

## **Mental Skill Development In Training**

# **Relaxation Skill: For Competition**

Let me say I have not an ounce of expertise in this area. I simply say what seems sensible or does to me. Too often over these years in bowls I have had some drongo tell me they need a beer to relax and they bowl better. I agree they relax, but bowl better! Get with it boys!

Learning to relax is a skill. Do you possess that skill? Champion athletes do.

Where does that leave you as an elite bowler?

My reading about relaxation, quoting Orlick for example, is that two things appear to happen when relaxation takes effect. Physiologically your heart slows down, breathing slows and is more regular, there is decreased oxygen consumption, muscles tend to be less tense and probably there is a calmness easing into your body.

Now psychologically there is a shift in focus to something else away from what caused any tension. This focus may be a move in thinking, then other senses may also 'do their work' allowing you to hear, see, feel different things around you.

If any coping strategy you employ is to contend with stress it has to be one learned and trained to be a competent skill (when you really need it).

My understanding for sports men (bowlers beware) is that relaxation clears the mind and relaxes the body in preparation for a quality performance; is useful pre-competition to calm down and conserve energy; and prepares body and mind for quality imagery.

A reminder – maintaining selective intensity is important especially in times such as finals where fatigue will set in. In said situation necessitating a refocus by the bowler, maybe on imaged quality performance – 'soft hands', extend, bend and follow through.

If you are lucky enough, no delete that, have the ambition and goal, and skill, to get into a national bowls squad, well in this day and age there will be a sports psychologist to render these services. I bet the Commonwealth Games 2018 players from many countries had that luxury.

If you are yet to reach that level what to do?

Seek and ye shall find. Initiate a contact with a relevant professional in this field of mental skill development.

***Relaxation***  
*www.Lachlantighebowls.com*

In my case back as far as 2000, I sought out Craig Fox, to add to my ongoing use of Neil Barras, who was invaluable with my Elbows bowls squad members in training them to acquire these relaxation skills.

**Lachlan Tighe, 2018**