

Lesson 12: Tournament Preparation and Match Play Coaching

EBCS Level 2 CPD – Advanced Technical Coaching

Learning Objectives (for the coach)

By the end of this module, you will be able to:

- Prepare players for tournament play through structured pre-match routines.
- Support players in physical, technical, tactical, and mental preparation.
- Simulate match-play pressure and competitive environments in training.
- Coach players effectively during matches (timeouts, communication, adjustments).
- Use post-match reviews to guide long-term improvement.

Background (why this matters)

Tournament performance requires more than technical skill. Players must manage nerves, focus, and maintain resilience across multiple matches. Coaches play a key role by:

- Helping players prepare consistently with checklists and routines.
- Creating match-like conditions in practice.
- Supporting tactical decision-making under pressure.
- Offering clear, calm communication during competition.
- Leading reflective reviews to turn experience into learning.

Practical Activities

Sample Pre-Match Checklist:

- Equipment: bowls, shoes, clothing, measures, chalk, spare kit.
- Physical: hydration, light meal/snack, stretching routine.
- Mental: visualisation, pre-shot routine reminder, calm breathing.
- Tactical: review jack lengths, rink conditions, opposition style.
- Logistical: arrival time, venue layout, schedule awareness.

Training Activities:

- Match-Play Simulation: Play timed or scored games under competition rules.
- Pressure Drill: Deliver set number of bowls with scoring challenge (e.g., 4 bowls into 1m zone in 90 seconds).
- Tactical Timeout: Coach pauses end mid-way and players must explain tactical choices.
- End Scenario Game: Set up heads that replicate common tournament situations (defending lead, chasing game, sudden death).
- Review Circle: After each practice match, players discuss strengths, mistakes, and improvements.

Questioning Prompts

- 'What did your pre-match routine do to prepare you today?'
- 'How did you respond when pressure increased in the game?'
- 'What tactical adjustments did you make mid-match?'
- 'How did you manage your emotions between ends?'
- 'What's one lesson from this match you'll carry forward?'

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Coach Notes (ethics, inclusivity, safety)

- Encourage consistent pre-match habits but allow individual variations.
- Ensure feedback during matches is calm, constructive, and not overwhelming.
- Manage team inclusivity—every role contributes under pressure.
- Avoid over-coaching during tournaments—support, don't control.
- Ensure hydration, rest, and safe warm-ups across long tournament days.

Reflection (self + peer)

Coach self-reflection:

- Did I prepare players effectively with pre-match checklists?
- Was my in-match communication clear and supportive?
- Did I simulate realistic tournament pressure in practice?
- Did I balance tactical guidance with player independence?

Peer feedback:

- 'I noticed you supported players by... (specific). This worked when... (evidence). You could also... (suggestion).'

Player homework:

- Create a personal pre-match checklist.
- Practise one pressure drill weekly leading up to competition.
- Write a short review after each match noting strengths and areas to improve.

Outcomes (what you should achieve)

- Ability to prepare players holistically for tournaments.
- Confidence in simulating and coaching under match conditions.
- Skill in guiding tactical and emotional responses during games.
- Promote independence while providing constructive feedback.
- Support reflective learning after competition.

Appendix A – Glossary of Coaching Terms

Pre-Match Routine: Consistent set of actions players use before games to prepare physically and mentally.

Match-Play Simulation: Training structured to mimic real competition rules and conditions.

Pressure Drill: A challenge designed to replicate competitive stress (time or scoring constraint).

Tactical Timeout: Pause in play where players reflect on decisions and adjust tactics.

Review Circle: Post-match group reflection to discuss learning points.

