

Tips for Success – Chapter 2

The topic of this week's "tip" is about managing adversity. All too often we find ourselves wanting to win each and every end in a match – a natural goal and inclination, but it may not always be the best approach in the context of a whole match. In an end of season singles match where you are playing to a set score and say your opponent needs one point to win, then yes you are all in and must try to win the end – similarly if it's the last end in a doubles match and you trail or the scores are even, then yes you must go for the winning shot.

However, let me set-up a situation now that we see quite often either early on in a match, or in the middle when the potential for a "big scoring end" is developing. After the leads have bowled and perhaps the skips now have two bowls each in the head along with all the prior bowls and the jack, it is clear that one team is looking at three, four, even five scoring bowls – we've all seen it happen. We know from experience that a heavy scoring end can profoundly impact the match score, and for team on the wrong end of that it can be devastating. It's always our goal to win the end, but what if you and your partner are on the wrong end of this potential scoring feast? By all means if the jack appears accessible with a very good roll and you have confidence in executing that roll, or getting "the shot" that is still a good strategy. Often though the jack is hidden or obscured by prior bowls and the path to it by no means certain. My goal then is to severely limit my losses. Can I get inside my/our opponent's second closest bowl? The skip can ask his/her lead – which is their second closest bowl? That bowl may be a foot or two away from the jack; if approaching the jack from that side is blocked, can I go to the other side instead and still get within a foot or two of the jack on that opposite side and take the second point away? All situations are in some ways unique, but the challenge is always similar. Giving up one or even two points on a difficult end is so much easier to recover from than four points or more.

This same approach will serve you well playing singles. If I am going second and my opponent has a very nice first bowl say two or so feet from the jack, my strategy is simply to put my first bowl between that one and the jack – using his/her first bowl as a marker, and if I can simply get inside it (whether by an inch or a foot or more!) that opposing bowl is now out of the scoring picture.

See you on the green, Leslie