

Tactically aware, mentally alert

A bowler wrote to me about this recent game situation in which he competed against a former Australian player:

“...Well I lead 17 to nine, held three and then my opponent killed the end. He was on fire, killed five ends and took my close bowls out time after time, class act.

We then were 26 all, but he won 31 to 27.

Now I realize, get then too close against these types of players, no good. Bowl about one foot away better, but you must have two bowls there, so important.

I enjoyed the game however, so close I still think about the three mistakes I made may have cost me my chance.”

As a coach, how do I react for the benefit of this bowler. Have a debrief. What might that entail. Let's see how readers / bowlers react to my thought below.

DEBRIEF - (in no order)

- I would have ensured you knew what was contributing to your lead of 17-9 so as to be able to reinforce it when and if the opponent was to claw their way back into the game.
- I would have taken time to face the reality that you are only halfway and need to keep that intensity level as high as was necessary to be winning.
- And did he kill the end that first time in desperation? If so keep making him desperate.
- Who was on fire?
- He had to kill the end five times, because you must have been bowling so well to force this tactic of driving to kill an end.
- Remember, dead ends do not add to his score.
- And why, oh why, call him a class act if you are not going to praise yourself.
- Acknowledge that all opponents can perform well and in this case there were TWO of you doing that, one drawing, the other driving.

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- You still acquired nine shots to go from 17 to 26, so be more attuned to how you perform and remove the 'distraction' of being too aware of the opposition.
- One thing about great players, they know how to win whereas you good players hope you will win.
- By training with an intensity level comparable to an intense match you start to adopt an acceptance of winning.
- The point you make of getting them too close causes the loss, is in my view, inappropriate, as your getting the bowls really close engenders total confidence and for the opposition the knowledge they have a game on their hands.
- Again why did he drive, perhaps because you were too close to often so he had to resort to that tactical weapon.
- What if he missed any one of those five dead end drives, where might his self belief be right then.
- With your point about two bowls close that should be part of a generic game plan, two on and one behind if possible every end so allows for one non-contributing bowl per end; reality is not every end will be to your satisfaction, so for that purpose, keeping losses to two shots becomes the gauge, not the dead end.
- The dead end is tactically and maybe emotionally in your favour, if you view it that way.
- The VAST majority of bowlers do not (see it that way), hence my coaching is not to their liking or at least to their understanding.
- Now your summary is a nothing to me as the coach, why?
- You 'enjoyed' the game, yeah great; but what did you set out to achieve and what, in fact, did you do well is more informative, for future preparation.
- And, three mistakes: well spell them out and truthfully were they the mistakes costing you the game. For example, over say 30 odd ends played how many times did you forfeit the chance to add another shot when you had last bowl, or, how many times could you have taken an opportunity to take his bowls out of a head and pick up multiples;
- All relative these options (lost);

For all the comment made above it is only of academic benefit whilst a player does not go off and train with these type of debrief facts as a resource to continue to improve their bowling skill (mental and tactical skills in this specific case).

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Lachlan Tighe, 2016