

CPD LEVEL 2 – TECHNICAL AND TACTICAL COACHING

The Role of the Lead: Setting the Foundation for Success

This module explores the pivotal role of the Lead in team bowls, focusing on the technical and tactical demands of the position. The session develops an understanding of how the lead establishes the tone and structure of each end, setting up the head and providing the platform for the team's success. Coaches will gain practical tools to train, develop, and evaluate lead players effectively through targeted practices, observation, and reflective learning.

Session Aims

- To understand the key duties and responsibilities of a lead in team play.
- To identify the technical attributes and psychological traits of an effective lead.
- To explore tactical decision-making relevant to rink conditions and opposition.
- To provide structured exercises and coaching methods to develop lead players.
- To strengthen coaching consistency within the Technical and Tactical CPD pathway.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this CPD, participants will be able to:

1. Explain the purpose and tactical importance of the lead's position.
2. Demonstrate effective practices to develop draw consistency and jack delivery.
3. Analyse how tactical adjustments influence team performance.
4. Coach leads to manage rink conditions, line selection, and tempo.
5. Implement practical session structures that improve confidence, focus, and adaptability in leads.

1. Understanding the Lead's Role

The Lead is the foundation of the team structure. Their bowls shape the head, influence the rhythm of play, and provide the building blocks for tactical control. A good lead establishes consistency and confidence throughout the team, controlling both the physical environment and the psychological tempo of each end.

Primary Duties of the Lead

1. Deliver the jack accurately to the skip's nominated length.
2. Set the head by drawing two consistent bowls close to the jack.
3. Establish line and pace to give teammates a visual and tactical guide.
4. Adapt quickly to rink variations, green speed, and environmental changes.
5. Demonstrate discipline and focus across all ends, maintaining positive team tempo.

2. Attributes and Hallmarks of a Good Lead

Technical Attributes: Reliable draw technique, consistent weight judgment, early reading of the green, versatility to play both hands.

Behavioural Attributes: Calm under pressure, patient, communicative, disciplined, professional.

Recognised Hallmarks of a Good Lead:

- Preparation before delivery: Always places a bowl beside the mat before casting the jack –

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maintaining weight awareness and preventing unnecessary delay.

- Consistent pre-shot routine.
- Early green reading.
- Jack and mat control.
- Clear communication.
- Tempo management.
- Quiet leadership.

3. How to Become a Good Lead

Becoming a reliable and confident lead requires deliberate practice, reflection, and match experience. The following framework guides how to coach and develop players aspiring to lead effectively.

Stage 1 – Master the Fundamentals

- Draw repetition drills.
- Jack delivery accuracy drills.
- Line control using visual markers.

Stage 2 – Develop Green Awareness

- Observe rink pace before and during play.
- Practise switching hands for adaptability.
- Vary mat and jack positions.

Stage 3 – Build Routine and Mental Resilience

- Establish a consistent pre-delivery sequence.
- Visualise line and weight before each bowl.
- Use breathing to maintain composure.

Stage 4 – Match Habits

- Always prepare your next bowl beside the mat.
- Maintain awareness of the head and skip's instructions.
- Observe opponents closely.

Stage 5 – Reflect and Adjust

After each session, reflect on accuracy, consistency, and focus. Record observations for improvement.

4. Tactical Awareness and Opposition Management

A strong lead can subtly influence tactical direction.

1. If your opponent is bowling on the opposite hand, play slightly tight to finish in or near their draw line but still close to the Jack.
2. If not playing well, bowl on the same side as your opponent to disrupt their rhythm.

Additional considerations include direction, surface pace, alignment with the skip, and confidence.

5. Practical Coaching Exercises

Example exercises:

- Two-Bowl Draw to Jack – Improve consistency of line and length.

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- Jack Casting Accuracy – Refine control of jack delivery.
- Line and Shoulder Drill – Build precision in aiming.
- Opposition Side Simulation – Practise tactical awareness.
- Rhythm and Tempo Routine – Embed pre-shot sequence.

6. If the Lead Draws a Good Close Bowl

If the first bowl finishes just in front or jack level: draw just behind for cover.

If both bowls are tight: vary next end's length or hand to shift momentum.

7. Coaching Discussion and Reflection

Discussion Points:

- How can the lead influence rhythm and control?
- How can coaches identify inconsistency?

Reflection:

- What routines help maintain focus?
- How can improvement be measured?

8. Summary – The Lead's Mindset

"A lead doesn't win the game outright — but they control how it's played."

Precision, patience, and quiet pressure define a strong lead. Their calm discipline inspires teammates and sets the tone for success.

Assessment Task

Design a 30-minute technical session for developing lead players, including one draw exercise, one tactical drill, and one self-review activity.

Glossary

Jack – The small white target ball.

Draw Shot – A controlled bowl aimed to finish near the jack.

Bias – The shape that causes the bowl to curve.

Trail – Moving the jack to a better position.

Head – The group of bowls around the jack.

Shoulder – Visual aiming point on the green.

