

‘...Coaching Is Not Shouting’

The daily newspaper had a recent article by a former AFL Football coach Rodney Eade, titled ‘Coaching more than a shouting match’ and it certainly was food for thought for active coaches in bowls to learn the scope of the role we may be expected to provide to future generations of bowlers.

Without doubt those bowls coaches working with bowlers with aspirations for greater heights need to heed the words he utters below.

‘Tactics set plays and game plans are a tangible way of examining what an AFL coach does match day.’

In bowls, game plans still have not featured even now in 2019.

If there is an approach it would appear to be to let the lead throw the first few ends to find his length and the rest of the team will follow suit.

Not really what an Eade is referring to as a detailed game plan.

A premier league bowls club coach told me he did not agree with game plans so what hope would he have of being a football coach with that mindset.

There are many and varied parts to a coach’s role, but a critical component is the feedback mechanism he employs.

Now we all have differing skills as coaches and styles, but again Eade is urging the necessity to communicate to players on performance.

Brendan Murray, currently on Collingwood FC coach staff, told a squad of us bowlers recently that involving players in the performance preparation was a necessity.

In bowls we hear a barrage of negative vibes uttered to players and teams who lose. Losing is an occupational hazard and the critics show (to me) their limited understanding of competitive sport when they barrel people for losing.

What feedback seems to be is constructive, honest appraisal of performance on that day with a view to fostering a keenness to get out there and train to conquer the opposition the next time.

After a match, most teams would like to have their review process out of the way ASAP, allowing time to concentrate on preparing for the coming week / event.

Eade goes on to indicate the various mechanisms of feedback to include meetings, statistical analysis, individual meetings, formal reports placed on notice boards etc., etc.

Lachlan Tighe
Weekly column

For bowls and depending on the level we are talking about some of these are out of the question. My experience earlier in 2019 with a fours team striving to win a state title was just that, a definite unwillingness to examine their performance post game. A long way from being truly elite, while they retain that limited mindset.

What is open to change is at least a review.

The culture of pennant competition clubs is that a player is dropped more often for poor form rather than the club (coach) making efforts to 'skill up' this valued team member who has only lost confidence in his skill, not his basic skill of delivery of a bowl.

I wonder if that approach prevailing at club level permeates further up the elite ladder.

On that feedback theme, one of the things I note these past few months is a reluctance of many of us in bowls to tell players they are good at their game and to foster a personal analysis of themselves so as to know what others see as their strengths, because you can be assured they will hear from every Tom, Dick and Harriet what they are NO good at.

As a coach I hope I minimise the times I overlook to confer a bit of positive reinforcement to players of any standard, as it becomes a practised culture if we hear and see others talking positively and constructively to players so as they get to the top levels it is a customary process.

Lachlan Tighe, 2019