

Bowls Website column
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A Better Performance At Lead, Second

Question:

While most players in our top side are consistently bowling around the "benchmark" of 17-18 Mat Length bowls each match, three of the four Leads are significantly below that average. Unfortunately no one in our second side is bowling any better!

We coaches have identified the issue and tried to address it at pennant practice - so far, with little success.

Lachlan, do you have any tips and or training routines specifically for Leads? Emphasis on jack delivery and weight control in draw bowling rather than line. Too short, too long and minimal or over correction!

Answer:

Hi:

I read your text and so impressed with the diligence of one Lead to deliver 400 jacks in between the fortnight of pennant.

I compile personal performance stats, which I share with you, which I record in the hope it gives me focus. Pity I was not that alert on Saturday, and motivation to bowl better.

What you can read is my effective bowls Saturday, ordinary effort; and read where as the front end, we only get 10 ends with 2 in the head when I know from facts that we win when we have at least 12 ends with 2 in the head as front end team. What I also do is keep stats of effectiveness for an average and a PB so I should strive to beat my average each week and aim for that PB.

I coach / advise three premier league bowlers and with all of them I set a target for the effectiveness of their first bowl, for as we know, meeting that will instill confidence, raise team spirit and get us all off to a good start. And you could say that in whatever position we bowl.

So for you and the club, coaches should get together and do specific training on Thursday (regardless of selection) to work on consistent contributions for all front end team members at the club.

A fellow coach had these comments to add for the club asking the above question:

In answer to the question from the division one president I provide the following:

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Thanks for the stats. I have been keeping a record of ML bowls for my rinks over the past few weeks, partly to stop the skip from complaining that's his lead and second were giving him 'nothing' , ha,ha! But mainly so the team knew exactly what they had to do to achieve victory.

We have a number of drills that our Division 1 leads are completing on a regular basis, but the drills are only of use if the players are excited about getting better and contributing to the team. I explained to the whole team that if we wanted to succeed this season we were going to invest time in improving our leads and seconds as I saw far more room for improvement in the leads and seconds than the skips and thirds. The leads and seconds were excited about being the centre of attention and seen as a valuable asset that are worth spending time on.

I find the large majority of club bowlers who have poor weight control do not have 'feel' as part of either their pre delivery, delivery or post delivery routine. If you ask most club players to play the same shot again they can't because they have no real idea of what they did the first time and that is partly because the only thing they are interested in is the result (where in fact the only thing they should be interested in is the process that got them there).

It takes a bit to teach someone 'feel' or rhythm when it doesn't come naturally (especially when all they are focused on is the result). It's a bit easier when its one on one. We start off with a little dance, moving our weight from one foot to another as we hold the bowl in both hands as it moves from side to side in time with the feet. I then get the player to deliver some bowls into the ditch with their eyes shut and then we move onto delivering caterpillars with their eyes shut on the green.

I am constantly amazed by the people who complain, because they missed their line, (when the exercise is about feel). But it just goes to show how focused they are on the end result and not the process.

This is where we need to spend the most time.

To take this to the next step after they have delivered I get the player to keep their eyes shut until I ask them to open them. Once again, I am amazed by the number of players who can't help but peep. Once I can get them to keep their eyes shut I get someone down the other end to remove the bowls they just delivered and replace it with a coin. We do that three more times and then go and see how close the coins are. This way the player can't use their eyes and has to use feel to achieve the objective.

Hope some of that helps.

Lachlan Tighe, 2017