

The Company You Keep

We have heard the expression ‘you can tell a lot about someone by the company they keep’.

In bowls that could relate to those (few) fellow bowlers, and coaches, who like you take the competitive side of bowls so seriously that you train regularly to hone your skills to perform in notable events.

When I was coaching Malaysia, I borrowed a phrase from the national coach of the then Brazilian (soccer) football world champions; ‘ If you want to soar with the eagles, don’t mix with turkeys’. Safuan Said used the expression to push himself to higher victories.

That bowls squad formed recently by me had one of the players do his debrief of the recent 2019 AO performance. A telling aspect for him was his (poor) choice of teammates, who in fact, probably are like most bowlers - went to enjoy the AO rather than compete, drank alcohol before and during the games, expected so much having done so little in the form of proper preparation. These teammates would fit the definition of turkeys.

Next year, and in fact for events entered from now on, he and other squad members have already agreed they will be specific in who they invite as teammates.

I want to relate a story from a teenager about training and playing partner choices:

‘ I get into a team and I spend time talking to the most experienced member of the team. His amazing dedication to training, diet and racing impresses me. He teaches me to concentrate on just doing my best, otherwise riders with more talent or other assistance will always best you or demoralize you. This plants an important seed in my mind, one that develops into a mentality that will get me through many difficult situations. One day he says to me that cycling is chess on wheels and I’m learning that road cycling and team cycling has a lot to do with strategy, tactics, your role and team cohesion. He teaches me to focus on getting the best out of yourself not the result.’

Website menu- ...coaches corner
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That teenager was, you guessed it, Cadel Evans, Tour de France champion.

For those of you who thrive on being better, hang in there despite the club environment which is laced with members with mediocre approaches to competitive bowls.

If a teenager has such wise insights heed his example, a world champion, not those turkeys who never get out from under their club hats hiding a wider world of competitive bowls.

Lachlan Tighe, 2019