

Dumb & Dumber: Experience, Skill

I have a constant frustration in having to listen to ‘experienced’ people in bowls, especially if they harp on these points
...we don’t need to change (to succeed), or
...reinforcing old and false approaches to better bowls.

Per instance when players recently express concern that I am encouraging them to be vocal and supportive at training, and in competition, when they are told at their clubs not to do that at all. What utter rubbish! Why adhere to standards that are the essence of mediocrity. When are we prepared to say enough is enough and lets thoroughly enjoy the game, it is a game remember!

And hasn’t 2020 displayed that element for bowls with this corona virus causing fatalities.

Oh, be careful not to assume I am asking all of you to be raucous, noisy. Simply let yourself be seen or heard to be in support through your body or verbal language. Letting others see you perform as a team energizer.

Anyway to my point. Heck in the 1950s / 1960s it was not unusual for the top rugby and AFL players of the day to do warm ups, analyze skill elements and undertake rehearsal features in training.

I listened to a football coach retell a story of his earlier life in coaching recently. Essentially a top player did his own thing rather than perform a set pattern of play and the team won. The coach exploded because that player had not practiced ‘his own thing’.

The coach argued that having the team know via trained practice what to do in set situations gave everyone a sense of certainty. It also gave each team member a game plan that equipped them to compete, to cope with the pressure to be applied in a competition.

That one player, like too many ‘experienced’ bowlers, did not understand because all he could see was that the team won. This time! It is

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not about him, it is ALL about the team. And it is about knowing the expected.

Skill is what makes the complex look so simple. As Rowan Sharp said to me once while viewing a state test match...the highly skilled bowlers appear so composed. The Malaysians were required to undergo rigorous and varied skills training when I became their coach.

They were a delightful squad of people, with a high degree of self discipline to realize the need to elevate their necessary bowls skills. It did not come because of 'experience'. That skill level is acquired through a program of proper preparation, discipline and acceptable standards.

The essence of bowls is pretty simple. However, pressure for elite competitors and us other folk too, is executing the delivery with utmost precision when it counts, or as scoreboard pressure mounts.

Whether it works, i.e. they get the shot or not, is not the point. The point is you want to perform in those difficult and stressful situation. Doing it easily when you are winning is never a concern.

'Experience' in bowls terms is Tuesday and Thursday practice games at the club pre or post beer. That experience is widespread and for elite sport levels utterly useless. Try telling your top club bowlers that and they will harangue you out the proverbial door. Guess what, they wouldn't know because their experience of elite performance is limited.

Acquiring skill and excellence is performing and persisting at training, so that these deliveries required in elite competition can be played with an assurance (that the skill and work are there to call upon).

Next time someone at your club sprouts forth about them being 'experienced'; check their performance credentials before allowing their words to enter into your historical brain. If you listen to them (who are dumb) you may be dumber heeding these lesser lights.

Ric Charlesworth is acknowledged as one of the greats in Olympic coaching through his gold medal successes in (field) hockey. He maintained ..."Experience is overrated unless you LEARN from the

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experience.' With his credentials I am paying full attention to Mr Charlesworth.

Are you?

Excellence has never been out of fashion.

Lachlan Tighe, 2020.