

## CPD LEVEL 2 – TECHNICAL AND TACTICAL COACHING

### The Role of the Vice Skip – Tactical Support, Communication, and Team Balance

This module explores the Vice Skip's pivotal role as the tactical link between the front end and the skip.

The Vice Skip supports strategic decision-making, provides feedback on head development, and contributes to team rhythm, morale, and cohesion.

The session equips coaches to teach and evaluate the Vice Skip's technical, tactical, and communication responsibilities in competitive play.

### Session Aims

- To understand the key duties and tactical support role of the Vice Skip.
- To develop communication and coordination skills between front-end players and the skip.
- To strengthen tactical awareness, positional play, and decision-sharing.
- To enhance consistency and confidence in middle-order play.
- To help coaches train and assess Vice Skips effectively within team structures.

### Learning Outcomes

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

1. Explain the Vice Skip's role in team communication and tactical development.
2. Demonstrate the technical consistency required in mid-order play.
3. Support head building, positional bowls, and tactical transitions.
4. Analyse skip-vice coordination and communication flow.
5. Apply structured practices to build confidence and composure in the Vice Skip role.

### 1. Understanding the Vice Skip's Role

The Vice Skip is the tactical bridge between the front end and the skip.

They are responsible for supporting decision-making, maintaining rhythm, and ensuring the team's tactical plan remains on track.

The Vice Skip must:

- Read and communicate the developing head clearly.
- Support the skip's decisions and relay them effectively to the front end.
- Maintain composure and lead by example when under pressure.
- Measure shots accurately and report impartially.
- Offer tactical insights that strengthen the team's position.

### Primary Duties

1. Head Management: Support the skip in developing, protecting, or enhancing the head to create favourable situations.

The Vice Skip should recognise when the head needs to be:

- Protected – playing a positional or cover bowl to guard against opposition risk.
- Developed – building additional options to strengthen scoring potential.
- Enhanced – adjusting the head structure to make it more advantageous for the skip's next shot.

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2. Communication: Maintain clear two-way communication between the skip and front end.
3. Measurement and Clarity: Accurately measure, call, and report shot results objectively.
4. Positional Play: Deliver bowls that protect, develop, or enhance the head, ensuring the skip faces the most favourable scenario possible for their next delivery.
5. Leadership: Reinforce morale, calmness, and team cohesion on the green.

## 2. Attributes and Hallmarks of a Good Vice Skip

| Technical Attributes                            | Tactical / Leadership Attributes             |
|-------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| <b>Reliable draw and yard-on ability</b>        | Good communicator with both skip and lead    |
| <b>Consistent delivery tempo</b>                | Observant and tactically aware               |
| <b>Ability to adapt to the head's needs</b>     | Calm, steady influence on the rink           |
| <b>Positional bowl placement skills</b>         | Positive and supportive leadership style     |
| <b>Focused, composed, and accurate measurer</b> | Trusted by teammates to make sound judgments |

### Hallmarks of a Good Vice Skip

- Trustworthiness: The skip can rely on their judgment and accuracy.
- Tactical Awareness: Sees opportunities and threats before others do.
- Measured Composure: Keeps the team settled during tight ends.
- Effective Communication: Speaks clearly, calmly, and purposefully.
- Leadership Support: Encourages unity and confidence, never undermining.
- Technical Reliability: Consistently contributes useful bowls to every head.

“A great Vice Skip is the team’s anchor — the calm eye in the middle of the storm.”

## 3. How to Become a Good Vice Skip

Becoming an effective Vice Skip requires the balance of technical competence, tactical awareness, and emotional intelligence.

### Stage 1 – Build Technical Stability

- Develop a reliable draw shot under varying lengths and paces.
- Practise yard-on and controlled weight shots for head correction.
- Focus on a consistent pre-shot routine and composure between deliveries.

### Stage 2 – Strengthen Tactical Understanding

- Observe and discuss skip tactics during team play.
- Learn to identify positional risk and tactical opportunities.
- Practice heads that require positional or defensive bowls.
- Understand when and how to suggest tactical options appropriately.

### Stage 3 – Communication and Coordination

- Practise communication clarity — confirm skip instructions to the front end.

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- Use positive, concise language (e.g. "You're holding one," "Stay narrow next bowl").
- Reinforce the skip's authority — ensure consistent messages reach the team.
- Build trust through calm, fact-based communication.

## Stage 4 – Match Leadership

- Support skip decisions even when under pressure.
- Help manage the team's emotional balance after tough ends.
- Lead by example through calm posture and consistent play.

## Stage 5 – Reflection and Self-Assessment

- Did I keep communication clear and consistent?
- Was I accurate in measuring and head feedback?
- Did I make tactical suggestions constructively?
- How did I manage team morale and tempo?

## 4. Tactical Awareness and Decision Support

The Vice Skip must master the balance between initiative and support.

Their role is to position bowls intelligently to either protect, build, or open up the head, depending on the team's tactical needs.

Tactical priorities include:

- Understanding when to play defensively to protect the head versus when to play positively to develop or enhance it.
- Recognising how to make the head more favourable for the skip to finish the end decisively.
- Suggesting or executing positional bowls that secure safe options for later play.
- Supporting the skip's tactical vision by keeping the head in a structure that limits opposition scoring.
- Reading the pace and angles of the head to anticipate likely outcomes before they occur.

### Common Tactical Scenarios

| Situation                                              | Vice Skip Focus / Strategy                         |
|--------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Team holding one with an open head</b>              | Draw a positional bowl behind Jack for protection. |
| <b>Opposition holding shot with a short front bowl</b> | Play firm draw or yard-on to remove or trail.      |
| <b>Tight end with uncertain count</b>                  | Measure calmly and report objectively.             |
| <b>Momentum is turning against the team</b>            | Reassure teammates, keep communication positive.   |
| <b>Skip under pressure</b>                             | Offer supportive body language and concise advice. |



## 5. Coaching Exercises for Vice Skip Development

| Exercise                        | Objective                                     | Setup and Method                                    | Coaching Focus                             |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| <b>Head Observation Drill</b>   | Develop analytical observation.               | Vice skip records end results and tactical changes. | Awareness, note-taking, and communication. |
| <b>Positional Bowl Practice</b> | Improve accuracy in defensive or cover bowls. | Deliver to pre-marked zones behind the jack.        | Weight control, purpose, patience.         |
| <b>Measuring Challenge</b>      | Build confidence and accuracy in measuring.   | Simulate close heads for decision practice.         | Objectivity and precision.                 |
| <b>Communication Drill</b>      | Practise clarity under match conditions.      | Vice relays skip's instructions to the front end.   | Tone, clarity, consistency.                |
| <b>Pressure-End Scenario</b>    | Test leadership and calmness.                 | Simulated tight-end situations with limited time.   | Composure and reassurance.                 |

## 6. Discussion and Reflection

Discussion Points:

- How does the Vice Skip manage pressure and responsibility?
- What makes communication effective under match stress?
- How does the Vice Skip's body language influence teammates?
- How do you balance initiative and respect for skip authority?

Reflective Questions:

- What are my communication strengths and weaknesses?
- How do I handle disagreements or uncertainty?
- How can I improve accuracy in measuring and reporting?
- How do I support team confidence after a poor end?

## 7. Summary – The Vice Skip's Mindset

"The Vice Skip holds the balance between front-end energy and skip control."

A strong Vice Skip:

- Connects communication and composure across the rink.
- Balances authority and support seamlessly.
- Contributes tactically, technically, and emotionally.
- Sets an example of calm professionalism and reliability.

Success as a Vice Skip isn't about being seen — it's about keeping everyone else steady, focused, and connected.

## Assessment Task

Design a 30-minute Vice Skip development session, including:

- One communication and coordination exercise,
- One head observation or measuring challenge, and

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# Berkshire Bowls Coaching Scheme



- One positional bowl or pressure-end scenario.  
Include how you would assess accuracy, teamwork, and composure.

## Glossary

| Term                      | Meaning                                                                |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Head Observation</b>   | Watching and analysing the developing head during play.                |
| <b>Positional Bowl</b>    | A bowl is placed to defend or protect an area near the jack.           |
| <b>Firm Draw</b>          | A slightly weighted draw for positional or contact play.               |
| <b>Measurement</b>        | The act of determining shot count accurately.                          |
| <b>Communication Link</b> | The relay of tactical and motivational messages between skip and team. |
| <b>Momentum Control</b>   | The ability to steady or shift energy in the team's favour.            |

## End of Module Summary

This CPD module equips coaches to develop and evaluate the Vice Skip's technical reliability, tactical insight, and leadership communication.

A skilled Vice Skip anchors the team between strategy and stability — turning tactical plans into composed, confident execution.

