

**Train-the-Trainer Courses on track throughout country...**



**Bloemfontein**



**Edenvale**



**Swellendam**



**Hard at work!**

The Train-the-Trainer courses that are currently being held throughout the country represent the culmination of many hours of writing the new reference book for Lawn Bowls Coaching by two member of the NSCC, preparing the Level 1 (Club) Coaches courses, handouts and other resources as well as the documentation and programme for the Train-the-Trainer courses.

The first course was held at Bloemfontein and it was very clear from the outset that the new book was well received. The review process of the book included all members of the NSCC, Kallie Haupt (the BSA Executive member responsible for coaching) as well as other highly respected Level 4 (Elite) coaches.

**REMAINING TRAIN-THE-TRAINER COURSES**

Districts	Venue	Dates	Times	<p><b>LEVEL 1 COURSES</b>  <i>may be arranged with</i>  <b>Jill Atkinson</b>  <i>(<a href="mailto:jillatkinson@mighty.co.za">jillatkinson@mighty.co.za</a>)</i>  <b>for your district AFTER these dates. Some districts are already implementing the new course using the material in the new Reference Book and the guidelines given to districts at Train-the-Trainer courses.</b></p>
PN KBA NI KZN	Pietermaritzburg	30 Sep – 2 Oct	<p><b>Friday</b>                      Registration @ 16h30                      Start @ 17h00</p>	
Limpopo Mpumalanga NW Sables Sedibeng	Lekkerbreek	28 – 30 Oct	<p><b>Saturday</b>                      All Day</p>	
EP Border	Kowie, Port Alfred	11 – 13 Nov	<p><b>Sunday</b>                      Until lunch time</p>	

## Graham Mackenzie's Coaching Corner: Problems with Forehand?

### As a coach how do you help the player?

Problems on the forehand occur more often than those on the backhand. The usual problems that occur when playing the forehand are as follows:

1. The anchor foot is wide of the delivery-line. The forward step will follow this wide line and will result in the arm "hooking" trying to find the correct line. Standing too straight will result in the arm playing away from the body. The aim is to play straight line bowls and this can only be achieved with the correct delivery routine. See the line: then place the anchor foot on this line and play straight down this line.
2. Feet are correct but still playing narrow. In this situation (and this is a very common fault) the arm is starting in front of the body, pointing down the centre line, thus resulting in an outside in delivery in an attempt to get around the hip and quickly find the line. Make sure the anchor foot is on the delivery line. The delivery arm will then ensure that the lines of the anchor foot and delivery arm converge after the swing which is straight back and straight forward again, playing straight line bowls. Your consistency will improve, making you a much better player. Remind your pupils of their delivery routine.

**SEE THE LINE – WALK THE LINE – ARM ON THE LINE – PLAY THE LINE**

### Other Coaching News

**New Convenor:** Brian Sayce is the new convenor of the NSCC. May your term be satisfying and successful.

Our sympathies go to Con Dixie, well-known member of the NSCC and co-author of the new Reference Book on the loss of her mother recently. Con's Dad (in his nineties) is still playing a good game of bowls.

**Head Coaches Course:** The course that was planned for November at Wingate Park has been cancelled owing to a lack of interest.

**Level 2 (District) Coaches Course:** Applications for this course to be held at Wingate Park in Pretoria from the 20<sup>th</sup> to the 24<sup>th</sup> of November are due by the end of September. Only 20 candidates will be selected from the nominations. BSA Circular 44 of 2011 refers.

**Bowls Awareness Day:** Thanks to those coaches who heeded the call (in the last Forum) to assist their clubs to make this day successful.

### Some Pearls of Wisdom

#### **What you think becomes reality!**

You cannot have anxious thoughts and expect to perform with confidence.

You cannot harbour self-doubt and expect to be confident of your ability and be able to bounce back when things are going badly.

You cannot think about losing and expect to win.

You cannot think hesitantly and expect to perform with sharpness and precision.

You cannot think about failure and expect to be successful.

**Think like a Winner!**

*(Author anon.)*

### **WE ALL LOVE TO WIN, BUT HOW MANY PEOPLE LOVE TO TRAIN? (Mark Spitz)**

#### **18 WAYS TO LOSE A MATCH:**

1. Allow your opponent to affect your game.
2. Choose the hardest possible shot to play.
3. Be late and unprepared, needing a few ends to settle down.
4. Become upset when your team-mates do not perform successfully.
5. Don't consider the % chance of your chosen shot.
6. Wander all over the rink or bank between playing your shots.
7. Distract yourself with idle chatter between playing your bowls.
8. Allow your opponents to engage you in some form of distraction.
9. Allow bad feelings to enter the game.
10. Allow negative thoughts to enter the game.
11. Allow negative words or body language to enter the game.
12. Play too quickly and narrow when holding shot.
13. Play too wide, short or heavy when not holding shot.
14. Ignore your skip's call and play your own shot.
15. Consume alcohol before or during the game.
16. Blame everybody except yourself and look for excuses for your bad shots.
17. Blame the green or external factors for your bad shots.
18. Allow someone in the team or opposition to irritate you, thereby affecting your game.

**With acknowledgement to Kallie Haupt and the George Club's notice board.**

**Discipline is not punishment... it is a way forward to the future**

## GET YOUR FEEDBACK RIGHT...

### Some aspects of Feedback Theory as applied to the playing of bowls

Merle van den Berg

(an updated article of one which appeared in *Bowls Action: Volume 2 Number 1, Jan/Feb 1999*)

It would be easy to oversimplify and define feedback mechanistically as simply a corrective device, and then we could say a player adjusts his play in response to the feedback received from the skip, or that actual play can be matched against intended play. However, bowls players cannot be mechanistically described – we are not machines! If we were we could program ourselves to be on the jack with every bowl. For our purposes we will consider feedback to be the constant verbal and non-verbal messages and interactions which take place throughout the playing of a game of bowls.

Again there is a proviso, and that is that, without checking, we can never be sure of the intention behind the feedback and shouldn't be oversensitive about it. To give an example, is the look on the skip's face to be interpreted as a scowl in displeasure of your shot or is it a squint because of the sun's glare. We must take care not to allow perceived feedback to ruin our enjoyment, and consequently our play. We should also realise that positive or negative feedback affects us all differently, not only from individual to individual but it also affects us differently depending on the circumstances or the importance we attach to the person giving it.

Let's get onto the green and look at some everyday bowling experiences. Although the examples used may concentrate on skips the practice of constructive feedback will not be limited to skips. There is constant and mutual feedback between all the players in the team. Notice the importance of attitude towards others as well as overlaps with non-verbal communication.

The method for examining these experiences is going to be by **Question and Answer**. The answers will give you some guidelines for structuring positive feedback in order to maximise its effectiveness.

#### Q Why is feedback necessary?

A If a player is given no feedback at all, whether by a lack of verbal response or negative body language such as avoiding eye contact when walking past, they will feel rejected. All players, including the skip have varying needs to receive feedback to obtain information about the shot played in order to improve performance, to feel included, and to know that their contribution to the team is worthwhile. Positive feedback such as praise ("Well done!") or supportive criticism (a gentle warning about a dangerous shot) is likely to produce a positive response of greater effort and motivation.

#### Q What are the advantages of giving and receiving feedback for a team?

A Communication accuracy will improve. Misunderstandings will be reduced.

The required information (concerning play) is provided. The team will progress as each member will attempt to correct mistakes, improve their performance, and try harder.

The team members will understand each other better, will be loyal to each other and more committed to the common goal.

Each member will have raised performance expectations, and this impacts on their confidence and self-image when these expectations are realised.

Feedback can be used to motivate the team and regain attention when the outcome of the game looks bleak.

#### Q Have you ever felt you wish a particular skip would give you more or even some feedback?

A Silence is feedback! A "lack of feedback" *is* feedback! The skip could be shy and is probably not a good or a sensitive communicator. (This has nothing to do with being a good public speaker – heartfelt communication may come out hesitantly but comes from the heart.) The problem should be discussed with the skip and they should be encouraged to give necessary feedback, but it is not easy to change a person's style of communication – you might as well try to change their personality! If this fails, discuss the problem with other team members and find innovative ways and means to overcome it. You can also try to manage without feedback! In a tricky situation, stand behind the mat, look at the skip, and **ask!** If there is no change and you find you can't manage without feedback, avoid playing with that particular skip for important games when you have the choice!

#### Q What feedback should a skip give to a player who occasionally or even continuously plays short or a few metres through when playing a bowl or delivering the jack?

A A player can see that they are short or have played through. Be specific in your feedback and say by **how much**, preferably using your (agreed) sign language. Generalised feedback such as "you are **always** short" is negative and unsupportive. Avoid negative or sarcastic comments such as "here comes the Boeing!" or "wish you were here!" Players will not improve if they receive only negative feedback. Find something **positive** to say such as "the line is fine". Feedback must be directed towards something the player can do something about – players cannot change the direction of the wind but they can take it into account.

#### Q What feedback should a skip give to a player who is struggling to find grass?

A To simply say "you're narrow or wide" is judgemental and an insult to the player's intelligence. S/he is aware of it, and, if concentrating, will be able to adjust. Effective feedback is descriptive rather than judgemental and never evaluates. If the problem continues, when the opportunity arises, say something like "I see you are having a problem with your grass today. Shall I stand grass until you've got it taped?" If the s/he is of the hostile, aggressive, or defensive type they might resent it, but a beginner, eager to learn, will probably welcome the guidance, particularly if the

venue is the local club during a social game. Tournaments and provincial competitions are not the right place for this type of assistance unless specifically requested by a player who is struggling.

**Q When should feedback be given?**

**A** Feedback should be given when the player is ready and willing to receive it. To maximise effectiveness it should be given at the earliest opportunity. A skip should judge the moment sensitively and it will not be necessary to say "praise in public but criticise in private". This will minimise conflict, and if you disarm aggression you will reduce the need for defensiveness. If feedback is delayed too long (a week after the game) it is often no longer relevant and the player no longer receptive. In a nutshell, feedback should be well-timed.

**Q What feedback does each player want or need?**

**A** Skips are advised to discuss feedback needs with their team, and as mentioned above, these needs vary. This is one of the reasons why a good team combination develops over time and the perceptive skip deals with each member of the team differently. Feedback must be given with care otherwise you'll lose not only a team member but a friend. Remember that the **style** of feedback is often more important than the content. It is not **what** you say but **how** you say it. If players indicate that they need feedback, they must also be prepared to accept it. Giving feedback takes time but it will not only improve the general play of the team but also the cohesiveness amongst the team members.

A skip should never stand grass for an experienced player, e.g. a skip playing third in a tournament will be totally de-motivated if the skip of the day stands grass!

This is an example of imposed feedback. If discussed amongst the team members beforehand and agreed, it is then solicited or invited and no longer offensive or destructive!

**Q How much feedback should the third give the skip?**

**A** This thorny issue will not arise if it has been discussed previously by the third and the skip or the

third remembers that they should only offer advice when asked or if the head has changed since the last shot. This is generally accepted as good manners. If the skip discusses the head with the third s/he will feel included and a worthwhile member of the team but also to see whether their analysis of the head is similar. Thirds of today are the skips of tomorrow. The third should always accept that the skip's decision is final and show 100% support, especially in front of the opposition.

**Q What should a skip do when a player has obviously played a bad shot?**

**A** Avoid trying to be so positive that you exaggerate and sound insincere. The player can see that the shot ended 5m through when a back bowl was not needed and a different shot was called. There are occasions when feedback should be limited – preferably a simple non-verbal sign indicating that the bowl was 5m through. Use feedback to motivate a player or to regain their attention.

**Q What feedback do you give the skip and other team members when you have played a bad shot?**

**A** Avoid becoming defensive or giving excuses. You can no longer do anything about the shot because it has already disappeared into the mists of time, **but** you can do something about the next one. Think positively (internal feedback), relax, and be kind to yourself. Stress will only increase your tension; you will lose your rhythm and play even worse. Throwing your hat down in a temper is negative feedback and will achieve nothing.

**Q What feedback should the skip give the team when you have lost?**

**A** Again, avoid non-verbal temper-gestures such as throwing the mat down – sometimes so far back that the opposing lead has to retrieve it by getting onto the bank. Encouragement (positive feedback) is what is needed if the next end, or the game is to be won. **Never** give the negative feedback to the opposing skip! This is the height of disloyalty, as is the front rank discussing the skip with the opposition.

*More examples of feedback and bowls will be in the next issue of Forum*

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