

## **DEFENSIVE PLAY**

When playing defensively you should start an end with the intention of not dropping more than 1 shot. So, what are the most likely ways in which your opponent can make a significant score?

They could simply outdraw you and finish with more bowls nearer the jack than yours. To prevent this, in the early part of the end try to get a good second bowl. Select the shot which gives your team the best chance of getting second shot even if it is on a hand or with a weight which can't possibly get the shot.

They might take out your nearest bowl. Counter this by trying to get 2 seconds preferably with some separation between them so that they can't both be removed with a weighted bowl.

They could move the jack to a group of their bowls. Watch for this danger building and try to cover it. In short mat bowls the jack gets moved frequently and the higher standard you play at and the better surfaces you play on the more likely it is. The jack does not move forward so bowls that are past the jack are always of value.

If the head is building up against you and you have a player in your team who can accurately play weight you might ask them to play a bowl to remove 1 or more opposition bowls and reduce the possible count. But beware of the risk in playing weight if you have only 1 of your own bowls in the head. No matter how unlikely it looks that your bowl could go out, bowls move in mysterious ways and an unlucky glance or plant could remove your best chance of restricting the score.

You do not need to get the shot with every bowl. It doesn't matter who is holding shot until the end is complete. When playing defensively, you really don't need to try to get the shot until the latest stages of an end, probably the second or third last bowl.

## **OFFENSIVE PLAY**

When looking to play with a more attacking style you should start an end looking to score at least 2 shots.

Start by drawing close to the jack but preferably 6 inches through rather than jack high. If your opponent can't match your drawing ability you should build a scoring opportunity.

If your opponent does draw a bowl close, look to play it away with a little more than drawing weight so that your bowls stays in the head.

If the opportunity arises. Move the jack to a more advantageous position.

Assess the risk and reward of your shot selection. Early in the game you can perhaps take on the slightly riskier shot in order to build an early lead.

You should look to get the shot slightly earlier in the end than when playing defensively, say on the third to fourth last bowl of the end.

## **CHANGE SOMETHING**

You went into the game with a cunning plan but, for some reason, it hasn't worked. The opposition are winning and you need to change something. When the game is going against you, you will often look back at the ends and see that they followed a similar pattern. You need to break that pattern and here are some of the ways you can try:

Change the length of the jack. This is an obvious thing to do but you need to win an end before you can do that.

Change the way the head builds. If your lead has been bowling consistently down one side of the mat, ask them to try the other hand. This can alter the area in which the opening bowls come to rest.

Change the position of your players in the team. The change doesn't have to be permanent. Sometimes just changing for one end can have a positive effect. On some difficult mats you could even have different players leading in alternating ends.

Change your style of play. If you have been playing predominantly a drawing game and you are being outdrawn, you could try playing a weighted bowl early in the end. If nothing else, this might make your opponents think they should play some positional bowls rather than keep drawing to the jack.

## **GAME MANAGEMENT**

When you have built a comfortable lead, there will come a point in the game when you should think about closing out the win. As a rough rule of thumb, if your opponents need to score 3 shots in one of the remaining ends, e.g. you are leading by 7 shots with 3 ends to play, then you should start to play in a way that covers any opportunity they may have to make that score. You don't need to win any of the last ends, just stop them scoring that 3 shots.