

## **‘Bowlers: spectator, commentator or competitor’**

Bowlers, which of the three categories (spectator, commentator or competitor) are you in.

My observations and emails from others in bowls, this past season / year from tournaments and finals has not surprised me. In fact, it reinforces (poor) practices that I experienced when I started in bowls years ago, worse luck.

Far too many bowlers, and that certainly includes rink skips, I categorize as either spectators or commentators. Or remain in these two categories far too long within the bowls event. Let me try to describe these categories of bowlers.

### **SPECTATOR**

Once finished deliveries of their bowls, this team bowler either stands back from the team and pleasantly watches the ‘game’ on the other rinks or, worse, is off with the fairies.

These players only join in when the team has to cross over. And they walk straight onto the bank and not remain at the head to support the third / skip. Or spectator bowler (ii) is the one who races up to join the skip and to see the outcome of his bowl – whatever happened to being a member of the front end team.

Or the skip as spectator, constantly chatting to fellow skips on the adjacent rinks while teammates await instructions on the mat, or, heaven help us, encouragement.

These bowler spectators love pennant (even finals) because they have things to watch, people to talk to, on either side of their own rink.

Whoopee!

### **COMMENTATOR**

Commercial TV channels have a nursery ground of talent to recruit commentators out there on the bowling green.

Players making absurd comments about wind conditions, green surfaces, delivery errors, poor skipping, poor players, etc.

Nothing, not one thing about positive team support.

All the ‘commentators’ lack an awareness that all the stated variables affect everyone, evenly. Unless you are more capable a bowler than they are.

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You cannot blame the ‘commentator’ as he / she has simply picked up the practices prevailing in the sport. And it is a practice to be disposed of, urgently.

## **COMPETITOR**

As opposed to competitiveness, or being competitive, which is more emotional.

The competitor, if I can cite former Australian player Jack Wilson, is so totally focused on their own rink, their own delivery, their own contribution to the rink team. And that starts from the roll up to the final delivery of our skip for the very last end of the event.

Actually, it started with the way you go about training, personally and as a team.

Recently a successful finals club shared with me a two-page document how they planned to get all 16 players in the ‘competitor’ category.

I share a snippet of that paper.

- Fine tuned the teams to ensure compatibility and harmony (made some open but tough decisions then worked on team morale).
- Instilled discipline in the way they trained instead practiced (used drills to improve our skills and tried to have a bit of fun with it as well).
- Quietly focused on the weaknesses of some individuals to improve their mental skills providing challenges and allowing them to develop greater confidence in their ability.
- Ensured all four skippers “always” had a team plan and fall back mode.
- Ensured that each team remained focused on the performance of their rink alone.

Reading that example shows not a lot of us bowlers are in the third category, competitor.

A difficulty is that we all want to be accepted and thus join in though we might have misgivings about the approach to training of fellow club mates.

Well, check – who in fact is letting the team, the club, down with complacent approach to training. Not you.

And it is not your fault. I rest all responsibility on club committee, selectors, our best players who generally are our skips, and, lastly club coaches, for not standing up for a better approach so as to give our club the best chance to perform next time we are in competition.

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Difficulty - the people responsible do not understand what I allude to either, so why should the majority of bowlers.

Why not aspire to that category by letting your eyes turn back down the narrow corridor called our rink and do it every time at your own training and when supervised pennant training occurs (if it does).

And if you want to comment, tune in to positive support or clam up.

Practice that at pennant training too.

**Lachlan Tighe, 2016**