

5. LEFT OR RIGHT-HANDED? For most players it is easier to play a wide draw line on the backhand because you have more room to adjust your stance. Basically, your body doesn't get in the way. For some of us that is a bigger problem than others. If there is a big swinging side of the mat, right handers find it easier in one direction and left handers in the return direction.

For all short mat bowlers, playing weight is more difficult on the backhand. But, of course, a right hander's backhand is a left hander's forehand. If you have a left hander in your team, you will have more scope to play a weighted shot on either side of the mat.

6. WHAT WILL YOUR OPPONENT PLAY? Before deciding on where you want your next bowl to finish think about what your opponent is likely to play. You could place your bowl somewhere that makes their shot more difficult. Or you could finish in a spot which makes their shot less inviting. You could even play their shot before they do in order to take away a big scoring opportunity.

Is your opponent left or right-handed? The same considerations apply as the previous point. They may have different options if they bowl with the other hand to you.

7. RISK vs REWARD If you are looking at a shot with an element of risk, ask yourself "Is it worth it?" If it goes wrong, what is the damage likely to be. If it goes right, how many more shots will you score? Don't forget that, if you are holding shot and unfortunately give shot away, that is a 2 shot swing on the score-board. But, if you are holding one shot and there is a chance to take a bowl out for 5 shots, the extra 4 shots could make all the difference, particularly if you are trailing badly.

As you will have seen, if you read the earlier article on tactics, your choice may be influenced by your assessment of your opponents. The stronger the opposition, the less likely you should be to risk giving them shots.

8. WHO'S CALLING THE SHOTS? In a singles game, you are on your own. You decide what shot to play and you tell yourself how to play it. Or, in Alan Spicer's case, you tell your bowls where you want them to go. In team play, the skip is responsible for communicating the shot to the player on the mat. But the skip isn't necessarily the best reader of a head. He or she is playing in that position because the selectors think they are the optimum person to be playing the last bowls of an end. All players in a team can and should contribute to the shot selection process. If you have seen a shot that your skip may not have thought of or, maybe, you have spotted a danger that was being overlooked, you should suggest an alternative. Shot selection is a group process and this is particularly true if the shot being proposed presents a significant risk of going wrong. Get the agreement of your teammates before playing an "all or nothing" shot. Sharing the risk is good for team morale.

9. HEAD BUILDING You don't need to get shot with every bowl you play. When coaching tactics and shot selection, one of my favourite questions is "When do you write the score on the scorecard?" Of course, the answer is, when the end is complete and the score agreed. That is the only time it matters who is holding the shot. The early bowls of an end should be played in a way that reduces the chance of dropping a big score and maximises the chances of picking one up. Sometimes, when the majority of bowls have been played in an end, you need to accept that you are not going to win the end and that it's better to drop just one shot. A saving draw for second shot when you are 5 down is worth 4 shots on the score card.