

Pillar in the Middle—Calm in the Center of the Storm

Here is an approach for you to take for a couple weeks of practice. I assure you it will take you to another level, if you can "feel" what is going on. You have heard me talk about how important it is to get that right foot down really, really, early on the first turn.....it sets up the whole throw. If you can do it just right....then you don't have to think about trying to get down early in last two turns...it just happens because you have set up the neuromuscular pattern. So...here is the drill/throw progression (Lance Deal showed me this early on in my masters comeback but I didn't really grasp it then). The progression builds on each phase.

1. Practice the winds....high, long & loose

Exaggerate and play with it....just so you can feel the rhythm that gets created for the whole throw. Make sure the low point stays off the big toe of your right foot. Reach "up" and get 180 at the top of the orbit, wind "in front" of you rather than "around" you.

2. Practice the winds, getting set, and letting the ball run by you.

Keep the low point off the right big toe. As you step back & then in, you want to be winding "in front" of you. When you "step in" (it should be more out wide with the right foot than just up to the back of the ring), plant that foot down so you are like the heavy clothes dryer electrical cord 3-prong plug...very solid and stable. As the ball comes down for the entry, make sure your right leg is moving with the right arm...i.e., closing the gap from your right knee to your left....feel the ball pull you into the turn.

3. Practice the entry with the ball being thrown out to 180....and step to it

At the top of the 2nd wind, "snap" the ball down to the low point (not hard or jerky..just impart impetus) and make sure your hips are against the outward pull of the ball as it goes by. Get the sense that you are taking the ball from 180 (top of your 2nd wind) all the way back out to 180. Now, if you are moving the right leg with the right arm and closing the gap of right and left knee you will sort of get twisted up like a pretzel, but.....you will be in great position for a quick step over your left instep/ankle. Here is the key to everything.....as the ball gets to 180, you want that right foot down and pointed at the left sector line....thereby creating torsion between the hip and shoulder axis. First practice this without the ball and feel that strong, core position (stable tether ball pole)....throw your arms to 180 (from 180 in your wind) and **stomp** with the ball of your foot. Why the stomp?....it allows the left hip/leg to drop/bend against the outward pull of the ball.

4. One-turn throws

Do the above entry, **step/stomp** at an easy comfortable speed (maybe with only one wind if necessary to slow you down) , just when you step/stomp, stay nice and long in the arms and feel the ball accelerate and sweep down toward the back of the ring. As the ball moves through zero, feel it "snap", then continue a little 1/4 turn out toward the sector with everything lifting (legs, arms). We want to feel the ball from 180 to 180 (top of wind out to 180) and 180 to 180 again (from 180 at the catch down through 0 and the release back out to 180). Do not try to "put something on the ball".....rather...."feel" the lower body as a strong pillar/tower and the ball speed around you as it creates its own momentum/energy simply from moving through its orbit high(s) and low(s). Absolutely do not go onto the next phase until you honestly get this feeling.

5. Multiple turn throws

Throw multiple balls for two-turns.....get the "feeling" you had with on-turn on both turns. You will probably notice that your right foot will get down early without you thinking about it....if not, then make sure its down early. When you can get this pillar or calm in the middle of the storm feeling for two-turn throws....then progress to 3 and 4-turn throws.

The "feeling" is easier to experience at first with a heavy and comp ball.