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# COACHING OF LAWN BOWLS

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## Milieu at Bowling Clubs

### Coaching at Bowls Clubs

Most lawn bowls clubs in Australia have experienced a sustained decline in membership in recent years. Bowls clubs here control virtually all lawn bowling rinks. Few rinks, if any, are available for public hire. Therefore, participation in lawn bowling and membership of a bowling club mean much the same thing here.

To offset the decline in membership, clubs tend to offer inducements to potential members. A common inducement is free coaching. Many club officials tend to associate coaching with free basic instruction of beginners. At many clubs, this is virtually the only form of coaching readily available. Many clubs have little concept of coaching programs for intermediate and advanced bowlers.

A program of beginner instruction is typically a handful of sessions, each of about an hour. Programs generally have the aim of preparing the client for playing as leader for a social bowling team. In many sports, this is the stage at which instruction in basic skills ends, and coaching for competition begins. In lawn bowls, this is typically the point at which coaching finishes forever.

Some adult beginners feel uncomfortable being coached. They may feel that they surrender a degree of control over their circumstances. They may imagine that to observers they appear to be submissive or incompetent. Many of them are glad when their instructional program ends. An empathic coach can dispel negative feelings.

When basic instruction ends, many bowls coaches actually encourage even keen beginners to discontinue the coaching relationship. Clients are commonly advised to acquire playing experience for several weeks or months, and to "come back" for coaching in "advanced shots" later. There are several issues here. There is:

- the questionable wisdom of interrupting a pattern of regular coaching.
- the separation from a supportive and encouraging mentor.
- the question of whether the novice will be forced to rely excessively on learning by trial and error, which is time consuming at best, and counter-productive at worst
- the intimation that instruction in the basics and in advanced shots encompasses everything needed in preparing for successful competition.
- the question of whether the coach is really keen to resume work with that client, and whether the coach knows any more about the game that is worth teaching.

Novices become exposed to the club culture, which may lack support for continuation coaching. They tend to participate in pairs and singles play, or in playing positions other than lead, within a few months or even weeks after becoming club members. Resumption of coaching rarely occurs.

Only a minority of bowlers have an interest in receiving coaching. Most bowlers are elderly and play socially rather than competitively. The average age of bowlers has increased with life expectancy in the community generally. The average age is probably now higher than it has ever been. Although young elite bowlers justly receive much media attention, their relative numbers are actually quite small. Where there is a latent demand for coaching within a club, a suitable person for providing that coaching usually emerges.

Some clubs make coaching available to their selected teams if they know that their pennant players have an interest in, and are willing to make themselves available for coaching and practise games. Otherwise, they tend to pin their faith on luring elite players from other clubs, or selecting of teams likely to generate synergism in pennant competition games.

### Club Coaches

In Australia, there are about 2000 bowls clubs and over 4000 registered coaches. Thus, there is an average of 2 male or female coaches at each club. Many clubs, particularly the smaller ones, have no registered coach. At all clubs, some informal coaching occurs. Players share their knowledge and skill, spouses coach one another, parents coach their children, etc. Therefore, coaching occurs even at clubs without a registered coach.

The bowls coach course has the Australian Sports Commission's approval. It comprises about 20 hours' tuition and a similar period of supervised practical coaching. Coaches receive registration within the National Coach Accreditation Scheme on successfully completing that course. The registration process marks the beginning of a career pathway. Coaches must continually update and increase their knowledge and skill to improve their competencies. Their registration is renewable every 4 years on proof of updating effort.

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Experience as an elite bowler is a splendid attribute for a coach to have. However, many elite bowlers do not have spare time in their playing schedules for regular club coaching. Many of them have little interest in club coaching programs. Performing excellence is not an attribute that one bowler can vicariously transfer to another. Bowling and coaching are quite different processes. Coaches essentially provide their clients with effectual learning experiences. They also require wide knowledge and the teaching skill to present programs in ways that best facilitate the learning process of clients. An elite bowler may or may not have the necessary attributes to be a competent coach. Compared with many other sports, lawn bowling rarely encourages ongoing coaching programs for competitors, so even most leading bowlers have had little experience with the methods and the potential of competent coaching.

A few large, profitable clubs have an elite bowler employed as a bowls coordinator - sometimes with coaching responsibilities. Remuneration in each case differs according to negotiated employment conditions. A few clubs allow elite bowlers to coach for an hourly fee. However, most registered club coaches are unpaid volunteers.

The standard of experience required of coach applicants is a subjective judgment of the club sponsoring the applicant and the association responsible for coach training. Adequate experience in lawn bowling is but one of the course prerequisites.

There need be no conflict between the club coaching role and activities as a player. However, some coaches fail to prioritise playing opportunities and coaching obligations. They present themselves as coaches but are unwilling to devote the time that the role deserves. Most coaches would be aware that club members are apt to draw conclusions about their coaching competency from their ranking as players.

As role models, coaches considerably influence the motivation of their clients to learn. Coaches should:

- emphasise enjoyable participation and companionship rather than game outcomes,
- emphasise the enjoyment and satisfaction that bowling provides rather than the physical skill and fitness that also develop,
- emphasise the opportunity for building self esteem and confidence,
- emphasise the enjoyment of lawn bowling rather than its traditional rigidities, and
- avoid premature prophecies of future success based on nothing more than a few promising early performances.

## Coaching Knowledge

### Core Areas of Coaching

Club coaching primarily involves responsibilities and activities that help bowlers to become competitive. It may also involve helping bowlers to follow a program of development, and managing supportive services. Supportive services may include administering coaching services within a club; mentoring of assistant coaches; applying new game laws, coaching methods or aids; adopting of new regulations affecting coaching methods, etc. Bowler development may include planning of programs for bowler groups, counselling, or even career counselling, etc.

Coaches help all bowlers to become more competitive. Players with limited aspirations typically discontinue their coaching prematurely. The coaching they receive tends to be limited in quantity more than in quality.

The components of bowling skill are progressive. In the following list, each component relies on the foundational skills listed above it:

Component	Comments
1. Motivation	Is keen, persistent, has 'work' ethic
2. Technique	Has efficient and fluent delivery technique
3. Fitness	Is flexible, energetic, durable, in all weathers and climates
4. Game Techniques	Is accurate with all shots in practice and competition, familiar with game laws
5. Tactical skill	Has specialist (eg singles player, lead, second, etc) skill. Able to evaluate tactical options.
6. Team work	Is cohesive and communicative, synergistic, has skill in game-planning & strategy, leader-like qualities

The core fields of preparation of bowlers for competition are technical, tactical, psychological, and physical (or physiological). These are easily remembered as the two 'T's and the two 'P's. Each of these fields has a basis of knowledge and many practical applications. 'Practice makes perfect' is a philosophy that applies to each of these fields. Coaches do not master all aspects of these subjects immediately. However, they can increase their repertoire of coaching skills as their expertise develops.

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## Technique

Technique centres on the bowl delivery movement. Technique also incorporates some appreciation of how lawn bowls in motion perform.

There is a common tendency for bowlers and even coaches to have an obsessive focus on the mere mechanics of the delivery movement. Typically, they ignore other core areas of performance. Movement mechanics are visible, measurable, assessable in form and style, and easier to deal with than other areas. Coaches who lack the skills to help bowlers to develop their physical and mental potential are unlikely to have a significant role beyond that of instruction of beginners.

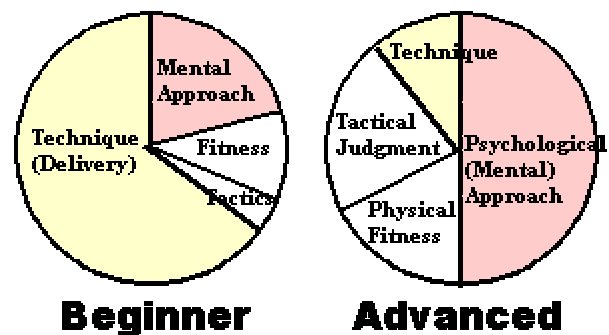
## Tactical

There is little published material about the fundamentals of tactics in bowls. Coaches should develop an understanding of head reading, shot options, and head directing and should introduce those concepts in their coaching programs.

## Psychological

Champion bowlers often claim that about 80% of their success in major events is due to mental factors. For beginner bowlers, the contribution of delivery technique to successful mastery of the basics is considerably greater than 20%. However, as delivery technique becomes grooved and automatic, it needs diminishing attention. So even at early stages of learning, technique drills do not warrant allocation of 100% of available training time.

Mental skills are the least sport specific of all competition skills. The mental skills in a sport readily transfer to other sports and extend beyond sport to other aspects of daily life. Bowlers instinctively develop goals for obtaining their major needs, such as their jobs, cars, homes, etc. Thus, goal-directed behaviour and related attributes such as self-esteem, self-confidence and drive or motivation are not entirely new to them. Many bowlers also use their imagination freely while reading, or when mentally rehearsing ways of dealing with everyday challenges. Some bowlers have discovered the value of controlled deep breathing and other techniques for moderating feelings of anxiety.



Sport psychologists regard mental skills as the outcome of learning and as readily teachable. They recognise that the minor sports can rarely afford consultancies with them. So, most of them readily acknowledge a need for coaches to introduce mental skills awareness training in coaching programs. Psychological applications include teamwork and sportsmanship.

## Physical

Physical concepts include general health and fitness. They also embody the competitive 'edge'. Bowlers are generally not receptive to advice about improving physical fitness.

## Principles of Training and Practice

The broad principles of training and practice apply in the coaching of lawn bowls as they do for any other sport. Coaches should individualise programs for clients according to their starting age and ability, rate of improvement, demands to be imposed, and ultimate level of achievement desired.

Training activities should be specific to demands of lawn bowling, logically progressive, and be interspersed with periods of appropriate rest and recovery. They should begin with an adequate warm-up, and follow the principle of progressive overload. Progressive overload involves measured increases in the degree of difficulty of tasks, or by increasing the number, duration or intensity of training sessions, or combinations of these factors. It also involves the exposure of actual or simulated pressures of competition in the practice environment. Coaches should use methods that provide informative and supportive feedback, and interesting variety. They should also make optimal use of available time, facilities and equipment.

Available methods of training and practice of lawn bowling are broadly as follows:

Method	Comments
1. Related practice	Typical 'roll-up', (even a game of tenpin or bocce would qualify)

2. Minor game	'Bolf', carpet (biased) bowls, 'kooka' bowls, short mat bowls, etc
3. Game technique practice	Consistency singles, bowling to a market bulls-eye, etc
4. Functional practice	Leading, bowling to preset heads, etc
5. Phase practice	First 5 ends, last 5 ends, or other phases of typical games
6. Small-sided game	Limited number of ends, jack at set distances, 'phantom' bowler games, etc
7. Modified practice game	No dead ends, nominated hand of play only, rotate positions within teams, team conferencing, etc
8. Full competitive match	Games under actual or simulated competitive pressure

The progression from method 1 to method 8 tends to move from less motivating to more-motivating activity, from simulation to reality, from simple to complex skills, and from skill segments to complete skills.

### **Performance Problem Solving**

Coaches should remember to differentiate the domains of the two 'P's and the two 'T's when observing, analysing and correcting problems. Bowlers can have a problem in any of those four areas. If, for example, a problem of short bowling in a competition arises, the bowler must fix it immediately. The problem might well disappear when the bowler consciously gives the bowl more initial elevation, which may generate greater bowl release speeds. The nature of that response is technical or a technique change. However, the real cause of the problem might be, for example, a tendency to underestimate distances up the rink. In that case, the real cause is not technical, but psychological - it centres on judgment of distances. Bowl elevation increase will not be a sustainable solution. Technical changes can provide sustainable solutions only for technical problems, and only psychological changes can provide sustainable solutions for psychological problems.

## **Planning & Organization**

### **Program Planning**

Planning and organization are processes by which coaches review club-coaching needs, plan a range of suitable programs and arrange the resources they need to present those programs when the opportunity emerges. Bowlers can distinguish between coaches who are organised and those who are not. They tend not to patronise disorganised coaches.

Where rain interrupts outdoor coaching programs, clients commonly become inactive, or coaches subject them to replays of videotapes without breaks for analytical discussion. Coaches should consider planning flexible programs, and bring forward topics held in abeyance for presentation either under cover in the event of rain, or indoors at night. Activities that could possibly proceed when rinks are unavailable include:

- Videotaping and appraisal of technique (requires sufficient light, & 10-metre strip of carpet.)
- Viewing and analysis of videotaped technique (follow-up on a green when possible)
- Mental approaches to performance (theory and/or practical)
- Game laws (explanations, demonstrations, quiz, etc)
- Warm up & stretching exercises
- Effective team participation
- Team leadership & communication
- Playing and clubhouse etiquette (particularly junior bowlers)
- Scorecard maintenance (particularly junior bowlers)
- Practice program design.

Coaches should design training programs by identifying appropriate outcomes of training and teach all the prerequisites vital to those outcomes. Topics that may be customary, interesting, or popular, but that would clearly contribute little to planned outcomes deserve no place in the program. Coaches should consider prioritising training content and scheduling the least important matters last. Then if sufficient time becomes unavailable for completing the session as planned, they would have dealt with all its important elements.

The program should maintain its outcome focus. Any secondary objectives should be congruent with the primary objectives. The criteria for success should be implicit in the definition of the learning outcomes.

Reteaching of existing knowledge or skill should rarely be necessary. However, any general or individual weaknesses in the knowledge or skill of bowlers at the start of a program should receive preliminary attention. Clients that have a physical or other disability may require modified or different programs.

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The target outcomes of a coaching program, which typically comprises a sequence of sessions, amount to a broader but similarly defined consolidation of session outcomes. A plan for a lesson should begin with a concise statement of its knowledge and its skill objectives, defining:

- each task in observable & measurable terms (eg "Deliver jacks using demonstrated technique..."),
- the performance conditions (eg "... on a rink of any pace, and for any indicated distance..."), and
- the evaluation criteria (eg "... with an average error of less than 1.25 metres from the jack")

### Planning of Teaching Method

Well-planned and documented lesson plans are invaluable for reuse in recurring programs. An example of a typical session plan is appended on page 23.

A teaching alternative is the whole skill or the part skill method. The former option involves teaching the whole of a skill as a unit. It suits teaching of simple skills such as polishing bowls, measuring for shot, kicking bowls, or laying the mat. The part skill method involves teaching the skill in sequential parts, then integrating the parts successively into the whole skill. Coaches should teach parts that occur earliest in a complex skill before the other parts. It suits the teaching of complex skills such as bowl delivery. The chosen parts of the delivery movement might be the stance, grip, delivery action, follow through, integration, and refinement of performance. Coaches should follow a separate plan for each part and a plan to describe the method of chaining learned parts into a composite skill.

Personalised coaching is usually the best method of catering for needs of individual bowlers. If clients are participators in the planning process, they are usually more willing to internalise task challenges and related criteria for success. Station teaching or reciprocal coaching is effective in some circumstances for groups. Group practice plans should minimise the time that clients are inactively awaiting 'turns' and maximise the time they spend engaged in tasks.



Many new clients of club coaches are of mature age. Some of them demonstrate strong motivation. Their personal objectives in lawn bowling may or may not be clear-cut. Driven by a 'need to know' they may have a healthy curiosity about their new sport. Coaches should anticipate that mature age novices must 'unlearn' any unhelpful habits before new learning will replace it. Novices inevitably relate new concepts to their past experiences. Occasionally recommendations that coaches offer appear at odds with their expectations. Coaches should anticipate temporary learning difficulties if such conflicts arise. Many mature age novices are more comfortable 'in charge' of situations than in situations where someone else (e.g. a coach) is in charge. Therefore, coaches should avoid assuming more power and control from such clients than is necessary while coaching. They should use 'question and answer' and reasoning techniques freely. Some elderly clients have restricted ranges of movement in limb joints. However, some of them will be able to improvise effectively. Competent lawn bowling is more about what can be done rather than what should be done.

Coaches should teach firstly any skills that are prerequisites for more complex skills. The sequencing of essential subjects should be logical. They should ensure that planned transitions from each subject to the next are as brief and 'seamless' as possible. In setting the lesson timetable, coaches should try to introduce variety to enhance the interest of clients.

Direct instruction, sometimes referred to as the "chalk and talk" method, is helpful in ensuring that all the subject matter receives attention in the available time. Coaches should allocate and conserve available time carefully. Direct instruction is an efficient method for coaching a group of bowlers. However, coaches should particularly avoid making excessive use of the spoken word based on the assumption that clients prefer to learn by listening. Some coaches believe that speaking is teaching, and that hearing is learning. The spoken word, is actually a relatively inefficient vehicle for a teaching and learning process:

<b>Taste</b>	<b>1.0%</b>
<b>Touch</b>	<b>1.5%</b>
<b>Smell</b>	<b>3.5%</b>
<b>Hearing</b>	<b>11.0%</b>
<b>Sight</b>	<b>83.0%</b>

<b>We hear half of what is said,</b>	<b>50.00%</b>
<b>We listen to half of that,</b>	<b>25.00%</b>
<b>We understand half of that,</b>	<b>12.50%</b>
<b>We believe half of that, and</b>	<b>6.25%</b>
<b>We remember half of that</b>	<b>3.125%</b>

Studies show that the rankings of the senses as channels of learning are typically as appears in the table on the left.

Coaches should teach by challenging as many of clients' senses as possible. They could enlist each sense effectively by presenting new skills in the following stages: explanation (sound), demonstration (sight), guided practice of skill (touch), explanation, demonstration and correction of weaknesses (all), and practise of corrected skill (doing). "A picture is worth a thousand words" and clear demonstrations often teach skills not only more effectively but also quicker than the spoken word. Learning by 'doing' is the best method for most skill teaching.

**"I hear, but I forget,  
I see, and I understand,  
I do, and I remember"**

## Organising Aids

Many coaches maintain a kit of commonly used instructional aids. These include cotton wool or metal discs for use as aiming points, lengths of coloured wool for use as aiming lines, etc. The kit should be on hand before the lesson begins to avoid a time-wasting search during the lesson.

Coaches should use game equipment as instructional aids whenever appropriate. They should teach head reading by creating model heads with a jack and some bowls. For example, they should teach measuring for shot by demonstrating with a measure, a jack, and at least two bowls. They should teach mat positioning options by laying mats, as shown opposite, at the extremities of permissible locations.

Coaches should always consider the feasibility of distributing lesson information to bowlers for self-paced learning at home. However, they should follow up with questioning techniques to test compliance with study tasks. Coaches should test the understanding of clients by asking open questions at every stage of teaching. Closed questions, which require single word answers, are of limited value.

Before each session, coaches should organise necessary resources such as booking of rinks, playing equipment, training aids, access to emergency phone and other services, special demonstrators or helpers, etc.



## Teaching & Demonstrating

### Approach to Coaching

There is a common misconception that coaches teach their own bowling skill, and thus the greater that skill, the better the acquired skill of their clients. Skilful technique is the result of practised conditioning of the subconscious mind. Skilful bowlers give attention to their objective for each delivery, not to the mechanics by which they will achieve it. Their practised imagery of the required line and length automatically translates into appropriate body movements to set the bowl in motion and achieve the desired result. Most bowling skill resides in the subconscious mind and is incapable of conscious recall. Thus, bowlers can teach others their style, but not their performing skill.

Many sport authorities regard teaching competence as more important than any other aspect of coaching skill. A warm, positive verbal and non-verbal style of teaching behaviour is best in most circumstances. A formal style, if positive, can promote learning. A permissive style can reduce learning if it allows clients to drift off set tasks. Coaches should establish any essential rules for safety or other behaviour at the outset. They should know their clients well and address them by their given names. For effectiveness in teaching, and therefore in coaching, bowls coaches need:

- Awareness of problems that learners face
- Respect for their clients' developing abilities
- Courtesy, self control and an even temper
- Honesty in deed and in thought
- Enthusiasm for the sport
- Expectations that clients will enjoy the learning process (in which case they probably will)
- Vicarious pleasure in the progress that clients achieve.

What coaches should do, irrespective of playing background, is to teach with reference to a model or concept of an orthodox delivery movement. Coaches are free to modify the standard movement to minimise the effect of any physical incapacity of clients.

Club coaches should be available to all members of their bowling club, including the best of the players. The top bowlers tend to control their own technical development. They tend to 'network' with one another to provide mutual help and advice. They tend to be unwilling to enter any coaching relationship that might entail the prospect of the coach assuming control of their technical method. They are generally aware not only of their technical weaknesses, but also of

appropriate solutions. Any approaches to coaches tend to be from the standpoint of seeking confirmation of their own analysis. Good responses for coaches in relating to the better bowlers include:

- listen attentively - speak conservatively
- use question and answer technique to obtain adequate information
- either confirm the client's analysis or identify more-important defects observed
- either confirm the client's intended course of corrective action, or suggest alternatives likely to be of equal or greater benefit
- use positive and informative feedback
- offer ongoing monitoring to check progress of any changes.

### **Planning to Avoid Problems**

Coaches should insist on punctuality and start lessons on time. They should direct session activities so that they use available time equitably and give due emphasis to all session topics. They could quickly undermine their timetables if they allow outsiders to disturb the continuity of lessons. They should arrange for a club official to intercept and deal with incoming calls during a lesson. They should courteously but decisively postpone discussion with people who approach them during a lesson. When faced with unforeseeable, urgent and important interruptions during lessons, coaches should try to complete the current lesson segment, if possible. They could give their bowlers a practice task so that lesson momentum can continue during their temporary absence.

The lesson plan should segment the available time to maintain good momentum and to maximise the productivity of the entire period. When coaching a group, coaches should avoid having only one client busy at a time.

Many sessions will include some practice of previously learned skills. For skill practice, the coach may vary the task difficulty by changing performance conditions, or evaluation criteria, or both. If tasks have a balanced degree of difficulty, clients experience a "flow" in performing them. They avoid the boredom of tasks that are too easy, and the anxiety about possible failure of efforts on tasks that are too difficult. Any intermediate objectives in programs for teaching new skills should make allowance for a possible plateau in performance improvement. However, at other times rapid skill improvements often compensate for periods of little improvement. Meanwhile the underlying learning process tends to continue at a steady pace. Coaches should consider giving clients enough information so they can evaluate their own performances.

### **Preparing to Coach**

Before each session, coaches should ensure that:

- lesson objectives are clear
- rinks, jacks and mats are available
- coaching aids are handy
- precautions imposed by prevailing weather are taken
- coaching environment is safe, and
- assistants and clients are ready for a punctual start.

Coaches should appreciate the effects of heat, direct sunlight, insufficient hydration, wind chill, rain-soaked attire, and should instruct bowlers how to avoid ill effects from such conditions.

Coaches should be able to recognise and to allow for the physical incapacities of some elderly bowlers. These incapacities typically include: slower learning rate, hearing disability, diminished hand strength and span, diminished limb flexibility, or impaired vision.

### **Explaining and Demonstrating**

Coaches should begin sessions by capturing the attention of clients. They should begin teaching of each subject by establishing its importance and performing context. They should avoid trying to extend teaching by overloading clients with more information than they can assimilate at a time.

Coaches can avoid verbose explanations wherever a good diagram or demonstration conveys the meaning better. Demonstrators should be competent performers, and their demonstrations must be good models of the required skills. Coaches who are able to demonstrate skills or part skills competently acquire enhanced status. Those unable to demonstrate because of physical disability or other reasons should arrange for another demonstrator or a video of a criterion performance.

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Coaches should begin demonstrations by ensuring that everyone is paying attention and is in good position to see and hear them.



They should identify key aspects and repeat them as appropriate. Clients might benefit by viewing demonstrations from different vantage points, or by executing movements in synchronism with the demonstrator. Coaches should repeat demonstrations as often as necessary. When a demonstration involves delivery of a bowl, clients sometimes switch their attention to the course of the bowl and its result. In so doing, they fail to observe the follow through phase of the delivery movement. In these circumstances, coaches should adopt measures to ensure that the attention of clients remains focussed on salient features of the demonstration.

Coaches can help overcome any reluctance of clients to ask questions by themselves introducing open 'question and answer' technique in a motivational and informative way. If uncertain of correct answers to any awkward questions, coaches should admit their uncertainty and provide clients with correct answers after consultation with appropriate experts. They could irreparably lose their credibility by bluffing answers that subsequently prove incorrect.

### **Initial Practise**

When teaching groups, coaches may overcome any reluctance of clients to participate by breaking the main group into smaller groups each of two or three bowlers. Coaches can help clients overcome any fears of peer ridicule by engineering practise environments to make them discrete and emotionally 'safe'. They should recognise that many clients will have concerns, to varying degrees, when faced with challenging tasks.

Coaches can help clients to master new skills by setting challenging but achievable practice tasks. They should engineer task difficult so that careful effort yields success in about 50% of attempts. They should avoid leaving the coaching area during initial practice of new skills by clients.

In teaching the delivery movement, coaches will take advantage of helpful skills their clients bring from other sports. For example, a golf stroke involves a grip, stance, swing, and a follow-through, as does delivery of a bowl. A putt on a sideways sloping green behaves somewhat like a biased bowl. Coaches will also be alert to negative influences of previous sports. Again with golf as a case in point, golfers execute a swing side-on and there is an initial tendency for some former golfers to deliver a lawn bowl partly sideways. The unlearning of unhelpful habits commonly takes longer than learning new skills.

### **Feedback**

The ability to use feedback effectively is a major coaching skill. Feedback is the process by which bowlers receive information about their performance, and is indispensable in the learning process. Feedback should focus on elements of performance, not on clients personally.

Sometimes feedback occurs intrinsically. Examples might include the thud of a bowl released too high, loss of balance during the delivery, or the sight of a bowl stopping adjacent to the jack. Coaches should avoid giving feedback that largely states the obvious in echoing feedback that a client receives intrinsically. Clients learn more from visual feedback than from other forms of extrinsic feedback.

When clients are learning skills, coaches should consider giving performance information in the form of demonstrations. Spoken feedback should be brief. At least half of all feedback should be informative. Information may be general or specific. "If you extend your arm in the follow through, your bowl will track along your aiming line" is general information. "You kept your arm nicely extended in your follow through, that time", is specific information.

Coaches should determine an appropriate strategy for feedback. They should expect a lack of fluency by clients in the early stages of practising a new skill and then give continual feedback. They could probably ignore minor and random errors that occur during early practises of complex skills. They could probably allow a few attempts at a new skill before beginning corrective feedback. Coaches may reduce the frequency of feedback as skill of clients improves.

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To avoid undermining practise momentum, extrinsic feedback should be brief yet frequent. Several informative or encouraging feedback comments per minute may not be excessive rates. A ratio of about four positive comments to every negative comment creates a supportive learning atmosphere.

Negative feedback can create an error-centred coaching environment. However, reprimands may occasionally be necessary, particularly in dealing with behavioural problems within groups of young bowlers. Negative feedback should focus on the task, not individuals.

The reinforcing effect of positive feedback on desirable attributes of good technique plays a major role in the shaping of capable bowlers. Coaches should use motivational feedback freely. They should give positive feedback whenever a client masters a difficult task. They should praise clients not only for achievement, but also for improvement. Feedback should relate to the session focus. For example, if the coach requests a delivery to an indicated position far from the jack there is no obvious reason to congratulate the client for a delivery that finishes near the jack. Guidelines for giving rewarding feedback are:

- Reward performance, not outcome
- Reward effort more than successful outcome
- Reward success in personal development as well as for mastery of sport skill

Motivational feedback, which may be verbal or given as body language, is normally very positive. Bowlers have individual differences in their responsiveness to motivational feedback. Many bowlers place greatest value on feedback they experience internally.

## Communicating

### Communicating Process

Available channels of face-to-face communication are essentially both verbal and non verbal. Written information (such as study guides for self-paced home learning) is entirely verbal. However, verbal information is a minor element of interpersonal communicating. Studies suggest that the factors involved in communicating are as the table opposite shows.

Thus, the information exchanged in an interpersonal communicating process usually comprises verbal content, emotion, and body language. Body language encompasses behaviour, gestures, facial expressions, posture, and the like. It is closely related to the tone of voice and emotional signals of the speaker. In some instances, these factors mutually reinforce one another to give clear meaning to messages. When they give conflicting signals, listeners typically give precedence to the non-verbal factors in interpreting the meaning.

<b>Words</b>	<b>7%</b>
<b>Tone of Voice</b>	<b>38%</b>
<b>Body Language</b>	<b>55%</b>

Teaching of skills should be rich in content, or information. Question and answer processes to test comprehension should also be rich in content. Motivational communication should be rich in sincere encouragement.

Circumstances sometimes affect the communicating process. Hearing or visual impairment of clients or noise in the teaching environment may adversely affect good communication. Young clients might not comprehend messages communicated to them because of their exuberance or lack of experience. Communication between coach and client might not be permissible during a competition. The size of a client group affects the range of options for effective communication.

### Communicating While Coaching

The coaching process is one of continuous communication. Coaches are role models. Their appearance and behaviours continuously send messages to their clients.

Effective spoken communication also relies on reciprocity. It should involve about 50% sending and 50% receiving. Attentiveness and mutual respect should characterise the listening process. Discourteous interruptions adversely affect the effectiveness of communications. The most effective vocabulary is one that is simple and free of jargon. Bowlers commonly use words like 'weight', 'head', and 'green' ambiguously. Coaches should speak:

- slowly and clearly (using simple, easily understood and appropriate words),
  - concisely (avoiding excessive and irrelevant detail), and
  - convincingly (stimulating the learning process)
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As shown earlier, the more powerful channel of most communications is the non-verbal, or visual. Well-motivated coaches will have body language that is consistent with their spoken language. Other coaches may demonstrate conflict between their spoken and body languages. Such conflict is typically quite evident to clients.

The best communication style in coaching is circulating among the client group and talking with them individually or in small groups. Coaches can then assess the needs of clients, according to whether each seems under-aroused or anxious, and alert or distracted. Such an individualised style usually earns greatest respect from the clients. If they are separated by distance, coaches and clients can talk on the telephone, internet, or by audiotape. Coaches and clients can otherwise exchange information over a distance by document, floppy disk, fax, internet chat, or e-mail. Media offering both spoken and visual contact include video conferencing and videotape.

The response and subsequent actions indicate whether communication has been effective. If coaches or their clients misinterpret or do not comprehend shared information, they should continue communicating to resolve the difficulty. Any coaches with speech defects or a difficult accent should compensate by speaking slowly and stationing near, and facing clients. They should resolve communicating problems patiently and persistently.

## **'Game Sense' in Lawn Bowls**

### **Application of 'Game Sense'**

Many Australian sport coaches have studied the 'game sense' approach following a visit to Australia in 1996 by Loughborough University's Rod Thorpe. Game sense is the learning that occurs as athletes participate in challenging games. Games are fun, which is the primary motivator of many athletes. A game setting offers an athlete an agreeable, skill-learning environment.

Control of the developmental process is shared between coach and athletes. They organise modified or unmodified games with some provision for competitive pressure. The scope of an athlete's learning includes effective movement, risks & opportunities, attack & defence, positive mental attitude, and physical preparation. The trial and error learning that occurs is partly intuitive. Because the learning occurs under game pressure, there are few transfer problems. Theory merges with practice.

Game sense, as a means of skill development, better suits open skill sports (eg hockey) contested by interactive teams or squads for a relative (win or lose) result. It suits closed skill sports (eg tenpin bowling), contested by coactive performers for a measured result, less readily. In closed skill sports, performing technique may be more critical than in open skill sports. Even so, bowls coaches tend to overemphasise delivery technique and under-emphasise tactics, mental attitude and physical preparedness for competition.

### **Pedantry versus Activity**

Coaching with excessive emphasis on technique tends to cause more harm than good. It tends to condition the attention of players to their technique during competition. A bowler is unlikely to be a successful competitor until an effective technique is autonomous or intuitive. The word 'effective' does not imply 'correct'. The objective in competitive forms of bowls and most other games is more on outcomes (eg winning or losing) than on processes (eg style or technique). Some coaches try to get bowlers to emulate a correct or orthodox model of technique. They tend to classify departures from that model as 'bad' or 'wrong' technique. However, some nationally ranked bowlers have wide individual differences and unorthodoxy in technique.

Coaches should avoid the lack of session momentum that accompanies verbose explanations. They should definitely avoid a pontifical style and any tendency to treat advice in coaching manuals as holy writ. Telling is not necessarily teaching. Information overload occurs very quickly in many individuals. Inattention and resentment can develop among inactive clients. Children, if idle, tend to create action by misbehaviour.

Competent demonstrations by a coach or observation of bowlers engaged in games may be far more instructive than verbose explanations. 'Game sense' learning resulting from experimentation in practice games could dispense with the need for much formal instruction. Bowls coaches should ascertain and allow for the skills that clients have already mastered. Otherwise coaching effort will tend not to address individual needs.

### **Learning Effective Technique**

The game sense approach requires that clients learn by performing in game-like conditions from the earliest stages of their training program, more than they would in traditional programs of bowls coaching. Coaches should allow clients to discover any new or additional information through a question and answer process at convenient intervals during

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games or game-like practices. With clients busy within a game sense setting, the coaching process appropriately becomes less conspicuous. Where coaches are inexperienced, they could and should take time to confirm observations and remedial suggestions before interrupting activities.

The game sense approach involves teaching of technical skills in a game context rather than in a separate skills session. Intuitive learning by doing may be superior to teacher paced technical instruction. Effective technical skills are often intuitive or 'picked' up. Coaches should judge technique on its effectiveness rather than its compliance with a particular model. They should teach clients how to gather intrinsic performance information. The object of sporting endeavour is oriented more on outcome than on process. The best method of instruction will be the one that yields sustained performance improvement.

### **Variety and Innovation**

Bowls coaches could allow clients to enhance the challenge and potential of the 'game sense' approach by modifying the practice environment. They can occasionally encourage play like the crown green game, whereby clients put the mat anywhere on a 'flat' green, and deliver the jack to any other point on it. This is good 'line and length' practise. For practice on parallel rinks, rink lengths limit the normal scope for increasing head distances, but there is scope for decreasing them below the normal minimum. Coaches can substitute relative targets (eg closest to a jack) with measurable targets (eg playing surface temporarily calibrated like a rifle target). They can use objects (eg spare bowls) to obstruct avenues of approach to a head. They can introduce a system of penalty points (eg for bowls that 'cross' a head) or bonus points (eg for certain 'touchers'). Coaches could encourage clients to vary virtually any normal playing conditions or rules to create an instructive game-like environment for practice.

## **Coaching of Groups**

### **Individual versus Group**

Coach educators sometimes use the word 'mentoring' to describe the tutoring of apprentice coaches by master coaches. Mentoring is often an individual or a 'one to one' relationship. Individual coaching of bowlers by club coaches is typical. It is a particularly appropriate arrangement for coaching advanced bowlers.

However, the number of clients simultaneously requiring coaching might greatly outnumber the coaches and assistants available. The clients may be club 'open day' respondents, school groups, pennant squads, coach updating groups, etc. In those circumstances, and depending on the skill and experience of the coaches, group activities may produce good outcomes despite small coach to client ratios.

### **Participatory Tasks**

Bowlers typically prefer 'learning-by-doing' and group coaching sometimes has a higher practical content than individual coaching. Coach updating workshops offer group involvement, and may be highly practical if organisers are careful to avoid a theoretical bias. Such workshops commonly include intervals of brainstorming of syndicates or small groups of coaches engaged in mutually learning and exploring of set tasks. Group coaching may promote greater variety in task-oriented activities. Participants in groups commonly have greater input and control over their activities.

### **Group Dynamics**

Some people are individually more productive when functioning within a group. Groups tend to become synergistic units with internal cohesion and mutual support.

Particularly within groups, coaches should ask clients to wear nametags initially, and should address them by their given names. Coaches may overcome any reluctance to participate by individuals in large groups by reorganising clients into a number of smaller groups. When coaching a group, they should avoid having only one client busy at a time

### **Groups of Children**

Coaching of junior bowler groups is arguably the most demanding sector of bowls coaching. Coaches of juniors should determine their approach and priorities from the outset. Negative feedback can create an error-centred coaching environment. However, reprimands may occasionally be necessary, particularly in dealing with behavioural problems within groups of young bowlers. Misbehaviour of young bowlers may be a result of insufficient practical activity.

The role entails special regard for continuous supervision, hazardous elements of the coaching situation, planning of safe activities, warning of actual or potential risks, prompt and effective treatment of any injuries, and informative record-keeping. Active observation of groups of juniors keeps them on task. Game sense principles tend to highly effective for coaching of junior bowlers. Mistakes have the potential to be learning experiences

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Juniors of varying ages, abilities and sex prefer not to participate as an aggregated group. They tend to prefer gender separation for coaching, practice and competition. Mismatching of bowling skills or basic movement skills is more likely within aggregated groups. Very young children have longer judgement and response times, and have limited hand and eye coordination. The motivation of young juniors is towards mastery of accurate delivery and other skills of the game.

The motivation of older juniors is towards display of their acquired skills and recognition of their performances. Group coaching, as opposed to individual coaching, of older juniors is largely unproductive. Older juniors tend to be interested in competition play, and should be encouraged to enter regional competitive events. Coaches can desensitise them to typical distractions of competitive environments by introducing actual or simulated competition pressures during preparatory practices. When constituting teams for practice games, it is not a good idea to mix juniors of appreciably different age or ability. Adults do not like playing that way, and neither do juniors. Older juniors like applying their acquired skills in games with or against adult bowlers, but many adult bowlers have a substantial ego-involvement and regard the prospect of defeat by a junior as threatening.

Juniors like fun and variety in their practice activities. In some cases, lack of fun leads to 'drop-out'. Practice activities focused routinely on a traditional form of the game do not fully satisfy these needs. Coaches should be innovative to provide variety and enjoyment. Innovations are not necessarily a diversion from the process of learning, development and improvement.

## **Station or Circuit Teaching**

### **Organising Circuits of Stations**

There are difficulties in presenting a practical program to a large group of people on a bowling green. Individuals are often unable to see demonstrations clearly. Their view may be obstructed, or they are too far away, or they are viewing from the wrong angle. They are often unable to hear demonstrators clearly. The demonstrator's voice does not carry, or is projecting in a different direction, or adjacent chatter is too distracting.

In these circumstances, coaches may break a large group into smaller groups on separate rinks. Coaches may set the same or different tasks for each group. The available coaches demonstrate the set task and objective to each group. They then circulate around the groups, evaluating and helping each group in turn. Coaches can modify set tasks to match individual needs or to optimise task benefits. If coaches set different tasks at each 'station', groups can circulate from station to station, and therefore task to task, according to a pre-arranged signal or schedule.

Each station engages in tasks of approximately equal duration. On a signal or after a prearranged interval, each group quickly moves from one station to the next. The facilitator at each station repeats the allotted presentation as each new group arrives. However, each updating coach participates in a fresh activity with each change of stations.

Coaches should define a system of self-assessment of task performances so that success is achievable yet challenging for the bowlers involved. They can foster use of intrinsic forms of feedback. They should allow enough time for every bowler to accomplish each task adequately. Circuits tend to provide trainees with greater individual control over the sequence, frequency, intensity and timing of training tasks.

### **Special Applications of Circuits**

One way for coaches to exercise the technical and tactical skill of bowlers is by presetting practice heads. If they preset playing tasks on contiguous practice rinks, each rink could constitute a station in a circuit. This arrangement enables a number of groups equal to the number of set rinks, with at least two bowlers in each group. Coaches should set heads so that the direction of play alternates on adjacent rinks and thereby allows quick 'rink to rink' transitions. Groups should start simultaneously on their own rinks but circulate from rink to rink in the same direction.

Bowls associations tend to favour seminars for coach updating programs. Many coaches feel that lectures do not convey enough participation. Circuits of practical coaching tasks are ideal for updating programs. Mentor coaches divide participators into small groups. They need at least one fully briefed demonstrator or facilitator at each station or location. A bowling green might have enough space for up to seven stations. Other stations could operate in surrounding areas or buildings, as appropriate.

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## Reciprocal Coaching

### Reciprocal Method

Whenever clients requiring training outnumber the available coaches and assistants, station or reciprocal teaching methods may be effective options. After planning a program for the reciprocal method, coaches should produce a set of task cards for issue to participants. Each card should describe the performing task and its purpose, the aspects of performance that warrant observation, task success criteria, and options for either widening the scope of the activity, or varying the task difficulty.

The reciprocal teaching method involves pairing off the client group. One member in each pair then assumes the role of coach, and briefly teaches elements of performing skill. Meanwhile, other acts as client, observer, helper, critical friend, or whatever the task requires. Members then reverse roles, and repeat the exercise. Typically, the group then reunites, evaluates performances, and receives instructions for another reciprocal training task.

For limited tasks, and relatively short periods, reciprocal training can be a highly effective way of spreading scarce coaching resources. This situation is common when coaching a squad of bowlers. The method also offers a high degree of practical involvement.

### Application to Coach Training

The reciprocal method is of proven value in the initial training of apprentice coaches or refresher training of registered coaches. It offers time and cost economies when participants necessarily travel to rural areas.

The procedure begins with the mentor coach presenting a model lesson segment to a learner or someone in that role. The scope of the subject matter should comprise a number of easily remembered concepts. Student coaches observe and learn what and how to instruct. Because students observe what and how to coach, they are less dependant later on their ability to convert theory into practice. The mentor coach then invites feedback and discussion about the adequacy of information given, the suitability of the teaching method used, and what improvements might be possible.

The mentor coach then separates the student body into pairs, each with its own rink space. They then take turns in presenting the same model lesson to one another. While reciprocal coaching is in progress, the mentor coach monitors the work of each pair, helping and correcting, as necessary. The mentor coach should not discourage any use of different but equally effective teaching methods. The mentor coach progressively assesses the developing 'workplace' competencies of student coaches. Additional assessment on exit from the coach-training program may be redundant. Student coaches thereby avoid any 'final exam' jitters. Student coaches enjoy their training program much more.

Individual variations in teaching method create the unlikelihood of pairs finishing simultaneously. However staggered finishing times are also the result of the way that reciprocal coaching can accommodate individual teaching styles and learning rates. When the last pair completes its task, the mentor coach consolidates the group of student coaches, and invites their feedback and discussion about the task and about any supplementary information or teaching method variations that emerged. Apprentice coaches would learn how the mentor coach efficiently deals with interruptions and other problems that arise during the course of a program

The mentor coach can then follow similar steps with another model presentation. The reciprocal method is participatory and more effective for learning of coaching skills than traditional methods where students have a passive role. Because learning by doing engages all the senses it is the best method.

## Observing & Evaluating

### Observing

Careful observation of performances can provide information not only about technique, but also about the physical and mental well being of clients. Coaches should respond immediately to any symptoms of physical or mental stress. Active observation tends to keep junior bowler groups on task.

Reliable observation of technique commonly warrants a number of performance repetitions to eliminate random factors. Experienced bowlers may have obscure faults that warrant many repetitions to enable reliable diagnosis. Less experienced bowlers may have obvious faults that enable immediate diagnosis. To minimise random factors, coaches should normally encourage a 'warm up' of a dozen or more deliveries to allow technique to stabilise before observations begin.

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Coaches should work within 3 paces of a client. At that distance, they can communicate in a normal speaking voice, and are well placed to move closer to help with a correction. Coaches should observe body alignments from a point near, but clear of, the delivery line. They should observe forward limb and body movements from a point on the delivery arm side.

Direct observation tends to be more systematic and complete if coaches have handy a checklist of features of a technically sound performance. Such a checklist is appended at page 22. Tripod-mounted video cameras with selectable shutter speeds are an excellent aid to observation. A fast shutter speed produces clearer images of the bowl delivery hand when it is in motion. Slow motion and freeze frame VCR replay features enable detailed study of technique. Clients are also able to observe replays of their performances. Members of bowler groups can learn by observing selected performances of one another. Coaches and their clients can monitor refinement of technique over time by periodic videotaping.

## Evaluating

Success in lawn bowls hinges on results, not on form or style. The object of the game is a winning points margin on the scorecard at the end of the game. The quality of the movements executed in compiling the winning margin is not the paramount consideration. Therefore, objectives should not prescribe form or style too narrowly.

Coaches should also have the competence to differentiate between stylistic or unorthodox movements that need correction and those that do not. They should also have the competence to differentiate between causes and mere symptoms of faults and consequential effects. The cause of a fault is sometimes far removed from its observable effect. For example, bowlers who adopt a delivery stance with the bowling hand in front of the body usually take a wide back swing to clear the hip. They may then follow through with the arm angled across the body. In such instances, the initial positioning of the bowling hand is the cause of a fault, and the wide back swing and angled follow through are mere symptoms. That result of that fault may or may not be an inaccurate delivery line.

Errors may be of three types, each of which requires a very different approach:

- Strategic error (eg playing an inadvisable shot, less favourable hand, etc)
- Perceptual error (eg misjudging distance, delivery line, etc)
- Execution error (eg wayward body movements)

The general procedure for correction of faults is:

- Explain and demonstrate the faulty movement (if execution error)
- Explain the cause of the error
- Explain and demonstrate what should be done
- Explain why the correction is advisable

Coaches should involve clients in selecting errors for attention. Only one error should receive attention at a time. Where several errors are present, the first correction addressed should be the one likely to produce greatest improvement. Otherwise, the error occurring earliest in the movement should normally receive first consideration. If the errors are related, one of them can be the critical error. Correction of the critical error may cause the others to disappear. The error correction procedure should avoid attending to too many errors at once. The more practise coaches have in diagnosing and correcting observed problems in delivery technique, the more proficient they become.

Clients with a physical disability that results in errors might sometimes benefit from an alternative technique more than a correction of technique. Coaches should plan supplementary instruction for any clients who are unable to attain necessary performance goals.

Coaches should ensure that all the subject matter of each session, and of each program as a whole receives proper attention. They are responsible for the achievement of planned learning outcomes. They should document the progress of clients' skill acquisition, the pivotal features of each session, and constructive suggestions for improving future programs. They should also evaluate any help provided by assistants.

The criteria for evaluating coaching effectiveness should be explicit in the performance objective. Coaches should periodically assess their own teaching style by audio taping or, better still, videotaping representative segments of their presentations. Less experienced coaches might benefit from the constructive observations of a mentor coach.

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## Self-Assessing By Camcorder

### Validity of Video Method

The Australian Sport Commission has approved inclusion of video analysis techniques in sport specific and general coaching courses. The number of major sports already using video analysis methods is increasing. Video analysis techniques help coaches to appreciate and improve their coaching methods. The techniques could also help less-experienced coaches in establishing a suitable coaching style.

### Adoption of Video

Video analysis can disclose improvements in coaching effectiveness if used before and after coach development training. Coaches can analyse contribution of their personalities to interactive processes, and analyse quality of mediating processes with their clients. They can select their behaviours most amenable to improvement. A competent, critical friend can help in analysis and in providing constructive criticism. Video self-analysis can be used without special difficulty at remote rural venues. The process tends to produce rapid improvements in coaching effectiveness, which leads to better services to clients.

### Video Camera Features

A basic, hand held camcorder with an inbuilt microphone is adequate. A radio microphone accessory is unnecessary provided the camera is always stationed within 5 metres of the coach. A camcorder with only a modest zoom/wide angle range is quite suitable. A tripod is necessary if an assistant is unavailable. A spare cassette and a spare battery back and charger may be required. An RF converter, if supplied, is handy for reviewing videotaped activity on a TV receiver. A VHS-C cassette adaptor, if available, is handy for playing VHS-C cassettes in a VCR.

### Video Camera Availability

Increasing numbers of bowls clubs have bought a camcorder for use by their coaches. Camcorder ownership is now common among bowlers, other sportspersons, hobbyists, teachers, reporters, property and stock agents, travellers, field officers, farmers, dramatists, etc. They can be hired (Yellow Pages listing "Video Equipment - Hire"). If a camcorder owner is unavailable, a willing friend or someone who has previously used one could be a suitable operator. Operators may need some training and practice to produce realistically assessable results.

### Environmental Problems

Adverse environmental problems	Solutions
Raindrops on lens	Avoid showery weather
Wind blowing into microphone	Avoid windy weather, consider early AM or late PM
Noisy air conditioning pumping, refrigeration plant	Consider rink far from clubhouse, time before club open
Noisy greenkeeping machines	Consider cooperation, day, time of day to avoid
Noisy road traffic	Consider green & rink farthest from road, early Sun AM
Noisy aircraft approaches	Consider inactive times
Noisy adjacent players	Consider non playing days
Talkative bystanders	Consider an assistant to shepherd them away

### Good Taping Techniques

The method requires the services of someone in the actual or simulated role of a bowler under training. The video should record all facial expressions, body language, and reactions. Temporary removal of shady hats, sunglasses, etc is typically helpful. The camera should record all movements of the client in response to instructions of the coach under assessment. The operator may crop out legs and feet, except when they happen to be the proper focus of attention. The operator need not tape non-interactive events, such as setting up of aids, course of a bowl, etc.

The video sound should include all verbalised introductions, explanations, demonstrations, corrections, feedbacks, questions and answers. To obtain clear sound the operator should shoot from a rather front-on position within 3-5 metres of the coach. The quality of vision and sound produced may be less than perfect, but there is no need for retaping provided the video has sufficient material for a reliable assessment of coaching behaviours.

A reliable assessment requires at least 20 minutes of representative coaching behaviours. A checklist of behaviours worth observing and assessing is appended at page 24. If they wish, candidates can arrange the shooting of more than one of their coaching sessions and use the tape that best reflects their current approach for the assessment.

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## **The Coach's Role**

From an awareness of the competencies or range of skills relevant to the coaching of lawn bowls, a coach should plan the session to be video taped so that the behaviours of immediate interest will be foremost. In viewing the video, the coach should self analyse by answering the questions in the table appended at page 24. The coach should allow for any client behaviours that have caused departures from normal coaching procedures. The coach should discuss the videotape and self-analysis with a respected critical friend to optimise the value obtained from the exercise.

## **The Critical Friend**

Critical friends should have sound sport knowledge and behaviour analysis skills. They should appreciate that competent coaching is rarely dramatic or charismatic. They will carefully organise and present feedback, and present it orally, either in person or on tape, and avoid giving only written feedback, if possible. They should informally ascertain why the coaches under assessment chose particular behaviours for modification.

## **Managing Coaching Risks**

### **Duty of Care**

People injured at sporting venues have an increasing tendency to seek redress through legal action. Actions arising out of coaching sessions commonly claim neglect in fulfilling a duty of care. The duty of care exists even when coaches are unremunerated volunteers. Consequently, prudent coaches systematically identify and evaluate the risks entailed in their training programs. They develop risk management plans to protect not only their clients, but also themselves.

Legal claims typically include not only damages, but also costs of counsel. Amounts awarded in successful cases are commonly very high. Premium rates for professional indemnity insurance tend to increase correspondingly. Prudent coaches typically seek the protection of such cover, but the number of insurers that offer it tends to be decreasing.

Risk management planning generally follows the following procedure:

- What are the hazards present that could threaten safe coaching activities?
- How great is the risk of injury or damage that each hazard could cause?
- If injury or damage occurs, how great are the consequences?

### **Identifying Common Hazards**

- Sun, Heat, Dehydration, etc
- Wind Chill, Cold, Dampness, etc
- Insecticide & Weedicide residues
- Slippery green surrounds
- Greenkeepers' electrical extension cords
- Narrow access pathways
- Inattention to safety warnings
- Existing illness of clients
- Vulnerability of clients with a disability
- Stepping other than sideways between green and bank
- Inherent risks of each practice task
- Over-practicing
- Inappropriate technique
- Rearward movement after delivery
- Overcrowding
- Exuberant behaviour of children and others
- Competent supervision
- Positioning of undelivered bowls
- Frayed mats

### **Personal Safety**

In appropriate cases, coaches should advise clients to minimise risks as follows:

- observe moderation in consumption of tobacco and alcohol.
  - avoid dehydrating and use shady hats and sunscreen lotions, particularly during the summer months.
  - avoid creating obstructions with bowls bags along thoroughfares.
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- adopt sensible precautions before practising on a green recently treated with injurious chemicals.
- precede bowling activity by warming up the major muscles with stretching exercises.
- avoid stepping backwards on to the mat or a group of bowls at rest.
- avoid stepping on to loose mats when entering or leaving the green.

### **General Risk Management Planning Considerations**

- Complete a checklist of risk areas before beginning a coaching session.
- Warn new clients about all significant risks.
- Remind regular clients about major risks.
- Warn clients particularly about any new risks of which they may be unaware.
- Ascertain the physical and other capacities of new clients and match practice tasks accordingly.
- Document, distribute and periodically review a coaching risk management plan.
- Avoid using private transport for clients where public or official (club etc) transport is available.
- Become competent at first aid.
- Ascertain the extent of bowls club or association public risk or special cover over registered and unregistered coaches and club member and non-member clients of coaches.
- Ascertain whether the cover under any household or other public liability insurance held would extend to liability for injury and legal costs arising from coaching at a bowls club.
- Consider the advisability of obtaining a sport coaches' insurance policy.

### **Management of Injuries**

- Comfort injured clients
- Prevent injuries to other clients
- Give first aid
- Access a telephone for assistance
- Make comprehensive notes to aid consequent reporting of the circumstances
- Review coaching plans & methods
- Defend actions taken in response to the injury

## **Bowlers With Disabilities (CAD)**

### **Background**

Fewer than 100 of Australia's 4000 bowls coaches have a supplementary CAD (Coaching Athletes with a Disability) registration. Just as peer coaching among able-bodied bowlers is common, so the coaching of persons with a disability by persons without CAD training appears to be rather common and is typically highly effective. Among those coaches who have 'given it a go', any concerns about unfamiliarity with the situation, or aggravating the handicap, or about legal liability, or harm to the green, or about limited success usually dissipates. By mastering the challenge, most of these coaches have added stature within their clubs and have enhanced self-confidence.

The approach of individuals with a disability to sport and to lawn bowls in particular is little different to the approach of able-bodied bowlers. A coach will already have much of the knowledge, skill and experience required for successful CAD work.

### **Sources of Information**

In Australia at present, a CAD accreditation course is of only 2 days' duration. Such courses rely on the acquisition of skill through subsequent involvement and experience. The most important sources of information and advice about CAD, particularly about what an individual is capable or not capable of doing, are the handicapped individuals themselves. Each state has a CAD organization, which usually has a white pages listing (eg CAD Queensland). Some disability groups have their own organizations with a white pages listing (eg Sporting Wheelies, Arthritis Foundation, etc). The parents, carers or family of handicapped bowlers usually have helpful information.

For some types of disability, sport authorities have defined classes of disablement to facilitate coaching and to achieve equitable and fair grading for competition. However there appears to be no special international laws of lawn bowls applying to bowlers with a disability. Nevertheless, national laws may exist. In Australia, CAD coaches should familiarise themselves with national law 74, which provides for use of artificial limbs and other supporting aids, feedback to blind bowlers, and positioning of wheelchairs during play. National laws in other countries may differ.

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Wheelchair bowlers typically need assistance in moving between the bank and the green. The front tyres of the chair should be at least 200 mm diameter and 50 mm width. The rear tyres should be at least 45 mm wide. In both cases, the tyres should be 'slicks', that is with a smooth tread. Alternatively, wheel covers for narrower or treaded tyres are becoming available. Provided wheelchair bowlers always turn gradually, their chairs are unlikely to make tracks in greens with a pace exceeding 12 seconds.

### **Individual Interests and Objectives**

Lawn bowls attracts people with a disability for much the same reasons as it attracts able-bodied people. Participation provides them with enjoyment and social contact. They are keen to master bowling skills, and may be drawn to the challenges of competing. They anticipate a sense of achievement out of which they can gain self-confidence and the esteem of peers and self, which helps to reinforce a positive attitude to life.

### **Safe Coaching**

Few coaches have the knowledge or qualifications for making a reliable medical assessment of the capacity of a person with a disability to undertake a lawn bowls coaching program. Coaches should demonstrate to applicants with a disability the nature of the minimum physical demands of the sport. The coach and the applicant together should determine whether the latter has an adequate capacity to undergo coaching in lawn bowling. Their aim is to avoid harm or the emergence of medical complications. If doubtful, the coach should seek the written recommendations of the applicant's medical practitioner.

At the initial assessment phase, coaches should be careful to avoid negativity. Most people with a disability have the capacity for physical development through sporting activity. However, they may have previously been discouraged from participating in active sport or recreation. They may lack self-confidence and self-esteem. Female amputees, for example, may be self-conscious. Therefore, applicants with a disability might too readily accept any negativity of the coach. Positive and encouraging approaches by coaches tend to dispel tendencies to negativity by clients with disabilities.

Coaches' responsibilities for environmental safety for CAD are not greatly different to those for general coaching. While CAD athletes neither expect nor need sympathy, they sometimes need help. For example, wheelchair bowlers need access to clubhouse facilities and generally need help moving on and off the green. Visually impaired bowlers require familiarisation with immovable obstacles or hazards. Coaches must not overlook such matters.

Coaches should closely monitor the activities of bowlers with a disability and the environmental conditions. Many disabilities cause dehydration or heat stress (including sunburn) more readily than in able bodied bowlers. Amputees may experience stump soreness. Symptoms such as discomfort, fatigue, balance difficulties, profuse perspiration, etc are commonly obvious to alert coaches. However, a 'question and answer' process usually gives earlier warning of physical stress, and would be used freely by careful coaches.

### **Some CAD Principles**

While assessing an applicant, a coach will try to generalise a program that addresses the applicant's mental approach and general fitness as well as the limitations imposed by the disability. The coach would be aware that a congenital or acquired condition (eg amputation of leg) has resulted in a disability (eg prosthesis allows limited mobility), which in turn produces a handicap (eg difficulty in delivering a bowl from a low posture). With the residual range of movement that the diminished body function permits, the coach might broadly conceptualise an individual program to suit the applicant. The coach will also be aware that some disabilities (eg intellectual, visual or aural impairment) present in a wide range of individual differences. Many disabilities cause balance difficulties in posture or during movements. Broadly, disability is the effect of lack of physical or mental structure or function.

### **Teaching Disabled Bowlers**

Coaches should treat bowlers with a disability as individuals. They should avoid treating them as invalids. As with able-bodied bowlers, bowlers with a disability should personalise long term and short-term goals by being given full scope to participate in their goal setting process. They will avoid goals that lack appropriate challenge and risk taking. Coaches should appreciate the extent of their clients' disabilities. They can do this, for example, by blindfolding themselves or getting into the wheelchair and trying to 'practise what they preach'. They should plan to minimise explanations and maximise guided demonstrations for clients with an intellectual disability.

Bowlers with disabilities will not only experience learning errors just like able bodied bowlers, but may take much longer to master bowling skills. Clients with cerebral palsy or intellectual disablement might need a greater number of smaller and frequently reinforced teaching steps. Clients with cerebral palsy may have sensory problems, or muscular reflex or functional problems. Visually impaired clients must rely more on their other senses to obtain information

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about their performances so that they can make adjustments for improving their accuracy. Sounds from a position up the rink can give a guide to required delivery direction. Some vision-impaired bowlers feel for the corner of the mat to help in aligning their feet for deliveries in a desired direction. Spoken information from a helper can give much information about the unseen head and the finishing positions of delivered bowls. An imaginary clock-face may be used to express the direction of bowls at rest from the focal point of the head. Many vision-impaired bowlers are able to use imagery or visualization just as effectively as normally sighted players.

If customary teaching procedures are not achieving results, coaches should be prepared to follow alternative approaches in teaching skills, particularly those that are complex. Similarly, they might depart from normal biomechanical models for common movements and techniques. They should tailor methods for the capacities of individuals (particularly wheelchair users). They then modify and define skill expectations and target dates accordingly.

Concise, clear and unhurried 2-way communication is as important in CAD as it is in bowls coaching generally. Use of metaphors often stimulates imagery in a positive way. Demonstrations or sketches are typically more comprehensible than the spoken word. Bowlers with some types of disabilities have a lower threshold of 'information overload' than normal. Body language, if not verbal language, keeps coaches informed of how clients are coping with their environment and physical activities. Communication may be the only problem in coaching hearing-impaired bowlers, which may be resolved by facing them when speaking, and giving them some information in written form. Coaches should remember that bowlers with other impairments are rarely deaf, so the curiously common tendency of speaking louder does little to facilitate the communicating process. Coaches should ascertain each client's preferred channels of communication. Before they give guidance involving physical contact (eg for blind or wheelchair bowlers), they should establish an agreeable 'touching' protocol. They should freely use question and answer technique to confirm understanding and to teach at a pace that matches the learning capacity of their clients. Some adults with an intellectual disability may seem childlike but coaches should, with good humour, treat them as adults.

### **Practise for Disabled Bowlers**

Disabled bowlers generally notice that able-bodied bowlers tend to make quicker progress. They sometimes see their own progress as monotonously or frustratingly slow. Their own less competent abilities can imprint poor performance models on them, and can erode their underlying motivation. The possibility of participating in games or even game-like practices might seem remote.

Coaches generally avoid 'rolling up' or practising with their clients. The underlying reasoning is that if they bowl too well, they could discourage their clients. If they do not bowl well, their unconvincing efforts tend to negate their instruction and divert their attention from the needs of their clients to their own performance problems. However, coaches can selectively help bowlers with a disability by 'rolling up' with them.

Disabled bowlers typically have great respect for coaches. They regard the motivating opportunity to share 'roll ups' with their coaches as demonstrations of acceptance and an honour, notwithstanding any disparity in results achieved. By 'rolling up', coaches thereby provide performance models from which bowlers can adapt time and motion cues for their own efforts. In addition, the results achieved by the coaches help bowlers to set their own challenging and realistic achievement benchmarks. When 'rolling up' with clients, coaches should explain what they are trying to achieve, and why they consider that objective is the best option. When not engaged in delivering bowls themselves, coaches should go about the business of helping their clients in the conventional way.

When clients progress to guided practice, CAD coaches should avoid 'soft' objectives. They should avoid 'protecting' clients with a disability from temporary failures or setbacks. As with able-bodied bowlers, these experiences are important to the learning process. As always, positive, informative, and motivational feedback by the CAD coach is of fundamental importance.

## **Talent Identification (TID)**

### **Identification versus 'Scouting'**

At least until 1987, methods of talent identification (TID) in Australia were generally very rudimentary. Talent scouts with a 'good eye' observed trial games or competitions, to discover talented players. In lawn bowls and many other sports this process is still about the only method of 'talent identification' used. 'Talent scouting' is a term that might better describe this practice. Lawn bowling is not a skill that children can experience by improvisation in the schoolyard or playground. Today's talented bowlers represent those who have become successful in lawn bowling more typically by chance than through specific guidance.

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## **Focus of TID**

TID methods that have emerged since 1987 are more systematic. The Australian Institute of Sport (AIS) introduced TID in sports such as rowing, cycling, track and field, and canoeing. Sport scientists determine the physical and physiological demands of particular sports and make recommendations about the type of athletes suited to them. The Australian Sports Commission (ASC) introduced 'Sports Search', a program involving labour intensive anthropometric measuring and fitness testing of willing 12 to 16 year old subjects at participating schools. TID focuses on attributes that cannot readily change through training. For example, heredity is the primary influence on height and body shape. Training has little influence on such characteristics. A coach once said: "Training cannot put in what God left out".

Newer TID programs do not focus on players already skilled in sports being targeted. They focus on youthful athletes who have the physical attributes but not necessarily any experience whatever in those sports. Usage of the term 'Talent Identification' increasingly means these newer and more scientific programs.

## **TID for Lawn Bowls**

Lawn bowls is not a sport warranting a rigorous TID program. Lawn bowling imposes only modest physical demands on players. However, even limited demands can sometimes challenge the quality of performances.

The participation pyramid in lawn bowls has a broad base. Elite level bowling is a rather small apex of that pyramid. Total participation has been in decline for many years. Member recruitment programs appropriately focus more on numbers than on potential of new players. However, authorities could introduce TID procedure wherever an influx of youthful newcomers occurs, to identify those most likely to respond to specialised coaching and training.

## **Tests and Measurements**

Australian Coaching Council (1991) Better Coaching - Advanced Coach's Manual (Ch 3), Frank S. Pyke (Ed) Australian Sports Commission, which was the prescribed textbook for Level 2 Coaching Principles' Courses in Australia, describes measurement methods. The syllabus of this course includes brief training in somatotyping and anthropometric measuring. Thus, Level 2 lawn bowls coaches should have had exposure to the methods involved. Coaches who work with school groups may have had the opportunity to apply simple TID programs. However, such work in lawn bowls would have little point in the absence of funding for developmental programs.

Individuals within school groups would display wide variation in motivation and talent for lawn bowling. A primary aim of a TID program would be to identify the individuals with suitable attributes (i.e. 'talent') for the sport. The aim should encourage them to receive specialised coaching and training additional to the school group program. TID programs simplified for lawn bowls would exclude testing of factors more relevant to aerobic sports. This would probably include tests of power, speed, agility, oxygen uptake, etc.

Talent factors relevant to bowls would probably include most of those identified in the table appended at page 25.

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## Appendices

### Check List of Bowling Technique

Date:

Observer's Name:

Movement Phase (Described for Right Handed Bowlers)	Subject/Date of Observation							

#### PREPARATORY POSITIONING

Well-practiced mat laying procedure									
Right foot along delivery line									
Left foot slightly separate but parallel									
Toes about 10cm behind front of mat									

#### GRIP

Middle finger centred on running sole									
Bowl rings upright and aimed									
Right thumb near shoulder of large ring									
Bowls suitable size & grip comfortable									

#### STANCE

Shoulders square to delivery line									
Right arm sufficiently elevated									
Right arm extended along delivery line									
L. hand not drawing right arm off square									
Knees comfortably flexed									
Weight over balls of feet									
Shoulder line forward of toes									
Attention directed forward									

#### DELIVERY MOVEMENT

R. arm unflexed during pendulum swing									
Left heel lifts as right arm passes hip									
L. foot advances parallel to delivery line									
L. foot advances a normal walking pace									
Sufficient amount of back swing									
L. heel grounds as forward swing starts									
Left foot settles parallel to aiming line									
Forward swing smoothly accelerates									
R. knee moves to position behind L ankle									
Left hand moves to left knee									
Attention still directed forward									
Bowl released at lowest point of swing									
At least 90% of weight over left foot									
Shoulders forward, above left knee									

#### FOLLOW THROUGH & RECOVERY

R. arm extended along line, palm upward									
Attention focused on moving bowl									
Recovery separated from follow through									
Steps forward off mat									

## Lesson Plan Example

*(NB: Consider teaching complex skills (eg delivering a bowl) in parts (eg grip, stance, delivery, and follow through). Use a separate plan for each part and an extra plan to describe the method of chaining learned parts into a composite skill)*

<b>Skill:</b>		<i>Laying the Mat (Simple Skill)</i>	
<b>Purpose:</b>		<i>Locates a common "base" for delivering the jack and bowls, whereby the green surface is protected from wear and tear by the back foot of bowlers during their deliveries. The front edge of the mat provides a line for measuring distances to bowls or to ditches.</i>	
<b>Competency:</b>		<i>Lay mat at permissible positions so that its longer mid line coincides with the centre alignment of the rink.</i>	
<b>Equipment:</b>		<i>Mat, Rink</i>	
<b>Time Activity</b>	<b>Teaching</b>	<b>Method</b>	<b>Appraisal</b>
	<i>Explanation of skill</i>	<p><i>Introduce skill &amp; explain its purpose. Mention:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Tossing of coin</i></li> <li>• <i>Who lays mat</i></li> <li>• <i>Positioning for first end</i></li> <li>• <i>Positioning options for subsequent ends</i></li> <li>• <i>Wet weather can erase rink markings</i></li> <li>• <i>Rink realignments can result in confusing multiple rink markings</i></li> </ul>	<i>Test knowledge gained by questioning</i>
	<i>Demonstration of skill</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Pick up mat by corners of a short edge</i></li> <li>• <i>Squarely face rink marker at rear ditch</i></li> <li>• <i>Position mat after either crouching down or taking a forward pace and bending as in a delivery movement</i></li> <li>• <i>Align mat with rink marker if centre line not visible</i></li> <li>• <i>Align front edge two mat diagonals plus one mat length from ditch if 2m mark not visible</i></li> <li>• <i>Resume an erect posture.</i></li> <li>• <i>Straighten a dislodged mat</i></li> </ul>	<i>Test learning by questioning about key points</i>
	<i>Practise of skill by client</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Correct (if necessary)</i></li> <li>• <i>Frequent, informative, positive feedback</i></li> </ul>	<i>Observe &amp; Analyse</i>

## Check List of Coaching Behaviours

Observed Coaching Behaviour (Mark appropriate column)	Competency Satisfactory	Modify Immediately	Modify Later	Modify Ultimately
Empathizing skill (eg. supportive, encouraging, rewarding)				
Reinforcing skill (eg Q & A about previous session, summing up at end of current session)				
Planning for video-taped session (eg prompts, subject sequencing, subject-to-subject transitions)				
Explaining skill (eg. clear, concise, correct and convincing)				
Mentioning of related basic tactical matters (eg. avoiding short bowling when shots down)				
Mentioning of mental states essential for competently performing the skill. (eg. focusing)				
Mentioning of adverse lifestyle indulgences (eg. Sunburn, insufficient fluid intake)				
Partitioning the teaching of complex skills (eg grip, stance, movement, follow through)				
Questioning skill (eg stimulate attention, test comprehension)				
Demonstrating skill (eg. visible, exemplary, frequent, critical cues)				
Maintaining momentum (eg preparedness, avoiding external distractions & interruptions)				
Maintaining interest (eg novelty, variety, avoiding inactivity)				
Observing skill (eg alertness, good positioning, technique v style)				
Diagnosing skill (eg perceptual v. movement errors, interrelated errors, cause v. effect)				
Socializing skill (eg easy courtesy, eye contact, personal space conventions re 'touching')				
Communicating skill (eg considerate, articulate, responsive, dispassionate, positive, informative)				
Training skill (eg practice drill suggestions, challenging variations)				

## Talent Identification for Lawn Bowls

Suggested Tests and Measurements, with the underlying rationale.

Test/Measurement	General Considerations	Bowling Considerations
Age (If child)	Relates to height, weight	Capacity for bowling influenced by stage of growth and physical development
Height	Height of older siblings, parents	Is delivery at the green surface easier for short bowlers, who do not have to bend as far as tall bowlers? Do bowlers well under average height greatly outnumber bowlers well above average height? Do tall people prefer basketball, netball, football, etc where their height is an advantage? Do many tall people take up lawn bowling and progress to elite performer levels? Are shorter bowls champions much more common, over the years? Should heights of a statistical sample of elite bowlers be benchmarked?
Weight	Over/underweight Body Mass Index (BMI) = Weight (kg) ÷ Height <sup>2</sup> (m) Somatotype of parents: 'Mesomorph'=muscular, well-developed chest, shoulders, upper arms 'Endomorph'=overweight, well-developed hips, thighs 'Ectomorph'=thin and tallish	Is a newcomer with obese parents or older siblings likely to develop differently? Is obesity a disadvantage to performance? Above what BMI value (norm 20-25) does excess weight influence bowling performance? Should BMIs of elite bowlers be benchmarked? What somatotype mix suits bowling ability? Would, say, 38% mesomorphism, 34% endomorphism, and 28% ectomorphism be close to ideal? Should somatotypes of a sample of elite bowlers be charted?
Skin fold Measurement (Skin fold callipers)	Body fat. Correlate with BMI. Check diet	Does over or underweight significantly affect performance? What performance factors are most affected: endurance, fitness, flexibility, etc? Do family characteristics in each case indicate that bodyweight factors are congenital or are controllable through programs?
Grip Strength (Calibrated dynamometer)	Firm grip	Strength to hold a bowl of appropriate size with the fingertips on fast greens and to grasp a bowl firmly for quicker deliveries or on slower greens.
Sit Ups (Number/min - feet held)	Abdominal & hip strength Endurance, Resistance to muscular fatigue.	Resistance to fatigue of lower trunk during long games in tournaments.
Push Ups (Number/min)	Arm & shoulder girdle strength Fine movement control Resistance to muscular fatigue	Strength to deliver fast bowls on very slow greens or in attacking play.
Sit and Reach (cms)	Trunk flexion Hamstring soundness Lower back strength Freedom from lower back pain.	Resistance to fatigue of hip and large leg muscles during long games in tournaments.
Hip Range of Motion (Goniometric measurement - degrees)	Hip flexibility	Consistent and comfortable movement into and recovery from a stable delivery stance