

MENTORING

HOW TO DEVELOP, IMPLEMENT, REVIEW AND MEASURE OUTCOMES FROM A MENTORING PROGRAM.

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Presentation to Zone 15 Coaching Academy 20th February, 2012.

WHAT

The model of mentoring, popular in the 1980's, in which an older, more experienced person passed on their wisdom and knowledge, has evolved.

The new model, emphasises the value of students engaging actively in their own learning and critically reflecting on their own experiences, is now considered best practice. (Extract from Leadership Development Services)

Mentoring can be defined *“as a partnership in which two people collaborate to achieve mutually defined goals that focus on improving the skills, abilities, knowledge, and thinking of a student bowler”*.

The student does not have to be a new bowler but can be an experienced bowler wanting to improve their overall performance at our sport.

WHY

A dilemma facing our sport is that around 30% of all new bowlers leave during the first three months of joining a Bowling Club?

The reason for this -put quite simply, we do not meet their expectations.

The past practice of allowing new people to assimilate into our Clubs, without an induction system has been unsuccessful.

Data supplied by Bowls NSW since 2009, shows a downward trend each year in membership compared to the previous year, in Men's Bowling Clubs.

We can expect membership declines to continue unless something constructive is done about it.

Mentoring can provide a sound induction system for new members and may assist to reverse that early loss trend.

Mentoring can also help us motivate experienced players, especially those in the lower grades.

We can structure special activities to help those players who have a constant struggle to improve by inviting them to participate in our programs.

This proactive stance will help rather than hinder. It gets people involved.

Elitism, essential in all fields of endeavour, is a negative influence on inclusiveness.

For bowlers graded in 6's & 7's, involvement with the higher graded players is generally quite low.

Clubs could have at least one game each week - single entry only. A blind draw for position could then decide teams.

New players to our sport want to learn faster and progress sooner than has been past practice. New players just don't want to spend seven years playing Lead before progressing to play in other positions.

The timing is right to implement a change to past coaching practises.

We need to get people on the greens playing as soon as possible. They can then learn from their mistakes. As much as possible we need to help them minimise those mistakes and hasten the learning process.

WHO

Chairperson of Coaches, within a Club, needs to help his/her Coaching team bring a well thought out recommendation for mentoring, to the Club's Bowls Committees for consideration.

A draft recommendation will be included with this paper.

The very least we want from our committees is to implement a three month trial.

Given that opportunity, mentoring can become a regular coaching activity at your club.

HOW

Determine realistic objectives; what do you want to achieve from this initiative?

In short form at Umina, our **primary objective** was to utilise the knowledge and skills of our more competent bowlers to help implement an induction program for newer players. We also needed to provide opportunities for existing players to participate in a self-improvement activity through mentoring.

Our **secondary objectives** involved more routine matters. - We wanted to cover a range of things such as:- safety, courtesy, looking after our greens, dumping bowls etc., things that may not be generally practiced – this list should be developed to suit your Club's needs.

The wheels move slowly in clubs so make allowances for delays that may occur.

- Take care as you develop the program; implement change gradually, consult widely, hasten slowly.
- Get to the opinion leaders; manage those who know more than you do.
- Be aware of the negativity of the “Table of Knowledge”
- Involve and consult those players who may be interested in the concept of mentoring and could act as mentors later on.
- Talk to newer bowlers and get their “in principle” support as participants.
- Develop your training plan.
- Be prepared to assist Mentors to develop some basic presentation skills if necessary. Help them to understand the fundamentals of your mentoring program and its objectives. Keep them involved and informed as you move along.

WHEN

Time the implementation of your program, (avoid the January to May period [pennant trials and pennants]) so that you have a minimum period of four clear weeks of continuous training, longer if possible.

We chose thirteen weeks as our time frame. Take whatever time is required to adequately complete the task.

- *Choose your participants well.*
- *Newer bowlers have automatic entry and are very willing to participate when the activity is clearly outlined and the training plan is explained.*

- *Work with each player and mentor to complete a benchmark "50 Bowl Challenge" ASAP.*

Use one metre from the jack as your yardstick. We found that using a mat length as the measuring criteria was too harsh for new bowlers. Make it easier for these players so they are not discouraged by their results.

This 50 Bowl Challenge will then become the level of performance against which you can measure the success of your mentoring activity for each student.

Primarily the results of that test will highlight, for the Coach, player weaknesses that require particular attention.

The proposed course of corrective action should be discussed with the student and his mentor, thus we can target our efforts where we will get the desired outcome.

MANAGE THE PROGRAM

If this initiative is not properly managed you will find that there will be many opportunities for mistakes to occur.

- *Remember, a mentor is not a coach.*
- She or he is a person of some knowledge and skill at our sport, willing to pass on some of those valuable assets to assist the future development of newer and other, less experienced, bowlers.
- *Do not underestimate the potential of your mentors.* There are many that have never been asked to help before and you may find some very worthwhile surprises.

REVIEW THE COMPLETED PROGRAM AND REPORT ON OUTCOMES

At the end of the program you should have a file for each participant that should comprise a "before" and "after" 50 bowls test, plus copies of all corrective drills so that comparisons can be made; players can be evaluated.

Other training opportunities will present themselves. It is important to be thorough and to keep your mentor and student in the information loop.

Provide a report to your committee of the results achieved and make comment on any future changes you propose to implement.

IN SUMMARY

- Write up your program plan and objectives – as the saying goes “fail to plan – plan to fail”
- Set realistic goals
- Get approval from the Club Committee
- Select mentors and students
- Hold briefing and training session/s
- Begin the program
- Complete the “50 Bowl Challenge” ASAP
- Analyse outcomes of those tests
- Work with mentors to implement correctional coaching
- Regularly review the progress of the program
- Implement any adjustments that may be required
- After 4-6 weeks complete a second “50 Bowl Challenge”
- Measure and compare outcomes from each test
- Discuss these with mentors and students
- Write up final report to committee
- Thank everybody for their participation
- Decide on your next activity

FINALLY, WHAT IS NEXT FOR MENTORING

Mentoring is a program that allows Coaches to be proactive

It provides opportunities for our more experienced players to participate and pass on some of their valuable knowledge and skills gained over many years of playing our sport.

Through this process we can target a variety of training activities which enables us, as Coaches, to motivate our players of all levels.

Thank you.

Ray Simpson 20.02 2012.

I wish to acknowledge the Ladies and Men's Bowls Committees at Umina Beach for their support over this past year of development for mentoring, and to David Cameron, chairman of our Zone 15 Coaching Academy for his encouragement and final editing of this paper on Mentoring. Ray Simpson.