

Rugby Teams With Spirit

Previously I enjoyed a luncheon discussion with state Rugby coaches and two sports scientists with experience servicing national football teams. The purpose for the discussion was to share views on team spirit and how to instill team morale. I reckon the nine of us who sat chewing the fat gained a lot from this 'intellectual cross training' session. Pity the red was over-priced.

Apart from the fact that we represented about four (team) sports, it was the exchange of views from different perspectives, finding common themes and ground that made it so worthwhile and here is an attempt to summarise the contributions for application to us all in bowls.

What makes for an effective team?

- Goals and Plans - everyone knows and has contributed to the team goals and their role in the team and we plan to win not 'gunna win.'
- Leadership – is in evidence and there are standards and there is an environment conducive to a success culture and most probably it is set by the coach and the best players.
- Training - given it is regular it is also a support situation and helps the player to work on strengths and weaknesses and skill development.
- Attitude - a preparedness to commit and to be done equally by ALL team members.
- Communication – is done well in this setting, lots of listening and exchanges and is equally shared and valued and thus is open (snipers beware, go elsewhere).
- Rapport – reflected by trust, emotional support, intelligence, norms, standards and peers who understand the value of all this (mutual belief, which is what this point probably is about).
- Recognition – reward effort and endeavour, reward individuals, so what happens, all team members know that sometime they will get the accolade.

With all of the above it all stems around the quality of the leadership, which appears to be an issue around the bowls traps as I view it.

Lachlan Tighe
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So what adversely affects a team's performance and the early signs of probable dysfunction?

- Performance – at training and in competition is sub standard.
- Behaviour – is unacceptable and worse not being addressed.
- Criticism – is either excessive of the team or any one individual and verges on being destructive (another opening for snipers).
- Conflict – now we really are in trouble.
- Alienation – among players and support staff or between players; for years I have witnessed this with skips and their role as 'god' without anyone seeming to comprehend the skip in a bowls team is only a 25 % technical contributor.
- Control – an excess by either coach or selectors; a difficulty I had when with the bowls management was the 'control freak' mindset that prevailed in dealing with players, which is tantamount to distrust and the road sign to failure.
- Emotions – when excess negative levels spill out for all to see and usually a strong indicator of frustration.
- Communication – when it has stopped, become dictatorial, confusing, one way or limited then signals are flashing for those with their eyes open.

It was all good stuff at the meeting, however there are two teams involved in my view with team performance and these are the visible team (the players be it Rugby or bowls) and the invisible team (represented generally by selectors, management, board, coaches, sports scientists) and all of the members of both teams have to understand their effect on the ultimate success of the team in question.

Lachlan Tighe, 2020