

Decision Making, A Learned Skill

Years ago, I wrote that most club bowlers turn up at the green each weekend with no particular purpose in mind other than to play well and try to win on the day.

Not helped even now in 2020 by selectors and coaches, and worse, the club's best players reinforcing that lamentable mediocre practice.

And again today I watch as supposedly good elite bowlers turn up to practice sessions with no purpose in mind.

You play as you practice.

So if training has no component for tactical skill training, how do we learn, other than repeating the (flawed) practices of the experienced bowlers, all of whom belong in my opening statement.

My amazement continues as I learn that most national representatives follow this above practice pattern.

Has much changed for the better, from club to elite levels, with competition preparation and coaching in our sport?

I doubt it, we must move on to that better level of practice: A more purposeful session of training in more than technical prowess. Tactical skill development is necessary too.

One of the most frequent questions I am asked about elite bowlers is '...how do they always seem to know which shot / delivery to play?'

If you asked an elite bowler what is involved in shot / delivery selection, their response may well be..."What do you mean? Hell, I just roll the bowl closer to jack than the other guy!

That's the simple response.

I claim it's not enough. Why?

It's above the shoulders that we develop our skills. It's through specific training at coach supervised sessions focusing on such skills.

How I go about teaching the bowler about decision-making processes to ensure he has capacity to choose from options when in a pressure game situation.

PRACTICE TACTICS in Decision making

There is an obvious need to simulate game settings and practice tactics. For the keen bowler these may entail:

- Set choice for applying tactical positioning.
- Drills in a modified routine to force a set response or react to a set response.

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Tactics menu- Decision making is a learned skill

- Coach determines choice and varies the routine.
- Freedom of experiment to see what happens with varying choice.
- Priority on securing second shot situations.
- Priority on strategy in preventing an opposing skip trundling in a delivery to convert.
- Calling on recent game experiences and replicating these as training (Robbie as Middle Park head coach did just that type of training for his club recently.)

By enabling the bowlers to practice the tactics and executions in training, they practice recognition of the cues and the known outcome of choice for these responses that can provide for success. Cue usage and interpretation is important to success.

DURING GAME - switched on to making decisions

- Spot opponent weaknesses and use them to advantage.
- Think of an easier scoring / shot objective.
- Concentration - being aware of the importance of a precise call and listen to what is said.
- E.g., A request to the third to trail the jack 4', which misses by an inch goes thru by 10', but in so doing dislodges our only bowl in the head so we are 5 down.
- Jack delivery is commencement of tactical strategy – vital.
- View the score to focus on the challenge.
- E.g. At afternoon tea or 15 ends rinks are +4, +4, +4 and -10. So the skips get together and agree that losing rink role simply to hold losing position and winning rinks to improve therein taking pressure off losing rink. Team captain has displayed responsibility, now the onus is on the rink skip to convey the same supportive approach to his rink members.

The observations in 2019 show me how much still has to be done by the sport and thus the coach to train the competition bowler in these tactical preparations before and during the game.

Lachlan Tighe, 2020