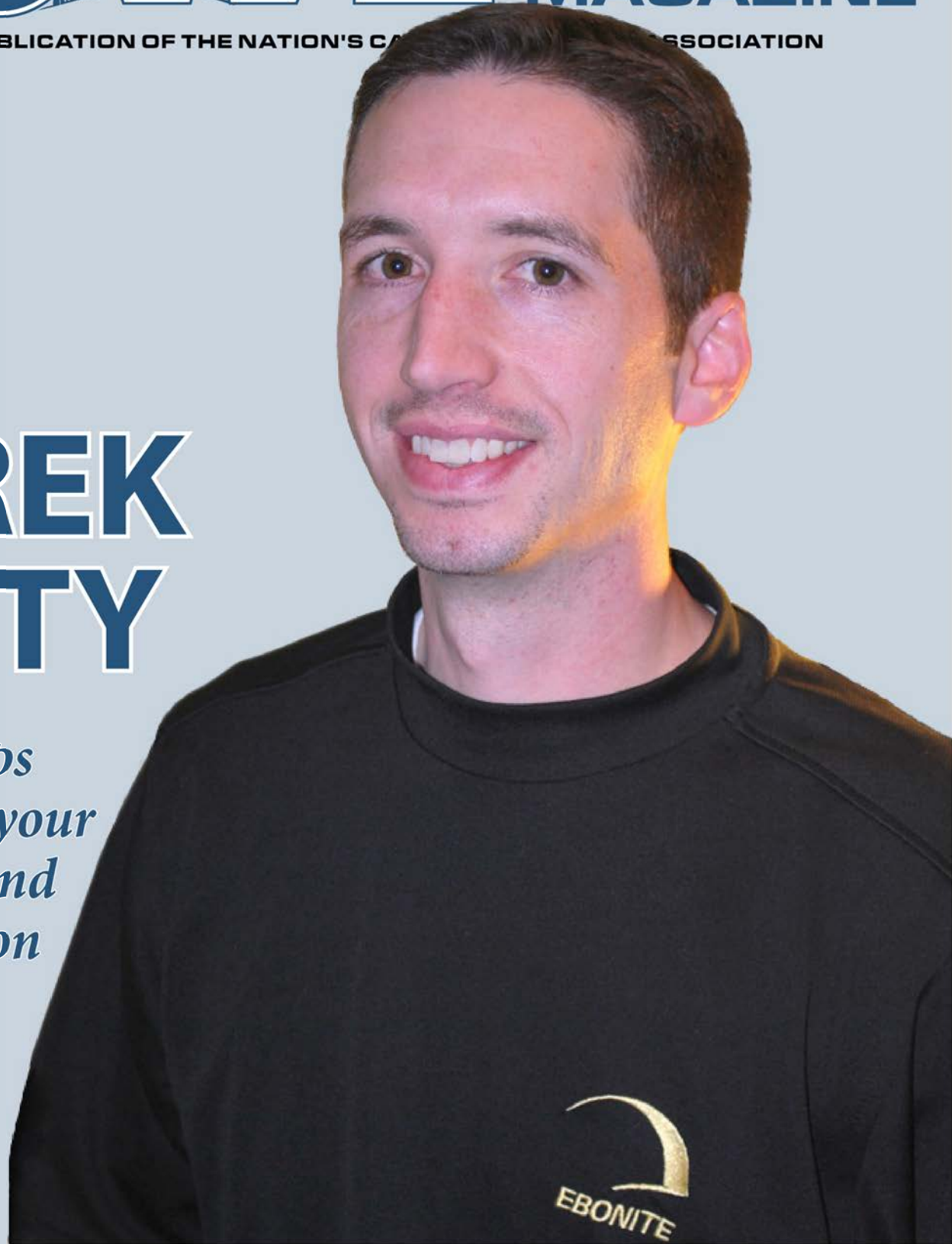
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DEREK PETTY

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critical for your
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of a shot*



The Best Bowling Tip I Ever Received

By Derek Petty



The best bowling tip I ever received is actually two tips in one. Both tips are critical for your approach and the successful execution of a shot, while neither is more important than the other. These tips involve good rhythm and a steady head.

I can't recall if it was in a magazine, from my father, Bud Petty, from the late Bob Pendegraft, the legend Don Huss, or while I competed collegiately at Virginia Tech from 1993 to 1998 (though my wife has probably told me more than any of them), but the one thing I do know is that bowling is an ever-changing game, and you need a coach to stay competitive. There are too many moving parts to think you can do it on your own.

Most recently, Stephen Hahn, Geovel "Gee" Lopez, and I have been breaking down each other's games and have identified a few small changes that needed to be made, none of which were more important than the two I mention above—good rhythm and a steady head. These two components have played critical roles to minimize the mistakes we had been making from set-up to release and are now providing consistency in every shot. These two items are often talked about by many but not executed well by all. The pros are great at it, the weekend warriors are good at it, and most league bowlers never think about it.

Timing is everything. Yes, timing *really* is everything when it comes to bowling. Whether it's fast or slow, late or early, it needs to be the same on that given day of competition. Your body, your mental state, the lane condition, the temperature or whatever it may be change daily, so finding that consistent timing and rhythm puts you in a place many others won't get to. A constant rhythm allows you the ability to do the same thing over and over and over, often resulting in quality shots.

With all that I've just said, it's not an easy task. Over the years, I've worked hard at figuring out where to position my ball in my approach, how fast or slow to walk, how short or long my steps needed to be, and even how far to push the ball in my approach, and all have helped me understand how to achieve late or early timing and how to gain that "feel" you need for confidence in every shot.

People do not often think about their head and shoulders while bowling, unless of course they're talking about shampoo (haha - funny). Seriously, most simply worry about getting to the foul line and throwing the ball in the direction of the pins. A key piece to all of this is a steady head and a solid shoulder position. Both are needed to keep the ball in-line with your target and allow you to execute on that path.

Before my recent trip to the 2011 U.S. Open in New Jersey, Gee Lopez noticed that I had gotten into the "house groove"—the coveted (as I described above) "throw it in that direction" and it will hit the pocket. We worked to get my body in control and head stable, and what a difference it made. We worked to get my shoulders in a solid open position to allow me to hook the ball and also a closed position to allow me to play down and in.

This *simple* step, solid head and shoulders, allowed me to get back to seeing my ball reaction and provided increased consistency. I was shocked at how this had gotten away from me, but it made sense as to why I had felt like I was on a roller coaster every time I stepped on the lanes for competition. I can't tell you how significant this has been at increasing my ability to know where my ball is going and how it is reacting. Following lane transition is a part of my game again. I don't need to guess because I can see it (and nearly feel it when a shot creeps high or comes in light). My ball is now on the same trajectory, shot after shot.

So, while many things may go through my head before I pick up my ball to make a shot, the last thing I've thought about recently is "feeling" the shot I need to make and keeping my head and upper body solid. With these two things in control, my confidence is high, and I am able to post my shots, providing an optimal scoring environment. I recommend you think about these things the next time you step on the lane and try to repeat them, every shot.

Find your rhythm, solidify your head and shoulders, and Bowl to Win. See you on the lanes.

Derek Petty, a pro shop technician at Spares Pro Shop in Sterling, Va., is an Ebonite International Team Member and a writer for above180.com. He has recorded 17 perfect games and eight 800 series, and he averaged 228 in 2010-2011. The association's third-ranked bowler in the 2000-2001 season, Derek was an NCAUSBCA Scratch Team Champion in 2007 and, unofficially, this season.