

Frisbee Fundamentals

29 OCT 2001

By: Lawrence Frederick

To Fly, Flip Away Backhanded
Flat Flip Flies Straight
Tilted Flip Curves, Experiment

For those of you not familiar with these words, they were originally molded on the underside of the earlier manufactured Frisbee discs (and still may be found on the bottom of Fastbacks). I think all of us may attest to the fact that when it comes to throwing a disc, that it is not quite that simple. Nevertheless, with a brief explanation of the basics, the sharing of a few “disc secrets”, and a consistent practice regime, anyone can master basic, and eventually expert disc handling skills.

Contrary to popular belief, physical stature has little to do with the mastering of disc handling skills, especially when referring to the basic skill set. When we teach our weekly training classes in Jacksonville, we never differentiate between gender, age, physical attributes, etc.; everyone learns each throw and move as a group. True, strength ultimately does play some role in throwing the disc for long distance, but for our purposes (getting everyone to perform a unique Freestyle routine, and throwing a minimum of 40 yards), technique is going to be more important than strength.

Our philosophy in teaching disc handling skills is very simple: teach the basics of each throw, expand upon and demonstrate the enhanced releases of that throw, encourage practice of the releases which appeal to each individual, and have fun! During these training classes, we also discourage people from delivering any specific throw more than three times in a row. By minimizing consecutive throws we reduce opportunities for developing and strengthening bad habits, we force the execution of different throws, and we ultimately strengthen a person’s innate thought process of delivering multiple releases consecutively with greatly enhanced fluidity.

Having covered those basics, let’s get down to business!

We teach on the premise that there are four (4) basic throws that ultimately lead to the expansion of the literally hundreds, and even thousands, of variations of releases propelled from our bodies. Those releases are the backhand, sidearm, overhand wrist flip, and upside down throws. True, there are other specifically designated releases such as the thumber, catapult, staker, brush, two-handed throws, etc. It is our belief that these are just extensions of the original family, and will be shared in more detailed articles in future issues.

In addition, we break the learning process of each throw into four stages: grip, stance, release mechanics, and usage of the wind. You, as the thrower, have control over all of these factors with the exception of the wind. Understanding the flight characteristics of the disc upon release, and how the wind influences those characteristics are paramount to successfully delivering the disc to your intended target (i.e. your canine companion). However, before we get into the specific discussion of teaching individual throws, it is important to learn some basic facts and

terminology about the disc.

The disc itself – we are going to concentrate our efforts specifically on the Fastback Frisbee since it is the safest disc to use with your canine companion and it is the only officially sanctioned disc for most of the large competition formats. While the basic structure of all discs remains very close, the actual physical design and weight bear heavily on the specific flight characteristics of each disc. From this point forward, I am going to guide us with the Fastback qualities in mind.

For ease of recognition, and consistent terminology, let's define the parts of the disc:

Face (top)

Underside (bottom)

Headrick Lines

Outer rim

Inner rim

Copula (nipple, located in the center of the underside of the Fastback).

Unlike a ball, which is spherical and travels in an end over end motion, a disc becomes oriented in its flight path by spin. Obviously, the more spin imparted on the disc, the more stable the disc is upon release. Maximum spin can be greatly enhanced by sharper snapping of the wrist just prior to release, along with a firm and correct grip on the disc. Also, unlike a ball, (which travels in an end over end spherical motion) the disc spins in a gyroscopic motion. Therefore, the disc must be released at an angle to compensate for this automated gyroscopic flight adjustment once the disc is released. For simplicity in the beginning, let's say that you should always release the disc at a 45 degree angle with the part of the disc farthest from the tip of your nose pointed towards the ground (except on upside down releases). Adjustments depending upon the wind, the desired distance to be thrown, and the specific release being used will become more evident to you with experience.

The next aspect to understand is the flight path undertaken by the disc once it is released. Depending upon whether the disc is spinning "clockwise" or "counter-clockwise" (which we will discuss further and differentiate when we cover the "sidearm" throw in a future issue) the disc will react with different results. When released with the "nose" up, the disc will climb and ultimately stall. Depending upon how much spin remains when the apex is reached, the disc will either come back to the thrower or fall off in the direction of the spin. When released with the nose down, and the "trailing edge" up, we see the disc become a "worm burner" (i.e. straight into the ground with high velocity). If the disc is released with the lead shoulder down, and makes contact with the ground, the disc will skip back up into the air (we will also cover "skip" throws in a future article). If the trailing shoulder makes contact with the ground first, your disc will become a "roller". If the disc is thrown correctly, you will be rewarded with a perfect, tranquil, graceful, and sometimes even awe-inspiring flight path which will be met at the precise moment by a very appreciative canine companion.

To get you on the correct path until our next edition, I would like to offer up a few suggestions that may help you strengthen the throws that you already possess.

1. Don't just practice throwing and/or delivering up releases with your canine companion. Throw with a friend at very short distances (10 yds. Max). Throwing short distances allows you to refine the mechanics of your deliveries and releases. You will find that distance will come naturally as

you master the mechanics.

2. If you have no friends readily available, use a badminton net tied between supports. Spray paint a target on it and aim for that spot at different angles. The reason for the net is to act as a “catcher” without damaging your discs, thus saving you from walking all over the playing area to collect your discs. Some people put tape on a wall, spray paint a target on a large tree, use neighborhood disc golf course baskets, etc.

3. Practice your Freestyle routine without your canine companion. Throw the discs in the same sequence and energy as you would with your canine companion. This affords you an opportunity to concentrate on releasing your discs more correctly, to realize where your discs are ultimately going to lie (for subsequent throwing and or retrieval purposes), and to hone your showmanship skills.

4. Be cognizant this time of the year in relation to the outside temperatures. Discs will crack on impact below 52 degrees Fahrenheit, and cracked discs are very dangerous to both you and your canine companion.

In conclusion, I would like to leave you with some throwing wisdom that was imparted upon me more than 20 years ago by one of the most famous and successful human disc freestylers of all time - Jens Velasquez. Jen’s philosophy about having a dazzling routine is as follows:

Take the easy throws, and make them look difficult.

Take the difficult throws, and make them look easy.

It’s that simple!!

Make sure you check out our subsequent articles that break down each throw into such basics that anyone can learn to throw them.

The Sidearm Throw

04 DEC 2001

By: Lawrence Frederick

We have selected the “Sidearm” throw as our first throw to specifically detail in our continuing series of “Throwing Your Life Away”. The Sidearm is one of the four basic throws that we discussed in our first article; and is considered a favorite throw of a lot of Disc Dog handlers, as well as Ultimate, Freestyle, Disc Golf, DDC, and Guts Frisbee Disc players. I have chosen to embark upon teaching this throw first because it really is probably the most difficult of the base class of throws to learn, and is definitely the most unstable in flight. This being stated, once the Sidearm is mastered it can be a very versatile and exciting throw to have in ones repertoire.

What makes this throw difficult to learn, and unstable in flight for the novice? A couple of factors contribute to this realism. First, unlike just about any other throw, the Sidearm is propelled more or less with the tip of the middle finger on the throwing hand. (This is where the disc gets its impetus for spin.) Other throws actually have the spin imparted on the disc by more

of the hand, and other fingers. The positive aspect of the throw is that it provides more “reach” in the delivery aspect of the throw. The negative aspect of the “reach” is that the throw is normally delivered with less spin imparted on the disc, which in turn makes it unstable in its flight path.

A common mistake made by most people in trying to learn this throw is that they use too much of their arm and back when releasing the disc. There is a tendency, more so than any other throw, to “over power” this throw upon delivery. As we have stated previously, and this throw is a perfect example, standing no more than 10 – 15 feet from your partner when trying to learn this throw will prove to be very beneficial. What we are trying to learn at this point are the mechanics of the release. Again, learning the correct mechanics of this throw at a relatively close distance will afford you the opportunity to concentrate on the hold, body posture, release, and follow through, and not worry about the distance. Distance with this throw will come later, once you have learned the correct way to throw the sidearm, and practiced it countless times to perfection.

One last thing to consider before we finally get down to the mechanics. The Sidearm is going to have the opposite imparted spin on the disc then from when you throw a backhanded throw. This means that if you throw a right handed backhand, you will have “clock” spin on your disc when it is released. If you throw the Sidearm with the same hand, it will have the opposite spin, “counter-clockwise”. (Or in disc jargon “counter”) It would be the exact opposite if you were a left-handed person.

You may be wondering why this is important to you as a canine competitor. The main reason is that you are now opening your dog up to an entirely new way of catching the disc. If you throw a “clock” spin disc to your dog, they will be accustomed to the disc entering their mouth with the spin moving the disc across their face from left to right. They also know that the disc, especially with a lot of spin, is going to move their head from left to right to make the catch. Now, you throw them a “counter” disc and it is going to move from right to left across their face. Imagine the element of surprise that the dog is going to experience the first time you throw a counter spin disc to them. You have now exposed them to a whole new element of the game. It is recommended that you do not deliver the Sidearm to your dog in the beginning stages at a high degree of velocity. Start out slow and easy, and allow the dog to get used to the fact that the disc is now coming at them in a completely different manner. One thing that will develop in future training is that the dog will already know, based upon your delivery set-up and release of the disc, what spin has been imparted on the disc, and will adjust mentally prior to making the catch. Now, let’s move on to learning the throw!

We are going to divide the learning of the Sidearm into four stages; the grip, the stance, the release, and utilizing the wind in our favor. Let’s discuss the grip first.

There are various grips for the Sidearm, and I urge you to use what ever feels comfortable for you. But, for teaching sake, I am going to use the most common of the grips, the “two-fingered” release. Hold the disc in the opposite hand of your throwing hand (for ease of explanation, I am going to teach with the assumption that you are right handed – yet another instance of discrimination against the left handed people of the world) and make a “peace” sign with your throwing hand. Now, take the disc, with the “top” of the disc facing the sky, and your palm also facing toward the sky, and lay it in the web area between your index finger and your thumb. Next, while keeping your ring and little fingers still pressed against the palm of your hand, place your thumb on the top of the disc. You should have the pad of your thumb firmly pressed against the “Headrick” lines on the face of the disc. Your middle and index fingers are now on the

underside of the disc. Pull your middle finger toward you until it comes in contact with the underside rim of the disc. Your index finger should remain in direct contact with the undersurface of the disc and be pointed to the center area. It is OK to slightly place pressure with the thumb on the Headrick lines to ensure that you have a firm grip, and remember to always have the disc tucked as tightly as possible in the web area between your index finger and thumb.

Next, we want to concentrate on the stance. When setting your self to throw the disc, your body (i.e. head, chest, feet, etc.) should be facing away from your intended target at a 45-degree angle. The opposite shoulder from your throwing hand, (in this case, the left side of your body) should be pointed directly at your intended target. Knees should be slightly bent, and upper torso bent over ever so slightly, with a slight dip in your shoulder of the hand you are throwing the disc. Weight is originally displaced almost equally between both legs at the beginning of the set. The forearm of your throwing arm is horizontal to the ground, palm facing toward the sky, and the elbow all but making contact with your hipbone. The disc is held in the hand as described above; with the furthestmost point of the disc away from your nose, pointed toward the ground at about a 45 degree angle. Wrist is held almost limp as the forward snap is imparted upon the disc. Make sure that your “non-throwing arm is used as a balancing, as well as “aiming” tool. Do not let the non-throwing arm hang limp at your side. You should really think about the non-throwing arm as the counter balance for all the activity that is going to be taking place on the throwing side of your body.

Eyes should remain locked on the target, with a definitive spot focused upon to increase your sense of accuracy. Normally, we instruct people to aim for the belly button of the person they are throwing to when practicing. The theory here is that you are aiming for a specific spot, and if you are off aim just a bit, the disc will still be fairly close to your intended target. If a person just throws in the “direction” of the intended target, any slight deviation could cause maximum missing of the target. It is a little more difficult throwing to your dog because you must visualize where the dog and disc are going to meet; and concentrate on delivering the disc to that exact spot. Again, with this way of thinking, a slight miscue will still put the disc in the area that the dog will be able to adjust and still make the catch.

Now, let’s address the release. The release of the sidearm should start with the disc off to the right side of your body, and being held between your waist and lower part of your chest. Next, cock your wrist back; this should cause the leading edge of the disc to tilt down. Remember to keep your palm facing the sky at all times. Now, bring your arm forward and snap your wrist ONLY. Do not use your shoulder or back to cause the forward motion. Once you gain a little expertise with the mechanics, you will want to combine all of this so that it is done in one motion, with all parts of the body moving at the same time. During the release, about 70% of the weight is first transferred to the trailing leg, and then during the actual release, weight gets placed back toward the front leg. Never lift either leg from the ground during any portion of the delivery. Your palm should always face to the sky during the release of the sidearm. If you find your palm turning toward the ground, you need to make an adjustment. This is also true in regards to the underside of your forearm. Additionally, your forearm should remain horizontal with the ground; never bring it behind your back, over your shoulder height, or let it hang down vertically next to your leg. (All of which will occur if you are seriously trying to achieve maximum distance with the Sidearm, but for learning the basics, don’t go there!)

Last, and by no means less important; and before we speak about how the wind is going to specifically affect the sidearm throw, let us understand how the wind affects any disc, or throw

upon release. If a person throws a disc facing the wind, the disc is going to have a tendency to initially rise upward. If throwing with your back to the wind, the disc is going to have a tendency to be pushed down in its flight path; which in stiff wind can actually be your better choice for gaining more distance. Obviously, we need to compensate for these effects prior to the release of the disc. The stiffer the wind, when throwing into it, the more angle you need to place on the disc when releasing, and the less distance the disc is going to travel. Also, you would like to be able to release the disc slightly lower than your normal release point. Likewise, throwing with the wind in stiff winds, you can get the disc to travel more distance, but you need to place less angle on the disc, release it higher, and realize that it is going to be traveling much faster. The significance here is that if your dog is super fast and you can release it high enough, you may be able to do better throwing down wind when throwing distance. Otherwise, when throwing into the wind, your disc will have a tendency to not travel as far. It will also be more apt to “air-bounce” at the last second when your dog is air born for the catch; or shelf, rise, and float back toward you, or drift off to either side out of control.

The wind is going to affect how the sidearm travels upon release mostly because of the nature of the release (i.e. the propelling by the end of the finger). Also, there is little room for releasing the disc at different heights because of the nature of the grip and release. So, you are fairly locked into how the disc is going to be released regardless of whether you are throwing with or against the wind. Hopefully, these few minor adjustments will help you; 1.) When throwing into the wind, let the disc hang almost vertical from your grip and release the disc with as much snap in your wrist as possible. If you are throwing with the wind, keep the disc almost horizontal, and release the disc with less than normal spin – that is, let the wind carry it toward your target for you. The only true way to know how to handle the wind is to play in it and experiment.

There are a tremendous amount of various “releases” of the sidearm. The sidearm can be thrown with your back to the target and the actual release coming from the opposite side of your body (‘blind” sidearm); between your legs (either released in front of your body, or behind your legs); under either leg, with the leg lifted in the air of course; around your ankle, with your body completely inverted (“flamingo”); as a “skip” shot of the ground; off your chest, leg or foot, more or less as a ricochet; upside down; etc... Only your imagination will limit you to the variations you are able to identify and learn to execute.

As with any throw, the key to success is to practice. Try to find a partner other than your dog to learn new throws. It is much more beneficial to have a human friend catching your errant throws in the beginning stages than to make your dog frustrated chasing your “shankers”. Once you have it fairly consistent; then go grab your canine companion and introduce them to the wonders of a new release. They will be just as pleased with you for introducing something new to the routine, as you will be with yourself for mastering such a difficult release.

Until our next article, remember to continue to “throw your life away”!

The Backhand Throw

03 DEC 2001

By: Lawrence Frederick

The Backhand

We have selected the “Backhand” throw as our second throw to specifically detail in our continuing series of “Throwing Your Life Away”. The Backhand is one of the four basic throws that we discussed in our first article; and is considered a favorite throw of a lot of Disc Dog handlers, as well as Ultimate, Freestyle, Disc Golf, DDC, and Guts Frisbee Disc players. I have chosen to embark upon teaching this throw second because it really is the most popular of the base class of throws. It is the easiest to learn and offers accuracy and control for even the beginner; as well as being the most stable in flight. This being stated, once the Backhand is mastered it can be a very versatile and exciting throw to have in ones repertoire.

A common mistake made by most people in trying to learn this throw is that they use too much of their arm and back when releasing the disc. There is a tendency, as with a lot of other throws, to “over power” the disc in the early stages of learning the delivery. As we have stated previously, and this throw is another example, standing no more than 10 – 15 feet from your partner when trying to learn this throw will prove to be very beneficial. What we are trying to learn at this point are the mechanics of the release. Again, learning the correct mechanics of this throw at a relatively close distance will afford you the opportunity to concentrate on the hold, body posture, release, and follow through, and not worry about the distance. Distance with this throw will come later, once you have learned the correct way to throw the backhand, and practiced it countless times to perfection.

Throwing the Backhand essentially entails grasping the disc much like you would shake someone’s hand; cocking your wrist back toward your body; posting the disc in front of, and just trailing your chest; pulling your arm across your body; and snapping the disc toward your intended target. It really is that easy!

Obviously though, it is not quite that simple, especially if you want to include various angles, releases, placement, and degrees of length thrown factored into the motion. We are going to share some of the basic information regarding the grip, stance, angle of release, release, and usage of the wind of this throw in the first part of this edition of “Throwing Your Life Away”. Then we are going to cover some of the more popular variations of the Backhand release, and the secrets to making these throws not only possible, but seem like you have been doing them forever.

One last thing to consider before we finally get down to the mechanics. The Backhand is going to have the opposite imparted spin on the disc then from when you throw a Sidearm throw (the throw we learned in the previous article). This means that if you throw a right handed backhand, you will have “clock” spin on your disc when it is released. If you throw the Sidearm with the same hand, it will have the opposite spin, “counter-clockwise”. (Or in disc jargon “counter”) It would be the exact opposite if you were a left-handed person.

We are going to divide the learning of the Backhand into four stages; the grip, the stance, the release, and utilizing the wind in our favor. Let's discuss the grip first.

There are various grips for the Backhand, and I urge you to use what ever feels comfortable for you. We are going to assume that you are using the standard backhand grip. (i.e. thumb is on the Headrick lines, middle finger pinching the underside of the disc exactly under the thumb, and the remaining fingers can either be "fanned" out on the underside of the surface, or slightly curled under and poised against the inside "cheek" of the rim) The best way to learn this is to place the disc in your non-throwing hand, (for this article, we are going to assume that you are right handed) and extend your throwing hand directly out in front of you as if to shake the hand of an acquaintance. Now, holding the disc horizontal to the ground, place the outside of the disc (three o'clock) into the palm of your right hand. Place the thumb on the Headrick lines (poised at about 11 o'clock) and place your remaining four fingers on the underside of the disc so that you are comfortable with your grip. The rule of thumb in regards to the tightness of the grip is as follows: hold the disc much like you would a canary, loose enough so not to crush it, but tight enough so that it won't fly away. You will get the feel for what is comfortable for you with more practice.

The stance will be our next area of concentration. When setting your self to throw the disc, your body (i.e. head, chest, feet, etc.) should be facing away from your intended target at a 45-degree angle. The throwing hand shoulder, (in this case, the right side of your body) should be pointed directly at your intended target. Knees should be slightly bent and your weight is distributed equally at first between both legs. As the disc is brought back across your chest, weight is transferred to the trailing leg (i.e. left). As the disc is brought across your chest for the release, the weight is again transferred to the leading leg. The amount of weight transferred to the leading leg is directly proportional to the distance you are attempting to throw. In other words, the further you are trying to throw the disc, the more follow through you would apply to your leading leg. The forearm of your throwing arm is horizontal to the ground, palm facing toward the ground, and the elbow essentially is pointing at your intended target. The disc is held in the hand as described above; with the furthest point of the disc away from your nose, pointed toward the ground at about a 45 degree angle. Wrist is held almost limp as the forward snap is imparted upon the disc. In the early stages of learning this throw, and for a lot of people thereafter, we suggest that you use your left hand to grasp the trailing edge of the disc as you bring the disc back across your chest. This will help to insure that you are placing the disc in the same area, and that you are putting the same angle on the disc each time. Ultimately, this will help you to find your groove in your release each time. Last, but not least, it gives you something to do with your left arm, while serving to act as a counterbalancing the weight. Make sure that your "non-throwing arm is used as a balancing, as well as "guiding/placing" tool. Do not let the non-throwing arm hang limp at your side. You should really think about the non-throwing arm as the counter balance for all the activity that is going to be taking place on the throwing side of your body.

Eyes should remain locked on the target, with a definitive spot focused upon to increase your sense of accuracy. Normally, we instruct people to aim for the belly button of the person they are throwing to when practicing. The theory here is that you are aiming for a specific spot, and if you are off aim just a bit, the disc will still be fairly close to your intended target. If a person just throws in the "direction" of the intended target, any slight deviation could cause maximum missing of the target. It is a little more difficult throwing to your dog because you must visualize where the dog and disc are going to meet; and concentrate on delivering the disc to that exact

spot. Again, with this way of thinking, a slight miscue will still put the disc in the area that the dog will be able to adjust and still make the catch.

Now, let's address the release. The release of the backhand should start with the disc in front of your body. Start the throw by moving the disc to a slightly trailing position of your left shoulder, at about chest high. Next, cock your wrist back; this should cause the leading edge of the disc to tilt down. Remember to keep your palm facing the ground at all times. Now, bring your arm forward and snap your wrist ONLY. (I tell people to envision that they are reaching back to pull the starter cord on a lawn mower, and try to simulate the same pull-through motion) Do not use your shoulder or back to cause the forward motion. Once you gain a little expertise with the mechanics, you will want to combine all of this so that it is done in one motion, with all parts of the body moving at the same time. During the release, about 70% of the weight is first transferred to the trailing leg, and then during the actual release, weight gets placed back toward the front leg. Never lift either leg from the ground during any portion of the delivery. Your forearm should remain horizontal with the ground; never complete the throw with your forearm in any stage of vertical position. Your follow through should keep the forearm flat and the index finger of your throwing arm pointed directly at your intended target.

Last, and by no means less important; and before we speak about how the wind is going to specifically affect the backhand throw, let us understand how the wind affects any disc, or throw upon release. If a person throws a disc facing the wind, the disc is going to have a tendency to initially rise upward. If throwing with your back to the wind, the disc is going to have a tendency to be pushed down in its flight path; which in stiff wind can actually be your better choice for gaining more distance. Obviously, we need to compensate for these effects prior to the release of the disc. The stiffer the wind, when throwing into it, the more angle you need to place on the disc when releasing, and the less distance the disc is going to travel. Also, you would like to be able to release the disc slightly lower than your normal release point. Likewise, throwing with the wind in stiff winds, you can get the disc to travel more distance, but you need to place less angle on the disc, release it higher, and realize that it is going to be traveling much faster. The significance here is that if your dog is super fast and you can release it high enough, you may be able to do better throwing down wind when throwing distance. Otherwise, when throwing into the wind, your disc will have a tendency to not travel as far. It will also be more apt to "air-bounce" at the last second when your dog is air born for the catch; or shelf, rise, and float back toward you, or drift off to either side out of control.

The wind is going to affect how the backhand travels upon release. Fortunately, the backhand affords you the freedom to release the disc at various heights and angles to easily compensate for the type of wind you are facing. Here are a few adjustments that will help you; 1.) When throwing into the wind, let the disc hang almost vertical from your grip and release the disc with as much snap in your wrist as possible. If you are throwing with the wind, keep the disc almost horizontal, and release the disc with less than normal spin – that is, let the wind carry it toward your target for you. The only true way to know how to handle the wind is to play in it and experiment.

There are a tremendous amount of various "releases" of the backhand. The backhand can be thrown with your back to the target and the actual release coming from the same side of your body ("blind" backhand); under either leg, with the leg lifted in the air of course; (understanding that the same throwing-hand leg will be easier than the opposite leg) around your body (i.e. waist, single leg, both legs); as a "skip" shot of the ground; as an "Air Bounce"; off your

shoulder as an Air Bounce; upside down; etc... Only your imagination will limit you to the variations you are able to identify and learn to execute.

As with any throw, the key to success is to practice. Try to find a partner other than your dog to learn new throws. It is much more beneficial to have a human friend catching your errant throws in the beginning stages than to make your dog frustrated chasing your “shankers”. Once you have it fairly consistent; then go grab your canine companion and introduce them to the wonders of a new release. They will be just as pleased with you for introducing something new to the routine, as you will be with yourself for mastering such a difficult release.

Until our next article, remember to continue to “throw your life away”!

The Overhand Wrist Flip

Published: 19 DEC 2001

By: Lawrence Frederick

The Overhand Wrist Flip

The “Overhand Wrist Flip” (OWF) throw is the third throw to be covered in detail in our continuing series of “Throwing Your Life Away”.

The OWF is one of the four basic throws that we discussed in our first article and is considered a favorite throw of many Disc Dog handlers as well as Ultimate, Freestyle, and DDC Disc players. I have chosen to teach this throw third in our series because it opens up the possibilities of putting together a very diverse freestyle routine utilizing all the base classes of throws. Also, I was very moved by the site of Ron Watson skipping an OWF of the grass, and Bill Keller throwing his upside down version, in their routines at the 1999 World Finals, as well as seeing John Casey, Ken Cooper, Mark Miller, Gail Mirabella and all the other competitors who used this throw in their routines. Each of them had a unique way of throwing the OWF even though, other than Ron & Bill, they were all throwing what would be considered a “regular” OWF. I think I was the only competitor that year that didn’t throw at least one OWF in one of the Freeflight rounds. (Maybe that is where I went wrong.

The overhand wrist flip is not the easiest throw to learn, and unless thrown perfectly, it does not offer much accuracy or control for even the most advanced thrower. What it does offer is a very visually appealing throw regardless of how it is thrown. Unlike almost all other throws, this throw gives the impression that it uses a lot of your arm motion and strength, as well as maximizing the torque from your body. Believe me when I tell you that is all an illusion. Needless to say, the OWF can be a very versatile and exciting throw to have in ones repertoire once it is mastered.

Common mistakes made by most people in trying to learn this throw is that they use too little of their arm when releasing the disc, they forget to cock their wrist back thus not placing the underside of the disc on the outside edge of their forearm. People also commonly step into the throw when releasing the disc or forget to keep their throwing arm level with their shoulder as they deliver the disc. There is a tendency, as with a lot of other throws, to “over power” the disc in the early stages of learning the delivery, so standing no more than 10 – 15 feet from your

partner when first learning this throw will prove to be very beneficial.

Learning the correct mechanics of this throw at a relatively close distance will give you the opportunity to concentrate on the hold, body posture, release, and follow through without having worry about the distance. Distance with this throw will come later, but it is unlikely that you will ever be able to throw the OWF as far as your other basic throws. It is best to be content that you can throw an overhand wrist flip and to concentrate on the accuracy of the delivery instead of the distance of the throw.

Throwing the OWF is not necessarily as simple as it may look, especially if you want to include variations on the angles, releases, placement, and distance thrown. I will share some basic information about this throw regarding the grip, stance, angle of release, release, and usage of the wind. Then, I will cover some of the more popular variations of the OWF release and the secrets to making these throws look like you have been throwing them forever.

One last thing to consider before we finally get down to the mechanics. The OWF is going to have the opposite imparted spin on the disc then from when you throw a Backhand throw (the throw we learned in the previous article). This means that if you throw a right handed OWF, you will have “counter” spin on your disc when it is released. If you throw the Backhand with the same hand, it will have the opposite spin, “clock”. Of course, the spins for these throws will be the exact opposite for lefties.

The Grip

There are a couple of different grips that are used when throwing an overhand wrist flip, and I urge you to use what ever feels comfortable. The best way to learn the standard OWF grip is to place the disc in your non-throwing hand, (for this article, I will assume that you are right handed) and extend your throwing hand directly out in front of you in the form of a “C”.

Now, holding the disc horizontal to the ground, place the outside of the disc (three o'clock) into the palm of your right hand. Your index finger should be placed along the outside lip of the disc, your other three fingers should be fanned out across the top of the disc, and your thumb should be placing pressure against the middle knuckle of your middle finger from the underside of the disc. The rule of thumb in regards to the tightness of the grip is as follows; “hold the disc much like you would a canary, loose enough that you don't crush it, but tight enough that it won't fly away.” With more practice, you will get the feel for what grip is most comfortable for you personally.

The Stance

When setting your self to throw the disc, your body should be facing away from your intended target at a 45-degree angle. The non-throwing shoulder, (in this case, the left side of your body) should be pointed directly at your intended target. Your knees should be slightly bent and your weight should be distributed equally at first between both legs.

As the disc is brought behind and against the small of your back, weight is transferred to the trailing leg (i.e. right). As the disc is brought from behind your back and projected forward for the release, the weight is again transferred to the leading leg.

The amount of weight transferred to the leading leg is directly proportional to the distance you are attempting to throw.

In other words, the further you are trying to throw the disc, the more weight you would shift to

your leading leg.

The disc should be held in your hand, as described above in the section on Grip, with the point of the disc that is farthest away from your nose pointed toward the ground at about a 45 degree angle.

Your wrist should be held almost limp as the forward snap is imparted upon the disc.

Make sure that your “non-throwing arm is used as a balancing, as well as “guiding/placing” tool. Do not let the non-throwing arm hang limp at your side. You should really think about the non-throwing arm as the counter balance for all the activity that is going to be taking place on the throwing side of your body.

Your eyes should remain locked on a designated target in order to increase your sense of accuracy. Normally, I instruct people to aim for the belly button of the person they are throwing to when practicing. The theory here is that you are aiming for a specific spot, and if you are off aim just a bit, the disc will still be fairly close to your intended target. If a person just throws in the “direction” of the intended target, any slight deviation could cause the target to be missed by a large distance.

It is a little more difficult throwing to your dog because you must visualize where the dog and disc are going to meet and concentrate on delivering the disc to that exact spot. Again, with this way of thinking, a slight miscue will still put the disc close enough that the dog will be able to make an adjustment and still make the catch.

The Release

The release of the OWF should start with the disc in front of your body. Start the throw by cocking your wrist back. This should cause the underside edge of the disc to rest against the outside and underside edge of your forearm. Remember to keep your palm facing the ground at all times.

Next, bring the disc behind your back with a slight bend in your elbow so that the underside of the disc is facing the small of your back. The outside edge of your thumb should be in contact with your spine at the small of your back. In the early stages of learning this throw, and for a lot of people thereafter, it is important that you make sure the disc touches your back in the exact same place each time you do your “wind-up.” It is also helpful to hold the disc in this position for just a second or so to get the feeling of where the disc should be before you start your release. Ultimately, this will help you to find your groove in your release each time.

As the disc is brought behind and against the small of your back, weight is transferred to the trailing leg (i.e. right leg). As the disc is brought from behind your back and projected forward for the release, your weight is transferred to your leading leg, and remember to keep your throwing arm moving forward and level with the height of your shoulder.

Find the point that is 45 degrees between your throwing shoulder and the point of your nose when you are in your beginning stance and looking directly at your target. This is the point at which you want to release the disc during the delivery. Once you gain a little expertise with the mechanics, you will want to combine all of this so that it is done in one motion, with all parts of your body moving at the same time.

During the release, about 60% of your weight is first transferred to your trailing leg and then back to the front leg as you release the disc. It is important to make sure that you do not lift either of your feet from the ground during any portion of the delivery.

What some people do in the follow through is to allow their trailing foot to pivot from its original position (45 degrees away from their target) to a final position where it is pointing directly at their target upon release of the disc.

Again, you shouldn't worry about the pivot very much at this point – just do whatever comes natural or feels comfortable. In addition, your follow through should keep the forearm flat and the index finger of your throwing arm pointed directly at your intended target when the release is complete.

The Wind

Fortunately, the overhand wrist flip delivery gives you the freedom to release the disc at various heights and angles to try to compensate for the type of wind conditions you are facing. I use the word “try” because the OWF is the hardest delivery to throw into the wind of the four basic classes of throws (backhand, forehand, overhand wrist flip, and upside down throws). The overhand wrist flip is difficult to control in strong wind because it is released contrary to all of your other releases; the spin imparted on the disc comes from only your wrist, and it is positioned differently than any other throw in the basic skill class.

When throwing an OWF into the wind, let the disc hang almost vertically from your grip and release the disc with as much snap in your wrist as possible. If you are throwing with the wind, keep the disc almost horizontal and release the disc with less than normal spin – that is, let the wind carry it toward your target for you.

The only true way to know how to handle the wind is through practice and experimentation.

Variations

There are a tremendous amount of variations on the release of the OWF. The OWF can be thrown with your back to the target and the actual release coming from over the opposite shoulder of your throwing hand; under the arm on the opposite shoulder; under either leg, with the leg lifted in the air of course; around your head without rotating your shoulders, head, or body (i.e. facing the target with shoulders squared – the disc is thrown over your shoulder with the release coming from the same side of the body as your throwing hand); as a “skip” shot of the ground; as an “Air Bounce”; upside down; etc... Only your imagination will limit you to the variations you are able to identify and learn to execute.

As with any throw, the key to success is to practice. Try to find a partner other than your dog to learn new throws with. In the beginning stages of learning a new throw, it is much more beneficial to have a human friend catching your errant throws than to make your dog get frustrated chasing your “shankers”. Once you are fairly consistent with your throw, go grab your canine companion and introduce them to the wonders of a new release. They will be just as pleased with you for introducing something new to the routine, as you will be with yourself for mastering such a difficult throw.

Until next time, remember to continue to “Throw Your Life Away”!

Upside Down Throws

Upside Down Backhand Throw

We have selected the Upside Down Backhand Throw (USDBH) as our fifth article to specifically detail in our continuing series of “Throw Your Life Away”. We consider the USDBH, our fourth and final release variation as one of our four basic throws that we discussed in our first article. While the upside-down throws are favorites of a lot of Ultimate, Freestyle, Guts, Disc Golfers, and DDC Disc players, it does not seem to be used by the majority of Disc Dog Handlers. I have chosen to embark upon teaching this fourth release last in our beginner series because it is thrown completely different from any other throw, and utilizes the wind totally different also. Finally, the USDBH completes the possibilities of putting together a very diversified routine utilizing all the base class of throws.

This throw was actually popularized by President Richard Nixon at a U.S. Naval Commencement exercise back in the early 70’s. They had given him a U.S. Naval Academy Frisbee prior to going to the podium and had asked him to throw it to the graduates upon completion of his speech. (To show all of us hippies that he was actually cool.) Well, when he finished speaking, he picked the Frisbee up and threw it backhanded upside down into the crowd. The rest is history; the disc community got together and called for his resignation for not knowing how to throw a Frisbee correctly. He resigned, disc players realized it could fly upside down, and another achievement was chronicled in the Nixon Administration Memoirs. (I can take liberties here since I am the guy writing this...)

He really did throw it upside down into the crowd and the press and media had a field day with that one. Imagine someone not knowing how to throw a disc correctly? Well, today we know that it can fly upside down if released correctly and given the exact flight path to put it where it is intended to end up – i.e. caught by our canine companions.

The USDBH (as does any upside-down throw) has virtually none of the aerodynamic flight characteristics of any throw projected right-side up. The air has no opportunity to flow under the surface and be “caught” by the underside and it’s curved edges, thus helping to create the “lift”. What happens is that the air flows over the bottom and top at almost the exact same speed and no lift is really created. Sure, you can “projectile” it outward, but it is going to die just as quick as your physical exertion deadens. Translated, when your snap upon release wears off, the disc is going to drop just like a ball or rock. This being stated, once the USDBH is mastered it can be a very versatile and exciting throw to have in ones repertoire.

The most common mistake made by most people in trying to learn this throw is that they have a tendency to throw the disc in a flat projectile toward their intended target. (much like they would throw an right side up backhand) This type of release and flight path will cause the disc to “scoop” to the right and drop way before it reaches it’s intended target. There is also a tendency, as with a lot of other throws, to “over power” the disc in the early stages of learning the delivery. As we have stated previously, and this throw is a another example, standing no more than 10 – 15 feet from your partner when trying to learn this throw will prove to be very beneficial. What we are trying to learn at this point are the mechanics of the release. Again, learning the correct mechanics of this throw at a relatively close distance will afford you the opportunity to concentrate on the hold, body posture, release, and follow through, and not worry about the

distance. Distance with this throw will come later. This throw can actually be thrown quite a long distance if released correctly; but this can only be achieved by practice and perfection of the delivery.

Throwing the USDBH is actually quite simple. We are going to share some of the basic information regarding the grip, stance, angle of release, release, and usage of the wind of this throw in the fourth edition of "Throw Your Life Away". Then we are going to cover some of the more popular variations of the USDBH release, and the secrets to making these throws not only possible, but seem like you have been doing them forever.

One last thing to consider before we finally get down to the mechanics. The USDBH is going to have the opposite imparted spin on the disc then from when you throw a OWF throw (the throw we learned in the previous article). This means that if you throw a right handed USDBH, you will have "clock" spin on your disc when it is released. If you throw the OWF with the same hand, it will have the opposite spin, "counter". It would be the exact opposite if you are a left-handed person.

There are a couple of different grips to the USDBH, and I urge you to use what ever feels comfortable. We are going to assume that you are using the standard USDBH grip. The best way to learn this is to place the disc in your non-throwing hand, (for this article, we are going to assume that you are right handed) and lift your throwing hand directly in front of you as if you were going to be placing your hands on a steering wheel. Now, place the outside of the disc (three o'clock) into the palm of your right hand. The underside of the disc should be facing you, with the top of the disc facing to what would be the windshield of your car. Your index finger is placed along the outside lip of the disc, your other three fingers are fanned out across the top of the disc, with the thumb placing pressure against the middle knuckle of your middle finger from the underside of the disc. The rule of thumb in regards to the tightness of the grip is as follows: hold the disc much like you would a canary, loose enough so not to crush it, but tight enough so that it won't fly away. You will get the feel for what is comfortable for you with more practice.

The stance will be our next area of concentration. When setting your self to throw the disc, your body (i.e. head, chest, feet, etc.) should be facing away from your intended target at a 45-degree angle. The non-throwing shoulder, (in this case, the right side of your body) should be pointed directly at your intended target. Knees should be slightly bent and your weight is distributed equally at first between both legs. The disc should be held at about shoulder height in front of you, with the trailing hand acting as the guide and consistent spot to place the disc each time this throw is thrown. (It really does look like you are holding on to a steering wheel) The disc is held in the hand as described above; with the furthestmost point of the disc away from your nose, pointed toward the sky at about a 45 degree angle. We suggest that you hold the "backswing" of the throw for just a second or so to get the feeling of where the disc should be and feel at the point of impetuous in your release. This will help to insure that you are placing the disc in the same area, and that you are putting the same angle on the disc each time. Ultimately, this will help you to find your groove in your release each time.

Eyes should remain locked on the target, with a definitive spot focused upon to increase your sense of accuracy. Normally, we instruct people to aim for the belly button of the person they are throwing to when practicing. The theory here is that you are aiming for a specific spot, and if you are off aim just a bit, the disc will still be fairly close to your intended target. If a person just throws in the "direction" of the intended target, any slight deviation could cause maximum

missing of the target. It is a little more difficult throwing to your dog because you must visualize where the dog and disc are going to meet; and concentrate on delivering the disc to that exact spot. Again, with this way of thinking, a slight miscue will still put the disc in the area that the dog will be able to adjust and still make the catch.

Now, let's address the release. The release of the USDBH should start with the disc in front of your body; positioned as described above. (i.e. holding the disc like a steering wheel) You want to start this throw by bringing the disc back past your opposite shoulder, but still keep it at shoulder height or above at all time. As the disc is brought back, weight is transferred to the trailing leg (i.e. left). As the disc is brought from beyond your shoulder and projected forward for the release, the weight is again transferred to the leading leg. The amount of weight transferred to the leading leg is directly proportional to the distance you are attempting to throw. In other words, the further you are trying to throw the disc, the more follow through you would apply to your leading leg.

Your wrist is held almost limp as the forward snap is imparted upon the disc. The trick on the release of this throw is to deliberately release the disc "up and over" and imaginable object in front of you. I tell people to imagine that there is a person standing right in front of them and that they have to throw it up and over them in order to get the throw off. So, instead of snapping your wrist horizontally with a forward motion; you want to snap your wrist "up" at about a 45 – 50 degree angle. Once you gain a little expertise with the mechanics, you will want to combine all of this so that it is done in one motion, with all parts of the body moving at the same time. During the release, about 60% of the weight is first transferred to the trailing leg, and then during the actual release, weight gets placed back toward the front leg. Never lift either leg from the ground during any portion of the delivery. Also, with this throw, your forearm should remain vertical to the ground; never complete the throw with your forearm in any stage of horizontal position. Your follow through should bring the forearm just slightly short of flat and the index finger of your throwing arm pointed directly at your intended target when the release is complete.

The wind is going to affect how the USDBH travels upon release. Unfortunately, the USDBH does not afford you the freedom to release the disc at various heights and angles to try to compensate for the type of wind you are facing. This is because it is released contrary to all of your other releases; and the spin imparted on the disc comes from only your wrist, and it is positioned differently than any other throw you have learned to date. Here are a few adjustments that will help you; 1.) When throwing into the wind, let the disc hang almost vertical from your grip and release the disc with as much snap in your wrist as possible. A good idea is to also project it proportionally higher, with a greater distance attempt) If you are throwing with the wind, keep the disc less vertical, and release the disc with less than normal spin – that is, let the wind carry it toward your target for you. One thing that is unique about this throw is that the disc will eventually reach an apex in the flight path, and then "drop" almost straight down to the ground; and in almost all instances the trailing edge of the disc will be dropping in for a very easy catch for your dog. The only true way to learn how the upside down discs will fly is to throw it numerous times and experiment.

There are a tremendous amount of various "releases" of the upside down throws. The USDBH is only one of many, but the easiest to learn. Some other variations would be the upside down sidearm; (this is actually the throw I use with my one arm handstand throw) there is also the upside down thumber; the "inverted" upside down backhand; the upside down push pass; and the

upside down “helicopter” throw. As with all of the other throws that we have chronicled here; only your imagination will limit you to the variations you are able to identify and learn to execute.

As with any throw, the key to success is to practice. Try to find a partner other than your dog to learn new throws. It is much more beneficial to have a human friend catching your errant throws in the beginning stages than to make your dog frustrated chasing your “shankers”. Once you have it fairly consistent; then go grab your canine companion and introduce them to the wonders of a new release. They will be just as pleased with you for introducing something new to the routine, as you will be with yourself for mastering such a difficult release.

Until our next article, (which will be the “Air Bounce” throw) remember to continue to “throw your life away”!

The Backhand Air Bounce Throw

The Backhand Air Bounce Throw

The Back Hand Air Bounce throw (BHAB) is the first “non-basic” throw to be covered in detail in our continuing series of “Throwing Your Life Away”. I have chosen to cover the mechanics and secrets of this throw because it has been requested by so many people; and because it really is a beautiful throw. Please keep in mind though that the BHAB is probably the most difficult throw known to disc players for people to master. I would really like to caution everyone to the fact that this throw will not come easy, and is not going to be very consistent or stable if you do not have a strong wrist.

The BHAB is considered a favorite throw of many Freestyle players, and every once in a while, an Ultimate player or disc golfer. Freestylers like it because it gives them the ability to impart maximum spin (Z’s) over a very short distance. And, if thrown correctly, the disc will reach its destination and climb to its apex; it will hover there for the receiving Jammer to ever so delicately place his nail on the underside and allow it to spin. The BHAB, when thrown correctly, is one of the most beautiful of all throws.

For the exact reason the Freestyler likes it, the Disc Dog enthusiast should be wary. In order to make this throw look appealing, you have got to initially project it toward the ground, exactly where your dog is located. It also is going to take that initial flight path, and then bounce off of an air cushion. Somewhere in between the release and the ascend from the bounce, your dog may want to try to catch it. Last, but not least, the spin you must impart on this throw may make it very difficult for you dog to catch; especially if they are not used to this particular flight path, or they have not had much experience in catching a disc spinning this fast. I highly recommend that you practice this throw without your dog until you feel that you have it mastered.

Common mistakes made by most people in trying to learn the BHAB throw is that they have a tendency to project the disc directly at the ground without learning the release correctly. This throw, more so than any other throw dictates that you hold the disc correctly, and execute the release as near perfect as possible. Another mistake is to try to throw the BHAB “down wind”. A BHAB can be thrown down wind, but it is far more difficult, and definitely should not be attempted during the learning stage. People also have a tendency to try to throw the BHAB by

bringing their delivery directly across their chest, just as they would in the release of the backhand. The release should start at shoulder height and end around your waist. One last “gotcha” would be that your thumb plays a significant part in this release. You can forget about allowing your thumb to ride along the face of the disc and snap at the last second. Your thumb actually “rolls” across the surface of the disc during the release. But, we will talk more about these issues during the “how to” segment of this article.

Throwing the BHAB is not as simple as it looks, as most of you have come to realize. I will share some basic information about this throw regarding the grip, stance, angle of release, release, and usage of the wind. (throwing the BHAB into the wind will garnish quicker results) Then, we will briefly cover a few variations of the air bounce release and the secrets to making these throws look like you have been throwing them forever.

The Grip

We are going to suggest that you use the standard backhand grip, (see DDQ Journal issue # , Spring 1999) with one exception. Instead of placing your thumb on the Headrick lines, you want to exaggerate the placement of your thumb closer to the center of the disc. This will afford you more surface area contact with your hand on the top of the disc, thus affording you to be better able to “push” the disc into the bounce. You may now place your remaining four fingers on the underside of the disc so that you are comfortable with your grip. (You will probably find that it is easier for you to get the snap if you curl your fingers into the inside cheek of the disc) Normally, the rule of thumb in regards to the tightness of a grip is as follows; “hold the disc much like you would a canary, loose enough that you don’t crush it, but tight enough that it won’t fly away.” It is slightly different with the BHAB, you really want to increase the tightness of your grip, more so than you have with any other throw. With more practice, you will get the feel for the necessary tightness of the grip.

The Stance

When setting your self to throw the disc, your body (i.e. head, chest, feet, etc.) should be facing away from your intended target at a 45-degree angle. The throwing hand shoulder, (in this case, the right side of your body) should be pointed directly at your intended target. Knees should be slightly bent and your weight is distributed equally at first between both legs.

As the disc is brought back across your chest, weight is transferred to the trailing leg (i.e. left). As the disc is brought across your chest for the release, the weight is again transferred to the leading leg. The amount of weight transferred to the leading leg is directly proportional to the distance you are attempting to throw. In other words, the further you are trying to throw the disc, the more follow through you would apply to your leading leg.

The forearm of your throwing arm is horizontal to the ground, palm facing toward the ground, and the elbow essentially is pointing at your intended target. The disc is held in the hand as described above; with the furthestmost point of the disc away from your nose, at an angle almost horizontal to the ground. Wrist is held almost limp as the forward snap is imparted upon the disc.

In the early stages of learning this throw, and for a lot of people thereafter, we suggest that you use your left hand to grasp the trailing edge of the disc as you bring the disc back across your chest. This will help to insure that you are placing the disc in the same area, and that you are putting the same angle on the disc each time. Ultimately, this will help you to find your groove in your release each time. Last, but not least, it gives you something to do with your left arm, while

serving to act as a counterbalancing the weight. Make sure that your “non-throwing arm is used as a balancing, as well as “guiding/placing” tool. Do not let the non-throwing arm hang limp at your side. You should really think about the non-throwing arm as the counter balance for all the activity that is going to be taking place on the throwing side of your body.

Your eyes should remain locked on a designated target in order to increase your sense of accuracy. Normally, I instruct people to aim for the belly button of the person they are throwing to when practicing. The theory here is that you are aiming for a specific spot, and if you are off aim just a bit, the disc will still be fairly close to your intended target. If a person just throws in the “direction” of the intended target, any slight deviation could cause the target to be missed by a large distance. It is a little more difficult throwing to your dog because you must visualize where the dog and disc are going to meet and concentrate on delivering the disc to that exact spot. Again, with this way of thinking, a slight miscue will still put the disc close enough that the dog will be able to make an adjustment and still make the catch.

The Release

The release of the BHAB should start with the disc in front of your body. Start the throw by moving the disc to a slightly trailing position of your left shoulder, at about shoulder high. Next, cock your wrist back; remembering to not allow the leading edge of the disc to tilt down. (actually, you may want to exaggerate the set of the disc and let it almost hang horizontal from your grip) Also, remember to keep your palm facing the ground at all times. Now, here is where the differences start to come into play between the normal backhand and the BAHB.

Normally, you would bring your arm forward and snap your wrist, all the time keeping your arm and snapping motion horizontal to the ground. Instead, you want to actually cause your arm to more or less “roll” through the forward motion and allow your hand and thumb to also simulate this same “rolling” motion. Also, you don’t really want your arm to come through the motion horizontally. You really want to start shoulder high, and actually release around waist high. Another difference here is that in a normal backhand, you more or less keep you elbow bent through the release process. With the BHAB you really are going to end up straightening your elbow and locking it at the downward release point to help “snap into the down ward force” being placed on the disc.

Another difference in this throw comes from the thumb itself. During a normal backhand release, you start with your thumb pointing directly away from your intended target. During the throw, your thumb rotates directly toward the target all the time maintaining a horizontal motion and keeping the same speed as the motion of the wrist. During the BHAB, your thumb does not really rotate toward your target. You actually rotate the pad of your thumb from the inside (the side closest to your index finger) to the outside (the side closest to the trailing edge of the disc) Only at the last possible instance does your thumb take on the motion of finally pointing itself toward the target; only because the final impetus of the snap forces you to do this. It is virtually impossible to keep this from happening if you are truly putting all your wrist snap into the throw.

The last main difference is that you want to lean your upper body back at about a fifteen degree angle during the wind up and release; and bend your knees more so than you do on any other release. We actually tell people to almost “sit” into the release. Your downward body motion will help place more pressure on the underside of the disc, and this is where the air cushion develops As you become more proficient with the throw, you will be able to minimize your knee bending; but it won’t hurt you in the beginning to over exaggerate your follow through “dipping”

motion.

Do not use your shoulder or back to cause the forward motion. Once you gain a little expertise with the mechanics, you will want to combine all of this so that it is done in one motion, with all parts of the body moving at the same time. During the release, about 60% of the weight is first transferred to the trailing leg, and actually remains there during the release, weight gets placed back toward the front leg only after the release. Never lift either leg from the ground during any portion of the delivery.

The Wind

Before I talk about how the wind is going to specifically affect the BHAB throw, it is important to understand how the wind will affect any disc upon release. If a person throws a disc facing the wind, the disc is going to have a tendency to initially rise upward. Likewise, the disc is going to have a tendency to be pushed down in its flight path if you are throwing with your back to the wind – this can actually be your better choice for gaining more distance in strong wind conditions. Obviously, we need to compensate for these effects prior to the release of the disc. When throwing into a strong wind, it is important to place more angle on the disc when releasing, and the disc is likely to travel a shorter distance. It is also important to release the disc slightly lower than your normal release point when throwing into the wind. Likewise, throwing with a strong wind will allow you to throw the disc farther, but you will need to place less angle on the disc, release it higher, and keep in mind that the disc will be traveling at a very high velocity compared to an upwind throw.

Fortunately, the BHAB affords you the freedom to release the disc at various heights and angles to easily compensate for the type of wind you are facing. When throwing a BHAB into the wind, remember that the wind will be your friend; not like in other throws where the wind can actually wreck havoc on your flight path. Not saying that it won't wreck havoc on your BHAB, but you are really taking advantage of the wind more so than with any other throw. Consciously, you should be more in tune with the wind than you have ever been with any other throw. Here are a few adjustments that will help you; 1.) The stronger the head wind, the less force you are going to have to use to generate the “air cushion” on the downward push. 2.) The stronger the head wind, the tighter the release mechanics and angle are going to need to be in order to maintain its intended flight path. 3.) Always try to throw the BHAB into the wind if possible.

One last fact about throwing the BHAB into erratic winds; your disc is going to be more vulnerable during its flight path than a normal backhand. The reason for this is because you are already pushing against the inbound wind much more so than you would with a normal backhand throw. With the normal backhand throw, you are literally slicing directly through the wind, instead of trying to manipulate an air cushion on which to ride. The only true way to know how to handle the wind is through practice and experimentation.

Variations

There are only three real serious variations for an “air bounce” release. The BHAB can be thrown with your back to the target and the actual release coming “blind” to the intended target. Secret here is to remember to start with the disc out high in front of you and release about waist height behind your body.

An “off the shoulder BHAB” is thrown by placing the trailing edge of the disc up on the shoulder of your throwing hand. Your hand and thumb are kept on the forward portion of the disc. Initiate

the throw by pushing down and out from your shoulder. Step into the throw with your leg on the same side as your throwing hand. Remember to roll your thumb and straighten your arm at the end of the throw. (Some people seem to think that this is the easiest way to actually learn the mechanics of the air bounce)

The last variation is actually an over hand wrist flip air bounce. Throw your OWF as normal, but actually allow the disc to trail in your throwing hand and snap your elbow on the release.

As with any throw, the key to success is to practice. Try to find a partner other than your dog to learn new throws with. In the beginning stages of learning a new throw, it is much more beneficial to have a human friend catching your errant throws than to make your dog get frustrated chasing your “shankers”. Once you are fairly consistent with your throw, go grab your canine companion and introduce them to the wonders of a new release. They will be just as pleased with you for introducing something new to the routine, as you will be with yourself for mastering such a difficult throw.

Until next time, remember to continue to “Throw Your Life Away”!

The "Staker" Throw

The Staker throw is one of those throws that doesn't have a lot of variations, is rather awkward to throw, and doesn't fly all that far for most people. So, why do people throw it; or better yet, why are we teaching it here in this series? Because it looks good in disc dog routines, and is fairly easy to learn!

The Statker is one of those throws that after you have released it people kind of look at you and know that you really do know how to throw a Frisbee. It is also a variation of a “clock” spin throw, and it so different that the judges usually too are impressed that you used it in your routine.

The Grip

There is only one way to correctly hold a Staker. You start by holding the Frisbee in your non-throwing hand. Take your throwing hand and place it about 12 inches out in front of your face, with your palm at mouth height and facing toward you. Your elbow should be bent at a 45 degree angle, and pointed toward the ground. Next, pinch your thumb, index and middle fingers together much in the same way that you would be picking up a pinch of salt. (if your are right handed, the tips of your thumb and fingers should be pointed directly to your left) Your ring finger and little finger are curled into your palm, out of the way. Again, your palm is still facing your mouth.

Now, you want to take the Frisbee and place it into your throwing hand so that the thumb hooks on the inside of the cheek, and your index and middle finger are on the outside rim. (The actual grip is on the forward leading edge of the Frisbee.) As in other throws, you want to make sure that the Frisbee is seated firmly in your grip. You should now lower the disc up to just below your chin and keep the disc horizontal to the ground. The last part of this is that you will now curl you hand back around to your face so that your finger tips are pointing directly at the front

of your neck.

It is very important that you keep the level of the disc between the top of your shoulders and below your chin. If the disc is staged too low, you will be forced to use more of your arm and back than necessary. If the disc is too high, it will place the disc and your hand in the path of your intended target, thus not affording you the opportunity to keep your eyes on your target for an accurate aim. You will also come to realize once you learn to throw the Staker correctly that it really is more comfortable in this designated zone.

The Stance

When setting your self to throw the disc, your body (i.e. head, chest, feet, etc.) should be facing away from your intended target at a 45-degree angle. The throwing hand shoulder, (in this case, the right side of your body) should be pointed directly at your intended target. Knees should be slightly bent and your weight is distributed equally at first between both legs. As the disc is brought back toward your chest, weight is transferred to the trailing leg (i.e. left). As the disc is brought away from your chest for the release, the weight is again transferred to the leading leg. Some people actually find that keeping the majority of their weight on their trailing leg affords them to snap their wrist with more force. While this does afford more spin, it usually doesn't afford you to throw the disc very far; besides, you probably don't want to put all that much spin on the disc for your dog.) Experiment and see what feels best for you on this one. In essence, the amount of weight transferred to the leading leg is directly proportional to the distance you are attempting to throw. In other words, the further you are trying to throw the disc, the more follow through you would apply to your leading leg.

The forearm of your throwing arm remains horizontal to the ground, palm remains facing vertical to the ground, and the elbow essentially is pointing at your intended target with the 45 degree angle still intact. The disc is held in the hand as described above; with the furthestmost point of the disc away from your nose, pointed toward the ground at about a 35 degree angle. Wrist is held almost limp as the forward snap is imparted upon the disc. Make sure that your "non-throwing arm is used as a balancing tool. Do not let the non-throwing arm hang limp at your side.

The Release

The release of the Staker should start with the disc in front of your body. Start the throw by cocking your wrist back; this should cause the leading edge of the disc to tilt down and your finger tips to be facing your neck. Remember to keep your palm vertical to the ground at all times. Now, bring your arm forward and snap your wrist **ONLY**. Do not use your shoulder or back to cause the forward motion.

Once you gain a little expertise with the mechanics, you will want to combine all of this so that it is done in one motion, with all parts of the body moving at the same time. You may be able to create more snap on the disc by actually flailing your wrist out to the right hand side of your body to get a little "recoil" impetus involved as you bring the disc up to the position in front of your neck just prior to the release. This adds flair to the move and affords you the rhythm to create more motion on the release. This is the best way to be able to set the Staker up as an "Air

Bounce” throw.

As I pointed out above, during the release, about 70% of the weight should be transferred to the trailing leg, and then during the actual release, weight gets placed back toward the front leg. Experiment with this portion of the throw and see what feels best for you. Never lift either leg from the ground during any portion of the delivery. Your forearm should remain horizontal with the ground; never complete the throw with your forearm in any stage of vertical position. Your follow through should keep the forearm flat and the index finger of your throwing arm pointed directly at your intended target when the throw has been completed.

The Wind

The wind is going to affect how the Staker travels upon release. It is relatively close to the same flight characteristics that the Backhand demonstrates. Unfortunately, the Staker does not afford you the opportunity to release the disc at various heights and/or positions. Here are a few adjustments that will help you in throwing in different wind conditions. When throwing into the wind, let the disc hang almost vertical from your grip and release the disc with as much snap in your wrist as possible. If you are throwing with the wind, keep the disc almost horizontal, and release the disc with less than normal spin – that is, let the wind carry it toward your target for you. The only true way to know how to handle the wind is to play in it and experiment.

Variations

There are a few variations of “releases” for the Staker. The Staker can be thrown with your back to the target and the actual release coming from the same side of your body. (“blind” Staker) The single most consistent mistake that people make in trying to do this variation though is that they try to throw the disc from forward of their body. You physically must reach your throwing hand back behind your body, with your elbow almost perfectly straight, and keep the disc at about shoulder height. You would then snap the disc from this position. You may also throw a Staker under either leg, with the leg lifted in the air of course; (understanding that the same throwing-hand leg will be easier than the opposite leg) as an “Air Bounce”; upside down; etc... Only your imagination will limit you to the variations you are able to identify and learn to execute.