

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

(February 2008 column)

‘EFFECTIVE TEAMS = WINNING TEAMS’

Winning a major (teams) event is a hard slog. It probably requires 5-6 successive early round victories. All against quality opposition.

Somewhere in those 5-6 rounds one or all of the team is going to ‘go walkies’, lose confidence, have a mini slump. What to do!!! Cry, scream, spit it – not much help except to clear the throat.

No, a reversion back to what we agreed to do as team members accepting the roles we understood and agreed to beforehand, the roles we trained for in preparation for giving ourselves the best chance to succeed, subject to some opponents being ‘unfriendly’ and beating us.

Knowing how good you are by systematic measures of both skill and performances, and, how good you need to be as an individual member and a team to be effective, to be in the elite winners stall more frequently than most bowlers. I asked a good young bowler to nominate his best and weakest delivery in his game: took him a while to respond and even then hesitantly; do you know your answer to that question? You should, and know it immediately.

If I have thrown you by that level of effort you are not likely to be a major threat to the winners. That’s OK. You should just enjoy going to the Australian Open, or being in pennant rounds. Because I believe any success you have will be a one off effort and enough to keep you bending like Beckham at the bar for fellow ‘could a beers’.

All I will say is the game of bowls is not what is occurring in elite bowls competition anymore. In a few short years since 2002, with Malaysia’s ascendancy and professional approach to coaching and competition preparation, Australia and NZ have joined with Malaysia to be leaders in bowls professionalism at national levels to compete to win bowls events. Unlike other bowlers, these representatives no longer come to ‘play bowls’. The rest of use wee bowlers do that, play bowls.

Look closely at those who end up as quarter finalists, or better, in the 2008 Australian Open and there is a good chance their teams in pairs and triples combine well to be effective. Could they do better. Answer – always.

In these past years coaching elite squads and players in three countries, my attempts to introduce an improved mode of operation for an effective team approach has had minimal success. My fault not winning the hearts and minds of many of these teams, perhaps. Where I succeeded in convincing the team, they won Gold.

One proposition I liked was this one to be an *effective team*

- Goals and Plans- everyone in the team knows and has contributed to the team goals and their role in the team, and we plan to win not ‘gunna win’

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- Leadership – taken, accepted, and there are standards and there is an environment conducive to a success culture set by the coach and the best players
- Training- it is regular it is also a support situation and helps the player to work on strengths and weaknesses and skill development
- Attitude - a preparedness to commit and to be done equally by ALL team members
- Communication –lots of listening and exchanges and is equally shared and valued and thus is open (snipers beware, go elsewhere)
- Rapport – reflected by trust, emotional support, intelligence, norms, standards and peers who understand the value of all this, mutual belief
- Recognition – reward effort and endeavour, reward individuals, so what happens all team members know that sometime they will get the accolades.

Effective teams don't have, or set, false expectations as they individually and collectively have a common attitude, trained as such together, to know who does what, who has responsibility, who takes responsibility.

A very capable name player in Victoria told my Elbows squad member ('Pappa') that he could not do what he saw Pappa doing in recording his performance. As I said to Pappa that is why that player is very capable but not a really elite national level player.

Again another Elbows squad member (Deno) upon hearing disruptive and disputed communication among opposition team members quietly turned and said to me these guys lack (the right) attitude necessary for good teams. Deno knew as he understands the meaning of an effective team.

During February 2008 wherever you are in team formats for bowls events, take note of the processes and behaviours of the finalists and the winners. Effective!