

TIPS FOR SUCCESS - CHAPTER 1

First, I cannot overstate the importance of setting the mat correctly as we start each end of bowling, and in our club play this responsibility largely rests with our leads. Centering the mat is critical to providing players with a consistent start point from which our bowls are delivered towards the jack. In my experience there is only one way to achieve a properly centered mat and that is to take the mat in two hands by the leading edge corners, line yourself up facing the rink marker with your feet almost touching the end-board, and slowly walk backwards a few steps dragging the mat along the lawn until you reach approximately 6 feet +/- from the end board, and then place the mat at that point. Visually check to see if it looks perpendicular to the end-board and the rink generally, and if so you and your opponent are ready for play. Setting the mat is absolutely a two-handed job so leave your first bowl on the lawn along with the jack and anything else like towels - they will be ready to be picked up after the mat is appropriately set. This seems like a small thing but like so many aspects of our beloved game, the details matter a great deal, and developing consistency of approach and execution, and repeating good habits on the green can show up on the scoreboard.

Which brings me to our second point about the mat. It is good practice for all of us to stay on the mat after we have delivered the bowl until that bowl comes to rest at the far end. Two reasons why this is important; (i) it helps promote the clockwise circular player motion around the mat - the pattern of approaching the mat from the left, bowling, pausing to examine the outcome of that bowl, then departing to the right to retrieve your next bowl; and (ii) this momentary pausing piece is critical if you and your partner want to exchange information about the bowl you just released - distance from the jack, is that the "shot" etc. - the rules state that you can only receive this information from your partner if you still "possess" the rink meaning if you are still on the mat. Once you step off, your opponent and his/her partner at the far end "own" the rink until it is your turn to bowl once more. Use your own time on the mat wisely, both before and after you bowl. Again just a small detail but one which can further enrich our experiences on the green.

Finally, during the course of an eight-end match we each only roll thirty-two bowls over the better part of an hour; so take time to carefully watch each roll, particularly those which felt good when they left your hand - try to remember that feeling, those small motions and routines that worked for you on that particular roll.

Thank you, Leslie