

Another great and very helpful article from Brian. Thank you

THINK ABOUT IT – PART 3 THE BEGINNING OF THE END

This article focusses on the early phase of an end and the sort of shots you should consider playing. But before you even start though, you may need to make a decision about the jack.

YOU'RE A RIGHT TOSSER or at least someone in your team is because you have just won the toss. First decision is whether or not to take the jack. Ask yourself the question "Am I more likely to win the first end if I take the jack or if I give it away?"

By taking the jack, you will set the length and you will be playing the first bowl. If you have decided to do so, you must think this gives you an advantage. So, let's break the decision down into its 2 parts.

1. Setting the length. Note that you have only 3 feet of variance in the length. • Do you know something about the mat that suggests a particular length favours you or your team? • Do you and your team have a style of play which means that a short jack or a long jack is more likely to produce a positive result? • Do you know your opponents well enough to think that they might struggle on your selected length?

2. Playing the first bowl • Do you have confidence that you (in singles play) or your lead can play the first bowl to a winning spot? That, of course, depends on the ability of the player. • How likely is it that a good first bowl will remain in a scoring position for the rest of the end? This depends on the following; a. the peculiarities of the mat. Knowledge of the mat is key and you are more likely to know the mat's characteristics if you are playing at home or at a venue you play regularly. In a game where trial ends are played, this advantage may be quickly lost. Also, if the mat is difficult, remember that your first bowl will immediately show your opponent the best hand to play. b. the ability of your opposition. If you know your opponent's capabilities, you may think that they will find it hard to beat a good opening bowl so get your blow in first. c. the number of bowls your opponents have to better your opening bowl. Obviously, the more bowls they have to beat your opening bowl, the more likely they are to do so.

My suggestion is that you only take the jack in the following circumstances:

There are no trial ends.

You are playing at home against someone who is unfamiliar with the mat.

The mat is tricky enough that mat knowledge provides a distinct advantage.

Your assessment of your opponents is that you should be winning against them.

Your opponent has no more than 4 bowls to beat your opener, i.e. in singles or 2 wood pairs.

In all other cases, give the mat away and you will have the last bowl of the first end to play a telling scoring or saving shot.

I'M ALL RIGHT, JACK If you have taken the jack or you have won an end, you will need to decide where to place the jack. It sounds obvious but you will want to put the jack in a position that best suits you and your team and least favours your opponent. The centre line is only 3 feet long but that simple yard presents a tactical opportunity.

If you are playing anything other than singles, do you place the jack where your front-end player(s) prefer it or where the skip is likely to be most effective? The decision hinges around some of