

Getting Essentials Right – The Draw Bowl

Thoughts from Dene Milner, head coach, Yarra Glen, Australia, April 2020

Ask anybody about what you need to focus on in bowls and the answer will more than likely be “keep it simple, just get the line and length (weight) right”.

Take golf for example, essentially it is about line and length, but we all know it is more than just that, it is in the pre-shot routine, visualization, shot selection, body position and balance, the swing (body motion) follow through and most importantly what is happening above the shoulders, the thought processes, mindfulness that controls everything that happens. Behind the above are the countless hours of structured training, setting goals, standards, continuous improvement, repetitive “practising of good habits” and all of what that entails.

Bowls, like many other sports, is no different. The above are the very same things that impact how well we will get consistent line and length (weight), the simple essentials that determine how well we play the game.

Great to see the interest, input and discussion from pBus around bowls matters. Recent mind power / mindfulness discussions have been fantastic and of great value. Like many of you, the weight issue from players is very interesting, one I have a theory on, and in my coaching capacity attempt to address with players.

Fundamental to my teaching / coaching strategy is an emphasis, perhaps some would say, an over-indulgence with the draw bowl and Land the Mat. This strategy focuses primary on perfecting consistent line. (Notice I do not mention length / weight) My ideas have been built from accumulated understandings derived from playing, teaching, observing and coaching sport at a high level across many disciplines over 50 + years. They include tennis, basketball, football, golf and more recently bowls.

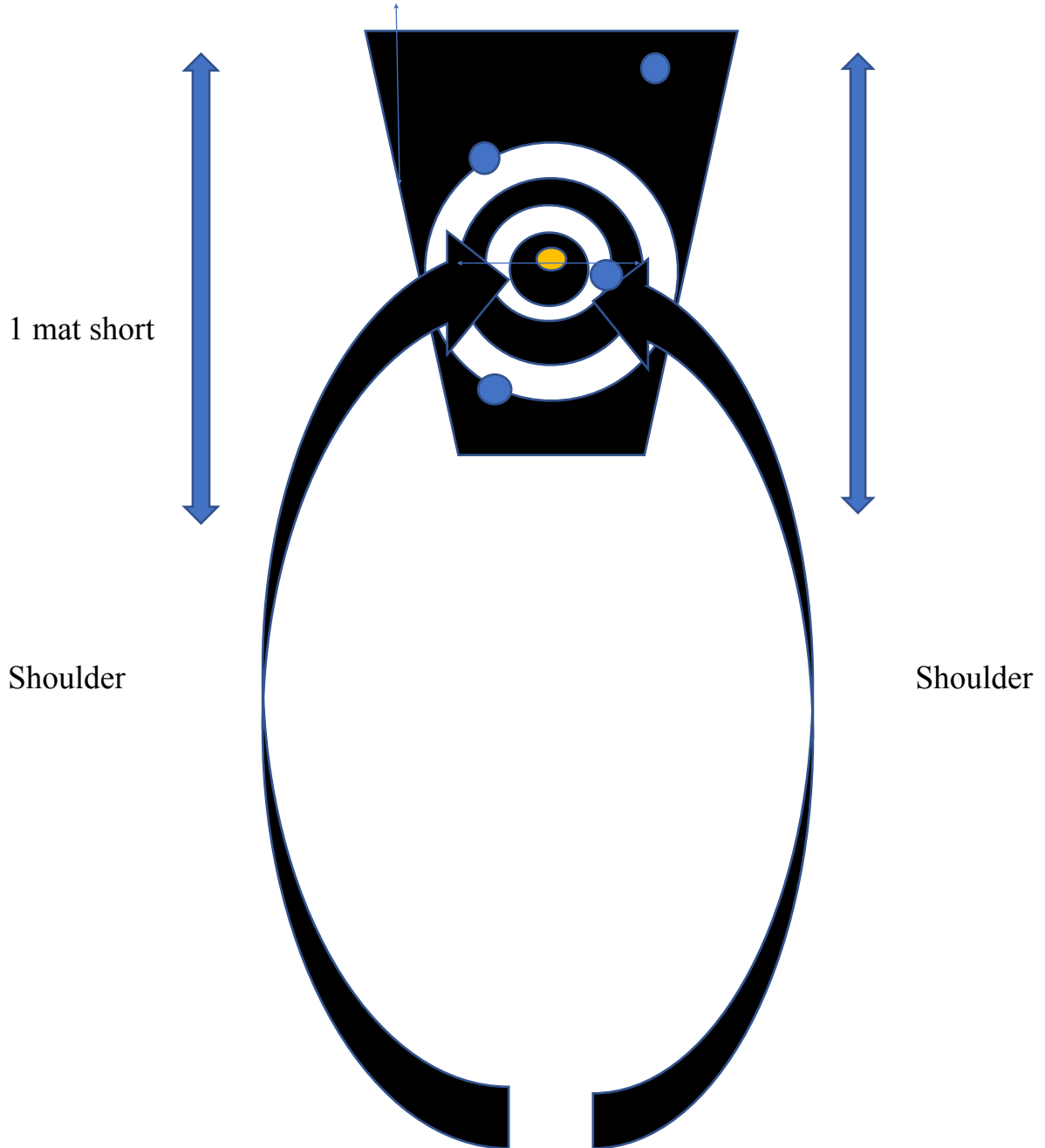
I trust the material provided is useful and assists in developing your understandings around the game of bowls and improvement in performance. I do not profess to know everything there is to know and certainly do not expect you to accept nor agree with my views. If some of what I put forward is of assistance, so be it. Glad to be part of the round table discussion.

Diagram 1 below is a visual illustration and forms a key plank in every training session I set up. The objective is to master drawing to and landing the mat over set distances.

Diagram 1 Land the Mat.

1. Sets a Standard of Expected Performance especially for the front end team in pennant.
2. 2/4 bowls must finish behind jack.
3. Establishes training discipline. Any bowl short of mat to be retrieved.
4. Focus on minimum length and maximum length.
5. Focus on the process not the result.
6. Focus on visualization, line. Tunnel vision, slide support drills.
7. Focus on “eyes down, head down, stay down”. Pre-delivery and delivery technique.
8. Focus on pendulum, full body motion and momentum swing.
9. Focus on make each bowl count.
10. Focus on developing muscle memory. What does it feel like?????
(weight)

Land the Mat (diagram 1)



Things to be mindful of.

1. Like in any sport you need to have an intimate knowledge of and understand your tool/s of trade. How does the bowl feel in the hand? How does it behave / perform on the green running surface conditions? Your bowl is your weapon.
2. At what point along the draw line does your bowl start to turn in. I have done some testing on this. Bowls starts turning in around 2/3rds of the way up the green. It will vary with different bowl designs, but you can work on between 64 – 70 % over the length you are bowling. On a short end say 22 metres you can expect somewhere around 16 metres, medium end 27-29 metres around 19 metres and long end 34 metres around 22 metres. I find this information handy to know because it helps me to visualize and calculate with my delivery where I need to get my bowl to on the draw line to achieve the result I am looking for. For me it is this process of working out where I need to get my bowl to on the draw line that determines weight.
3. It is for this reason that I will always pace out the green I am going to play on, so I know the dimensions to work to. I know it is not a precise science, but it does give me sound information to base my calculations from. It is a bit like the golfer reading the green to sink a 30 ft putt.
4. A point of difference perhaps between myself and others is the consideration regarding weight. I do not think weight I think line. Where my bowl finishes relates to the line I have visualized and the point on the draw line that I want my bowl to get to for the turn. It then comes down to my pre-delivery and delivery technique, body motion, flow, rhythm, balance on the mat and extension. The weight is about feel. It is instinctive. It is muscle memory developed over repetitive structured training. We all know when the bowl has left the hand that this just feels right. How often at ELBOWS and pBus training do you hear the call “How does it feel”?

5. My delivery technique is based around the pendulum swing. I am not a push bowler. For short end start low, stay low. As the length increases start higher with body position and motion and stay higher. The 5, 4, 3 o'clock Danny principle. Watch a golfer hitting with driver and then pitching wedge to the green. Body positioning, feet and flow helps provide a momentum shift for controlling length /weight.
6. I place high value on the hand, particularly fingers with my delivery. A very important focus on a fast-paced green together with staying down, extending action down the line. I find the fingers on a fast green, fine tune where I want my bowl to get to on the draw line. Slow green I use more full body motion with the swing.
7. Think about this!!!! You can focus on weight as much as you like, but if you don't have the right line you don't get the chosen result unless of course, lady luck intervenes. We have all been victims of that.
8. Making the right line assessment is the key in my book. You need to make a slight adjustment to the draw line when you change from short end to long end and anywhere in between. Diagram 2 The Draw Line.
9. Diagram 2 demonstrates targeted points of impact along the draw line from short end to long end to "Land the Mat". Take a direct line from mat release for each chosen length. You can see from the diagram that the delivery line angle at point of hand release reduces slightly as the length increases. (diagram is not to scale) If you were to play for a long end using the short end shoulder impact my theory would suggest 2 things will happen. You will finish wide of the head (positive side) and almost certainly fall short given my view on weight control. Alternatively, if you were to play a short end using the long end shoulder impact you will finish across the head and almost certainly long.

The Draw Line (diagram 2)

- Long end
- Medium end
- Short end

shoulder medium

shoulder short

