

Rossmoor Lawn Bowling Club

Singles Play

Some points to remember...

1. Your shot selection:

- a. Remember the draw shot is the basis of the game. Consistency is the key to success – make every bowl count.
- b. Try to get your first bowl close as it is the most important you will bowl. It is not only the foundation of the end but a confidence booster and will surely put pressure on your opponent.
- c. Remember a running shot is often the hardest to play and an objective missed means a bowl out of the head. Size up the situation and the green and decide if it is worth it – you may well be better off settling for the draw or the drive.

2. Pay attention to the green:

- a. Pay close attention to how the green is playing.
 - i. Is it fast, sluggish, wider on one side than the other, etc.?
 - ii. How can you adapt your play to the green?
 1. Can you find a reliable hand to play? If so, stay with that hand.

3. Size up your opponent and try to exploit weaknesses.

- a. How experienced is your opponent?
- b. Does your opponent favor one hand more than the other? If so, can you change to that side to draw to the jack and take that side away?
- c. What are your opponent's strong and weak shots? How good is their drive, draw, blocks shots, etc.?
- d. How does the bias of your bowls compare to your opponent's? Do you have bias to draw around or go narrow?
- e. How does your opponent deal with pressure? Tense? Relaxed?

4. Dealing with gamesmanship: For instance,

- a. does your opponent try to distract you with conversation?
- b. stay on the mat after their bowl has come to a stop or block you from the mat when it is your turn to bowl?
- c. try to discourage measuring?
- d. Talk and/or move around behind you when you are on the mat?

5. Tactics and strategies:

- a. Does your opponent have a strategy and the skills to make plays?
- b. Set the mat and jack to advantage.
 - i. Find what suits you or does not suit your opponent and place the mat and deliver the jack in that exact position.
 - ii. Never vary the length of the jack while you are outscoring your opponent.
 - iii. Do not let your opponent force you off your good hand or the hand you are playing.
 - iv. Make sure you have something close before changing to attempt a different shot.

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- c. Never try to get first shot early in an end; instead play for a good second shot.
 - i. If you cannot score, settle for second shot. Your opponent cannot go far in singles with one point.
- d. Keep the pressure on your opponent:
 - i. Whether you are behind or ahead,
 - 1. stay focused and maintain your highest level of play. If ahead, do not let up. If behind, do not give up.
 - 2. do not take unnecessary risks.
 - 3. When in trouble, think logically and devise a plan for disrupting your opponent's game. Take your time, think, find the shot that has the highest probability of success and keep at it.
 - 4. Do not be intimidated by a good driver. It is a high risk shot and will not work much of the time. Stay with the draw game.
 - 5. No matter the score, do your best to appear calm and confident.

Adapted from Bowls with Bryant by David Bryant (1984)

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Talking points:

- Singles tournaments are different from all other tournaments. How?
 - One person against another.
 - You use 4 bowls.
 - Scoring is done by points instead of a fixed number of ends.
 - You cannot rely on a skip to make decisions.
 - Markers are used when available.
- You must pay attention!
 - To the green for “bad” spots. If you are having a hard time bowling on one hand (side of the green) don’t bowl on that side. You may be wasting your precious number of bowls.
 - To your opponent.
 - Never underestimate your opponent.
 - How experienced is your opponent? Don’t be intimidated. Play one bowl at a time.
 - Does he favor one hand over the other? Force him to play his less favored hand. BUT don’t let him force you to use your less favored hand. You must play both well. Practice to become proficient.
 - Do you understand your opponent’s bias? Don’t use his line unless you know you both have the same bias and you plan to block his line.
 - Does he play a lot of running shots? Is he wasting his bowls by doing this? Do you have a back bowl in case he connects with the jack?
 - When the pressure is on him, does he make mistakes or does he step up his game?
 - To yourself.
 - Are you getting complacent because you are ahead? Don’t ever let up!
 - Getting tired or losing focus? Play the game at your own pace. Do not be overly eager to step on the mat.
 - Always appear to your opponent as patient, serene, confident and full of concentration.
- The basis for all singles play is the draw shot.
 - Get your first shot as close to the jack as possible; this will put pressure on your opponent.
 - If your opponent is right on the jack, don’t waste bowls trying to dislodge him from it; go for a close second shot; remember you only have 4 bowls and you can’t waste them.
 - Remember “2 on the jack and one in the back” – don’t put two on the same side of the jack; make your opponent have to use 2 bowls to displace your shot bowls.
 - Don’t forget to put a bowl in the back as a catcher or to cover groupings of your opponent’s bowls.

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- Mat and Jack
 - If you have a favorite length for the jack that works for you, keep using it. The mat doesn't have to stay in the same place, but the jack length should.
 - If your opponent catches on to your favorite length, go to your second favorite length.
 - If you find your opponent has a favorite spot for the mat or length for the jack, move the mat when you have a chance. (You can tell his favorite spot if he continuously scores points from that mat's spot and/or length of his jack.)
- Play the game
 - Find a reliable hand and stick to it whenever possible. Never fight a bad hand.
 - If you can't take shot, settle for the second shot. If all your opponent can get is one point at a time then you give yourself an opportunity by getting multiple points in other ends.
 - If you are down by a lot in an end, draw into the head to reduce his points instead of trying a running shot or drive to move the jack.
 - Do not take unnecessary risks. Any risk should be calculated. In fact every delivery should be calculated.
 - What do I stand to gain?
 - What do I stand to lose?
 - What is the state of the game? (What end? Am I up or down? By how much?)
 - Is this the time to play this shot?
 - Before playing a drive shot look for the worst that could happen – often it does.
 - Only play a blocked shot as the last resort. A bowl in the back as a catcher or cover shot is likely worth a lot more.
 - Apply the MUST rule for every bowl: I must be up! I must not be narrow! I must get the right length!
 - When in trouble, think logically and devise a plan for breaking up your opponent's game. (Move the mat. Change the length of the jack. Block his favored hand. Etc.)
- When under pressure take a deep breath and remember bowls is about three things – PATIENCE, CONCENTRATION AND COMMON SENSE.