

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

(May 2008 column)

Club Pennant Performances – a Reality

I am surprised to be writing on this topic choice for this column as it comes because I had numerous clubs contact me this past month to discuss club coaching, specifically to ask what their club has to do to go another level higher in pennant competition.

In all cases, no exception, the discussion shows to me the naivety of the representatives as keen bowlers. It comes through in these discussions that they believe there are sufficient people at their club with the same mindset for top sides to gain promotion. Invariably by the time I finished the discussion, apart from wanting to belt me in the face, these club representatives realized that in fact there was not a cluster of 16 bowlers with the level of commitment that I proposed for success and in fact these bowlers talking to me were in the minority.

Rather than leave these spokesmen flat and deflated, I wrote out a guideline for them to take back to their respective clubs. One size cap does not fit all. But you should ensure you have all the parties steering the same way. When you jump in the ‘bowls car’ make sure you know the driver knows where we are going (the Club) and you have faith in the driver for their sensible driving (the selectors). Because then it is one in all in.

Some Club members, keen ones such as those coming to meet me on the topic, show irritation in not seeing other members take top pennant seriously, why they say? Possibly, because these keen bowlers are unable to see that for other members it is not that important for the club /members. Is the Club the dog or the tail in this regard, or, are the keen bowlers really the tail of the dog.

GUIDELINE FOR SOLUTION

What is important for the Club & all the Members to consider in this order below: an acknowledgement on

- 1 Aims of the Club, competitively
- 2 Aims of the Top two sides in pennant
- 3 Aims of each player
- 4 Previous approach of the Club / players to top side pennant
- 5 Future approach required to foster success

Sample responses I expect for the five important statements include

1 THE CLUB COMMITTEE AIM TO

- Set out objectives / goal for what we would expect to achieve for the top two sides
- Reinforce to Club members that our top two sides are our ‘flagship’ sides
- Have the Club (members concerned) agree to the pennant objectives
- Expect, even demand, that the Selection committee make decisions pertinent to the top two sides that reinforce the agreed objectives
- Secure a coach to conduct formal training and game review for the top two sides
- Expect compulsory training every Tuesday 5-6.30.pm & Thursday nights with specialised and supervised sessions

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- season planning, specifically ensuring no club games are permitted to be organised beyond 5pm on Tues/ Thurs for the top side players
- form a leadership group for top two sides who are responsible for – culture, standards, communications & team selection, team plan, skills training plus recruitment, invitees into squad
- Pre Season plans and programs involving prospects for the top teams scheduled over winter and definitely from August

2 *THE TOP TWO TEAMS AIM TO*****

- Win the competition for each of the top two sides for promotion next season into the higher pennant level
- acknowledge establishment of a leadership group by the club for the teams
- set agreed objectives, roles for each position in a team
- set agreed team goals
- set agreed team plans
- commitment to review progress of top team after every 5 rounds of pennant

3 *AS A PLAYER IN THE TOP TEAMS I AIM TO*****

- Be aware of my contribution in any Top team position I am selected
- Regularly attend Training conducted with team members by the coach on prescribed pennant training nights, Tuesdays & Thursdays 5-6.30pm as an indication of my commitment
- Abide by the agreed role of the position in which I am selected
- Abide by a commitment to team game plan and goals
- Agree to not arrange club games that clash with team training, Tues / Thurs
- Be prepared to improve my skills under supervised coaching to contribute to the team
- Show by example I am part of the ‘*win*’ teams prepared to work for Club success

4 *PREVIOUS APPROACH OF THE CLUB*****

- records on Pennant performance previous 2 seasons
- committee direction
- Club Leadership
- Selectors role in achieving club direction
- Skips roles beyond the day
- Recruitment for top sides
- Fostering new blood
- Player performances- recorded, rated
- Player motivation –to aspire to top sides

5 *FUTURE APPROACH REQUIRED FOR SUCCESS*****

- Review of Section 4. ‘Previous Approach’ to reinforce what remains relevant, to alter what is necessary for improved performance.
- Player Preparation- what regular pennant finals teams seem to do

‘Winning ways’

1 comes pre game by planning and preparing

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- 2 with Goals set by all for all
- 3 Training skills and (mental) preparation
4. Game Plans for the side, rink teams
- 5 Analysing our effort/ performance each game
- 6 learning and taking it back into training
.....how do we get to that the NEXT level of performance. Simple, by having measurable objectives for each player, each rink in the top two sides.
And training to acquire that higher level of skill.

TOP SIDES PLAYERS WORKSHOP

Clubs who are taking competition seriously at the top side level may want to gauge the feeling and commitment level of their best players by hosting a workshop. It could be proposed as an idea to get support / commitment from the expected group of players

Of those who are invited to attend, including prospective recruits to these top sides, it becomes important to target the regular top side players who say nothing publicly in such forums, yet are good enough to be eligible members of the top team- rationale for my comment, to get them to contribute: passive members are passengers – sort them out early.

Questions the Club committee might ask these invited personnel could include

- What is one thing you are going to do better this year
- What is one thing you expect the top team (mates) to do better this year
- Do you see yourself as leadership, explain
- Why would we select you as a top skip
- Apart from an obvious member, who are two other club leaders, explain
- Explain your idea of a game plan
- Selection- issues, ideal skip, ideal third
- Skips chosen on leadership, discuss
- Do you believe there is value in training collectively, explain whether yes/ no
- Why don't you seek structured training (previously)
- What skill level is required to get to the next pennant level
- If you do not know what that skill level is, why not
- Do you want to be in the '*win*' sides/ working at their game or the '*fun*' sides who expect to win yet do little as team members to enable us to win at these top side higher levels

The Club (committee) has to be convinced it wants to succeed or progress and once affirmed, then selectors, top Skips and the players concerned have to go with the flow, or, watch with interest those bowlers in the club who accept the challenge to take the Club competitively further.