

Zone 9 Coaching Committee

Playing in the Wind

Never have the words from the Peter, Paul and Mary song “Blowin’ in the Wind” been more appropriate and challenging for bowlers in Zone 9 as they are from August till October.

Adjusting to strong wind, particularly if it is swirling and gusty, is probably more challenging for most bowlers than very fast or very slow greens. In fact, playing in strong wind can be the most frustrating and soul-destroying experience in bowls and most bowlers lose concentration and confidence resulting in them playing well below their normal standard.

Top line bowlers seem to be less affected because they have learnt a very important lesson: MAKE THE WIND YOUR FRIEND. Also, they “know” what to do to adapt to all green and weather conditions. While a lot of us don’t have this innate ability practice will drastically improve our future success.

So, what can be done to overcome these challenges to help the average bowler?

Firstly, practice in windy conditions at long and short jack lengths on all speeds of green because there’s no better way to become familiar with how your bowls will act on the wide and narrow hand. Also, practice adds confidence and predictability to prepare for when a crucial match is played. The practice sessions will allow us to familiarise with the surrounding conditions of movement of trees and shrubs around the green and wind blowing in our eyes and therefore avoid future distractions.

Secondly, choose the hand you play carefully and remember to MAKE THE WIND YOUR FRIEND. When playing in a strong, gusty cross wind your bowl will be affected more on the “skinny” side by being blown away from your chosen line than if you play the “wide” side. This can be frustrating and demoralising resulting in negative thoughts, panic and over correction.

Playing the wide side in heavy wind won’t be exempt from your bowl being affected by gusty strong wind but, if extra grass is taken, the result is usually better. Bowls on the narrow side will be blown off line more markedly and the bias of the bowl will be negated. This applies more to narrow bias bowls than wide bias bowls.

All bowls are influenced by wind so becoming familiar with necessary adjustments and keeping a “cool” head will add to success.