

## **Decisions Making: A Flaw In Mental Skill**

One practice that throws me even now in 2020 is why skips continue to call players to add to the head rather than prevent entry for the opposition.

And then wonder why they lost the end. Hello!!!

Where oh Where, did the skip acquire the tactical skill and the mental skill to boot.

I recently heard second hand how one name player remarked that he was frustrated all the time because he would get his first bowl close only to see his opposition move that bowl off and he didn't know how to handle that situation.

Well if state and national coaches are not providing training for such situations then these coaches are inept in their jobs.

Actually that lament about your bowl staying there as shot, I thought was something only new bowlers grizzled about. So much for supposedly good bowlers, who hold onto that nonsense.

My bowls squad, pBus, would be exposed to these experiences, these discussions, with me:

Firstly, when was the last time you played, and did very well against, one of your state or a national squad-member. Now the challenge. Don't carry on at the bar about how well you did (this one occasion) against the legendary Joe or Joanne Palooka, they deserve due respect as elite players.

However, why not reflect on how and why you played well against that calibre of opposition, list the aspects of that game that enabled you to perform in that level of company – such as delivery, drawing to a zone, recorded game analysis, winning ends and the lengths, number of bowls per end in the head, etc. – and when you can be that specific, go out on the green and let's train that way.

For any of you to have risen to the standard of the elite player that ONCE indicates you have the raw skill. Be self-satisfied and be another 'bar fly' (we all have 'em), be better by being better skilled especially in the tactical and mental skill to add to your developing technical skill.

It is obvious listening to numerous keen young bowlers that there is nowhere for them to source good approaches in training, outside of coming to these elite level events (BV Open & AO) to be alongside the elite player.

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Bowls Associations and their regional partners have a job to do with the bowls clubs, right across the board, to assist player development. Waiting till a player gets to Australian national level is too late.

I was rapt at the 2019 BV Open when one good mad keen bowler grabbed a napkin and started writing in front of me what he thought was good about his game earlier that day against an elite player. We then added to the mix notions of game plans, objectives per ends or per deliveries, protecting your head, lengths of ends won and lost, mat usage, etc. Nothing startling!

Our pBus squad members all do what this young bloke set down on the napkin. Give me a thinking bowler, a motivated bowler and you have a performer trained and then able to decide comfortably and independently how to play their game.

Having a competitive spirit is one thing. Heck some of the older experienced blokes who play premier / division one levels I observed are as competitive as hell. When it comes to skill, they had a use by date. But I am not going to tell them that. They survive solely on that competitiveness. Using your nous or the higher level of skills is the proper level of high performance competitive spirit.

- An insight of what and how we train as a squad can be stated briefly below
- Use part of our time to train under pressure.
  - Train at the intensity of the game, though I suggest if you want to go up a level in performance, go higher and harder than those playing at your level.
  - We always relate the drills to game like situations.
  - Then, we have a modified game for a brief period of the training session. That is all you need and you take that knowledge into the main event.
  - We don't have robotic drills, hence my adverse reaction to the 72 and 40 bowls test / drills I hear as all the rage in various elite squads. In their own way the drills are a good guide to allow you to know your technical skill, but nick off and do it yourself and keep a record of your ups and downs with these tests, but to have them as a major focus in elite training is ... not my approach.
  - The training environment is the variable that best assists our squad bowlers in developing a culture of knowledge and application for your decision making skills.

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Ladies, gents, you bowlers out there, hear me, there is no ONE way to play this game. However there is only ONE way to be better.

Simply know what skills are involved in the game (technical tactical team mental communication) and required levels of those skills at various and better competition levels, and develop a higher level in each skill area than you had previously.

One day you might find yourself going from rung to rung until you are one of the best in the world.

No harm in dreaming, then face the reality.

Whatever you do, enjoy it, but keep at it.

**Lachlan Tighe, 2020.**