

Thoughts on Throwing

The Hammer Throw – Putting it into Orbit

There are many keys to improving our distance but let's just focus on one for the time being – the correct orbit of the hammer or weight during the throw.

The right orbit, when we are standing facing the rear of the circle at zero degrees, is with the low point in front of us and the high point behind our heads. The initial swings around the head, called the “winds” set up the right orbit so it is important that you relax and let the hammer or weight swing freely. Don't try to stiffen the body and keep it like an “oak tree” because typically you will wind the hammer with the hands moving in a small orbit in front of your forehead. The radius of the hammer is dramatically reduced and plane will be too steep. Both of these conditions inhibit throwing to your potential.



Champion QMA thrower Bob Wagner shows correct technique in the winds in the sequence above. Move the hammer or weight wide around your left side with the hands moving over the top of your head to take the hammer behind your head (picture 2). Now turn your right shoulder to enable you reach back behind you and “catch” the hammer (picture 3). You then push the hammer down to a low point in front of your feet again.



For a standing throw, from the “catch” of the hammer behind you, push with your right palm down to zero degrees. At that point your shoulders and hips will both be aligned, your arms will be extended equally and the ball will be directly in front of you. From here to release, your body and arms stay in this relationship as you execute a 90 degree turn to the left and lift the ball with the arms and legs up at an angle of about 40 degrees. Bob Wagner again shows how it is done.

A common fault, during the final wind around the head, is to turn the body 90 degrees to the left while the hammer is still behind us. This changes the orientation of the hammer orbit and the low point now comes at 90 degrees rather than zero degrees. All you can manage to do is swing the ball like a pendulum without getting any lift from the legs or arms or assistance from the torso. The ball is also released from a much lower point resulting in a very flat throw and little distance. The difference between where I am releasing the hammer compared to Bob above illustrates this point clearly.



The turning of the body prematurely can also occur in throwers performing a single turn throw. The high point can again end up at 270 degrees instead of 180 degrees with the same result of a flat throw with poor distance.

Don Quinn