

## A New Year, a New Editor and a New Beginning!

2010 has come and gone, and we have new Bowls SA Standing Committees in place again for the new season, so we wish all bowlers and coaches a good bowls and coaching year. NSCC is in place with only one change. Brian Sayce from EGB has joined the committee in place of Robbie Coslett, who did a great job in the past season. The new NSCC has had their first meeting already and we are all very excited about our plans for the new coaching year. The new Coaches Reference book will be finalised soon and, after that it will be distributed at a series of Train-the-Trainer courses where districts will be empowered to implement Level 1 courses, using the new material.

### Opening the communication channels

NSCC wants to open a working communication channel with the various District Coaching Standing Committees, so we have asked all DSCC's to forward their contact details to us. Please ensure that this information is sent to our convenor [shaun@thunderbolt.co.za](mailto:shaun@thunderbolt.co.za) urgently. Each person on the NSCC has a couple of "liaison districts" – and they would like to get to know you and your committee better. See the list below and feel free to contact them for advice and guidance or just for a chat!

| NSCC Member    | District Liaison Responsibility | Cellphone    | Email  |
|----------------|---------------------------------|--------------|--|
| Shaun Kennedy  | Sables, CGBA, NW, Sedibeng      | 076 907 0200 | <a href="mailto:shaun@thunderbolt.co.za">shaun@thunderbolt.co.za</a>     |
| Jill Atkinson  | All KZN districts               | 079 030 7418 | <a href="mailto:jillatkinson@mighty.co.za">jillatkinson@mighty.co.za</a> |
| CH Dixie       | EP, WP                          | 082 220 3707 | <a href="mailto:dixie@nmmu.ac.za">dixie@nmmu.ac.za</a>                   |
| G Mackenzie    | NFS, SFS, NC                    | 082 948 9262 | <a href="mailto:gailmacwhite1@yahoo.com">gailmacwhite1@yahoo.com</a>     |
| Brian Sayce    | EGB, BGN, Mpumalanga, Limpopo   | 082 570 5884 | <a href="mailto:sayso@sherwood.za.net">sayso@sherwood.za.net</a>         |
| Merle v d Berg | Border, Boland, S Cape          | 082 693 4227 | <a href="mailto:merlof@telkomsa.net">merlof@telkomsa.net</a>             |
| Kallie Haupt   | BSA Executive                   | 082 927 3625 | <a href="mailto:haupt4@telkomsa.net">haupt4@telkomsa.net</a>             |

We would also like to increase the amount of district news included in the Coaches Forum. It will be appreciated if each district convenor either sends us their news of courses, successes etc., OR appoints someone on their committee to do so. Please send the information with or without photographs to Merle van den Berg at [merlof@telkomsa.net](mailto:merlof@telkomsa.net).

### Graham Mackenzie's Coaching Corner: Teaching the New Grip

The "old" grip was, for many players and coaches alike, complicated, confusing and contentious involving swapping the bowl from hand to hand and the exact placement of all of the fingers.

Our coaching guru, Graham McKenzie, has come up with this new method of teaching the grip, which, when tested, has proved to be much simpler and less confusing. Try it and you will be convinced. (Refer to the pictures provided.)



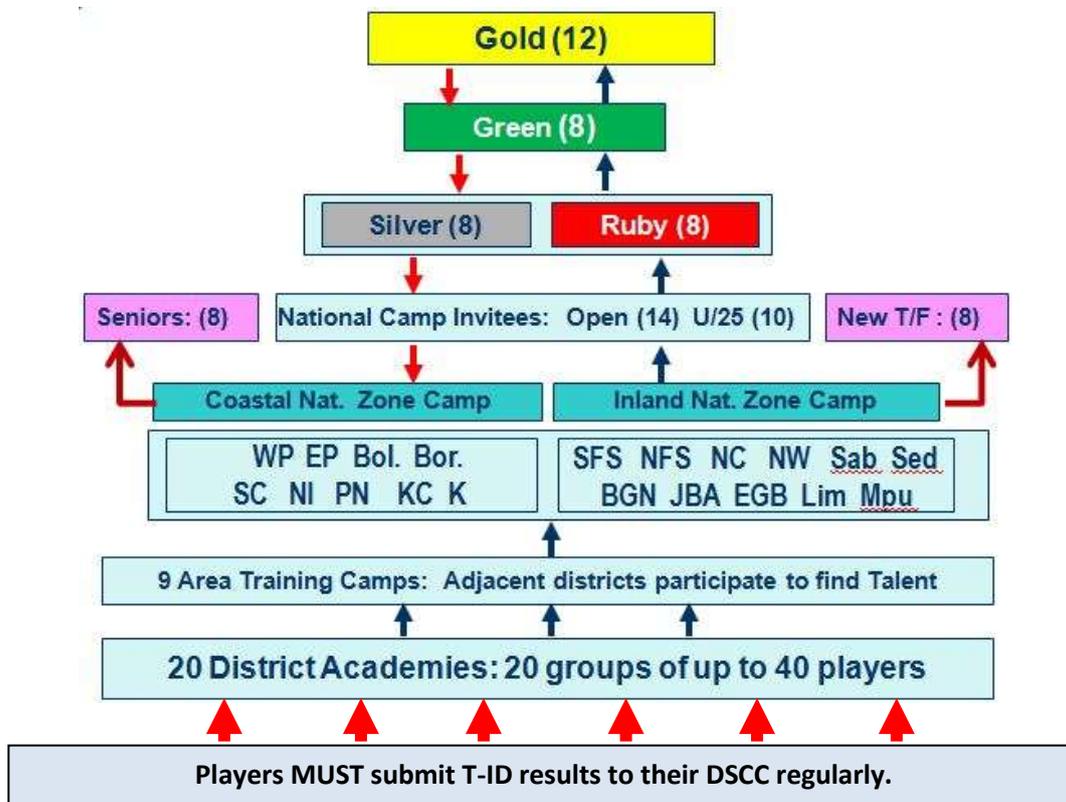
With your pupil holding the bowl on its side in their non-bowling hand, tell your pupil to simply place their thumb and forefinger comfortably on the dimples or rings. They then place their other fingers where they feel comfortable, checking that the dimples or rings are in line up the arm, with the middle finger as close to the centre of the bowl as possible.

It is as simple as that and it works every time!

## Talent Identification Programme (T-ID)

The Talent Identification program (T-ID) is now in full operation in most of the districts around the country, and it is appropriate just to remind competitive players that they can use the T-ID program to gain recognition for their playing skills and ability by submitting their T-ID results regularly to their local DSCC or the responsible NSCC liaison person.

The format for selection to the National Academy and the national squads has been defined and is illustrated in the following diagram, which shows the pathway to national selection for South African players in the future:



Once the National Academy is in receipt of the T-ID results from all the various districts (received from the Liaison Coach concerned), the results will be used to invite the best players in the relevant districts to attend the area camps that will be staged during the coming year. Their progress from there into the Regional camps will depend on their performance at Area camps. The entire process is transparent and absolutely fair, and does not prejudice nor advantage any one person, irrespective of their colour, race, creed or district.

The minimum requirement for the T-ID results has been determined for National Academy purposes as follows: In every quarter, i.e. three month period, a player must submit at least two (2) 20/20 exercises per month, plus at least one full T-ID. Some districts have implemented the T-ID as a minimum qualification for selection to their District squads and teams, and this decision can only be applauded, but it is a district decision that is independent of the National Academy. Players can request that their local district T-ID results be submitted to the Liaison Coach for their district for National Academy purposes if this is not happening.

The T-ID programme was issued in booklet format to all Districts at the beginning of 2010. For 2011, NO CHANGES have been made to the T-ID program issued in 2010, aside from some minor typographical corrections, but the exercises embodied in the T-ID program remain identical and are not different from before. The booklet may be downloaded directly from the Bowls South Africa website – [www.bowlsa.co.za](http://www.bowlsa.co.za). The only change is the final % calculation to reflect 80% draw and 20% attack – the new schedule distributed allows for this.

The T-ID program will improve playing skills and will allow the National Academy to uncover new talent in our midst – the only thing preventing a player from reaching National Academy status is commitment to the T-ID programme.

## Concentration & Intuition in Bowls

To be a successful bowler, you need to not only train the body but also the mind. In fact it is often said that bowls is a “mental game”. There are a number of powerful mind-power techniques available to the bowler, but in this article we will

be exploring two of the many: *Concentration* (or *Focus*) and *Intuition*. Both are skills which, like unused muscles, can be strengthened and developed until they seem to work in tandem.

**Logical thought?** Most bowlers will agree that success in playing bowls is not always the result of rational and logical thinking. The playing of bowls, like life, is an enigma, filled with paradoxes and sometimes mysteries. Some bowlers appear extraordinarily lucky. But is it just luck? Or have they developed an intuitive sense of what to do and when to do it?

**Subconscious** Intuition is not a magical genie or your guiding angel sitting on your shoulder and talking to you throughout a game! The inner voice of intuition is your subconscious mind supplying you with an answer from the mind's database after it has quickly sifted through the bits of relevant information and ideas. It stands to reason, that the more you have thought, contemplated or pondered something, and the more experiences (games and competitions you have played) are stored in your database, the more data there is for your subconscious to scan.

Let's take "grass" as an example. The subconscious mind quickly supplies answers to the following questions: Long? Newly mown? Dew? Wind? Rain? Dry? Fast? Slow? Angle (aiming line or "grass")? Aiming point? Position of mat? Position of jack (displaced)? Tracking? Bias of my bowl? Ratio of angle to speed required to execute the necessary shot? Unless you have consciously concentrated or focused on these concepts in the early stages of your bowling career, the "input stage", there won't be much information available to your subconscious when it searches and analyses.

**Total absorption** Most of us will probably associate concentration with unpleasant school memories. Yet that total absorption in a good movie or game of bowls is also concentration, but the experience is so enjoyable, it comes naturally. You cannot be bowling consistently well and at your full potential if you are not concentrating on every bowl you deliver, if you are not focused. If you are not playing well, you will recognise the fact and the experience and memories will not be pleasant. We have all played a really good shot, but champion bowlers do it most of the time because they are focused. Concentration is not difficult, but it is a skill you need to practice for it to develop fully. The more you are able to concentrate, the easier it becomes to channel your thoughts towards your purpose, which we will assume to be better bowling.

According to John Kehoe (1997, *Mind Power*), the ability to concentrate and focus the mind on one idea, thought or image, is a prerequisite for using mind power. An undisciplined mind is

inclined to wander, roaming from one thought to another in haphazard fashion.

**How do you discipline it?** George Orwell (author of *1984* and *Animal Farm*) advocated thinking a thought to the root. How is this done? Ask yourself a series of probing, but related, questions relevant to the problem that you are dealing with at that precise moment. The "moment" could be the here and now of the bowling green, or it could be a few quiet moments contemplating either a fault that is creeping into your delivery or the wrong tactics which cost you the last tournament or match you played in. In bowling, the problems that present themselves are very often repetitive and, if the question-and-answer process is accurately and thoroughly carried out during the problem-solving process (the first time), the mind will quickly react subconsciously, if a similar problem situation is encountered again, ignoring a multitude of irrelevant stimuli.

**Academic?** This might seem theoretical or academic to the average bowler. How can you make these concepts seem more "hands-on" during a tournament or competition? Think of a pilot who, before take-off, goes through a checklist of things to do or consider. By answering his own questions he focuses his attention to the various parameters needed for a safe take-off and flight. When you started bowling you probably went through a mental checklist or delivery routine as you got ready to deliver: bias and grip, position of feet on mat, stance, swing and step, release the bowl, follow-through. You did this very consciously at first, but later the mode changed to automatic pilot and you did it intuitively or subconsciously. It was no longer necessary to go through every separate part of the whole, smooth delivery. It was now routine. When in serious trouble or going through a bad patch, go back to basics! Go back to your delivery routine for a while, whether it be your own version, one of those available in books on bowls or on the Internet or ask your bowls coach for help.

If nervousness or the inability to relax is a problem, try the technique of "centring" (a "breathing with your tummy" technique) before your next delivery. Breathing in pushes the stomach out and breathing out pulls the stomach in (and not the other way around). With practice this action can become automatic. It has an immediate relaxing effect and allows you to refocus. This technique has the added advantage of being "private". The opposition need

not know that you are feeling the pressures of the game.

Like the pilot, you as a bowler build up a databank of information, programming your mind with experiences of various shots, varying weather conditions, varying types of greens and so on. Throughout the game you are updating this information as the data changes according to changing conditions and the phase of the game. At first, when you asked yourself questions about the variable, you had to focus and concentrate, but with experience your mind goes through the variables quickly and provides you with the answers to your questions intuitively.

**The bypass to your logical mind** In other words, when you are faced with decisions in a game and you are well-prepared, you will bypass ("short-circuit") your logical mind and your intuition will give you the answer. When you are focused, but relaxed, you will recognise the voice

of intuition; it might even be accompanied by an excited feeling. When you are ready to deliver, your whole being will pause a moment and then focus on the shot and your aiming point.

Negativity and timidity ("I can't" or "I'll never be able to do it") do not go hand in hand with intuition. Positive and confident thoughts ("I can do it", or "I can visualise my bowl curling in gently right up to the jack") arouse your intuition.

On a point of etiquette, concentration is fundamental to good bowling. Do not do anything to distract a fellow bowler while he or she is on the mat. On the other hand, when you are so focused that you remain on "automatic pilot", you will not even notice the distractions.

***This article by Merle van den Berg is an updated version of one, which appeared in Bowls Action, Volume 2 Number 5, September-December 1999.***

### Area, Zone and National Camps schedule for 2011

| Camp Category  | Districts Concerned  | Date  | Member of NA responsible  | Liason on NSCC  | Location  |
|----------------|--|---|---|---|---|
| Area           | KZN, NI<br>EG, MPU<br>NW, SBA<br>BGN, LIM<br>BOR, EP<br>JBA, SED<br>PN, KBA<br>BOL, WP, SC<br>NFS, SFS, NC | 14/15 Jan<br>28/29 Jan<br>28/29 Jan<br>18/19 Feb<br>4/5 March<br>4/5 March<br>4/5 March<br>11/12 Mar<br>15/16 Apr | J Henderson<br>T Fraser<br>S Botha<br>S Botha<br>S Botha<br>T Fraser<br>J Henderson<br>T Fraser<br>T Fraser | J Atkinson<br>B Sayce<br>S Kennedy<br>B Sayce<br>M vd Berg<br>S Kennedy<br>J Atkinson<br>C Dixie<br>G Mackenzie | Pietermaritzburg<br>Edenvale<br>Potchefstroom<br>Pretoria<br>PE OR Port Alfred<br>Johannesburg<br>Durban<br>Cape Town<br>Bloemfontein |
| Zone: coastal  | KZN, NI, PN,<br>KBA, BOR, EP<br>BOL, WP, SC  | 27/28 May   | J Henderson   | J Atkinson<br>C Dixie<br>M vd Berg  | Durban  |
| Zone: inland   | EG, MPU<br>NW, SBA<br>BGN, LIM<br>JBA, SED<br>NFS, SFS, NC   | 27/28 May   | T Fraser  | S Kennedy<br>G Mackenzie<br>B Sayce   | Pretoria  |
| National TID   | BEST FROM<br>ZONES   | 24/25 June  | T Fraser  | ALL NSCC members  | Pretoria  |
| National Squad | GREEN<br>RUBY<br>SILVER  | 8/9 July  | T Fraser  | SK / GM / BS<br>JA / CD / MvdB<br>SK / GM / BS  | Pretoria  |
| HPC            | GOLD   | 25/27 Feb<br>13/15 May<br>7/9 Oct   | T Fraser  | SK / GM / BS<br>JA / CD / MvdB<br>SK / GM / BS  | Pretoria<br>Durban<br>Pretoria  |

**Coaches Forum is the official publication of Bowls South Africa's NSCC. Please send your news and views to the Editor, Merle van den Berg at [merlof@telkomsa.net](mailto:merlof@telkomsa.net) or give her a call on 043-7483985 or 082-6934 227. Her postal address is P O Box 2486, Beacon Bay, 5205.**