

## *Goals met gains wins*

### *Goal setting, key to a winners streak*

I observe the football clubs who regularly appear in finals position in our national football premiership. A big change in approach is evident in some of these clubs to their previous handful of years, reasonably successful as those years were.

Now here is the lesson for bowls – quoting from an article referring to one of these ‘...it seems odd, but the players believe the club’s remarkable winning run, undefeated in the competition till round 20, owes a lot to reducing the emphasis on winning, now rather to the goal of improving standards.’

It appears to me the various elite bowls teams, wherever they are at local, state and national level, focus only on winning. That appears to me to be their interpretation of high performance. And that may be due to the mindset of bowls coaches.

Citing the various football players, they believe their wins have been strung together partly because their clubs focus (often via their new coach) has been on steadily improving and living up to team standards rather than concentrating on continuing the winning streak.

In case some of you readers are not elite bowlers, the lesson equally applies when you compete for your club in pennant. Like football clubs, we have the capacity to focus on our preparation. Like them we could strive to improve weekly. That is the goal apparently in football.

Not sure if that (goal to improve) is so apparent throughout all levels of competitive bowls!

Why am I sceptical?

Firstly because I can be. Well you show me where you and I can turn to in bowls to read what coaches state as their team goals; or generic game plans for bowlers in any format, singles to fours. Why not? Because, and you bowlers are equally remiss, they don’t fully believe (in the worth of) them.

Pity, we in bowls lose out temporarily while our high performance mindset is at that level.

In the past six months, in addition to my regular weekly coaching, I have coached / trained / presented to about 20 clubs. Everyone of the clubs disregard a culture of player improvement, of setting technical skill standards, or even organised pennant training. When I go to conduct a

sequence of my session, I call Skill Rating, and a reference to their 'pb' deliveries, the bowlers not used to me look at me aghast.

And coaching overseas mid-year I witnessed no different.

Wonder if any of the audience of bowlers I met would heed a successful national footballer reinforcing the principle (training for improvement).

But let's be fair to bowlers, even those at elite level.

One group of footballers interviewed did admit this year was a brand new approach with its focus on personal and team goals and 'pbs'. Accordingly the club players are playing their roles and know the game plan structures of the team.

Hold it! Roles, game plans. Hello bowlers here is where we can apply the lessons from profile football before we start our next bowls season, next national championship, next Commonwealth Games. We can define, write down our roles in the teams – pairs, triples, fours – we can describe a loose game plan.

I once asked four skips of our Regional representative side to write out their game plan for their rink team. It differed but it was suitable for each rink. At no stage did I interfere, except as regional coach, to demand they have it written and share it with the other 3 players to allow all in the rink to know the job at hand.

A real breakthrough.

I am still unsure if any national bowls coaches are sharing such plans within their countries. Our sport advances by the filtering of these high performance approaches down through the rungs of competition until it is second nature in operation at all levels.

A final word on the football lesson: the players quoted give an impression of self confidence. They feel their strength is their consistency and intensity. Opposing teams sense that too.

No different in bowls. If we elevated our competition preparation to include coaching with a focus on goals and game plans for competition. And training focus on skill, consistency and intensity to rival the expected game, bowlers worldwide would be better performers in competition.

If not, well it would be a sin to not want to improve.

Saint or sinners, which is it to be!

**Lachlan Tighe, 2017**