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Performing as a lead in a team

Performing As A Lead

Q: what is a good performance for a lead in teams?

Hi Lachlan:

I'd like to pick your brain please regarding what you consider to be a good performance by a lead. My question is prompted by a Pairs event in which my friend and I finally got to play with each other after all these years. We played five games (13 ends) in the drizzling rain over a couple of days and even though we finished fourth out of 42 teams it was very obvious we have different performance assessment standards.

First I'll set the scene: Greens were running 12 - 13 seconds and true on both hands with no wind. As the skip, I instructed my lead we were to play wet weather bowls. That is, he was to draw 2 to 3 feet thru the jack to ensure he was 'up', not to leave anything jack-high, and if we did have the shot that was jack-high, we were to trail / hide the jack before they did. If he missed the jack it would be in a good home.

Alas my lead was consistently three feet short of the jack so technically he was 5 - 6 feet short of what I asked for. However, in probably 4/5 games he was closer than his opposite. I started out with encouragement and gentle reminders to be 2 - 3 feet thru. He repeatedly fell 3 feet short for all five games and by late in the 3rd game and most of the fourth my body language deteriorated. I didn't verbally abuse him, but my body language clearly said I was very frustrated. I would tell him to "concentrate on correcting", "three feet thru mate, three feet thru" but he kept failing. He didn't apologize or say he would try harder and because it was our first event together I thought perhaps he thinks he's bowling well? We chatted about it after the third match and he said he beat his opponent most times so therefore he'd done his job. I said he wasn't putting pressure on the opposition skip and was allowing him an easy draw. He still maintained he beat his opposite lead so job done. He even quoted Ian Schuback, who apparently said if the lead gets his bowls closer than his opposite then he's done his job. Don't know if Ian said that. I asked: "What, even if he's five feet away and you're four feet away?" and he said yes.

We're friends and he'd driven a few hours to play and I didn't want to

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tell him how disappointed I was with his performance and then he rang me this week and asked me. I told him my appraisal of his performance and he was stunned. "But we came fourth," he said. During our chats at night we

learned he concentrates on results and I concentrate on execution of delivery and tactics. I said, results only come after the execution and that I focus on beating my own standards. For instance, if the jack has been moved and there's four feet to draw the shot, I focus on a resting toucher, rather than landing it somewhere in the four foot area. That way my focus stays sharp. I said I wasn't interested in other games because I couldn't control them and he said he wants to know what's happening. He's a very friendly person on the green and I've previously mentioned to him that I got the feeling he felt he had an obligation to be friendly to his opponent. I've watched him chatting all the time and looking at the other rinks and recommended he simply concentrate on his own game, encourage his team mates and wait till the game is finished to socialize with the opposition. He said he just couldn't play this way.

I could chat all day about self awareness, but back to my original question.

Considering the conditions of the green, how would you rate his performance? Of course drawing to within three feet on a slippery 17 second green with a cross breeze is a very different equation, but conditions for us were conducive to quality bowls.

If you could give me your thoughts I'd really appreciate it.

Regards

My Response

Interesting and coincidental that this week two players asked me to conduct a session for them as a consequence of meeting at which I had challenged them to define their skill level. Also this week a club has discussed with me how to go about coaching players beyond just the delivery skill.

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Anyway, to respond to your question, and I shall do it as we venture through your content.

1. Performance of a lead: As skip you can set anything you want so long as you both can measure it; example from your 65 ends over 5 games would be how many deliveries, in fact, went beyond the jack, how many jack deliveries were within a metre of length requested, how many ends did he in the role of lead have one bowl contribute per end; and in fact if that analysis was briefly done after each game you then have info. For averages, 'pb' game by game; then the objective may be to meet the average say by games 3, 4 & 5.
2. Individual perspective on performance: In defence of your mate nigh on all bowlers, including internationals, have no damn idea of how they went except for the emotional feel and that is cause they do not measure, or may not even know what is expected at a certain level.
3. Being closer than opponent: Agree with you having a bowl four feet away and saying it is ok cause my opponent is worse, yuk!
4. Myths: The beat your opponent tag is commonplace and I find absurd. I use mat length (ML) as the zone for contribution and if a player can lead at 45% effectiveness, yes 45%, they are doing well as ML is rather hard to achieve be it 12 or 17 seconds speed.
5. Drawing shot: You mention your focus is on a resting toucher if last bowl has about four feet draw space. Again all I do is have all my players focus on a ML draw mindset so then a skip is gauged to be doing ok if 35% of deliveries are effective ML.
6. Focus: Again your mate may not be as serious as you in events and you, not he, has to accept that. He enjoys the company of people and in between time he tries doing his best. Welcome back to the real world of bowls mate. Unless you choose a like-minded partner, then just enjoy doing as well as you did coming fourth.

My bowls book has chapters to cover measuring skill and preparing

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players for performance in games as these two aspects were so obviously absent out there in the learning world of bowls, and still is given my chats this past week.

Have a browse in my bowls website too, as I have numerous articles on all that you cover in the question.

Hope that helps.

Lachlan Tighe, 2017