

Hi Pauline

As requested at the start of the season here is my summary of the Bowls New Zealand Coaching Conference on 'Empowering Athletes' I recently attended in Auckland for the board.

Bowls NZ Coaching Conference 2024 - 'Empowering Athletes'

I travelled to Auckland on Sunday 24th November staying in the same hotel as many of the wider Bowls NZ team and coaches making life a little easier. Sunday evening was a great opportunity to spend time out at dinner with Graeme Rees (BNZ Coach Development), Kevin Smith (BNZ Para Coach), Barrie Lester (Australian Jackaroo), Tayla Bruce (Black Jack) and Erica Ayres (Canterbury Youth Development Coach). Naturally lots of conversations around bowls but also an opportunity to get to know them a little better personally.

The conference kicked off on Monday morning with introductions from the Bowls NZ team and then a great talk from World Bowls CEO Neil Dalrymple. Neil heads a surprisingly small team of 16 covering everything from promotion of lawn bowls on the world stage to the rules we all 'try' to abide by. Speaking of following rules, we had a great Q&A session from the umpires. It is clear that as a coach, while I do have a good understanding of the rule book, it is time I officially updated my skill set and sit the Level 1 Umpires coach next time it is being run.

Outside of the world of lawn bowls we had great talks from Lewis Clareburt (NZ Olympic Swimmer) who gave us a fascinating insight in what it takes to become an athlete at the highest level. Swimming 16km a day is not for the faint hearted! Much like other sports he is a professional athlete so does not have to balance work etc, his job is to represent NZ and deliver at the highest level.

Craig Palmer from High Performance Sport New Zealand gave us a summary of the HPSNZ Core Knowledge programme and how it includes coaches from all areas of sport with the sole aim of lifting coaching standards across all codes. I am very humbled to be selected by Bowls NZ to take part in this programme which will run through 2025 and probably 2026/27 as well. This is a fantastic opportunity for me to further understand the key aspects of top level coaching which I can filter as needed to support the needs of the centre. He also had a number of very entertaining stories surrounding the NZ Cycling Team that has has been a coach of including at two Olympics. Just like Lewis their commitment to a training regime is mind boggling!

Sticking with other sports was a fascinating talk from Helene Wilson (Netball). Helene has been very successful in the ANZ championships and is now the coach for the NZ Mens Team. By her own admission this as both a fascinating and very rewarding group of athletes to work with. This was a highly intensive talk at the end of day 1 so I'm hoping some follow up information from Helene will help to bring it in to focus.

Other very worthwhile sessions came from Barrie Lester who talked about his life experiences and drivers that led him to become one of the Jackaroos regular and very talented bowlers. His thoughts around coaching, training and measuring were enlightening. Tayla Bruce and Suzie Muirhead talked about Suzie's business 'Raise My Game'. This is a tool to help player led development and is something I invested in last year which I have run with

three of the squad so far. This is a very intense process and is really only aimed at the top level athletes in the team.

From a personal perspective the session ran by Kylie Wilson PHD on Sport Psychology was particularly fascinating and there are a number of aspects from that presentation I will be incorporating with my work one on one with the team.

Award for the most entertaining presentation of all has to go to Mea Motu and her coach from the world of boxing. Fantastic athlete/coach partnership with the constant driver of 'always be ready'.

This event was also an opportunity for me to present to this diverse audience on my chosen subject of Coach Empowerment by using the skills we have. It was great to represent myself and fly the flag for what we are doing in Central Otago Bowls.

Evidently a lot of what we covered is very different to Bowls where we are all juggling work and general life as well as trying to get time on the green. For myself this is something I do need to consider when working with our representative team as they are all giving their time, effort and money for the love of the sport. It is essential that as a centre we continue to make this an environment that they can enjoy and thrive in.

Being a coach and striving to reach the top level is certainly a bigger drain on my time and funds than I ever anticipated, however, I love the journey and the support of the centre board is very much appreciated.

Thanks
Carl

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