

THINK ABOUT IT – PART 4 BERNIE, THE BOLT PLEASE In the previous article, the earlier bowls of an end were the main topic with the emphasis on building a head. You don't need to get shot with every bowl that is played but, at some point in the end, you will want to try for a winning bowl. You will want to play the Golden Shot. Hence, the title of this piece. For the younger bowlers out there, you may need to google it. The point in the end at which you will turn your mind to finding the Golden Shot is mainly dictated by how much potential the opposition has to better your shot and can be summarised by the 3 key factors: 1. Consistency of the mat 2. Quality of the opposition 3. The number of bowls left for your opponent. On good mats against good players the most important of these is point 3. You probably shouldn't need to be too concerned about which team is holding shot until your opponent has 3 bowls left to play. Of course, it is comforting to be holding the shot at this stage but, if you are not, this is the moment to concentrate on winning the end. So, in singles and 2 wood pairs games, you might even be playing the Golden Shot with your first bowl whereas in a fours game, it will be down to the number three and skip to go for it.

BECAUSE IT'S WORTH IT Sometimes the shot or shots you are thinking of playing carry an element of risk. But the rewards may be such that it's a risk worth taking particularly if you are behind in the game and the ends are running out. In deciding which shot to play, think about the risk to reward ratio. Perhaps even put some numbers into your deliberations. Here are some examples: a) Your opponent is holding 1 shot. You have a possible draw for shot but an opposing bowl is just short and there is a good chance it could get knocked up for another shot dropped. However, drawing shot would be the equivalent of a 2 shot swing on the current position. Risk = -1 (1 down to 2 down), Reward = +2 (1 down to 1 up) b) You are holding shot with your bowl touching the jack. There is room to draw another but any gentle contact on the bowl could give shot away. This time the swing is 2 shots the other way. Risk = -2 (1 up to 1 down), Reward = +1 (1 up to 2 up) c) You hold second shot and your opponent has 3 third placed bowls as well as holding shot. There is a clear shot to push the shot holding bowl away and stay for 2 shots. The risk is that you take your own bowl out with a weighted shot. In that case, you will drop 4 shots or 3 more than if you do nothing. Risk = -3 (1 down to 4 down), Reward = +3 (1 down to 2 up) The decision to take on the risk should not be based solely on these numbers. The biggest factor is the state of the game and whether you need to take a risk. But, by adding a little arithmetic to the decision-making process, it might just help you to take a deep breath and make a rational decision.

REDUCING THE RISK Too often, short mat bowlers only visualise the perfect shot. Sometimes less than perfection will get the result you want and can reduce the likelihood of an unfavourable outcome. When you are trying to draw shot, for instance, remember that you don't need to finish right on top of the jack. You only need to finish closer than your opponent's nearest bowl. Look at example (a) above. How close to the jack is the shot bowl? Is it possible to finish 3 inches away on a jack high length and still get shot? If so, you might be able to play the drawing shot slightly tight or play on the other hand, avoiding contact with the short

way the head is building, think about disturbing it before your last bowl. Then, if it doesn't go well, you have a chance to recover the situation.

GOOD ENOUGH IS GOOD ENOUGH As stated above, you do not always need to draw the perfect toucher to win an end. You just need for your bowl to finish nearer the jack than your opponent's nearest. A classic perfectionist's shot is when the jack has been played into the ditch and you are a few shots down. The temptation is to try to draw as close to the ditch as possible. It looks great to the spectators but you risk overdoing it and losing your bowl. Say, for example, that the opposing shot bowl is 2 feet short of the ditch. If you draw to match that bowl and are an inch beyond it, you will get shot. If you are an inch short of your objective, you will have a good second bowl. Much safer than trying to make the highlights on Match of the Day.

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