

Get A Grip Skip

Following the 2019 BV Open one of our pBus squad members said he witnessed the best skipping ever experienced.

What frustrates me no end is most skips are not up to it, good skipping.

I bet you can relate to these observations of a typical skip.

- Are they only there to dictate to players?
- Because they win the games not their team, ask them.
- Know it all.
- Love to dictate to people.
- Inspire performance.
- Are best left up that end away from us.

A few noted anecdotes from observing pennant this 2019 season.

- #1 Skip says to his third; “Mate, last end, we’ve gotta get three shots to win, two to draw,” just AFTER the mate has already seen his delivery on its path to ‘glory’ hearing this new “game plan.”
- #2 Skip says; You choose whatever length you like to roll the jack,” despite the fact that this skip was the only one of the four players who had at least one bowl within a mat length of the jack the previous end (she actually had both within the length)...hello anyone home!!!
- #3 Skip was asked a question. “Is that bowl in my way,” and the answer expected was a yes or no. But I noted the skip simply paced out the distance from jack to the short bowl in question – not helping the perception of the player 30 metres away.

These are skips without any grip on the team dynamic.

Let’s look at what a good skip is. Wouldn’t it be great if Selectors took into account that a **SKIP** can actually be a player who is a **Successful Kindred Inspiring Performer**.

Whoa! Now there is an issue at clubs. These same rotten skippers described above are also the selectors; heaven help the teams now.

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Anyway let's continue on our theme.

Key attributes: Communication

In fours a skipper bowls 2 of the 8 bowls (25%), therefore he / she has the capacity to influence 75% of the contributions prior to delivery of their own bowls. The job of maintaining and gaining is nigh all but done before they deliver most times if player and skill management has worked effectively.

Skipping is about team management of people who may not automatically choose to play with the nominated skipper.

Bowlers universally acknowledged as good skippers probably do these things.

- Communicate to team members in a way wherein the players want to do well for the skip.
- Use words and tones that assist that cause.
- Be honest and yet supportive, encouraging.
- Uses sensible proportion of support mingled with honesty and consideration so as not to appear to be 'overboard' with the hype.
- Avoids negative word usage and body language and certainly does not include a statement of obvious error in pace or grass by a bowler.
- Never appears derogatory in word or action.
- Style of direction and management is inclusive, clear and never confrontational - barking and haranguing are non existent.
- Involve the players and especially the third who has more shot considerations and changes to prepare for at the other end. Attitude of player on the mat sought when shot preference numerous and perhaps confusing when viewed from the other end.
- Maybe even trained as a team in the week preceding the event or pennant game to allow a mutual understanding (game plan) of how they would all perform next game.

Skippers who call instructions which are easily understood and shared with teammates have a higher probability of desired outcome, subject to proper execution by the bowler(s).

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Some fundamentals are these:

- Advising what hand to play.
- The finishing position / spot of the delivered bowl.
- The path line for the bowl to travel especially if there is a distinct requirement to pass a short bowl(s) in travel to the spot.
- The anticipated result from the delivery.
- Indicating by hand if necessary to change a bowlers' hand from a previously delivered bowl.

And finally, the skip communication (vibe) at the conclusion of the shot where:

- It is a good result the reaction should be positive, overt and warm.
- No result occurs or it is negative for the team, the reaction should be comforting, supportive, calming.

Skips tend to forget the messages, sent off by them at the conclusion of the deliveries, are as important as their effort in advising bowlers what is wanted of them with deliveries. Maybe I should restate that - skips tend to be ignorant of the negative messages they send the teammates. You piss them off one end, you may have pissed them off all game.

Watching some pennant recently I reckon the obnoxious behavior from skips is as bad as it has been in all my years in bowls.

Selectors take some responsibility. Oops! just remembered, three of those guilty of real bad behavior are all, or were, their respective club's chairman of selectors. That's three out of the eight skips!

Wow, enough said.

Lachlan Tighe, 2020