

## Development Squads - principles in their formation

(This article is a contribution from Dene Milner, head coach of the Heathmont club that competes at Division 1. Level in Melbourne, Australia; Dene is an (original) Elbows squad member, who features in the photo within the 'welcome' menu on my website.)

### Development Squad

Development squads are not something new. Every sport at every level, junior, state, national has a development squad. You see it in golf, cricket, swimming, soccer, AFL, tennis etc. You name it, it is there. Bowls Australia has a development squad. More recently some of the more progressive bowling clubs have gone down the path of establishing a development squad. So what is a development squad and who should it be for?

Let us answer the second part of that question first. At Heathmont the development squad is open to anybody who is a member of the Heathmont Bowls club. All it requires is a **will**, a **want**, a **desire** and a **commitment** to become a better, more consistent and accomplished bowler. It will require you to be dedicated to a regular structured training program.

What is the development squad? Let me answer it this way. We all have our own reasons for belonging to the club. For some it will be social contacts and the occasional game of bowls. For others it will be playing pennant and being part of a team. For some it might be for playing club only events, tournaments and so on. The development squad is designed to provide you with the environment and facility to improve your enjoyment and performance in the game.

Entering the forthcoming season without a playing philosophy is like driving across a new landscape without a road map. If you are lucky you might eventually arrive at your destination without too many hiccups, waste of time and energy. Chances are you will lose your way, become frustrated and probably pull the pin. A well thought through playing philosophy helps keep you on track to negotiate your way through the season and beyond.

The overall mission of the development squad is to help players reach the

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**top of their game.**

Teaching a player how to play the game and provide a balanced program which pays attention to the **technical, tactical, mental and physical** needs will help them to achieve the outcomes they strive for. In addition the development squad seeks to create a culture based on teamwork, sportsmanship and competitive spirit in a positive supportive peer group environment.

The development squad philosophy is based on the premise that the **development** and **continuous improvement** of the player is the most important reason for the program. Key features of the development squad include;

- 1 establishing realistic and clearly identified goals
- 2 providing a results driven structure and,
- 3 setting standards of excellence.
- 4 reinforcing behaviours / characteristics of successful teams.

Establishing goals means each player has an idea of what they want to achieve. It gives the player something specific to strive for. Goals provide a blueprint for the season and beyond. It is a road map for the journey ahead.

It is one thing to have goals but the player must also be committed. They must be focused, stick to the plan if they want their goals to become a reality.

**Being goal oriented has shown to be paramount to a person's success.**

Consider for yourself the following statements;

- 1 If you are under the impression you have already perfected yourself, you will never rise to the heights you are capable of.
- 2 If you want to change the fruits, you first have to change the roots.
- 3 If you want to be an extraordinary bowler, find out what the ordinary bowlers do and guess what - **don't do it.**
- 4 Others might be more gifted bowlers than me, but I am **more committed** and I am prepared to **work harder** and **smarter** than they do.

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I leave you with these final thoughts;

- To become a better bowler you are the only problem you have, but you are also the solution. It just so happens that the most difficult adversary you have to face strangely enough looks just like you.

Everyone has **strengths** and **weaknesses**. Turn these into **competencies for success**.

Until next time.

Dene Milner (DOC)

**Lachlan Tighe, 2016**