

Short bowls v Long Bowls

If we accept that a bowl of high quality is that which finishes within 3 feet of the desired finishing spot, then we can consider the merits of bowls that finish short against those that finish long.

Before commencing our discussion, let us agree upon some principles, such as: -

- Y Bowls of equal distance from the desired finishing spot and
- Y Those of good quality - within the 3 foot boundary.
- Y Any delivery which finishes outside the boundary is of poor quality and requires adjustment. We will not discuss the merits of one poor quality delivery against another of poor quality.

Jack Moves Back.

When we first play the game it is often heard that it is better to be long than short. The reason given is that the Jack rarely moves up the rink towards the short bowl whereas the long bowl is more likely to receive any movement of the Jack. One cannot argue against that logic as it is indeed quite rare that the Jack moves forward.

Statistical Data

Over many matches, the average number of times a Jack is moved in Division 1 is: -

- Y A deliberate movement of 1 in 25 attempts and less frequently as we descend through the lower grades. There are no statistics available that records the number of deliberate attempts.
- Y An accidental movement of the Jack is another 10 times per Pennant match.

When it is moved it generally will be propelled towards the rear of the Head, hence the logic of better to be behind (long) than being short.

Easy to beat

Where there are two bowls, one short and the other long, both on the 3 foot boundary, then a question can be asked -- Which is the easier to beat?

- Y They are both equally able to be outdrawn, so there is no difference in the outright draw shot, therefore our discussion centres upon the collision shots.
- Y Any collision on the back bowl will move it outside the boundary of being good quality, whereas any movement on the front- short bowl will move it closer to the Jack and still within the 3 foot zone and retaining its good quality within the Head.

Therefore the back bowl is easier to beat when there is a collision to either stationary bowl.

Collision at Different Weights.

Any collision with the back bowl negates its quality. We will consider the effect on the Head when we collide with the front bowl with different weighed collisions.

The 3: 1 Ratio collision Shot

The theory for this shot is that the bowl (short) at rest will be moved 1 foot for each extra 3 feet of weight on the delivered bowl.

The struck bowl will move forward 1 foot and the delivered bowl will take its place at the point of collision.

Therefore when we collide with the 3 : 1 ratio shot we will promote the stationary bowl 1 foot and remain at the 3 foot boundary.

When it is our bowl that was short and we collide with it, we have made it of even higher quality than it already was in relation to the Head. That is to our advantage.

A miss at this weight will have us finishing Jack high and a high quality effort. That is to our advantage if we miss our short bowl.

The 6 : 1 ratio collision shot

This similar to the 3 : 1 ratio shot where the struck bowl will be propelled 2 feet, however, the delivered bowl will run-through 1 foot.

So the short bowl at the 3 foot boundary will be moved forward by 2 feet making it even more of a high quality consideration in the Head and our bowl will be 2 feet short of the Jack.

Again if it is our short bowl, we are at an advantage.

A miss at that 6 : 1 ratio weight will have our bowl at the boundary behind the Head and still be marginally a good quality in that Head.

The 3 yard on Shot

A collision at this weight will have the struck bowl propelled 3 feet and be Jack High whilst the delivered bowl will run through to be 1 to 2 feet short of the Jack. Still to our advantage.

A miss at this speed will have our delivery some 6 feet passed the Jack and therefore outside our boundaries of a good quality delivery.

Our Short Bowl

The collisions of up to the 6 : 1 ratio shots are all to our advantage when it is our short bowl within the 3 foot boundary of the target area. Even unintentional collisions will be to our advantage.

The back bowl only being an advantage when the jack is moved in the 1 in 25 chance, a very low percentage shot.

The Opposition's Short Bowl.

Having put forward the advantages of our short bowl, the "boot is on the other foot" when the reverse is the case. The opposition now has all those advantages when it is their bowl that must be avoided.

The Shots

As the advantage will be ours with a short good quality bowl, we must become effective and efficient with the knowledge and skills of the various weighted deliveries so that we can maximize that advantage.

Covering the Long Bowl

When we have the advantage of a good quality short bowl we cannot leave the opposition's long bowl unattended, but it takes but one delivery on our team to cover that danger bowl.

Let the rest of our deliveries be attempts at high quality deliveries albeit that some will come up short.

Advice for New Players

As the advice to new players is that it is better to be long than short is one of the first things that they hear when beginning to play the game, it will stick in their minds and in most cases will create the undesired trait of being overweight players for most of their careers.

The advice is erroneous and is a hindrance to their development as a high standard player.

Praise should be confined to those attempts that finish within 3 feet of the intended target area and the beginner learns that no comment means that an adjustment is required for the next delivery.

This is contrary to the well intended but misleading false praise of 'better to be long than short'.

Advice to Skippers

Develop your range of shots to include the so called 'yard-on' shots, namely the 3 : 1 and 6 : 1 ratio deliveries, as you and your team can play a higher percentage game by using the short bowl.

Also your tactical game will benefit when you take the pressure off your team mates by acknowledging the benefit of their short bowl. The less pressure the player experiences, then the more accurately they will play.

But that is the subject for a separate article.