

Lachlan Tighe...Talking Tactically Website bowls coaching column

(May 2009 column)

Professional Development, bowlers & Coaching

Thirty two (32) bowlers/ coaches from seventeen (17) clubs around Victoria paid and registered for this full day Bowls Workshop conducted last Friday in Melbourne.

Why?

Because these attendees and I as the convenor wanted

- Continuing coach education for coaches and experienced bowlers
- the need to constantly educate bowls coaches and bowlers
- To continue to develop bowlers/ coaches skills
- Perception of a demand for this type of service
- Mutual exchanges of approaches to coaching/ bowling
- forum for coaches / bowlers wanting their club pennant team performing better.

This was not an elementary coaching course; it was geared toward learning and performing better through structured and supervised training.

The Bowls Workshop program covered three topics

- Coaching large groups of bowlers with all skill levels in the club;
- coaching specifically a pennant or elite team.
- Individual bowler or singles competition coaching

Within the Henselite showbag given to registrants was

- the 54 page Bowls Workshop Manual with thirty six (36) illustrated training diagrams and accompanying coaching articles;
- a strategic coaching plan template for clubs to use to plan, use and measure the role of their newly appointed head coach;
- copy of the next month Henselite...on line delivery coaching column featuring a diagram of a bowls head and the prospective fifteen (15) delivery choices available to the skip for his next delivery (www.henselite.com.au)

Each Topic we started with a different bowls warm up routine. Part of the winning formula in sport includes the idea of warming up. If you have any thoughts of reaching further heights in bowls then prepare to introduce a bowls warm up routine before moving into a full session of training.

The concept shown to attendees was a routine undertaken to commence the bowler's intense training session, warming you up technically, mentally and physically.

A note in passing, if your bowling is stagnating and you earnestly want to continue improving, don't we all, maybe now is the time to audit that technical proficiency of your delivery.

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Organisation – groups of bowlers, coaching

This one hour session contained a

Warm up routine

Circuit concept use of the full green- 7 stations

Four skill drills Draw/ add yard/ yard over/ drive

Finished with a fun activity

Organisation – pennant bowlers, coaching

This second one hour practical session included a

Warm up routine called caterpillar (consecutive bowls resting on original delivery)

The session then used the full green with

Mat on each rink a few metres apart – ‘back of the queue’ handicap – and at varying lengths

Skip directions – two attendees showed their ‘ideal’ lead position bowls , for everyone to attempt

Skip directions – two attendees showed their ‘ideal’ 2nds position bowls, for everyone to attempt

Back end team (3rd & skip) – head which required the jack to be drawn onto to hide it from the opponent working in pairs over the entire green

Finish with fun having group compete in a nearest the ditch – 2 deliveries at 2 lengths.

Lunch Discussion

While indulging in a light bite, discussion continued and the topics were

how to gauge pennant performance

objectives of side/ rink /each player position

measures of side/ rink /each player position

There was a majority view from attendees that measuring technical skill and competition performance are the approaches to take on now to compete in the future as it was apparent in other sport and in business.

Postscript Comment:

1. Coincidentally, after the Bowls Workshop that night, I read this comment about Brett Kirk, the Sydney Swans AFL footballer citing his approach going back 12 years to his teenage days

...Brett though a cheeky kid developed some earnest routines as a junior; before matches he would compose a checklist of personal expectations. After that game he would review it and give himself a mark out of ten (10) for each category. His family instruction was that the kids never follow the pack simply for following the pack’s sake.

2 A friend and former work colleague was a Skills Acquisition expert (who I used frequently in my bowls coaching) and professional adviser to the North Melbourne Football club (‘Kangaroos’) in the AFL during their successful period of the 1990s; he

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used tell me that based on statistical evidence whenever the Kangaroos were in front at three quarter time, they would win. He knew that position based on fact. Those elite footballers knew that based on emotion and fact.

3. Bowls has had people who knew that too. In 2002 Ian Schuback came over to me at Manchester, UK, prior to the Games and lamented how all the bowlers out there on the greens kept no record of their performances. With glee, I corrected Ian ('Shooney') because the Malaysians, minnows at the time in bowls, kept records both in training and in competition. Six years on the Malaysians as the best in the world all keep records of performance.

To those of you aspiring to elite level bowls, move on, start the honesty system that applies to self, measure yourself each performance in training and games for your long term benefit. It should be part of your development in bowls too.

Afternoon format

We were washed out and with any good 'Game Plan' in competitive bowls, we changed to suit the circumstance to perform at our best. We introduced a wet weather session. Had we conducted the afternoon practical session on coaching individuals it would have been as follow

Organisation - individuals/ singles coaching

A typical training session would include

Warm up / skill rating/ tactical skill/ mental skill / modified game

Finish with fun

Modified Game examples might

All deliveries on one hand for one player against an opponent

Full house where each of the four deliveries has to be different

Limit to 2 bowls for one player against a player with 4 deliveries

The topics eventually covered in the Wet Weather discussion forum were

Game plans

Modified games and their application in training

Club culture and the difficulty as a coach

Tactical training

A former advisor of mine maintained that players and certainly skips have to know whether a bowler is playing at his A Game level, the B Games level or the C Game level and use the player accordingly while that bowler is in the level of performance.

That level of tactical awareness and mental skill is rare in bowls currently.

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Summary of program: conclusion

All attendees were asked the question

What one thing have you learnt from this Bowls Workshop?

Hearing the responses last Friday, I recalled these were the frequent answers

- measuring technical skill and competition performance was a must for clubs and future bowlers
- game plans help players know their jobs
- training has to be planned
- training can be fun and yet still demanding
- the coach needs to impose themselves on the training group of bowlers
- club committees need to better understand what a head coach could do for their players
- more of these Bowls Workshops are necessary
- the Bowls Workshop was value for the registration fee
- Bowls Workshop manual was very helpful and professional published
- State associations should be hosting these workshops, and regularly
- Interestingly our coach today never rolled a bowl, simply managed the conduct of the overall Bowls Workshop.

Thanks to Henselite for sponsoring the Bowls Workshop, the manual publication and the attendance of the four colleagues from Marysville bowls club, the scene of that recent fire tragedy.

This Bowls Workshop report features as this month's coaching column and shall be despatched to various bowls associations for their consideration as host bodies for future programs, especially as attendees have a preparedness to pay while programs are conducted professionally.

To all who attended thank you for as convenor I learnt again more today than I knew yesterday which knowledge I hope to be able to share with Bowls Jersey when I am over there in September.