

‘Marching...into another year of bowls, 2016’

The calendar year 2015 is over, national events concluded and domestic finals are decided around March 2016 as the month of miracles and premiership medals.

So what have we other bowlers learnt – competitors who entered the AO qualifiers around the country; clubs who fielded sides in pennant without finalists; clubs in fact still in contention for pennant premierships.

Before you give the answer, you need to know the questions to ask. Let me probe your thoughts – those of you still in pennant finals really need to have answers if wanting to hold the premiership flag aloft and high.

Here goes.

1. What do we need to do for next year for the club to get into the final four.

First and foremost, just simply be aware of how many average wins your team needs to get into the club pennant final four – 12 wins to be first, 10 for second, nine for third and eight wins should see you as fourth. And to avoid relegation about five wins are required from the 18 games.

Secondly, training and preparation. None of this...I won't train Tuesdays, or under a certain coach. Get used to better approaches.

Third, recruitment of better players. Finally, increase the skill level of all team members. That requires your club to consider a series of coach supervised training sessions over the season.

2. How will we cope going into the finals with recent losses fresh in our minds.

This is a tough one, but lessons are learned from other sports where it also happens.

Seems to me the key is in reinforcing the need to be mentally positive. All your technical, tactical and fitness skills were enough to take you to the finals. Now is the time to believe in yourself, your teammates. Selectors note. Hold strong. I am coach to numerous bowlers playing in finals at a variety of clubs. This message applies to all of them wherever they compete.

3. What goals have we set the club for next year.

The current selectors SHOULD have one more meeting post season. That should be to set the goals and direction for the club and maybe the incoming selectors for next season. Without goals you don't score.

4. What goals have you set yourself in bowls for the year.

Way back in 2000 I had elite players who shared goals with me, which I still keep.

Their success is no surprise to me when I look back at the level of detail written in those goals.

To be better in your bowls you must, repeat must, go to that length. I know in my coaching I cannot help anyone who has not set themselves a goal so we can refer to that statement. In fact it is my initial measure to find out how serious the bowler is who approaches me about coaching. I am serious about my coaching, maybe you are not about your bowling. Good on ya!!!

5. You give the lead the choice for length, or to hand the mat away, do you as skip know what he considers.

Some skips in the club pennant and other competitions too, will give length and mat decision responsibility to the lead. But do you know the mindset of that lead. Will they be reacting based on their own form in the game, the result, our team, the opposition. And even so, when will they be reacting – too early, too late, after five ends to see how we go? Hell the final might be lost by then. Skips, sit down and discuss the approach with the lead and ensure they have the foresight you expect to make suitability judged decisions. If not, blame yourself, not them, if you hand them that responsibility.

6. What can I do to perform better in the 2016 AO.

Or for that matter your group/zone events, state events. Firstly, view the skill levels of the best, those in the big league, and digest their elite standard. Now review the use of your weekly time in bowls. If you play pennant, that is about five hours as a given allocation, where you apply your trained skills. If you also 'practice' with club mates in pairs / fours roll up, that may be another say five hours in a week. Well, kick that five hours to seven hours in

the week. Now ensure that 3/7 of that time is set to improve your skill level with separate specific training. That still allows you four hours with mates if that is what you want too.

Otherwise by retaining your normal schedule, don't expect a marked improvement in performance because your expectations exceed your work load and skill level. Stiff luck troops.

7. Have we a mechanism as a team to cope when we are struggling in the finals.

You will struggle at some time in these forthcoming finals. It will happen maybe 4-5 ends where nothing works. As a rink you have to keep the spirits up, you have to meet as a team in the middle of the green to change your collective behaviour. No good persisting with stuff that is not working. And you have to do it no later than three ends of any one members horror stretch. But don't change anything if one team member is 'bleeding to death' in the horrors yet the team is winning. Just bad luck for him, back him emotionally by speeding to victory on the results board.

8. What is our game plan.

Helps answer the above question too. At a previous AO when sets play was the format, one skipper informed his team to win the second set. If they won the first then they won overall. If they lost the first and won the second they had the momentum to go into the tie break knowing that statistically winners of the second set were generally winners of the round. Plans on length, mat placement, handovers and hand to play, were all spelt out too. Interesting to talk to that skip later about his approach.

9. What lessons have we learned from this event - AO or pennant season.

Earlier I referred to selectors sitting and examining the season for the club teams. Well this question applies to all bowlers and us coaches, at whatever performance level. I have sat with my bowls squad as soon as they finished the AO program.

Every one of them has their own perspective for their improvement. My role as their coach in these conversations is to flesh out the tangible things / skills they will work on where we can gauge, measure, train,

Lachlan Tighe...Website
Menu folder: measure & appraisal

improve, modify or even correct. Note that is the last factor. All of the above though is a reflection of their attitude, or mental skill. How hungry are you to be better? A few national level bowlers had separate conversations and training sessions with me as soon as they were ousted from the AO setting out their next year of bowls. That's what will drive you, not me nor anyone else. Me, I do all of the above as a coach, because I am driven to be as good as I can be as a coach. Who knows how far I can go? My one limitation – I need driven players who want to be much better bowlers. Actually I was asked by one of the bowlers at the AO how come I was so passionate about bowls coaching and elite development. There above is part of the answer. I love the passion.

In our sport today, your time at the top is limited if you don't take stock of what is occurring around you. We have new AO champions, new clubs in finals, new group or Zone contenders, new state, province and national squad members.

Even new coaches - though few and far between.

All because more players are looking at ways to improve themselves, and their clubs. If you remain stationary, you are actually going backwards as the others pass you by. I encourage, in fact coach, you all to 'march' forward and learn from the triumphant, who have recently finished their march in bowls this past season.

March, 2016.