

BERKSHIRE BOWLS COACHING SCHEME

Coaching Part 2 — Week 4 Coach's Notes

Reading and Solving a Small Head

ROLE OF THE WEEK

Introduction to head reading

PRACTICAL FOCUS

Small Head - 3 Bowls

1. Why Week 4 Matters

Week 4 is the point at which the course begins to move beyond delivery alone and asks the pupil to connect line and weight with a game problem. The pupil must first identify the position in the head, then decide what the last bowl needs to achieve. The original material deliberately uses a small, manageable head because head reading and shot selection take experience and time to develop.

CORE PRINCIPLE: Read the position first. Then select the simplest shot that can achieve the required result.

2. The Small Head - 3 Bowls Exercise

The exercise places three opposing bowls around the jack. It is the last end, and the pupil requires one shot to win. The bowls should be spaced to suit the pupil's ability; for a beginner, the source material states that the bowls should not be less than 1 metre apart. No firing shots are used.

- The main purpose is to draw shot while introducing head reading.
- The player should identify the nearest opposing bowl and the minimum result required.
- Possible shots include Draw, Resting, Wrest Out, Yard On and Trail the Jack.
- The exercise continues the development of line and weight control rather than replacing it with theory.
- Full concentration is required because the pupil must commit to one clear option.

3. A Simple Reading Process

The source material advises keeping head reading as simple as possible. A clear understanding of what must be achieved before reaching the head helps narrow the pupil's focus. A useful coach-led sequence is:

- Position: who holds shot, and how many?
- Required result: what must the bowl achieve?
- Options: what realistic Draw, Weighted or Cover choices are available?
- Preferred hand and target: which route and intended finish are clearest?
- Main risk: what may happen if the line or weight is wrong?
- Commit: state the chosen shot before stepping onto the mat.

COACHING LANGUAGE Ask for facts first, then options, then one committed decision.

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4. Understanding the Three Main Options

Option	Purpose	Coach emphasis
Draw	Finish nearer the jack or rest onto a bowl.	Line, dead weight and useful finishing area.
Weighted	Move or remove a bowl, move the jack or alter the head.	Controlled weight, contact point and risk to friendly bowls.
Cover	Place a bowl in an area likely to receive the jack or restrict the opponent.	Future danger, likely opponent reply and required depth.

These categories are a discussion framework, not a rule that every head has three equally good options. In the source scenarios, a Cover option is sometimes unavailable or less useful. The coach should help the pupil recognise when an option is realistic rather than force a choice from every category.

5. Scenario 1 - Holding Two Shots

The player is holding two shots but has no back bowls. The source discussion identifies the following considerations:

- Draw: an opportunity to add a third shot, with relatively little danger from the opposing bowl behind the jack. A risk remains if the jack is moved back to waiting bowls.
- Weighted: possible gain of three or four if the opposing bowl is removed, and the delivered bowl may provide back coverage. A tight line could disturb the two counting bowls and lose the shot.
- Cover: a bowl around the head may cover the back position against a likely drive. Extra weight and a tight line could disturb the existing shots.

6. Scenario 2 - Two Shots Down

The player is two shots down, with one short bowl and one back bowl. The source notes:

- Draw: dead weight or a rest may gain one shot. A poor result could remove the player's own closest bowl and increase the count against.
- Weighted: either hand may offer a chance to remove both shots, cannon one bowl into another or move the jack towards the player's back bowl. Missing leaves the opponent the chance to add another.
- Cover: the source states that no useful cover shot is available because the player is down and already has a bowl covering the opposing back bowl.

7. Scenario 3 - Balanced Head

The head is a measure, both players have strong second bowls, and each has back coverage. The source notes:

- Draw: room is limited, and either hand may move the jack towards an opponent bowl.
- Weighted: slight weight may remove the nearest opponent bowl or promote the player's nearest bowl. Too much weight may remove the player's own bowl and concede multiple shots.
- Cover: the back is already guarded, but further cover may be considered because the opponent has the better back bowl.

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8. Common Coaching Errors to Avoid

- Giving the answer before the pupil has described the head.
- Discussing too many complicated possibilities at once.
- Treating the jack as the only target when resting, cover or bowl movement may be more useful.
- Ignoring the score requirement: the exercise needs only one shot to win.
- Allowing a weighted option to become an uncontrolled firing shot.
- Evaluating only whether the bowl succeeded, rather than whether the decision and intention were sound.

9. Common Pupil Difficulties and Coach Responses

Observation	Likely issue	Coach response
Cannot identify shot	The pupil looks at the whole head rather than the nearest bowls.	Start with who holds shot and the number held.
Chooses the most aggressive option	The pupil confuses difficulty with quality.	Return to the minimum result needed: one shot.
Changes decision on the mat	The option was not clearly defined.	State hand, target and intended result before delivery.
Good decision, poor execution	Line or weight control remains the limiting factor.	Correct the delivery while confirming the decision was reasonable.
Successful bowl from a poor choice	Outcome is being mistaken for judgement.	Review the risk and whether the same choice should be repeated.

10. Progression and Evidence of Learning

- Easier: shorten the jack, widen the head and offer only two realistic options.
- Standard: use the normal three-bowl head and require the pupil to state the intended result.
- Harder: reduce the spacing, change the score requirement or require the less-preferred hand.
- Progress only one variable at a time so the cause of success or failure remains clear.

Evidence of learning is not simply a successful final bowl. The pupil should increasingly be able to identify the score position, explain the job of the bowl, compare realistic options and commit to one shot. The delivery should then match the stated intention as closely as possible.

- Identifies who holds shot and the number held.
- Names a realistic Draw, Weighted or Cover option.
- Explains the main benefit and risk.
- States hand, target and intended finish before delivery.
- During practice, uses Bowl 1 for information and Bowl 2 to repeat or correct the chosen shot; understands that the final game challenge is a single-bowl decision.

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11. Link to Week 5

Week 5 moves to measuring and deciding the result of an end. Week 4 should therefore establish that visual judgement comes first, but close decisions must be checked accurately and without disturbing the head.

COACH SUMMARY Keep the head simple, establish the facts, compare realistic options, and require one clear intention before the pupil delivers.