

# Habits of elite bowlers

## *Insight from an elite coach*

One of the Victorian members of our pBus bowls squad (Max Goldsmith) did an interesting survey with 23 acknowledged elite bowlers during the lockdown. All 23 responded which is a compliment to them especially as three are overseas players.

He asked these bowlers eleven questions and I decided to also react to the questions all these two years on.

Some of the questions asked of each elite player are so similar so as to solicit a same response, so I have integrated the similar questions (from 11 to 8) and I follow each question with my response as a coach of elite players.

**What do you think it takes to become the best?**

**What do you think has been the secret behind your successful career in bowls?**

**How did you overcome your biggest challenges to achieve what you have achieved?**

- A strong sense of **self belief** to succeed in my approach,
- **Motivation** to strive to be my best,
- **Motivation** to pursue excellence and as coach, expertise,
- Set myself **goals** to gauge progress up the rungs of the goals ladder,
- Being **selfish** (of my time, \$\$\$, commitments, distractions) in pursuit of my goals,
- Having talent is nearly a given, having a relentless **work ethic** is a necessity,
- Energized by the **challenge** to acquire those skills to be the best,
- Use of a capable & committed **coach** to guide my motivation, my development,
- **Knowing** what the best players do to set sights on scaling that mountain,
- Extensive **planning** & game planning,
- **Debriefing** every performance,
- **Measuring** performance to enable proper debriefing,

## Training habits of elite bowlers

- Supervised coach **training** sessions,
- A **pre-delivery routine** that is rock solid for (elite) competition,
- An **intensity** of deliberate practical training,
- **Listen** to everyone, reject that which lacks merit,
- Be **intolerant** of mediocrity,
- As a coach, watch competitions to gauge what and how to **develop observation** skills.

**What have you found to be your most effective / successful training regime?**

**How do you plan each training session?**

- Every session is conducted with a combination of intensity, purpose and fun,
- Every session of 90 minute duration I set aside time for warm up, skill audit, drills for a simulated head, preparing for the next event, modified games based on drills done today,
- Repetition repetition repetition of a singular purpose for each session,
- Training your intended game plan for the next event,
- I plan program sessions up to 10-12 sessions in advance.

**How do you record each training session? (stats keeping)**

- Other than an audit of a specific delivery skill for players, I do not record stats. at training sessions (of course always in competition).

**What drill do you think is the best for a short training session?**

- Any of my warm up drills are imperative,
- The caterpillar, elsewhere players called it grouping, is my bread and butter for short or normal length sessions as it is the hallmark of consistency.

**What do you deem to be the most important skill in bowls?**

- I reckon there are seven (7) skills in bowls ALL of which are imperative to be an elite bowls success.
- The skills are communication, fitness, mental, sensory, tactical, team, technical.

**What mental skills do you think are important?**

**Training habits of elite bowlers**

- Mental skill is simply being able to perform proficiently in the contest.
- Mental skill is trained and part of any coaching session.
- Mental skill might simply be the discipline (mental toughness) to:
  - Regularly audit your technical skill,
  - Attend training as scheduled despite weather conditions,
  - Debrief after a game especially a bad loss,
  - Keep composure when all around is failing miserably,
  - Adhering to your game plan in the heat of battle,
  - Train with intensity (and higher than that of competition),
  - Attitude to practice winning habits,
  - Challenge having no limits,
  - Set goals and objectives to measure and train for.
- Mental skills are evident in factors to include attitude, composure, concentration, confidence, motivation, persistence, positivity, resilience, winning belief.

**If you could share one thing that you wish you had known when starting bowls. What would it be?**

- Avoid the social bowls mindset that prevails in bowls clubs,
- There is a big competitive wide world of bowls out there beyond our club gate,
- Bowls as a competitive sport lacks that sporting mindset that exists elsewhere in other sport - disregard most bowl(ers) insights,
- If there was a coach committed enough, gravitate to them to learn.

**If you were trying to teach someone what it takes to become the best, what would you tell them to 'fast track' their progress?**

- Get a coach committed to your development and use their guidance,
- Train more than you play to acquire a consistent rhythmic skilled delivery,
- Train with a purpose every session and maybe three times per week,
- Refrain from playing too many games,
- Kids play games, athletes train in preparation for competitive performance,
- Write yourself a set of goals to give you a sense of direction, some objectives,
- When going in team events, choose your partners wisely,

**Training habits of elite bowlers**

- Ask questions of those in bowls who had success, within your club, from opposition clubs, and of elite players you meet early in your bowl's life,
- Enter events at club / region / state even national level for the experience and exposure to a new and better level of performance,
- Audit your technical deliveries (12) at least once a season,
- Record and measure your competition performances,
- And debrief these performances with that coach you found,
- And don't get pissed off with selection / selectors, simply embarrass the buggers by continued success.

For bowlers these questions might be ones you ask of yourself to find an answer so as to set yourself on a path to further develop your skill capacity.

Does this mean you are elite, or a champion being able to answer the questions?

No, not necessarily.

Does the investigation by you of such a quest to question assist your development?

Guaranteed.

Even today, doing this response exercise, I found it really beneficial to have to ponder the questions and consider my response to each question accordingly.

What I shall do early in 2023 on this bowls website is provide these 23 players responses over those 23 weeks.

And again their responses in a series of eight (8) columns to these same questions I have in bold above for you, the reader, to gain insights from them on being an elite bowler.

**Lachlan Tighe, November 2022.**