

Accept the Challenge...

Recently our national football body, the AFL, held its annual Hall of Fame evening to induct the 2019 recipients. Leigh Matthews, AFL Footballer of the Century and an AFL legend of the sport, entitled his autobiography ... 'Accept the Challenge'.

You might say it was his creed.

Already in 2019, some good bowlers have displayed to me an inability, or at times an unwillingness, to consider Matthew's credo worthy of chasing as per these examples:

A team of bowlers not wanting to debrief their losing performance.

A few good bowlers baulking at the idea of doing a set of goals to set direction for their bowls.

A top bowler plays a shocker (unfortunately) for his team in his role as a second, so the skip, mid game mind you, clamours for his removal from the rink for the next game in the tournament.

A national level bowler simply wandering off the green knowing they cannot win.

A well regarded bowler is angered for being removed from his position as skip in the team and will not concede to be a second in the top team, rather, he skips in the second team.

A bowler dissatisfied enough with not being appointed / recognized within the club duly not playing pennant.

In such cases there is no example of an acceptance of a challenge. Only examples of the self-interest of players, especially skips in this case, and no overall concern for the team and its members.

And far, far too often these players get their way rather than the team or club approach being paramount.

So far in this first half of the year I have had calls from a few clubs all seeking advice and an ear on what to do to raise the commitment level of many of their top-side club players.

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I think our bowls fraternity is not fair dinkum about (competitive) sport and its essence of contest at the higher levels. Clubs have the capacity to foster a better spirit of competitiveness and skill yet forego that opportunity, maybe I should call it responsibility.

That's what selection criteria is essentially. It is the benchmark, or indicator, of responsibility or club capacity to steer and direct player commitment for the club. Note that, player commitment for the CLUB.

For me, my sanity, I want to coach people who accept the challenge to improve as bowlers in all facets of their game. Their challenge enables me to be stretched too. That is why my squad ***Elbows*** is, or was, such an enthralling experience (we rarely get together this recent period of time).

Guess what, that day being stretched has come again of late.

Since 2019 has commenced I have had around 10 players local, interstate and lately overseas, really wanting to be challenged a la Matthews.

I asked, and they agreed, on these aspects to develop their bowls further into elite levels of performance:

Set a statement of goals.

Completed a self appraisal form.

Shared their game plans.

Described what their objective will be in a 4s team.

Analyzed their games with recorded stats.

Had a debrief with me.

Entered, and are doing well, in Australian indoor qualifiers, regional and state championships, and the current AO.

Agreed on a season long schedule of training as supervised or set by me (where they are not local).

Together they as players, me as coach are accepting Matthews at his word...accepting the challenge.

Good luck to all riding Matthews starship.

Lachlan Tighe, 2019