Selectors report division One Wednesday Side 2019/20

The season started disappointingly with five of the previous season’s players not available. It continued with a 19 point loss at Port Noarlunga after a healthy first half lead, in our first game.

The strategy formulated at the beginning of the season was to have strong triples and pairs sides to maximise the opportunity for an overall shots win whilst having competitive fours which could each win or lose by around 5 points. It was also felt a competitive advantage could be gained by playing home games under the dome as it allowed players to practise on a surface which would be similar in pace and width on match days, unfortunately on the first two home games solid rinks lost by 17 and 23 shots respectively eliminating any chance of overall wins. This part of the strategy was abandoned.

The first half of the season was tough with the side only winning one game against another relegation candidate Gawler. At the half way stage only the star studded rink of Eric Datson (Datto), Dwayne Anderson and Ian James had a positive shots position(49 shots) with the other four rinks being in a negative position(159 shots). The number of points earned by the various rinks was also a problem with pairs scoring 4 points, fours 9 points and the triples 20 points. This gave us a sum total of 53 points for the half season and had us firmly in the relegation zone. That’s when, over the Christmas period, our Saturday premier league players came to our rescue. With solid wins over Port Noarlunga (41 shots and 18 points) and Modbury (33 shots and another 18 points) we were off the bottom and had some hope of salvaging our season. Thanks guys!!! With John Carter then available for most of the second half of the season and Roger Ward filling in for some critical games, we bounced back and finished a respectable 6th with 170 points and a 3 shot positive margin.

With Datto skipping a couple of pairs games and David Knowles the majority of the others, the pairs were undefeated in the second half and collected 17 out of a possible 18 points. The triples collected 25 out of 36 and the fours chipped in with 15 out of 36. Both the pairs and triples had positive shots up with the fours in negative territory. To be fair to the fours they hung in and it was never going to be an easy season for them as most of the changes were in their rinks. There were games we should have won and as a skip, I know I fell down at not minimising the +4 shots against ends, and as a team we lapsed at critical times during some games.

Next season if we can tighten the fours performances then we should get a significant improvement in the overall results. A practise schedule will be essential as we have to get more from our current players as there is no guarantee we will be able to recruit from the outside. The good news is we do have players with the ability and anxious to improve.

Congratulations to Datto for an outstanding season. He finished second in the overall division skip rankings and topped the skips for number of shots up (99 shots). John Carter also finished in 24th place after only playing for half a season with 6 wins a draw and 54 shots up.

Our leads also get an honourable mention with Ian James 5th on the leads ladder and second for shots up (99 shots). Stan Erceg finishing in the top ten (8th with 43 shots up).

Detailed statistics are on the blackboard outside of the locker room for anyone interested. There is also a summary of Datto’s performance for those wishing to see how the game should be played. Out of 176 losing ends Datto had only one loss greater than four shots and only 8 of four shots.

Conclusion

The strategy was sound and with some effort put into tightening up the fours game, we should be more competitive next year. It was pleasing to give an opportunity to players like Ken Hemlin and Dennis Veal to play in the top side and I am sure their game will improve because of it. John Stuchbury proved that age is no barrier to playing good bowls. I know some bowlers are against using the Saturday Premier league bowlers who are available, for a limited time, during the Christmas period. The cascade effect often means some bowlers in the lowest side may not get a game at this time. I understand this view, but as a selector trying to get the best possible result for the club, I do not agree with it. This year, in particular, the strengthening of the Division One side saved it from a possible relegation and boosted the confidence of players co-opted into the side for the first time. Pennant is NOT social bowls and a selector has a responsibility to pick the best side available at all times otherwise they are doing a disservice to their club and the bowlers who can benefit by playing with more talented bowlers. Should a Simon Dorr, Rhys Taylor or Luke Pietersma be available at the last minute, I would have no hesitation in stepping down and missing a game for the overall benefit of the team and club. As selectors we make mistakes and do not expect everyone to agree with our decisions but we do our best. I wish everyone an enjoyable pennant break and look forward to seeing everyone next season.

Gerry Phillips

Wednesday Division One selector

12 March 2020