

## Lessons From 2018 Elite Bowls Events

# **Bowls: Game Of Skill At Elite Level**

I had the pleasure of coaching a state player recently who was part of the state winning side in the national sides championships.

I also had the pleasure of providing advice to a player who at time of typing was in his 5<sup>th</sup> state singles final in as many years.

And over the past few weeks I have conducted training for two players who represented their region in the state regional championships within Victoria.

Based on those player exposures I am still so, so disappointed our sport lags so far behind in the example elite performance preparation from our players.

Not helped one iota by the blissful ignorance of selectors and bowls management.

Let me proceed with this column '**Bowls: A Game Of Skill Elite Level**' basing a lot of what I am to write on recollections had with other sports coaches and sports psychologists in my dealings with them in sport generally and bowls over 20 years.

The most vivid picture a sports psychologist gave me of his experience observing an earlier sides championships was noting some players playing the pokies before matches, at lunch-time between matches, and in the evening after matches. For many players gambling-smoking-drinking was, still is, an important part of their lifestyle.

Gee that reinforced my version of the elite representative bowler when away attending a major event. Saw it all in Delhi 2010 Games with bowlers the only sports people drinking and at times to excess, at the Village bar prior to their events.

The players who represented their Regions recently at the Victorian regional championships in early 2018 were aghast at how many elite players drank excessively, were never punctual for formal sessions, even being roused from their beds to get to compete and worse, appeared to be influenced by the use of drugs.

And these were teammates or prospects for future state sides. Selectors, team managers, wake up, this is occurring still on your watch in 2018.

I ask the question.

Do state representative bowlers see themselves as elite athletes?

I ask the question of state selectors.

Do you see state representative bowlers as elite athletes?

I ask the question of state bowls associations.

Do you see state representative bowlers as elite athletes?

In my view, elite level bowls is a game of acquired skill at the highest level and it is reasonable to expect, even demand, that regional, State and National bowlers are honing their skills with an intensity, parallel to elite players in other sports, ie. AFL, Cricket and Olympic sports.

Bowls Selectors of representative sides need to step up and take full responsibility in who they choose to represent the association. They should be selecting players who have an elite and team mentality towards competitive bowls.

And, guess what, some of our very best (technical players) would not get a team shirt from me seeing and knowing their mindset.

**Lachlan Tighe, 2018**