

‘Brilliant, Bryant’

John Snell celebrated 60 illustrious years in bowls November 2019. Lilydale B.C. was generous enough to acclaim their celebrated player with an evening to acknowledge John, which I was duly invited to attend.

His equally celebrated opponent was David Bryant the great bowler who telegraphed John from the UK to wish him well.

John wrote two books, which any keen bowler, with aspirations for high level of performance, needs to read for superb insights into greatness.

That evening prompted me to head back to my library to reread Bryant’s book ‘Bryant on Bowls’ published in 1985, 30 odd years ago.

And today after the reread, I see why Bryant was brilliant. Would you believe 550 bowls titles in his sporting career. Wow!

Let me start with this quote as an example that underpins all the others that follow:

‘...indeed I don’t think that I have ever approached any championship with the hard and fast goal of winning in my mind.’

‘...yet stronger than that is the sheer love of the game and my continuing to play it to the extreme limits of my ability – the challenge is perfection and as a product of perfection, victories will follow automatically.’

Too many bowlers say to me ... I want to win...but Bryant understood that his preparation and discipline to prepare combined with his will to win got him those results.

Bryant on Training or Playing:

‘...I found years of intelligent disciplined practice helped in achieving the isolation which allowed me to focus totally on EACH delivery.’

‘...visualization, mental rehearsal, all helped support dedicated practice.

Lachlan Tighe
Website column

Mental Skill

Some quotes from the book I will share with the state team. However, these are as applicable today as when David Bryant wrote these words 20 years ago.

‘...there is no such thing as total failure; at the very worst a disaster teaches one not to experiment that way again’;

‘...failure is an occupational hazard, which if not swallowed happily, must be accepted with an attitude of saying it happened this time; I will strive to improve via training to win the next encounter’;

‘...you must never fear defeat, if you fear defeat you never dare to win’;

‘...relaxation and enjoyment of the challenge as much as the play (game) itself increases rather than diminishes performance’;

‘...it is of paramount performance that the bowlers eyes are RIVETTED to a point, aim or target’.

‘...it is essential to maximize one’s concentration on that (aiming) point and to fix one’s unwavering riveted eyes on it. This drill, for DRILL it should be, must be followed for days, weeks, months, years until it becomes completely automatic.’

Sounds so simple. However, look around, even look at yourself. Do you apply the above points he makes EVERY time in training. And training, or practice, is where it starts and ends.

The number of bowlers, nay good bowlers, who foolheartedly expect things to be different once the competition starts, are downright dills.

I can understand it, though not accept it, with all the bowlers playing lower than the respective state premier league level. Such bowlers are ‘recreational’ in attitude though competitive...on each Saturday..

It is the elite bowler, those of you in premier league and above to national level, who need to go and reread, even read for the first time, the pearls of wisdom from Bryant.

Oh, then go off and apply his lessons.

And while you are at it refer to John Snell’s books too.

Lachlan Tighe
Website column

I must mention the story Barrie Lester shared with the audience at Lilydale last week when he partnered John years ago when Barrie was a young twenty year old; says Barrie:

“We are down a few at the head and need to pick up a four to win. John wanders up and says to me, when I drive the jack into the plinth it will rebound and all our four now short bowls, will score and we will win.

“John does drive, does hit the jack, but unfortunately the jack went askew and did not rebound back directly so we lost the end.”

For Barrie, it showed the skill, the imagination John had as a supreme bowler.

Now don't let those bowls books gather dust.

Finger through them occasionally to refresh your memory. Encourage yourself in your own quest for 'greatness'.

Lachlan Tighe, 2019