

Mental Toughness in 2022

Mid 2022 I was given a document on Developing Mental Toughness and I read it and here were my pertinent points for use with bowlers and fellow bowls coaches.

Mental skills are there to enhance and influence performance. Those skill sets that are components of mental toughness include:

- Motivation & commitment
- Concentration & focus
- Coping with pressure
- Self belief (I suggest positivity)
- Resilience & persistence
- Sport intelligence, the sporting brain.

Motivation rates highly as it does these:

- Improves performance
- Provides challenging training
- Equates with expectations
- Fosters persistence
- Esteem - pride, satisfaction, self confidence as effort / work bears fruit.

No surprise to read that the most difficult tasks are met not by one single burst of energy / effort, but by consistent and regular application / training of the best you can do each session.

Obstacles; well they are what you see, not necessarily others around; And when you see these obstacles you have taken your eye off the goals.

I once did a pyramid of skills (refer the website, menu : mental skill July 2010) and this document had a similar one for goals, rather than my one pinpointing skills, necessary at each rung of the competitive ladder.

I really liked some questions posed to players, and obviously coaches, and two stick out:

- What are some critical moments that occur in a game?**
- What are some critical cues you need to pay attention to?**

Mental toughness today in 2022

www.lachlantighebowls.com

All we coaches need to work on the answers to that in the sport of bowls.

I mentioned how I prefer positivity as a necessary aspect of mental toughness. And it can be seen as the tool to content with negativity, a factor so apparent in the bowls fraternity.

We find negativity from bowlers in these guises:

Jumping to conclusions from their limited experience,
Polarized in thought, it is black or white, only,
Consider only one perspective, all else disposed of,
Personalise and taking it personally,
Thinking is emotional not rational,
Blame shifts elsewhere.

Any reports from elite Olympic athletes on resilience seems to include the capacity to recover from injury, competitive failure, fatigue and lousy training environment.

And add one in bowls, non-selection in elite teams.

What is required in all these is resilience. And that is an attitude thing. You are aware and prepared for adversity and with your eye on the 'prize' you are not deterred (long term).

So I read all that and reacted favourably.

Then I found this column I had written February 2011mental toughness.

Mental toughness I said is learned, not inherited and thus is an acquired skill which champion athletes have.

And basically is about control of our emotions in the heat of battle.

And is best summarised in this box:

Mental Toughness

- Taking control of your emotions
- Self motivated and self directed
- Positive and realistic
- In control of your emotions
- Calm and relaxed under pressure
- Energetic and ready for action
- Determined
- Alert and focused
- Self confident
- Responsible

is positive as 'trying not to' doesn't work

- Don't try not to be angry
- Don't try not to be nervous
- Don't try not to be frustrated
- Don't try not to make mistakes
- Accept it as part of the roller coaster
- Do focus on your goals
- Do focus on what has worked for you before
- Do decide what to do and confidently do it
- Do everything naturally
- Do know how to collect the cheque

I said then, and I reinforce now, all these eleven (11) years later, mental skill requires as much work at coach supervised training as does your bowls delivery.

We coaches are in need of PD / refresher practical courses in such skill training.

Lachlan Tighe, 2022