

Commitment In Bowls Compared

Again I use other bowlers from all over the world to offer a view on the topic under discussion.

Hi all

I have a question for all the golfers.

At what level of amateur golf does the commitment, habits, and work ethic displayed by the pro-golfers start to appear?

Is it far more common (accepted) at the amateur level to take and use stats for instance?

And if so, is this because they see the pros doing it so it must be okay, or there is the expectation perhaps that if you want to be successful you need to use all the tools available?

I'm looking to try and understand if the 'commitment to being better' is different in the golfing world (at all levels) compared to bowls, and if so, why do you think that is the case?

Danny

Hi Coach,

Having played on and coached competitive sports teams all my life, I find most of the bowlers we associate with have not the most basic concept of what it means to be on a team, much less what it takes to make a team successful.

As a physical education teacher I can relate to the daily grind of attempting to teach a class of 50 students sports skills, the majority of whom had no interest in learning the subject matter I was attempting to share with them. This situation with the "LB powers that be" feels somewhat similar - we have a whole skill set to offer them, but they have no interest in learning or the benefits they would reap from our knowledge.

Having worked with highly skilled athletes and also with special education populations has prepared me well for my Lawn Bowling career. We have the competitive bowlers and prima donnas who know all there is to know about EVERYTHING and can be told nothing; and then we have

the somewhat challenged Club Bowlers, many of whom have similar motor challenges as individuals with special needs population. Within each group

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pBus motto: no limits

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can be found those few special individuals who really want to learn and improve and those who don't. Identify and focus on those folks and leave the others behind until they change their minds.

I love the pBus squad concept of chasing your personal best, once you know your skill level and can set goals and measure performance.

This morning as I was hosting a practice game for new members at our club it brought a smile to my face to realize we each have our own bus that we invite folks to ride on. The positive and enthusiastic response to my efforts to help these folks enjoy the game a little more by being better at it far outweighs the negativity and lack of receptivity from other situations. The teacher must find a place to teach and thankfully I have found one little niche and a few folks to ride along with me.

And thankfully I have also found a spot where I can develop my skill as a competitor and a bowler. The best athletes I have coached were those who loved the game so much practice was just as much fun as the game itself. All for the joy of just simply playing because we love it!

Mary

Hi Danny

You ask some very good questions...I will try to offer some half decent answers.

Initially I would say that golf is an individual sport so there is no 'hiding' as it is all on you and there are no tea mates to back you up on a bad day or to 'carry you'.

I think in that sense it puts such a premium on being the best you can be and thus you need to do the work and use all the tools available so you limit your bad days and if you are playing ugly you can still score.

But also the very nature of the game is stat- based. You measure every hole to a statistic being 'par'. So you are keenly aware of the numbers and what is occurring and anyone wanting to improve is going to delve a little further into them. The most base KPI's are:

- Fairways hit
- Greens in regulation
- Putts per round
- Up and downs
- Sand saves.

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Now we can go into all sorts of detail and iterations of those and add many more as well, but the basic knowledge gained from those simple five above is huge.

Then there is the broadcasting of the game where statistics are boundless and in your face constantly. It is just an accepted part of the sport and its vernacular you simply become a part of it by being involved. And anyone who wants to be decent is going to do what the pro's do and keep stats, have yardage books etc.

New technology has also helped with things like pin sheets for competition days so you actually know the exact yardage for the pin on each hole e.g. 15 on and four from the left. Dial that into your yardage book and you can have a more accurate idea of the shot you want to play and the right club for that. Contrast that to bowls where e.g. when you ask how far the jack is from the T and you are offered some lame estimation which is often 2-3 feet incorrect.

So to your specific questions, and note I am a number of years out of the game, but I don't think this will have changed much, but others can concur or disagree?

At what level of amateur golf does the commitment, habits, and work ethic displayed by the pro-golfers start to appear?

I think anyone who wants to make single figures has to display them. It is a decent step from double figures to single figures and to get to single figures you need to start a form of regular and dedicated practice.

I think then the next step from being single figures to handicap of five and below takes another level of commitment and adherence to better habits and practice.

Is it far more common (accepted) at the amateur level to take and use stats for instance?

Known, accepted and just a part of the conversation. Post round players would comfortably dissect their stats with each other e.g. I just wasn't hitting enough fairways today. I didn't make a single sand save etc.

Is this because they see the pros doing it so it must be OK?

I think it is just part and parcel of the game. You don't just see and hear the pros doing it, but also with the better players at your club. You will

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also hear it from higher handicappers too. As mentioned above with the TV commentators always discussing it, it is just part of the fabric of the game. And because golf is so measurable and you can play the courses and the equipment the pros use you can measure yourself against them very easily and see what the difference is. If you want to get better then you have the tools to do so.

As per Lach's recent email about coaching, it is just 'the done thing' in golf if you want to improve...you go get lessons from a pro.

Is the expectation perhaps that if you want to be successful you need to use all the tools available?

Like bowls and every other sport, golf has its host of what Lach calls 'social bowlers'. And you also have the ones looking for the magic bullet without the work. But most people realise if you want to get better you need to do more things 'right' and simple things like knowing your strengths and weaknesses from those base KPI's goes a long way. And golf prides itself on hard work too and putting the hours in on the range. It can be a bit of a badge of honour.

I'm looking to try and understand if the 'commitment to being better' is different in the golfing world (at all levels) compared to bowls, and if so, why do you think that is the case?

My 'gut' answer to this is the fact that it is so much more measurable and there is nowhere to hide means those who want to be better will embrace what needs to be done and tools to assist them. And unlike bowls where e.g. keeping stat's is almost taboo in golf it is embraced and applauded. I played a round with a bloke one day who kept my stats as well as his so he told them to me before I even got home to pop them in my s/sheet!!

Simon

Thanks Lach and all for sharing...

I think much can be learnt from golf and the approach pro golfers take.

It is such an incredible game and the work and effort put in by those who play at the highest level is simply enormous. I personally am grateful for my background in that game as I believe it has helped me in taking up our wonderful sport.

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Whilst keeping your stats is an oddity for bowls, in golf it is vital and to not do so is to play blind.

I am holding myself back as I could go on and on and bore the life out of you so it might not be wise to go to a tournament with me. **hahahahaha**

On the opposite end of the spectrum I am constantly flawed by our mega multimillion dollar industry and sport of Australian Rules Football and the mediocre approach they have to parts of the game...most specifically kicking for goal.

In this current season of very low scores, accuracy is even more paramount and I see game after game where the kicking is frankly embarrassing. For full time well paid athletes to miss from 25 meters out is beyond belief. A pro golfer basically does not miss from five feet in and a 25 meter kick for an AFL player without much angle should be no different. But it is and what's worse is that horrid low standards are accepted.

The team that elevates its mindset and actually says that is not acceptable will crack the code to change the game and win so many games simply off the back of straighter kicking and higher scoring.

As an Essendon supporter I saw Joe Daniher basically kick an 'off bias' as he hit the kick that badly, he missed the target by some 30 meters to the left. In golf parlance he has the 'yips'. He has always been suspect in front of goal and is only getting worse and you can almost read the fear in his face as he lines up for a shot on goal.

On a statistical basis you would no longer keep him in your side as whilst he is highly capable of getting the ball he cannot convert often enough when he does.

Pro golfers have such elevated mindsets...so it is fascinating to consider what and where that can take our group as we grow and develop together.

Simon

Hi Simon

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I read your email after watching the AFL game last night and more of the dreaded same kicking inefficiency and to think these blokes get paid \$300k+ minimum to be so atrocious is lamentable.

And I pick on bowlers.

I need a wake up call.

Watching the commentary after the game the former footballers were nearly distressed at the lack of skill kicking for goal.

We heard that the sports science demands made of the players prevented these players from practising the skill of kicking at a target, the goals.

I knew many sports scientists servicing football, and sought a few to help me in early days of bowls coaching, but hell some are in cuckoo land.

Can you imagine the morale of the teammates seeing a Joe Daniher, reputedly on a \$million dollars, missing the target by such wide margins. Those coaches are all from the same school and sometimes I wonder why I heed so much on these profile sports when the solution to numerous issues is obvious (to me).

That poor goal kicker is akin to that horrible selfish skip who plays the game and their own deliveries with scant regard for the team morale. Shoot 'em all I say!

Hi Danny,

Involvement in a structured program at an early age probably depends on what club you're at.

Certainly once you get into a US college program, things are going to be very structured and looking at every way to get better.

Here is a link to the Arizona State University golf team: watch the video "a new home unveiled for Sun Devil golf".

<https://thesundevils.com/sports/mens-golf>

The competition for scholarship slots in US college golf would be fierce, so I expect golfers (and parents) are putting lots of money into getting good coaching, traveling the junior tournament circuits, etc. in order to get better and get noticed by the big college programs.

Pat

Hi everyone,

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Thanks Jimmy for a great read. So many excellent points made in your write-up. I took particular note of your comment emphasizing mechanics in the lead up to an event.

In sports like professional golf, we see players monitoring their mechanics all the time - grip, alignment, posture, ball position, swing plane, tempo, etc. They do this with coaches, with video, with training aids. They do it all the time, whether they are on the top of the money list or struggling to hang on to their tour card.

The mind-body action and connection involved with hitting a putt in golf is very similar to the delivery in bowls. It's a repetitive, low physical-effort motion to deliver an object down an indirect line to the target on a curved path at a weight so that it finishes near the target.

I recommend everyone go watch a professional golf event and hang out near the practice putting green for a few hours. Just watch what the pros do. Before the round, the players are attempting to establish their feel and confidence. After the round they are working on mechanics.

At the international level in lawn bowls, I've often seen competitors from the smaller bowls nations who have top notch mental skills - likely gained from experiences playing other sports earlier in life. These folks are just as likely to come up with the big shot in the last end as the skipper from Australia.

What they lack is the technical ability to put down bowl after bowl for hours / days cleanly and on the intended line. Losing that one bowl every so often to an unreliable delivery is what holds them back from achieving their full potential.

Nothing better for one's confidence than knowing your mechanics are solid.

Pat B

Good afternoon pat

In our squad we are lucky to have yourself, Ken and Simon (and maybe Mary) as single figure handicap golfers, elite by definition.

We can learn a lot from your parallel sport insights.

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And Ken and Simon might take we locals to a golf event and thus the practice putting green to do what you say, observe and transfer knowledge to our bowls.

You make reference to some countries having developed mental skills, certainly Malaysia way back in 2002, and the need for solid mechanics, which might be readily evident in Australian teams.

I think the acquiring of these solid mechanics requires an elevated level of mental skill because it takes time, persistence, adjustment, periods of frustration, to move to that level of solid (mechanics).

I recall being in Canada in 2016 pushing players to focus on the dual development of tactical and mental skills to add to their developing technical skill.

If we are besotted in moving the mechanics from say 95% to 100% are we spending excess time that could be allocated to these other two skills.

Without question, having a solid technique to allow regular fluent delivery is fundamental.

However it only works if we choose (shots) correctly and keep cool and composed when delivering in competition.

Thanks for the response.

Remember most of you compete with and against players who have limited interest and understanding about what we do and see and share, so take heart.

Regards to you all everywhere.

Lachlan Tighe, 2022.