

SKILLS OF COACHING

All sports involving repetitive processes and their multiple application have for the great majority of people a natural progression to competence.

This progression has a number of stages. They are:

- Stage 1 - The illusory stage (belief in being too good too quick)
- Stages 2, 3 and 4 - The learning or apprenticeship stage
- Stage 5 - The application or tradesman's stage

Stage 1 - The Illusory Stage

This stage, if it is not recognised for what it is, can mar future progress in a chosen sport, in our case bowls.

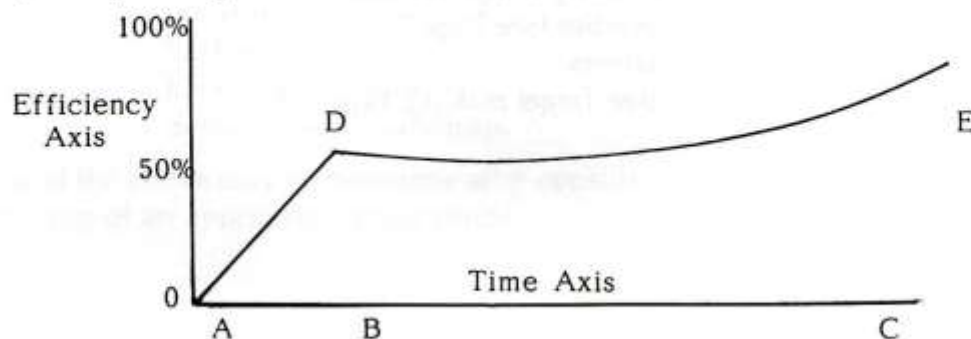
This stage is reached very quickly in the career of most sportsmen, sometimes after only two or three games or lessons. It is, in most cases, wrongly interpreted to reflect the initiate's flair for the sport and depending on his or her level of performance, quite often misleads both coaches and players into believing that this ready aptitude for the game, or some of its repetitive processes, indicates that the player is destined for a great future in the sport.

Unfortunately this may not be so. This is why this stage of a player's career is called "The Illusory Stage".

In almost all cases, this stage reflects the player's predominant natural aptitude or flair evidencing itself. In other words, that physical flair or ability which the player has naturally and easily, is automatically applied to perform one or more of the repetitive processes. This is why all athletes in all sports have a predominant characteristic, be it a good right or left hand in boxing, a sidestep in football, a squarecut in cricket, a backhand volley or a big serve in tennis, and so on.

This latent and quickly evidenced characteristic is no indication of the player's future progress in the sport and the great tragedy is that in most cases it is incorrectly interpreted as being just that.

Unless some corrective action is taken, the average player's Learning/Proficiency Curve (ODE) will probably finish like this:

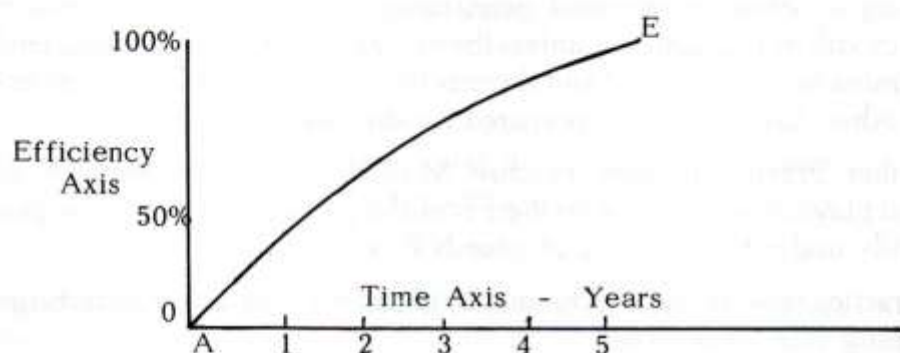


Period A to B can represent as little as 3 to 4 weeks.

Period B to C can represent the rest of your life.

Unfortunately most of us are bogged down somewhere along the line D-E.

Quite obviously the ideal Learning/Proficiency curve should be something like this:



Our coaching programme sets out to disregard Stage 1 – The Illusory Stage – and regard it as a bonus. Instead it sets out to teach the **Total Subject** – not just for leads, seconds, thirds and skips, although they obviously will be approached on a progressive or graduated basis with emphasis given to different subjects from time to time.

Thus the programme has to cover:

- The history of the game and the laws and regulations under which it operates.
- The practical mechanics of the subject and the physical laws within which they operate.
- The application of that knowledge to achieve the strategic or desired ends.

All these subjects are studied simultaneously.

This brings us to Stages 2, 3, 4 and 5.

Stages 2, 3 and 4 – The Apprenticeship or Learning Stage

If Stage 1 is recognised for what it is, and by virtue of the fact that the new players accept they will progress little or no further in their chosen sport unless they disregard that early proficiency and improve their overall performance as follows:

- (2) Learning the mechanics of **all** the repetitive processes. Count how many you know and then examine your conscience to admit how few you have learnt or can perform adequately.
- (3) Learning the requirements of each position so that the tasks of each are understood, viz.: lead, second, third or skip.
- (4) Concurrently with that, learning the rules of the game, so that all the foregoing may be implemented to maximum efficiency.

Stage 5 – The Application or Tradesmen Stage

Learning the tactical approach to using those repetitive processes in the various positions relative to the state of the green, the opposition, etc.

Concurrently with all stages

- (a) Following a course of physical preparation, remembering that maximum efficiency will not be achieved unless the body and mind, i.e. muscles, tendons and stamina on the one hand and the mental capacity to relax and concentrate on the other, have been fully prepared for the task in hand.
- (b) Remember: practise, practise, practise. Most champions practise 75% of the time and play 25% of the time, so there is nothing odd about you if you practise constantly under the guidance of your N.C.A.S. coach.

Make sure in all practice sessions your technique is toward the practice of perfecting your skills and overcoming your weaknesses.

To obtain consistency to your bowls, you require:

a flowing rhythmic, well-balanced delivery which is a sound foundation for accuracy and consistency.

To summarise the factors which help this:

1. Choice of bowls suitable in weight and size for your hand.
2. Adoption of a comfortable, unstressed grip.
3. Accurate aligning of the feet and body.
4. A smooth, rhythmic, straight arm-swing.
5. Good "grassing" of each bowl right on the surface of the green.
6. Steadiness of shoulders, head and eyes through and after the release zone of the delivery.
7. Sensitivity of touch.
8. Smooth, unchecked follow-through.
9. Good balance and suppleness.
10. Controlled muscular relaxation throughout the entire delivery.

The average time taken between analysis of the head from the mat and the moment of release depends on the individual and varies from 3 seconds or so up to 11 seconds or even more. Too hurried a delivery brings the penalties of carelessness. Too long on the mat creates performance-destroying tension. Each bowler must discover his/her best timing procedure.

Match the programme with the capabilities of the student.

Maintain interest in the programme through variety.

Assess according to the individual a balance between activity and rest.

Always make sure that students are aware of their responsibilities relating to

1. Time, place and length of session
2. Equipment required
3. Suitable attire
4. Objectives of the session
5. Trying to obtain a particular standard in each session
6. Recording quality of performance for future reference.

A lesson plan must be prepared for each session.

It is much easier to establish a correct technique and perfect it before proceeding to the next segment.

Explanation and demonstration in a concise manner will help the student to understand better.

Don't feed too much information at one session; it only results in confusion.

Explain clearly all communications and make sure the student fully understands what is taught. Make sure all errors are corrected immediately before they become a habit.

Always use the same terminology as used in the coaching manuals.

Good demonstrations are an invaluable part of coaching and a major process of acquiring new skills.

The aim of demonstration is to produce a model of the required performance. All demonstrations should be technically correct at all times because they are invaluable in the acquisition of the skill being taught.

At the beginning of each session the coach should convey to the student what has to be achieved and what is expected.

The coach should arrange the goals to suit the capabilities of the student.

Always provide the students with encouragement and praise for their efforts.

All improvements, however small, should receive praise.

The coach should present the activities in such a way that the students are always aware of any improvements they make.

Allow students to practise alone or with another student under supervision.

Have students advise coach of their achievements.

Practise with your student, not against.