

Mental Skill Development In Training

Positive: Self Talk

Scott was my immediate pairs opponent in the final of a premier league club championships.

A very quiet young man, Scott is identified as a prospect in bowls.

I saw him in a predatory sense, our team as a hunter looking at him, the prey.

Physically he moved back into the background at the bowls head, only reinforcing for me that feeling of our team superiority. However, it was their team's final delivery that convinced me of the necessity for mental and tactical training.

Scott's skip had just played a superb delivery within a measure of being shot.

Scott's comment to his skip was hesitant and negative; along the line of they being down and don't be short with the next delivery.

No indication was given of how good the prior delivery was, how little or much to alter and no concern if added weight in the delivery was to occur.

Sure enough the delivery was just short and the final championship was lost.

Where had the verbal advice been to ensure no danger was to occur if added weight was given to the delivery? The player simply repeated what he had learnt in practice. Most bowlers would do the same as they do not have an understanding of the trained mental skill.

What I watch for and then train players in is their relevant and positive verbal language or the intonation.

I am watchful at training of any glances and facial gestures that transmit worry, undue nervousness and work with the players to be aware of these factors and to prepare them to be alert to their negative application in events.

Walking off green seems to be a strong indication that negativity is creeping into a bowlers' mind.

Numerous international bowlers and many a young gun bowler have walked off the green mid-game to display their mood to those viewing the game, pertinently that includes the opposition if they are alert. See good bowlers walking off the green to converse or curse, in some cases, alongside spectators – especially if the opponent has had a degree of luck (where possibly we all curse).

Why !!!

What these players forget is that they may have contributed to the opponent's luck by their own decisions, thus enabling this opponent to access the luck. I can think of too many situations involving elite players where players lost, and in some small way, it reflected their level of distraction by their foray into the crowd.

And of late, the distraction of coaching 'input' mid-game. Nowadays we see many international players, as per Commonwealth Games 2018, walk off the green in a game to talk with the coaches.

Whose game are they playing anyway!

Be careful not to read too much into the language coming from the other end if it is not contributing to your determined delivery. as this is a lesson in communication.

The issue of negativity or emotional information is resolved by a game plan that includes segmentation where a meeting after a certain number of ends is scheduled to enable players to exchange views and reinforce what each of them has agreed to do.

This year 2018 from May going through to August I ran a weekly session for selected or invited premier league bowlers wanting to step up to the mark as future premier league pennant skips. The dual focus of every session was:

Communication skill _ Positive, precise, understood.

Tactical skill _ Use of the players in team through a game plan.

Started off with chosen four good current premier level bowlers, along came another six (also premier level), who sought me out to join in this development, having heard what we are doing.

Hope it has benefitted them and me, learning how to coach these skills. I shall be adding these sessions onto my website in 2019 under the menu Training Sessions once I rewrite my notes and diagrams.

Lachlan Tighe, 2018