

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

*Lawnbowls com.au/weeklycolumn*

(edition 176, February 2006 a chapter from my book draft  
'Winning Gold: a measure of coaching performance')

### CHAPTER NINE 'TEAM' FACTORS

#### Storytime

'Triples team'

It is early 2005 and I think our sport still obstructs team factors by its very competitive structure.

In my experience singles players often get selected in elite teams, a contradiction in itself.

And further observation shows me that most elite teams (of four) are made up of bowlers who generally are the skip of their normal team – another problem given there are three other specifically skilled playing positions in a fours team.

Take this example where three players approach me to coach them for a profile triples event. In the very first training session, two of the team suggest to me that the skip ought be changed and that I should be the one to so advise.

Now they chose the trio yet here they are in the first session struggling to accept their own assigned playing positions.

It may be a triples team but is it a true 'TEAM' ?

'T.E.A.M.'

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The 'TEAM' principle is an acronym for  
'TEAM' = Together Each of us Achieves More

My first trial of this approach was undertaken at my bowls club, Kew Heights, in 2001. I was asked as a team member to talk to the boys before heading out to compete in Premier League.

At that time the message had a hollow sound for the boys.

However I reintroduced it over in Malaysia in 2002, the beauty of being the national coach.

Upon my return in 2003 I again was at Kew Heights though this time as the coach. The approach was implemented and with success this time.

And, my own squad adheres to the approach because they understand it.

- Our TEAM...leads /. Seconds are a team combination determined to set up the play
- Our TEAM...thirds/ skips form the second team combination to build on the good work of the first team
- Our TEAM... has twice as many teams (8 above) as any opposition because we have a two team approach, therefore our approach is twice as good as anyone
- Our TEAM ...has twice as many deliveries as any opposition as we see our delivery before we execute our delivery, therefore our approach is twice as good as anyone
- Our TEAM...is a team full of spirit

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- Our TEAM...is a team of winners and grinders
- Our TEAM ...is a great team and a GREAT TEAM
  - Expects to win
  - Works hard at winning
- Our TEAM ...are winners, grinders and singers
  - And we can win the next European song competition (if only we knew the words)
- Go .... 'TEAM'

**COHESION, COMMITMENT, CONFLICT**

The commentary above is my light hearted way of bonding a team.

But it is vital for any team, be it pairs triples or fours, to work harmoniously to achieve their desired mutual goal. Is there a mutual goal !!!

Teams comprise people and as we choose teams (of people) for either weekly competition, or months in advance for international competition, the dramas that unfold with conflict, commitment and cohesion will appear and test to the limit the principles of 'TEAM'

If a successful team is an outcome of an effective team, how do each of you in that team create an EFFECTIVE team environment

What is it meant to be effective

Can it be described by what it does (as a team)

How it behaves and accepts in behaviour of each individual member of the team

Subscribes to as values for each and all team members

What then is meant by the term, Values. Elite athletes are asked to do this analysis all the time.

We in bowls struggle to accept our obligation to act like other (elite) performers, either as the player or as a coach. So I provide what I think are factors for the described values

- Identify how we will go about things in the bowls team
- For the Values to work they must be shared, agreed to by each and every member of the team
- Determine behaviour
- What behaviour / attitude will be acceptable for an individuals identity
- And, for them as people to retain individuality whilst interacting in the team
- The team goals as set by the team members
- And, the individuals goals as part of the team, note this
- Review of goals and values is a priority

**SUPPORT TEAMS**

Teams go beyond the players.

The team at elite level has to include sports science support staff, coaches, managers, selectors and national management.

Whenever we talk teams in sport we only think of the player or bowler. For we in bowls I want to push further, beyond that prime team.

If we referred to the bowler(s) as the VISIBLE team and the sports science support staff, coaches, managers, selectors and national management as the INVISIBLE team, it might show, that

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if any member of the dual team falls down in providing the level of excellence (service) needed to win, then members of the visible team, the players, will visibly lose, or face, the contest without optimal preparation and support for that important contest.

It is amazing that if you seek out good people, whatever the nationality and culture, you will find them in abundance. One of the wise men for Malaysia was fortunately both a born leader and our team manager for the Asian Games in the Philippines.

In my early period after arrival in Malaysia, the bowls association hosted a camp for the purpose of team building.

I recall this man, Nik, giving a brief presentation and the words that he uttered rang like the bells of Notre Dame ‘...being involved is not being committed’.

In a later setting he again made a statement which I borrowed and used for reinforcement of the players commitment and attitude – ‘...if you want to be on the bus (for the Manchester Games) look in the mirror and not out the window, or else you won’t stay on the bus’.

In Orlick’s book on excellence (ch 17) he referred to the ‘T.E.A.M.’ factors to quote: ‘...in the end, it is upon the quality and commitment of individuals that all (teams) movement depend.

Harmony can be massaged and managed’ – the mood of every bowler in a team has a direct effect on their performance and generally positive interaction and feedback with players, coaches, support people reinforces that end.

‘Conversely negative perceptions, misconceptions and feedback help to destroy harmony, if it ever existed in the team’.

‘Just by being together – whether in gym, training, competition social settings, functions – does not ensure an increased mutual liking or harmony within the team’.

‘For the harmony to start, prosper, and be maintained, the bowlers have to be linked interdependently so that they (must ) rely on one another and thus help one another’.

‘Harmony grows most when they listen to one another, consider one another, accept the differences and reciprocate assistance’.

A lot of this is influenced via communication. Openness in communication is paramount...it helps both prevent and solve problems.

Non or poor communication may be the cause of a lack of awareness or even a misinterpretation of intention.

It is pretty difficult to be responsive to another bowls team mate if you have no idea of what his / her feelings and thoughts are. It is difficult to respect a teammates view if you do not understand what it is or how he came to it in the first place.

So communication is to be honest, and, immediate.

NOW ! At the first sign of confusion or conflict, anger, annoyance, or any of those solve the problem while it is small, not waiting till it has grown out of proportion.

An example could be where a coach and selector tell a player he is in a team for 3 weeks, yet after one poor performance that player is dropped, abandoned. What is that saying about the team and the team leadership.

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As a team of bowlers

- you want to excel personally and collectively
- help others by sharing knowledge
- encourage one another for trying to communicate
- physical skill is not enough at the top level your mind and emotion need to be on song too and mates in teams is what teammates are

But are most members of teams in this mindset ? The short answer, no.

**Team Goals, Values**

I wrote an article in April 2005 which I paraphrase below on EFFECTIVE teams

‘...Last week I enjoyed a luncheon discussion with state Rugby coaches and included a few Elbows bowls squad members, and, two sports scientists with experience servicing national teams. The purpose for the discussion was to share views on team spirit and how to instill team morale. I reckon the nine of us who sat chewing the fat gained a lot from this ‘intellectual cross training’ session, pity the red was over priced.

So why was I chuffed about the session?

Apart from the fact that we represented about four (team) sports, it was the exchange of views from different perspectives finding common themes and ground that made it so worthwhile and here is an attempt to summarise the contributions.

Views on what make for an EFFECTIVE team

- Goals and Plans- everyone knows and has contributed to the team goals and their role in the team, and we plan to win, not ‘gunna win’
- Leadership – is in evidence and there are standards, and there is an environment conducive to a success culture, and most probably it is set by the coach, and, the best players
- Training- given 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 – is done well in this setting, 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 (in web column #133 written during 2005 where I mentioned speaking to a premier league club and one theme I used was mutual belief, which is what this point probably is about)
- Recognition – reward effort and endeavour, reward individuals, so what happens all team members know that sometime they will get the accolade.

With all of the above it all stems around the quality of the leadership, which appears to be an issue for its absence around the bowls traps as I view it.

A few days later I was offered the position of state coach for the Victorian ladies (VLBA) to take effect on June 1 2005.

My first reaction was to draft a state team Mission or Team Values statement as a guide for discussion and input from players.

I wanted players to own their destiny. And, break new ground as such a statement did not previously exist. The true importance is the involvement of the squad in determining their future.

Victorian State Ladies Squad  
Goal & Mission– 2005, draft only

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we acknowledge and agree that as squad members –  
Victoria and all its teams strive to be the best in competition and as a model competitive state  
we have a responsibility to be role models as elite players and of professionalism for our  
sport

professionalism is detected by us and others by

- having pride in our selection, our team mates and our appearance
- priority to the commitment (s) of the squad
- preparing, planning & training with and as a squad member
- competing individually and as a team member to the best of our ability at all times
- leadership within our group
- the goals I/ we set and strive to achieve

by my / our attitude

a commitment to continue to improve our individual and squad technical, fitness, mental and  
tactical skills

we support, respect & encourage all current and prospective squad members who in turn will  
be team mates competing for our state

we cannot control selection, however we can control our focus on being better bowlers and  
team members

we are allowed to make mistakes in competition and we will enjoy the pride of being squad  
members

Practically, such a discussion has not yet occurred as it is a bit premature too 'load' the ladies  
with all this verbiage. However, one I feel they are accustomed to my contribution and they  
feel I have gained credence with them as a team, then I will reissue the above draft as a  
guideline for discussion.

Queensland ladies had a similar approach a few years earlier which gave me clues as  
to the direction I could take the team. Disappointed now to hear that the hierarchy in  
Queensland do not see the need for a state coach, heaven forbid.