

Lachlan Tighe...Talking Tactically *Website bowls coaching column*

(October 2009 column)

Bowls, the Art of War

I am increasingly intrigued by the lessons our profile sports learn from other sources/ sectors, viz..literature, business and even war.

A few successful profile sport coaches keep referring to Sun-Tzu and his book 'The Art of War'. Read it recently and considered what I have learnt (to apply) from it. Gee, all of us in bowls world competition can learn from this Chinese warlord as the profile sport coaches obviously did.

I re-read it to ensure I could extract valuable practical applications to my bowls coaching. Here are a few excerpts and my subsequent lessons:

strategic offensive: essential for victory

know when to fight
understand how to deploy
have men who share a single will
be ready for the unexpected
have a capable general

applied to bowls

Most of our competitive sport is in teams, and fours; it is vital we are switched on, take the good with the bad, have skips who manage their fellow bowlers well, with luck have the right players selected in relevant positions, and know when to minimise shots lost, and maintain shots up.

The skilful warrior

does not rely on the enemy not coming
but on his own preparedness
he does not rely on the enemy not attacking
but in his own impregnability

applied to bowls

Skilful (skipping) applies beyond the technical to the equally important skills, tactical and mental. Doing the (relevant amount) of work tends to both ensure, and assure, the bowlers their preparedness will carry them through to victory. And similarly, that effort of training to know when and how to defend when the opposition strives to topple us. How come elite bowlers win 13-0 the first set and lose 1-9 in the second set (as happened in a recent grand prix). Our coaching, our players, our elite High Performance system has a way to go to learn and then teach/ coach players how to address this pattern of performance.

Warriors....are never satisfied

the war is won before the battle has even begun

applied to bowls

A question to all you bowlers – why have you not set goals as competitive sports people? can I suggest simply because you are not serious competitors. Probably you believe you will gain form the more you play. Is the season long enough for

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that form to shine. And what about game plans – all profile sports refer to it daily; when did your coaches, selectors, skips share, expand and direct you on the overall game plan.

Those people do you/ us a disservice as bowlers by not providing that service. Do we think that it may be unfair advantage for someone to plan when we don't. Let others follow that absurd line and let them wallow in low grades, let's get real and serious about our competitive sport. In the absence of such support, work out your own game plan and share it with others at your club keen to borrow from sport generally. Haslah from Malaysia was my ideal 'warrior'

The wise warrior

when he moves is never confused
when he acts is never at a loss

applied to bowls

bowlers, be a wise warrior. Train yourself to be assertive, confident. Even better have a coach to train you in this area to be prepared, direct and confident. Positive people are amazing, they energise other bowlers. Take that training into teams so that in the eyes of other team mates you are the warrior. And even as a singles player, ooze the wise warrior.

Warriors in desperate straits

know no fear where there is no escape
they stand firm when they have entered deep
they persist when they see no hope
they fight

Applied to bowls

Firstly keep the words above in perspective as there are no desperate straits. It is still after all a game. But for those of us striving at all times for excellence, have resolve. Trust in the belief your training prepares you for adverse situations. Don't give in or succumb, take something from the closing stages of a game obviously lost at that stage. That's right, persist. Not with the losing game, but an approach to attempt with a new sense of imagination to get something positive from the latter stage of a game beyond winning of the result. And no hope, bull I say. Until the VERY last bowl is delivered gather something from your battle today. It then can be taken into the next battle to finally win the war.

My motto as a footer on all I write is.....attitude is all about practising habits. Oh what a lovely war we can learn from.

Regards, Lachlan Tighe.