

## ***Lachlan Tighe.....Talking tactically***

### ***Website Bowls Coaching Column***

(April 2008 column)

#### **‘Measuring team, developing tactically’**

The situation that follows is familiar to all of us who are in a fours team whatever the level of competition. Let us assume it is a pennant game of 25 ends which will have long periods of time if you are losing.

Beforehand your team sets out to win, no surprises so far. The Skip as always says to us let us see how we are going after 5 ends. By end 5 the score is 0-11, now there are surprises, where were the opponents in our pre game plans.

What caused 0-11? It must have been one of the two other players, it certainly was not the Skip, it never is. But, our Skip does know, he watched the game disintegrate. But did he know (read she for ladies pennant). Not really as he said let's see how we go after 5 ends. Now we know - we are being crapped on.

At this point of 5 ends, the Skip and his team have facts to discuss (briefly mid green). What happens in reality is that the bowlers walk past one another, probably heads bowed, Skip snarling, like ships in the night.

Now if I as coach am sitting in the stands observing I would be asking myself have they stuck to their agreed game plan which might have been to play maximum length ends with the lead on the forehand, the second on backhand and both to aim to have 2/4 deliveries per end in the head for say 3/5 ends. And individually each of these 2 players have 5/10 effective deliveries after 5 ends.

OK, we have placed a good Skip in our team. From the stand, I can see he meets mid green after end 5 and looks at the facts of all 4 bowlers deliveries as recorded by the lead. Yes you read correctly, the lead. It may be the front end team only had 2/4 bowls in the head for one end and both players have 3/10 effective deliveries so far. No doubt the Skip and third are operating at the same level but in their defence they are chasing the opposition because the front end team are currently below par.

The typical Skip will grumble and carry on.....up the Khyber...presumably to a disastrous loss. Our good Skip might see a turnaround in the next 5 ends where the 5 end score is 4/6 giving a cumulative total of 4/17, which is a marked improvement on the first 5 ends. Our other rinks notice the containment approach too, they feel encouraged.

For the ends 6-10, our front end team both score 4/10 effective deliveries and had 2/5 ends with 2/4 bowls in the head. All well and good if we keep thinking and applying ourselves so on this ideal the score for 20 ends in 5 end segments is

Ends 1-5 score 0-11, total 0-11

Ends 6-10 score 4-6, total 4-17

Ends 11-15 score 6-4, total 10-21

Ends 16-20 score 8-2, total 18-23

Which team continues the momentum? Is our team self satisfied at our effort and rapt if we lose say 20-28. Does the opposition fire up and win 11-0 in the last 5 ends as they did at the start and eventually inflict a defeat on us of 18-34, an even worse outcome than where we were after 5 ends.

Much of what occurs from ends 11-25 has to do with the capability of both Skip and third to think tactically in some of these ways

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- Keeping alert to any one member playing a hand or length better than anyone else in the rink
- Keeping alert to switching all 4 players from an unkind hand, or length,
- Taking 'A grade' risks with the third / Skip when they are playing at a 'C Grade' standard
- Poor calls such as inaccurate distance calls from jack to the nominated bowl
- Third not being quick to consider either safeguard or attacking options to suit the end
- Skip not providing any input to team mates as he is solely focused on his playing game.
- Minimizing losses per end to maybe 2 shots.

My observer position in the stand enables me to see these tactical areas as the real weakness

in the team because when we play well it just happens. But how well do we all play well. How often do the opposition ruin our fun and play as well if not better.

It is at all times the third and Skip need to be switched on, on red alert and not coasting because we are in front. When we are doing well someone has to be watchful that the winning standard is maintained.

When we have this mental and tactical skill in place to contend with the opposition we can lift performance to a level where it just simply happens.....that level of playing well.

**POSTSCRIPT**

I played recently with a traditional Skip who, though pleasant, and is a good player who never gave much in the way of instruction, never showed adventure, never gave any insight tactically, played those up in the head shots (which have a knack of keeping going beyond the head) rather than the discipline draw. Fortunately we had a third who assisted we two team mates with advice, tactical options, preferred length and his input in effect won us the game. And still the Skip simply was there 'to play the game expecting to win'. Amazing. As a team we won, he probably thinks he won it for us. Bowls needs to exchange 'he' for 'we' as part of understanding what team is all about.