

Bill Cornehl's...

Teams Position: Fours

On occasions bowlers have an opinion about each position in a fours side. In this article I will endeavour to help to enlighten some roles for each position. I am not saying I am correct and include every role for each position but hopefully this will give a good starting point as you aspire to play each position to the best of your ability. Each position in a side/team has roles and responsibilities and on many occasions interpretations with these positions can change for no apparent reason or personal analysis for the position.

Lead Position:

This position in almost every match sets up the game for the players following behind. It doesn't matter at what level of the game you play the lead position can have a positive influence on the game.

Importantly when the side has control of the mat, the lead places the mat and rolls the jack to a position on the rink where the skip indicates or a spot to benefit the side. This is important as this will benefit the side playing to a jack at an appropriate length for the side to get bowls into the scoring area. The delivery of the jack to an appropriate length will assist the sides' strength and not opponents. Rolling a jack to a length also can change something in the game when things are not working for the side.

The leads role is to attempt to deliver his or her two bowls as close as possible to the jack or at least in a scoring zone for the side regardless of whether they had control of the jack or not. The skip on rare occasions may ask the lead to change hands or play a position bowl depending on the opposition bowl played. Leads don't have to get touches or be right on the jack every end but if the leads bowls are consistently around the scoring zone the chances are the heads will be more favorable for the side with the opportunity to score and not lose multiple scores.

Short bowls by a lead can happen in the match but when this occurs it transfers pressure to the second position player.

Regular training by leads to enhance their draw shot ability on both backhand and forehand over all lengths to jacks during training will only help the side and team. Training routines for leads to include the drill of rolling the jack. This will help the lead to roll a jack to a correct length for side or when a change is required. Another drill is bowling to jacks over all lengths and setting up heads where leads beat opponents bowls.

The lead must remain involved in a game and help pick up bowls for other team members and shows enthusiasm and gives support to the other team members.

The lead needs to focus and take on the challenge of delivering bowls into a scoring zone and show self-discipline getting bowls in this area to the betterment of the side and position.

Second Position:

Seconds repeatedly develops into a player who has equal abilities as a lead. If the lead hasn't been able to get bowls into the scoring zone then the second must fill the role as the player who needs to get their bowls into the scoring area to eliminate the pressure on players who are still to bowl.

The position also requires this player to have the ability to play positional bowls to help protect the leads good bowls or favorable heads for the side. The second on occasions maybe required to play varying weighted shots from one metre and upwards or play a weighted shot and then back to a draw shot.

Due to a second playing a variety of shots (adding shots to the scoring zone, drawing precisely to a nominated position, regaining the shot if needed) and hands (backhand and forehand) this player at training should concentrate on a number of different drills including draw shots, conversion shots, positional bowls, changing hands after each bowl and a weighted shot then draw shot after each bowl over all lengths.

The second should assist leads in a game by helping to pick up bowls for other team members and show enthusiasm and gives support to the other team members.

The second should be prepared to play without question, to play positional bowls which may not count in the final outcome of the head. Ability to change focus from draw bowls to weighted shots. The position is adaptable and the player must be adaptable in all shots.



Third Position:

This pivot position in a side requires many talents, as he or she will take on many roles during competition. The player should have good communication skills with experience building a working relationship with the skip to form a strong partnership. The compatibility between the skip and the third will greatly increase the team's chance of success.

The third will be required to play an array of shots from draw to add, draw to save, draw to position, draw to block, play weighted shots as directed, drive, change a head to give the skip a chance to convert the head, conversion shots and the third will attempt to play all shots to the best of their ability without dispute.

This player will need to have knowledge of the rules, look for dangers at the head for example no back bowls; only opponents bowls, watch for verbal tactics by opponents, do not allow negative comments from lead, second or skip, measure close shots, do not go near head when opponent is in control of the mat, advise the skip if head has changed, make sure communication is loud and precise, maintain control at their end, if unsure of a situation ask skip to come and have a look at the head and do not offer advice to skip unless asked. This can vary dependent on the situation but with a sound and solid partnership between skip and third a nod of the head could mean information is required by the skip.

Good attributes of a third are to share enthusiasm and confidence amongst the side; this will eliminate negative comments and thoughts within the side. The third like other team members should follow a strong training routine to cover all the different shots he or she may be required to play during competition.

The third should be a compatible player within the team. This player is the link between all members of the side and should be prepared to do a number of tasks for the side/team.

Skip Position:

Skips must have many talents and be the captain or the leadership player in the side. The skip must be a person who can get the best from his/her side in a game situation. The skip must have knowledge of their own position and must have knowledge of all positions roles in a side and have the ability to change thinking during an end to control an unfavourable head.

“A skip should lead by example”

The skips many talents will cover abilities such as compatibility, direction, encouragement, communication, game planning, respect, leadership, emotion control, knowledge and confidence.

Expanding on the above, Ability is to draw to save or add, play positional bowls, a good weight player, to control players in side and able to get best from side. Have the ability to be compatible with all members/players in a side. Skip through direction calling shots on percentages or options, avoid changing players hands too often, aim to get bowls in the scoring zone, give clear exact calls when calling a shot. Calling shots can be subjective but the skip endeavours to call the correct shot each time for the team, but each skip reads the head different from another skip.

Encouragement by the skip to all players will help to involve players at all times and when a member of the side is struggling the person will still feel part of the team.

Communication between the skip and players is a very important part of a team's performance and if the skip doesn't communicate then the team will not function.

A skip shows respect to the team players but shows respect to all involved in bowls and respect opposition for both skill and luck. Treat others the same as you would like to be treated.

Another important point is leadership in a skip who can lead by example and think clearly and perform under pressure. Capable of applying and carry out team game plans, displays positive body language, having a presence and show enthusiasm in every situation of a game.

The overall talent from a skip is knowledge which covers all points above but also covers knowing player strengths, weaknesses, rules, players bowls, how to build a head, reading the green, playing for the side/team and knowing when to attack the head and when not to for the overall team performance.

The skip like the third, second, and lead must have a training routine in place to cover all the different shots he/she may encounter during a match.

Skip position players are encouraging, determined, mentally strong, patient, work to team structures, never surrenders, calming influence on the side/team, have ability to play all shots to a consistent standard and knowledge of all side positions.

Quick overview of Side positions:

Each position in a side/team has roles and responsibilities and on occasions the understanding of the role may be challenged. Players who understand their role and that of the others within the team are less likely to adjust the game plan during play therefore increasing team success. Training routines for each player should take place to give each player every opportunity to perform in their position but also eliminating the situation where only a few players preparing for the event.