

‘Team Success: Victory And Adversity’

Right now in 2017 here in Australia the models of sporting excellence abound and appear in every media outlet – Australian Rules football AFL finals, Australian rugby league finals, the Spring racing carnival, Australian Open Tennis, and cricket in all its forms.

I saw a documentary once a few years back on SBS titled ‘Seabiscuit’ which for me highlighted that victory over adversity as a feature of sports excellence has been around a long time.

Seabiscuit was a racehorse, who ran in the USA during the late ‘30s, who was described as a ‘dog of a horse.’ Fast forward to late 2016 and that sounds like the description applied unfairly to the Western Bulldogs (Doggies) these past couple of years, even from 1954 when they last won a football premiership.

Seabiscuit’s critics said he could not win a race to save himself as a 2 year old. He was described as...ungainly, unglamorous, compared to the other equine heroes of the day. To make matters worse for poor Seabiscuit, the jockey who bestrode him, Reg Pollard, was partially crippled through previous race fall injuries and to add to the flaws was blind in his right eye. Gee again a parallel to the Doggies with injuries befalling everyone this football season.

But, they, horse and jockey, teamed together through the astute management of the trainer, like a good skip in bowls, who knew all about managing his charges (and that is what a team is) to start to win races, many races.

Once results occurred, frequently, the team was then rightly perceived as dedicated, talented, totally committed. Seabiscuit was pipped on the post into second place in the then richest race in the world and the media of the day felt this was the beginning of his end. However, over the next few years, both jockey and horse revived their winning spirit to prepare and win that richest race two years later.

Website menu: teams

Team success, victory over adversity

How many Olympians do we read about who get flogged in their first Olympics and through sheer grit and determination come back four years later to take gold. Or the Doggies, from a finalist in 2015, to a lowly finalist the following year, onto premiers.

According to the trainer the losses, jibes, gloom in those periods without success made each of the trainer, jockey and horse.

Driven; driven for the hunger of success.

The bad times, the tough times, the adversity was part of the journey. More to savour when victory finally came about. And victory would come about as they believed in its ultimate arrival.

There is ample application from this horse racing tale in 1930, the Doggies tale in 2016 for us in bowls to note, adopt and apply whether we be coaches, skips of teams or players.

One big difference in these two tales to what I witness in various levels of bowls. In this sport, bowls, many talk about the victory, but given we are part of clubs, sides, teams and squads there is a necessity to be in sync with one another.

My recall of the SBS show was that the Seabiscuit team was as one in their utter dedication to work toward achieving the goal they cherished as a team. And all of us here in Australia witnessed the repeat of the tale with the Doggies victory and the magnanimous gesture of the coach post game.

That was one of the abiding memories I had in watching a show that was telling a sports story from nearly 80 years ago; not much has changed to the main ingredient of success in all that time, circa Doggies parallel 2016 premiership story.

Lets hope more bowlers stop the talk and work the walk as successful results will be more likely to occur because you understood the responsibility to work, together, for the success.

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More of us in bowls should seize the lesson from the subject in the documentary. And from the Doggies soaring to the summit of sport excellence.

Lachlan Tighe 2017