

Some great information from Brian. Thank you

THINK ABOUT IT – PART 1

SHORT MAT TACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Have you ever come off the mat and thought “I don’t know how we lost that? We played better than they did and still lost!” It could be that your technique and execution were good but your tactics were wrong.

There is no magical solution or a single tactic that is guaranteed to make you a champion. Your winning tactics may be different to other players/teams because it will depend on your own and your teammates’ capabilities, the mat conditions and, of course, your opponents. There is a famous military saying – “War is a democracy. The enemy gets a vote as well.” In short mat terms that means that whatever strategy you come up with, the opposition will respond with their own.

This should not stop you putting together a game plan but one which has flexibility built in. To help you here are a number of things for you to consider.

HOW DO YOU WIN A GAME OF BOWLS?

It really is as simple as you think. You just need to score more shots than your opponents.

HOW MANY ENDS DO YOU NEED TO WIN?

You don’t need to win more ends than your opposition. You just need to score enough shots on the ends you win to exceed the number of shots lost on the ones you lose. For example, in an 11-end game of fours, if you were to score 2 shots each time you win an end and drop just 1 shot each time you lose an end, you only need to score on 4 ends to win.

LOST ENDS ARE AS IMPORTANT AS THE ONES YOU WIN

In 3 years as county statistician I kept a record of every end played in all games in all county matches. That is a lot of games. Not once in that time did a player/team on either side win all of the ends in their game. So, you need to accept that you will lose some ends. When losing an end, you should try to limit the damage. In contrast, in winning ends you want to maximise your score. To win consistently you need a good balance of attacking and defensive play.

KNOW THYSELF AND ASSESS YOUR OPPOSITION

We all do it. We look at who we have been drawn against and we think “Crikey (or words to that effect), this will be tough” or “We really should beat this lot”. When you are playing someone you know, be honest about your relative abilities because that should be a significant factor in deciding your approach.

If you were drawn against the world champions, would you rather play them over 3 or 21 ends? Of course, your chance of winning is better in the shorter game. When playing superior opposition, you need to try to shorten the game as much as possible. You do that by preventing them getting an early lead. If, for example, you were drawing with 3 ends to go you have effectively reduced the game to just those 3 ends. To achieve that, you need to stop them making any significant scores on the ends you lose. You need to know how to play defensively.

Conversely, if you are playing lesser opposition, you want to make the game longer. In this case you play in a more attacking

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