

## Mentoring Elite Bowlers

In the course of any year I shall be asked by elite bowlers worldwide any number of questions seeking advice as to how they might succeed in forthcoming championships.

More often than not they set goals, prepare with diligence, win lead up events, get selected in elite sides because of their performances.

Still they feel a degree of uncertainty, quite understandably because it means a lot to be recognized by your successful record. These players who have sought my advice even this calendar year, men and women, are anxious and aroused not in a negative sense more in a sense of (impatient) anticipation. The mind is a funny thing, sometimes we want to yank it out of our head when it annoys the hell out of us.

Some of these bowlers live in my home town and I can meet and talk to them. Others we phone or email. Either way I have provided these statements below as examples of the responses to give them. There is no one response though.

- Reinforce what I hear them talk about as ideal in an emotional sense.
- As elite bowlers, a reminder to them of their rank amongst the very top bowlers in Australia or the world, where they are from overseas.
- Where they are that good as elite, their need to go above the pack (team), go and measure your effort, go and influence them (team) as a man or woman of character.
- I don't doubt the player holds those other name players in the team in great regard, however as good as they are I reckon they are nowhere near you the player talking to me when it comes to the stuff we have exchanged this past year.
- I remind the player of some of the stuff we shared that has relevance for the preparation to be the state, provincial or national champions in future.

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- Whoever they play is irrelevant because your mind is on seeing how many times the first bowl is within a mat width (MW) of the jack, or what is asked of you, not a mat length though you could as easily have two objectives - is it within a MW if not a ML, both of which are truly good in any company.
- I remind them of the need to relish the fact you have a goal and work hard to strive to meet that goal; whereas other good and elite bowlers just play (well), even compete on the international stage of bowls, but never go to the effort you make to set your sights.
- A reminder about pre game planning and you having performance goals and the team also having goals and the debrief template.
- And if the player is in a team, but not as skip, that the game plan is set by the skip probably and what you need to know is what is your role, and how could you measure it. Remember always your skip decides all your deliveries when you are not in that role, skipping.
- And we would have discussed ways of being a strong team contributor; and I might have suggested these:

What you do is ensure you have the same pre-delivery routine for EVERY delivery;

What you could do is see if the skip will share his game plan with you three before the game;

Whether he sees merit in meeting maybe every five ends to assess our contributions;

Remind him having the meetings means we set the tempo;

Come days end get the rink together if the skip doesn't and briefly and politely seek to overview your day - losses have lessons and wins can hide sins so either result do it (debrief).

That stuff I type above is where I discover character - don't you want to win???

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- What I reflect on in these phone calls, meetings or emails with the player is the need to have objectives in performance, to know what the skip is expecting if it is a fours championship, to know how you and the lead form a team to measure performance as contributors. You have no say in the use of the final four bowls. But, you have a say in how you want all four to work together to win the major or national championships.

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- I imprint the value of this rare opportunity on the player, that chance which may never come again.  
Just because the others may have been there before don't let that sway you from influencing the best way for the team to win the event.
- I will ensure a positive mind is within the player. I will ask them to look at themselves, value your character and what you want to achieve, with others.
- And challenge mediocrity. Don't let the lacklustre effort of the others cause you to miss out on this fabulous championship medal goal.
- And, the times you are bowling crap, I will ask the player to see the benefit to invest in the others, ensure they cover you, be there is positive spirit, pump the skip at all times.
- Be switched on, don't get distracted and never, never give up.

I refer to this approach above as mentoring because I am not in the immediate vicinity of the player or team to conduct supervised structured purposeful training which is the ideal form of coaching.

**Lachlan Tighe, 2019**