

# Happy Gilmour: Happy In The Zone

*Dene Milner was a member of my former Elbows squad, and now, is a fellow pBus bowls squad member, a winner of an AO triples championship, a former premier league player, and now head coach of his club Yarra Glen in Victoria.*

*This is his take on players being in the Zone, enjoy the read.*

Some ramblings about the zone and the link to (the film) Happy Gilmour.

## Hone the Zone

There are two ways of thinking about the Zone and how it applies to bowls.

1. **The physical zone.** This is the target area on the green that you visualise and where you want your bowl to finish in. Training drills focus on this. The drill is “**Land the Mat**”. Your goal is to consistently land the mat over different lengths. Landing the mat is the **outcome, the result** of what you do down the other end of the green.
2. **The mental zone.** This is the place you take yourself to in preparing and executing shot selection. It is the **process** you put yourself through each time you deliver the bowl. I call this the **Happy Gilmour** moment. This is the most important time you will spend on the green. Nobody can be expected to concentrate for 100% during training or in a game. But what you must train yourself to do is to have the ability and capacity to **switch on** and **switch off** when it **matters**. Train yourself to know how and when to take yourself to that special place, that **moment in time** when all your thinking is focused solely on the task at hand. The **Happy Gilmour** moment.

Each time you put a bowl down your thinking needs to focus on “**make each bowl count**”.

This starts with the way you train.

Condition yourself at training to be disciplined in maintaining a deliberate and consistent process.

On game day when you are challenged by any given situation you will be able to reflect on and draw from those training drills that you have developed conditioned responses from.

In the movie Happy Gilmour, Happy takes himself to a place of contentment where emotions and frustrations are put to one side. Happy visualises the shot and in a calm and collected moment in time executes the impossible.

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On the bowling green you have upwards of 15 seconds to become a Happy Gilmour each time you bowl, where all your thoughts are positive and focussed on the process – the **Now**.

### **Nothing else matters.**

Train the brain to switch on and then switch off. During a pennant game this means you will take yourself into **The Zone** around 46-54 times given roll-up and dead ends. Over a four-hours game this is about 15 minutes, 6% of game time.

In a singles event which could be over 30 ends and take three hours you need a dedicated, committed and focused **concentration span** of 30 minutes about 17% of game time three times more demanding than pennant.

There are different levels of focus and concentration where you seek to gain an advantage over your opponent.

You need to find time to relax, tune out and **re-charge the battery** so that when the moment arises you are fully charged, right and ready to perform.

During that time never dwell on the past, if only, the what if, the unlucky turnover.

The only thing that is important and matters is the bowl you have in your hand and what you need to do with it.

Switch on, focus on the **now** the **present**.

Remind yourself to “**focus on the process**”.

When you pick up your bowl in those 15 seconds tell yourself “**make this bowl count**” and think only “**eyes down, head down, stay down**”.

Apply this discipline to each time you train, each time you compete and more-often-than-not the result will take care of itself.

## **Hone the Zone Challenge (test your skill)**

The training program has been designed to focus on the essentials around developing a sound delivery process with consistent line and feel for the delivery. It hinges on three important criteria and underpinned with **standards of expected performance**.

- “Know your role, accept your role, play your role”,
- Know and understand the four delivery process elements,  
Ddisciplined, consistent application of process – “make each bowl count”.

You should regularly check how you are performing.

Learn to identify your **strengths** and **weaknesses**. This gives you a focused training plan to work on.

Every training session / level of competition should involve standards based around some type of feedback. Using a scorecard is one technique. This drill is just one that you can set up and use.

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**How to play and score:**

This Mat has score zones. Play this game on your own or compete against another players.

- Mats are set up over agreed length. I focus on minimum and maximum.
- You can play a three bowl or five bowl game.
- One or two bowls to be forehand in any order.
- One or two bowls to be backhand in any order.
- Your third or fifth bowl is a bonus bowl. It is your last bowl. Play either forehand or backhand.
- Your third or fifth bowl scores double points (four for the jack and double the zone score).
- All bowls are draw bowls.
- You score two points each time you touch the jack. The Jack is re-spotted each time it moves.
- You score the number of points for the zone your bowl finishes in. You score the higher number should any part of your bowl cut the line.
- Each bowl played is removed before any other bowl is played.
- You can play all three or five bowls in a row or alternate between your opponents.
- Vary challenge when playing opponent by leaving all bowls where they finish and then score.

Regards, Deno

I trust you value the wise words of my old mate, Deno, in bowls.

**Lachlan Tighe, 2020**