

The “Invisible” Team (Value)

Just occasionally you come out with some words or ideas which you think... “I like that, even if I say so myself.” Well mine was / is the ‘Invisible’ team.

I reflect back to 2003 when I held an induction with the BA national coach and national selectors and I referred to them and us in management positions as part of an ‘Invisible’ team where the players are the Visible team.

I look now in 2020 with my own bowls squad pBus and I think in our sport of bowls people need to understand which category of people they fit into. as the relevant members of the Invisible team.

The Invisible team groups included in HP bowls are:
(fellow) squad members,
selectors,
coaches,
team management,
office bearers and management,
friends and family,
sports scientists,
media in bowls.

Four words that crop up for me in relation to the effect of the strong influence the Invisible team has include pride, respect, envy and commitment.

Players (as the Visible team) need to have, or take, more pride in ‘wearing the uniform’ at state and national levels. Or in our squad case wearing our squad shirt. It should be something of enormous pride to be selected and represent the elite level of the sport and teams. The players in the teams need to reflect that pride, or we should ensure there are only players chosen willing to reflect that pride. And we members of the Invisible team should make the players feel proud.

Therein comes the respect. Again my view only, however, too often there is an absence of (mutual) respect between members of the Visible and Invisible teams. The players are fewer in number and the mass of us in the

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Invisible team support base involved in the elite level programs need to develop and nurture a respect for the players. They in turn will realize the merit of reciprocating it to their support base.

An example of this is seen in the press coverage of the players performances. Too often it is negative, and quick to criticize the efforts of the players. Players read these comments and understandably are annoyed at the apparent lack of support for them.

Is that envy? Maybe. No doubt when in the company of elite bowlers it mystifies me why so many people in the sport are so quick to criticize the players who are our elite ambassadors. They are not average. If they are, they join the rest of us and that's not good enough. Let's gloat in their success. They deserve the position, they don't deserve the envy.

And commitment, the real leveller. In nearly every circle within the sport I hear people whine about commitment (of players). I am at the front of the line in demanding the player(s), as the Visible team, change their whole approach to commitment to be elite athletes – therefore get rid of the fags, the grog, the fat belly – to look at other elite athletes in sport and let's get serious.

However!!! On behalf of the players, you / me the Invisible team members need to also respect what elite bowlers (as athletes) require and raise your commitment levels of support too.

Those categories of people within the Invisible team category (selectors, family, media, etc.) listed above, have a personal responsibility to lift their own level of performance to demonstrate that they are operating at an elite level of support for these future elite athletes. It is no good just having the role. Players worked hard to be in their Visible team at elite level. So all of us Invisible team members have to be equally accountable and responsible. And if not, why not!!!

We members of the Elbows squad saw the value of our support where fellow squad members trained regularly with Judy Nardella from late May to prepare her for the national indoors in Tweed in August 2006. They all knew she is the only one who wins, though they all knew their contribution,

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their feedback to her in these sessions in some small way may have made a difference. She went on to win the title. We share her pride, her victory, as her victory is our victory. She went one further and won the world title in 2007 training regularly with fellow elbows members.

The pBus squad circa 2020 is doing the same with Robbie Briglia who was supported weekly in his tilt at the national title win in 2019 and the support from the squad continues now as he prepares to contest the world title, subject to the coronavirus issue.

Years ago I declined a request by a reasonably good bowler to join Elbows squad. Recently, I knocked back a player wanting to join our new pBus squad. Interesting that my reasoning remained the same in both instances though a decade apart. I thought their level of commitment and apparent reluctance to be supportive to other squad members would be a hindrance. This stance was done to defend the current commitment level, culture and expectation the members have for the squad.

Another person from interstate wanted to come over 1,000 km to try out with the Elbows squad in 2009 and train as the player and his family have an impression that as a squad we would nurture the development and aspirations of the player at a level of commitment that will not be easily devalued. Well that example was replicated in January 2020 when Gavin from WA did the 8,000 km round trip so as to train with this squad, his squad, for three days.

That effort requires (extra) commitment. How can you question the commitment of the Visible team member if as an Invisible team member your / our level of commitment falls short of elite standard and becomes questionable where the one percenters make the difference at elite level.

As the Invisible team we may have been that one per cent deficiency in standard, that sole yet small reason for the team not achieving success on the green. Let's revel in players' success, let's create a mood of mutual respect. Let's be committed as team members of both teams.

Let's see the ultimate expression in the equation:

Visible team + Invisible team = player success

Lachlan Tighe, 2020