

## Lessons from 2018 elite bowls events

# Who is in charge when teams travel to compete for their Association?

We are mid-year 2018 and I had the pleasure of coaching a state player, on the weekend, who was part of the state winning side in the recent national sides championships.

I also had the pleasure of providing advice to a player who at time of typing this was in his 5<sup>th</sup> state singles final in as many years.

And over the past two weeks I have conducted training for two players who represented their region in the state regional championships within Victoria.

Based on those player exposures I am still so, so disappointed our sport lags so far behind in the example elite performance preparation from our players.

Not helped one iota by the blissful ignorance of selectors and bowls management.

Let me proceed on this topic, which can be called “**Who is in charge anyway?**” basing a lot of what I am to write on recollections had with sports managers in my dealings with them in bowls over 20 years.

I wonder if the question should have been asked by all nations prior to the Commonwealth Games 2018, when we see so few countries secure gold medals. Certainly BA can hold their head high which is good as there is an exemplary culture now existing within HP and the squad members.

Or at the recent 2018 Australian sides championships in Darwin.

Or at the 2018 Victorian regional sides championships in Traralgon.

Anyway, continuing on.

In 2003, the Wallaby rugby team lost to the English Lions in the most fabulous competitive event in team sport to my way of thinking.

I learned so much watching, later reading from the Lions coach, Clive Woodward.

One aspect came through loud and clear. He was in charge, totally.

In bowls, from the top sides at club pennant, right through to the national teams, players seem to be a law unto themselves, exception nowadays may be our national players.

This becomes an issue, on the green and off the green, when things are not going so well and it is time for someone to stand up and take charge of the situation.

Let's not look at Cricket Australia as a profile example.

Who is that 'someone'?

There are two questions that come to mind when I think about this issue.

Who is The Coach of the representative Bowls Team?

Gee, do all our state teams even have a head coach?

Continuing, who does what (Wayne Bennett or Craig Bellamy) does for the respective Rugby League Team or Alastair Clarkson (Clarko) with Hawthorn FC, in preparing the team and the players before and during the tournament to perform at their best?

Clarko apparently has that great dictum for players FIFO translated as "fit in or F ..off", love it!

Question two then is who is the leader of the representative Bowls Team?

Who does what Cameron Smith does for the Rugby League Team, or Luke Hodge did at Hawthorn, steering the acceptable practices, showing the courage, the determination in action when the play is at its toughest and most vital?

Over these years in bowls, however where I watch representative teams, in my view, there are not many times I have seen someone in the squad who coaches the players individually or the teams as teams and the overall representative team off the green.

And in bowls no one who has the authority, or should I say takes authority or responsibility, despite their designated title of either selector or team manager and can command the respect of the team to lead it on the green.

To some extent some of these bowls persons with titles seem to be obsequious in their dealing with players. As if they hold them in awe. Respect the player for their endeavour don't hold them in awe.

Delightfully, the BA team and culture no longer fit into the views I mention above. I think the jury is out on all our state level approaches though, and certainly a majority of the nations in bowls.

I would want to appoint a Coach of a representative side who can:

- (i) Coach and train elite level players,
- (ii) Who values an intensity of work on the training green, players who are solid citizens who naturally proper conduct in the team,
- (iii) Who shows respect but commands respect.

And I would want to appoint someone who is fair and firm and upholds the coach's standards as either the selector or team manager.

Or else we have the farcical situation again all these years on of our elite bowlers being light years away from true professional elite sportsmen, and women.

**Lachlan Tighe, 2018**