

## Being In The Zone, A Mindset To Train

Recently on a Sunday a few of you asked about use of a sports psychologist at training, and I said we did all (mental training) that is necessary.

I started using a sports psychologist as a coach in squash in 1986 and in my years in bowls have used one with every country I have coached in and mainly feel the need to make it (mental skill) bowls related nowadays.

At times some members enquire about a formula for the right mindset:

Attitude is what reflects the mindset - being near enough in effort as opposed to being constantly striving to be better;

Going to the effort of knowing what your technical skill (audit) level is and where it could be; training for events;

Training for a position in a team.

When we did the game plan exercise I could hear a pin drop for about 15 minutes and I smirked thinking they get it, but then a bit of banter crept in and no one had a record of how they went.

If Danny or Pappa had been at training those two would have known exactly what they did at training.

That, is attitude, that is what a psychologist would observe and record as a mentally tough player.

What we need to do is get the technical fundamentals right all the time, pre delivery, efficient technique, feel for weight.

Those variables such as windy conditions, lousy greens are to be dealt with by the opposition, too which you may have overlooked.

How often have I said intensity and purpose is paramount, not lengthy sessions or even too many in the week. I don't (like lengthy sessions).

Surprise, surprise to the reference about simulated heads being part of training for the national squad.

For years in the early days of 2000s, the Aussies used to pooh pooh what I did setting such heads (way way back coaching Malaysians from 2002).

Anyone, anyone, who knows about elite sport is aware of the need to apply the notion of 'game sense' into training.

*being in the Zone*

Any coach not doing that is nowhere near an elite level coach. Nowadays, in the national squad, it is emphasized, training a few times each week, mental toughness.

Now just on mental toughness some examples from our sessions last weekend:

- Attending training, even when it is raining.
- Walking up to get your short bowls.
- Not short cutting on requirements such as recording how you go in the drills, when it was a game plan drill.
- Not repeating the same mistake, such as narrow deliveries. Do it twice, then do something totally different to eliminate that flaw for now.
- Keeping a lid on your emotions and that has to be done in training too as you take training into games.

**Lach**

**Other comments:**

**Danny**

I can honestly say in over 50 years of sport I have only been in the zone 15 times, perhaps less.

And the interesting thing about those times is I remember the really really intense / deep ones as if they were yesterday.

Sometimes they were in competition, sometimes practice. The very deep ones were always defined by having a very strong purpose to them.

Motocross practice, December 1997, showed up for my 60 minutes training session ( spread out over two hours) to find the track was closing in one hour.

I completed that practice in one continuous, effortless session.

Park beach lawn bowls June 2011, playing an Australian player and my goal was to not be embarrassed by reaching 16 shots (first to 25).

I played with no fear. I chatted with the spectators, with Jenny, with the marker. Yet as soon as I picked up my bowl I knew exactly the weight

required. There was no thought of yesterday, or tomorrow or of winning or losing.

When I reached 17 shots I was excited I had reached my target. Every shot I won after that was simply a bonus. I ended up winning and was devastated when it was over.

So, for me, a strong sense of purpose is a definite pre-requisite.

## **Trish**

I believe being in the zone is when a high level of skill meets a high level of challenge. It comes about by practising the skill and gradually increasing the challenge. I can pinpoint times I have been in the zone in our beloved sport and it has been exactly when I don't think about things, but trust the experience and the practice I've done.

I watch Karen Murphy tapes a lot and she has a brilliant routine where she doesn't think about anything much or even watch the opposition's bowl until it has nearly stopped. She watches things, but doesn't really take anything in.

I believe she turns off her concentration until she begins to watch the opposition's bowl stopping, then makes her decision and bowls. It's a simple and repeated routine and it helps her to be her best or be in her zone.

I actually did a presentation to staff at my school last year on the very concept of FLOW which is another word for being in the zone. It was designed for teaching at primary school however it is all applicable to bowls.

Also, the link to the video may not work so Google it (Purple slide Flow Theory) as it's very good!

## **Lachlan Tighe 2022**