

Lachlan Tighe: Talking Tactically website bowls coaching column

(June 2010 column)

Classic Catch Phrases – coaches

(caught over time as the best of the best to take into India 2010 basing it all on striving for success)

Coaches coaching

as coach you should also be a dreamer pursuing his/ her own goals.

A ‘master class’ sport coaches setting in 2005 and the comments heard are summed up like this below which I read and saw a few days later as a commentary on a world class tournament –

- the image you want to capture as coach is of a stance behind the player;
- the best posture is one where knees are flexed slightly and the arms are loose not taut;
- the good balance and swing of the arm are all based on this bodily position;
- with this top player you can be struck by the extent to which everything is on line
- with the top player I am talking about he is neither too close or too far , too closed or too open, he is parallel to his target;
- the players feet, knees, toes and eyeline are all in the direction required for delivery;
- regardless of each of our varied postures and morph sizes and the manner of our address for the delivery the one thing we can do is align ourselves correctly so as to simply give us one little thing this player has in bundles...consistency;
- there are players whose posture changes off line as soon as a backswing commences, or as the three people viewed, as soon as the players make that first forward step – I use the word make not take as one bowler actually falls forward so reacting to step as his body is leaning like the proverbial tower of Pisa- but guess what my model player does not change any angle of his posture and body alignment at any time in that delivery process including his follow through step and weight transfer
- this bloke being so top notch in his game (delivery) though he works hard at both he and his equipment being in sync; this top line player – none other than Tiger Woods

You’re a good coach - meeting an eleven year old boy who looked up at me and uttered these words ‘...you’re a good coach’. I believe in my skill and my approach to coaching, Adam’s unsolicited response has made me walk tall ever since as it is vital to reinforce the belief in the approach as it demonstrated that capacity I see in myself to communicate and its importance as an important ingredient in my coaching. For a little boy of eleven years of age who has’nt got a clue who this old bloke is running the program has to be won over if you and I are ever going to make an impact in his skill development. Hosts can introduce any of us guest coaches to other adults and for a brief period the credibility of the introduction will hold their interest or keep the respect (which lasts until you prove the worth of the words) but in young Adam’s case it is....impress me now pal as I am a little kid, a titch, that loses interest real quick.

train them to move from thinking hardly to thinking hard mentality

Self belief as being an important reason England won the 2003 world cup. Woodward displayed publicly the same level of self belief that he has been engendering in his players. What Woodward has done is think differently. England has been transformed by his ability to think in this way – the coaches, the fitness levels, the visual awareness. He created a high performance environment in which no excuses were tolerated. He recognized that players could

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not make a 40% difference to their game overnight, so they made small improvements – EVERYWHERE. A 1% increase in everything will make a huge difference in the long run.

When you lose – if it is just the odd game – don't overreact. In business if you are winning you tend to go down to the pub and open the champagne. When you lose it's the 8am crisis meeting. To Woodward, it should be the complete opposite – when you have done something really good have the 8am meeting, find out why. If you lose go down to the pub have a beer and stay cool. If you keep losing you have to change things dramatically but if not carry on doing things right, carry on believing you can win next time out on the field.

excellence never dates: Bryant argued that coming to the head automatically once you play your third bowl enhanced your skills for mental composure, positive reinforcement for that next delivery, tactical strategy review, focus, distance judgement evaluation skill and the return walk was a time then to positively reinforce all of these factors.

Behaviour training - after the AFL 2008 premiership football game the Hawthorn player who starred that day remarked on how Hawthorn as a team was now doing support things and how these were tangible signs of team support and cohesion and the results were in some way an outcome of this trust and support for and by all team members.

What caught my attention was his comment that it did not come naturally to be supportive and this especially in the times when teams, and or players, are struggling for form. Hence his 'manufactured now becoming automatic' comment. What he said was that Hawthorn spent time on the training track encouraging, guiding and preparing players to demonstrate support in the forms of verbal and body language and though the players did not take to it initially, the training of this (mental) skill made it into an automatic practice as the players not only had to do it (applying the skill) but are starting to see the benefit of the outcome to the spirit and performance of the team where they have won four games in a row.

In bowls there are those who do not understand the value of the contribution of morale boosting gestures in our team settings. Despite all pleas to common sense and to view how other sports are developing these (skills) the best we have in bowls is an occasional 'high five' and even then done while some fellow team bowlers express some disdain for that 'flair'.

Bad behaviour - scenarios where I had a few of them do a role play of a good supportive setting and a role play of a deplorable non supportive setting. So why do we not have more of these demonstrations at the clubs to help reduce and aim to eradicate the bad examples. The other aspect of amazement to me was that everyone had experienced and understood the role play setting(s), agreed with what was favourable and unfavourable yet no one had thought to introduce, or encourage to introduce, a training session that shows what is and what is not an acceptable way of behaving if teams wish to win.

An effective team is one where the members trust one another, each feels part of the team, and there is a group cohesion and effect in what the four of us are trying to do on our rink. And multiply that feeling by four for a pennant competition as four rinks make up a side. For us to be our most effective, the team needs to connect emotionally so the attitudes and behaviour is habitual. We can train that way for us poor old humans to learn how to minimise our drop or lapse in emotional support to our team mates.

The Harvard Business Review March 2001 journal quote '...inevitably a team member will indulge in behaviour that crosses the line, and the team must feel comfortable calling the foul' reminds us that it is not all plain sailing in teams as we deal with people; however, the strength of character of the team and its individual members is up for testing when someone strays from the perfect setting and is the typical '...men behaving badly'.

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Attitude is an extension of how we feel about ourselves – have you ever met a happy person with a poor attitude? Attitude affects everything we do and everyone we meet – like a calling/ business card it stays around well after we have left the surrounds.

Leadership: is a sense of prevailing leadership, not limited to the nominated leader (skip). Leadership glues great teams together. Within bowls the barrier to true leadership is the tradition of bestowing it upon the skipper and it is presumed to be their sole domain. We may well need to alter the mindset to strengthen the sense of team and spirit by encouraging, training and developing leadership qualities in all those who bowl with us, not for us.

In games sense coaching approach, we coaches can take a novel path and include training that introduces the art of supportive communication which in anyone's language appears common sense. Maybe it has been more an absence of common use and training of senses.

Culture: Coaches making decisions must be the first to have the vision and culture so they then choose the talent based on the personal qualities of these talented people who befit the culture (of success) you set yourself and your team, your state and your national sport organisation. Margaret Court, Tennis great, felt there was too much group coaching at that elite level rather than one on one mentoring. Coaches and selectors are looking at how well people hit the ball (deliver the bowl) and that's not what it is about. It is about surviving on the circuit, committing yourself every day, learning and developing new skill approaches, wanting to work to win for self and country and that takes a special person, and I don't think they (coaches and selectors) are looking deep enough into identified individuals who have those qualities.'

Coach's bus: get the right people on our bus as the essential ingredient to drive a philosophy of striving for success. If wanting to soar like an eagle, don't mix with turkeys. No limits!

habits: need to be automatic by practice in the 'heat of battle' and heat is the factor for India 2010; attitude as I say is all about practising habits.

standards: don't stand for mediocrity and be intolerant of those who do.

First: History only recalls the names of those who were (there) first.

P Philosophy: goals

Goals are pursued through a commitment to strive for excellence and an adherence to an approach, or philosophy, developed and reviewed, over the years which for me currently is

philosophy.....*to be the best I can be and strive for success*

passion.....*sheer unadulterated and driven to bowls coaching*

people.....*use, share and work with quality people who have the right Attitude*

plan.....*everything, every time, every session, every performance*

programs.....*implement and review purposeful, fun programs*

power.....*knowledge (of sport, successful people, successful operations) is power*

performance..*in the competition as the outcome of the above*

praise & appraise..*the competition, the effort, share and care*

Lachlan Tighe, 2010