

ROLE OF THE LEAD

A good lead's worth is inestimable as he/she sets the trend of the game. If the lead's job is done well he/she provides his/her skip with a sound base on which to build the head.

The lead should ensure that he/she places the mat on a portion of the green allowing a clean take-off, having regard to both hands and the approximate location indicated by the skip. Don't change the position for subsequent ends unless requested to do so by the skip. A lead should not try to set his/her own length and must be aware that he/she is as much under the skip's control as are the second and third.

The importance of rolling the jack precisely cannot be over emphasized. Games can be lost as a result of the inability of a lead to roll the jack close to the required length.

A lead must be a good consistent draw player as this will be the only shot that he/she will be required to play during the game, to get bowls as close to the jack as possible and in the zone. One on and one behind. The lead must be able to draw equally well on both hands; a one handed lead is often a liability.

During the trial ends watch every bowl go down and together with your skip, select the most reliable side of the rink to play. Very few rinks behave similarly on both sides and by playing backhand one way and forehand the other, the lead is able to perform more consistently. Wind effect and green conditions will be similar both forehand and backhand. However, it is in order for the lead to bowl "around the clock", that is, backhand both ways or forehand both ways, if conditions warrant this, e.g. wind conditions, trueness of hand. Avoid chopping and changing hands, when you have found the good hand stick to it and don't be forced off it. If your opponent drops short on your hand, play, as though the bowl was not there. Such a bowl is never in your eye; only in your mind if you are not giving proper attention to your draw shot. A bowl is rarely in the way, even if it is, it is surprising how one can drift around or inside it. Even a collision with it can often result in a good shot.

No one can expect to get shot every end, but for a well played game it must be his/her aim to get two close bowls every end. A good lead does not try to play lead and second. If your first bowl finishes close to the jack, do the same with your next bowl. No head is safe with only one bowl near the jack. So leads concentrate on getting both bowls as close as possible in the zone. Leave positional play to the second.

If his/her opponent has drawn a close shot a good lead will not start poking at the head. On no account try to run your opponent's bowl off the jack or the jack down to your bad first bowl. Remember the lead has a clear cut job to do and this is to get two bowls close to the jack, and if not first shot a close second. Any bowl finishing from 45cm short of jack to 90cm beyond jack is a useful bowl. A proactive lead who has perfected the 'yard on' shot may play this shot to dislodge his/her opponents bowl and gain a psychological advantage.

Don't fiddle with the mat and always roll the jack very carefully to the spot indicated by your skip.

Intense concentration must commence with rolling of the jack to position. Don't allow any distraction between rolling the jack and playing your first bowl (except aiding the skip to align the jack), and also between first and second bowl. Watch the jack and your bowls. Rolling of the jack is an additional bowl, i.e. you have virtually 3 bowls.

When you have delivered your first bowl of an end don't stand anxiously to deliver the second; but think strongly of that delivery. If it is a good one, strive to recapture the feeling. If the bowl goes wrong, calmly work out why, but be calm and positive about this. On no account think negatively; "I am bowling badly today".

After playing both bowls do not become a non playing member of the team and lose interest or allow outside factors to take your concentration from the game. Always be ready to encourage your team mates, even handing them their bowls.