

MIND OVER MATTER IN THE DELIVERY SKILL

Filed under: [Behaviour - Mind Over Matter](#)

INTRODUCTION

The Experience: In lawn bowls the key to improving your game is to train your mind and emotions equally as well as you train your physical body. This statement is often borne out to bowlers when playing a series of competitive games over a period two or three days. It goes without question that in competition, whether winning or losing, many players reach the verge of, or partially, or fully becoming so intense and anxious that their emotional and mental stimulation affects their body, causing it to tense up and perform poorly. The simple remediation is the coordination of your mental aspects and physical attributes by the use of your senses; this is simply mind over matter. If that sounds mind-blowing, then you'll find putting this practice into action a pleasant mind-bending experience.

TRAINING FOR COMPETITION

To be competitive in training and competition you must train, this means mental toughness and physical body preparation by knowing what to control and condition as follows;

Mentally: This is mental toughness and means changing the way you think and react to your outer and inner senses as follows

- **Externally:** controlling your external senses such as what you see, hear, feel, taste and smell,
- **Internally:** controlling your inner imagination from forming mental images or concepts of what is not actually present to the senses such as visualizing what's not occurring, misinterpreting what is being said, internal feelings such as shock and fear, inner feelings of hunger, smell and taste.

Physically: This relates to two areas; physical and game fitness such as endurance and skill development as follows;

- **Body endurance;** this means having all round physical condition within the areas of the arms, shoulders, neck, body and legs to endure the period of the event,

- **Skill development;** this means having mental and physical coordination with muscular atonement and strength to perform the required amount of delivery shots throughout the event. This can only be obtained by individual practice of the various shots to a tactically setup head or heads. It is the act of repeating the delivery action of a particular shot that improves the performance and production of playing skills. Repetition of the shots instills a mental, physical and muscular atonement within the memory bank for an automatic presentation. This does not mean practicing in groups with other bowlers but training as an individual;

Note:

- Physically and mentally you can't have one without the other!
- Training or practicing in groups prevents individuals rising above their present standard. In groups the only one who gains is the dominant player,
- If you can perform the shots you'll have no problems fitting into the team or side environment.

MENTAL ASPECTS

Internal and external dialogue: During the preparation and delivery performance most bowlers don't see what they are supposed to see, a vast majority don't really hear what they are supposed to hear and very few bowlers actually feel what their supposed to feel, and they never realise that their external sight, sound, or feelings get jumbled up with internal dialogue, or internal imagined sights and feelings go uncontrolled until the quality of their external concentration diminishes. This essentially results in reduced performance and efficiency; particularly if they are engaged in a primarily external activity like delivering the jack or bowl, which requires the very best sensory acuity to perform at the highest standards.

External sensory input: Similarly, for the vast majority of bowlers, the problems of coordinating the external sensory input of the delivery skill with the physical movements of their body don't usually arise out of poor eyesight, hearing or balance, but rather as a result of the interference which prevents the external sensory message from getting through to the brain. Problems of hand/eye coordination in bowling are most often a result of internal sensory interference. Once you organise what should be external and what should be internal within your mind you will see a dramatic improvement in both coordination and playing performance.

CONCENTRATION

Definition: The definition of concentration is "The ability to direct ones thoughts or actions towards one subject," e.g. the follow-through action of the eye hand and aiming point alignment.

One pointed concentration: This illustrates the value of a one pointed concentration so intense that nothing is allowed to distract the mind from the task at hand during a bowling skill performance that is an important key to success. It means to be able to ignore any distractions: such as antagonistic fans; inclement weather; personal hopes and fears; the presence of friends and family; and even your opponents attempts to "psyche" you out; and keep your attention focused on the "here and now" of

your body coordination and follow-through action. It is an invaluable skill for any bowler to master, yet it is an easy learnable and obtainable skill!

Learning: So to understand how to learn and improve concentration, it's first useful to consider how concentration is most frequently lost both externally and internally;

Externally: When delivering the jack or bowl you should only need to concentrate on;

1. **The aiming point;** don't blink or move your eyes off the aiming point, if you do you have lost your concentration, other thoughts will enter your mind.

2. **Breathing;** inhale with the backswing, exhale with the forward of the delivery arm; this collapses your body's diaphragm and allows you to bend forward freely,

3. **Alignment;** the forward swing of the delivery hand must culminate with eye, hand and aiming point alignment. At the culminating point the hand must be positioned 30cm below the line of sight; this controls the precision of the pendulum action of the delivery arm and course of the jack or bowl.

Internally; all other aspects of the delivery should be automatically done unconsciously from the force of habit.

Note: the moment of fixation of your eyes on the aiming point automatically controls a definite stage in the course of events during the delivery action such as the forward body direction, alignment, length, balance and your senses of hearing, feeling, taste and smell.

ILLUSIONAL MOMENT

Cause: During the follow-through action an illusional moment can occur when eye movement momentarily breaks your concentration as the pendulum action of the delivery arm swings forward towards the culminating point. This is in fact your mind racing ahead of your movements.

Effect: This illusional moment has the effect on the mind, which is a misperception of the eye, hand and aiming point alignment. Your thoughts have in effect momentarily gone to your memory bank and then returns to deceive your brain into believing that the correct eye, hand and aiming point alignment has taken place.

Recognition: This illusion state is recognised when the subconscious mind internally tells you it has taken place but your conscious mind externally has not seen it, when mentally questioned "You are not sure or cannot remember if it has taken place", but the shot has gone haywire.

Remediation: Ensure that when you deliver the next bowl that you externally see the aiming point, feel the breathing and actually see the eye, hand and aiming point alignment out in front of you.

STRESS

Definition: "A disturbing physiological or psychological influence which produces a state of severe tension in an individual."

The cause: In most cases it is your mental reaction to negative stress which can come from poor training in the following areas;

- Poor control of your inner and outer senses,
- Poor levels of physical fitness that lead to fatigue and stress,
- Poor eye and directional control of the body,
- Poor breathing control during the delivery,
- Poor relaxation management.

The Effects: This may be connected with all sorts of ailments. Negative stress works in two ways, it creates immediate problems and discomfort and in the long term it can cause most damage through the slow accumulation of harmful side effects to your health.

Remediation: Optimum performance has a component of stress in it and the amount required varies with the individual, stress can be controlled and managed by various methods, e.g. power breathing or controlled relaxations sessions.

In lawn bowls, mental actions and your body re-actions govern how you play, it is the enemy within and the one that you should get to know.

MIND OVER MATTER

The eyes: Believe it or not your inner senses control what you do mentally and physically. Your outer senses of sight, hearing, feeling, smell and taste relay messages to your inner senses. So if you have programmed the delivery skill into your inner thoughts it is common sense to use your eyes and block out the other four senses prior to and when delivering the jack or bowl. In the delivery your eyes control the following aspects;

- Stops you from thinking
- Stops what you hear, feel, smell and taste,
- Controls your alignment,
- Controls the length of the delivery,
- Controls your balance,

The key: This illustrates the value of a one pointed concentration of the eyes on the aiming point so intense that nothing is allowed to distract the mind from the task at hand. This must occur just prior to standing on the mat and through the delivery skill performance which is the important key to success. It means to be able to ignore any distractions and keep your attention focused on the "here and now" which is the eye, hand and aiming point alignment.

Movement of the eyes: Movement of the eyes continually takes place when we talk, think or move. It is a natural procedural movement that stimulates the brain to work either externally in the conscious state or internally in the subconscious state. In fact various experts can read your mind by the body reactions from your senses, particularly from your eye movement. This phenomenon is not new we all read the other peoples minds in some form during communication. Of course we are aware that if you block out one sense your thoughts makes the other become more alert to detect what is going on around you. In fact externally if you concentrate with one sense you can externally and internally block out the other senses. A good example of this is when someone is intensely watching television, they will not see, hear, feel, smell or taste anything that is occurring around them. Now that the hypnotic state of mind you require to be in just before and during the delivery of the jack or bowl and through the follow-through action of eye, hand and aiming point alignment.

Time on the mat: Excessive time spent on the mat checking anything or everything once, twice or a dozen times means you have no control or have never obtained the physical or mental toughness in training your senses. These aspects should be checked behind the mat before you commence the delivery drill, and all other aspect should be automatically placed into position without looking or thinking about them. "Think about what has been said here"; then think about what dancers do because they are trained to place their feet and body automatically in various positions whilst moving, twisting or turning, and you only have to do it standing momentarily on the mat and then move forward at a slower speed during the delivery. The longer you stand on the mat your mind goes into the subconscious state and will rattle your brain with all sorts of thoughts and if it continues that way you're mental and physical performance skills will certainly deteriorate.