

Lachlan Tighe.....Talking tactically
Website Coaching Column

(column 199, October 2006 a view on bowls coaching)

TACTICAL DEVELOPMENT IN BOWLS

The article to follow was written by me 22/8/1995 and yet in principle eleven years on the thrust still applies. Though the solutions and applications from national to club level are still not introduced by our associations. Over those years I have had to look beyond my sport, generally, to get the answers. If anything when listening to the bowls fraternity, many in the sport abhor some of the recent 'practices' introduced to the Australian squad by the BA High Performance group.

Now to the article.

'...Most bowlers turn up at the green with no particular purpose in mind other than to play well and win. One of the most frequently asked questions I pose to myself is how do the elite bowlers always seem to know which shot / delivery to play. Experience is the answer. However is it the best experience that they apply?

The role of the coach is to teach the player how to gain that elite experience without having to take the same level of time / years that our current elite player took to be where they are today. A coach provides the short cuts for players to learn about the skill levels that may take them more quickly to the elite level.

Now where in our coaches manual is there the answer or guideline to develop that player keen enough to seek to be an elite player. How for instance would I as a coach teach the bowler to react instinctively to a certain head setting; how do I recreate and simulate heads to teach tactical habits; how do I get players to define pressure and then to conduct programs for the player to learn how to cope with it ?

I certainly don't get such resources when I re accredit as a coach.

Tactical questions come early in the experience of all bowlers. How do I improve my delivery? How do I read the progress of a game ? How do I beat someone even though I am bowling reasonably OK? How do I acquire variation in my game ? How do I learn the skill to continue after beating a name player in an earlier round?

The place to learn these skills is the training track. The coach is the catalyst for the preparation of a player to be better technically, and, better prepared for competition which includes both a mental and a tactical skill program.

Tactics are the essence of skill development. This statement was made by the head coach for squash from the Institute of Sport. In supporting this, I think that we have a game plan which forms the basis of our tactical ploy for the event. But to have the plan we need to ensure we train the player to have the skill to employ the plan. I set out to develop the ability of the bowler to execute the delivery necessary for each and every shot. And the mat movements required to provide the range of options for the delivery. With that knowledge the bowler and coach can see the tactical options that go from the track to the competition green.

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The need of the keen bowler will heighten where they choose to be good at and succeed in singles, pairs, triples and fours. Tactics and approaches will differ as per the format as you continue to add a new personality to the team games formats.

Winning is what all bowlers are about. Three simple tactical approaches I take into coaching / training and then to apply for the game for example are these

- Knowing when and how to attack and defend
- Being disciplined to keep losses per end to a minimum
- Control of the game is initiated by the length which is set by your jack delivery.

Practising tactical habits is a must in training. Simply stated we react as we have prepared. In order to best learn, we have to train by repetition.

How many times have you watched a bowler play a shot and grimaced when it is obvious that an opportunity has slipped by to either get a big score, or, to prevent the opposition get out of jail and get shot when you saw shots lost by poor judgement. Most practice sessions I am privy to are games (fours and pairs) and never simulate the tactical decision making processes.

If we coaches are not training the bowlers in a variety of tactical approaches and game plans then these bowlers are destined for mediocrity.

What then for the future. I believe there is an urgent need for coaches to share approaches in this skill area and propose workshops for coaches be held as follows

- Tactical analysis: where we watch a game and record information about a player's shot selection, frequency of execution, and comment on various choices the bowler made
- Movement analysis: again watch a game and record observations and circumstances for various mat selection
- Technique analysis: observations on a player re delivery execution for all the shots and to note wrist, forearm, arm extension, body position and posture, weight transfer, etc
- Psychological analysis: coaches watch and record player behaviour when they are winning easily, losing badly, in a tight situation, pressure bowl required, lousy bowl delivered and verbal and body language of the observed player.'

This was the article written in 1995 pre narrow bowls, pre premier league, pre High Performance, pre coaching manuals, pre Malaysia 1998. I have to observe we have moved very little as a sport. Even when I was the inaugural HP manager for Bowls Australia there was a reluctance from that body to 'invest' in the development of all the level two coaches around the country.

However there are gems out there we can tap into for tactical knowledge and in this past month, September 2006, I have had contact with these people who are doing good things despite a lack of formal support from the sport

Bill Vynor as Allyra's coach in Wangaratta and ideas on training

Jim Yates, Mark Cowan and Chris Jardine giving input to the Victorian state team

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Nick Petrie and the one metre delivery concept
Ian Ross and game plan being to win 25 shots
Jack and Lorraine with their regional academy in Gippsland
Clark and 'JR' introducing tactical programs at Lalor
Russ Saunders and coaches also doing same at Burden Park
Geoff Tulloch and his coaches at Montmorency doing likewise
Craig Fox presenting at Burwood on minimizing losses
Kristy Odgers and tag versus tunnelball as our state juniors training session
Rowan Sharp program he called full house using 4 deliveries
Maryanne Canute and her side collecting team statistics following competition
'Bear' at Richmond driving a better approach for the club from the selectors

view

Billy, Howard and Margaret in Auckland devising training programs
Fellow state coaches Audrey and Gay conducting tactical training at state

training

Ladies and gentlemen keep pounding as you can see it has been eleven years long for me too going by that article.