

HOW DID MOOROOLBARK WEEKEND NO 1 PENNANT TEAM GO FROM LAST TO FIRST THIS SEASON

At Christmas time my team, Mooroolbark 1, was last on the Pennant ladder. Things were not looking good; in fact we were closer to relegation than survival in Div 2. All the while, other Mooroolbark teams, such as the 2nd side were enjoying fairer tail winds and 4th had their spinnaker up. After Christmas we won all our games, avoided relegation, finished 3rd on the ladder and won the Pennant. How did it happen?

Our Coach Henny had a major influence on our success.

1. Changes to teams were made such as switching players and organizing team and playing strategies
2. Compulsory team practices in selected rinks and encouragement
3. More talk, especially between Skips and Thirds about strategies and shots
4. Reinforcement of the Team Plan about rink meetings at end 6, after the break' and Big Board attention after end 16. i.e. playing for the team not the rink or the self
5. Switching to play on the plastic for home games
6. Deeper analysis of the score card stats, uppers, clangers and conversions
7. Policy reinforcement to: If it's not working *CHANGE SOMETHING!* -

Henny was positive throughout the season, but he doubled his efforts after Christmas. His development of players and their skills was only eclipsed by his positivism and belief that we could do it. For instance, at team meetings he announced that we could play in the finals. He showed us it was technically possible! I have watched "The Castle" and thought he was dreaming! Then, if we won the next two games - we could avoid relegation! Yes it was possible!

He contributed to team morale and brought new perspectives to selection; especially player's attributes and skills. He watched everything, and showed that he was interested in our performance and would make positive suggestions about strategies. He promoted a strategic move to the plastic, because the opposition were enjoying our great greens too much.

I was part of a belief that grew, after we won our first two games. It was like we were a different team. We were supporting each other by recognizing great shots out loud. Encouraging each success and celebrating each win. Players were moved to provide better balance in rinks; and I admitted to Henny that I was not performing as well as I could. I resigned from Selection and my bowling improved immediately.

Then, we made the finals in third place and had to play MCC at Hawthorn. MCC were the strongest team at the end of the season, in my opinion. In a cliff hanger we got a fulltime draw, and had to play an extra end. Henny organized with our Manager Ross Kelton to give away the mat if we won the toss for the extra end, which we did.

Doug Hardy and I did not have to play our last bowls as Steve Rawlingson saved his rink with a magnificent last bowl to win one up. Thank you to all four rinks. The game was over and we had won 86 to 84. Unbelievable!

Then we had to play Ringwood in the Grand Final at Blackburn the next weekend. Ringwood had finished top of the ladder about 4 wins ahead of 2nd spot. We won at Blackburn by a whopping 20+ shots. Then the virus closed everything down. Ringwood were shell shocked but were gracious runner ups.

I still cannot believe it happened. A belief that we could do it had become a reality and a shock! Thanks to the Selectors, Henny and my team mates for a great season. Thanks to Henny and the Club members who celebrated with us, especially those who put money on the bar!

If you have read this piece and think that Henney was “the” only reason we were successful, you would be wrong. But, he was the major reason because of the belief he generated. Belief is a big word in religion, philosophy, and generally, especially in any sport. Henney did not generate a messianic belief - just a positive confidence. That winning is not all that difficult. That we could win by doing the basics well and supporting each other. Teamwork and luck did the rest.

Congratulations to those members who played and won the four flags; and to all those who played pennant for Mooroolbark. It's a great game if you win in a team; but it can be a disappointment if you get belted! But that's bowls! It is a great leveller!

Jim Hampton