

**PENULTIMATE END ARITHMETIC** The second to last end is a special case and is worthy of some discussion. Before you take an unnecessary risk in the penultimate end, just ponder this little arithmetic quirk: If you are 1 up, all square or 1 down going into the last end, you will still need to score on the final end to win the game. Of course, it is better to be 1 up than 1 down because then you can afford to drop a shot and, in knockout games, you have another chance with the extra end. But you don't have to risk all in an attempt to carry a one shot lead into the last end. As an example, in a recent tournament semi-final, my triple and I were 3 up playing the penultimate end. The opposing skip played a great shot to trail the jack to a difficult position and they were holding 4 shots. The backhand draw was very tricky and there was an option to play weight on the forehand to remove 2 of the counting bowls. Earlier in the game, without hesitation, I would have played the weighted shot to reduce the count against us. But, at this stage, taking 2 bowls out would mean we entered the final end just 1 up. If I missed the shot completely and drop a 4, we would be 1 down. Either way, we would need to score at least a single on the last end to have a chance of winning. I elected to attempt the much more difficult draw, trying for second bowl. That would have meant we were 2 up and could afford to drop a single in the last end. However, I was slightly too heavy and dropped that hefty 4 shots. And I'm sure you want to know the final outcome. Well, sadly, we didn't get the shot we needed and lost the match. In the final analysis, we didn't lose the game on the last end but by poor defensive play on the penultimate end, allowing our opponents to score those 4 shots when we should have played accurate positional bowls to remove the opportunity before it was too late. There is a favourite bowls saying which is "You learn more from losing a game than you do from winning it". Maybe, that's why I am so clever.

**NEXT TIME IN THINK ABOUT IT – PART 5** One of the characteristics of short mat bowls is the closely packed heads that we get compared to the longer format games. This often means that the direct route to the jack is not available. But it also means that there are many opportunities to take an indirect approach to getting the shot. That will be our focus in the next of this series of articles.

**THE USUAL DISCLAIMER** The ideas presented here and in the previous articles are not intended to make you change the way you play our magnificent game of short mat bowls. They are merely intended to give you something to ponder in this enforced time away from the mats. Remember, there is no right way or wrong way to play the game. The best way is the way that works for you. Stay alert. Your country need Lerts. BM

Thank you Brian for another informative article. Keep practicing everyone.

I hope you have enjoyed this issue of the newsletter. Please keep your items coming in.

Take care and keep well. Margaret x

