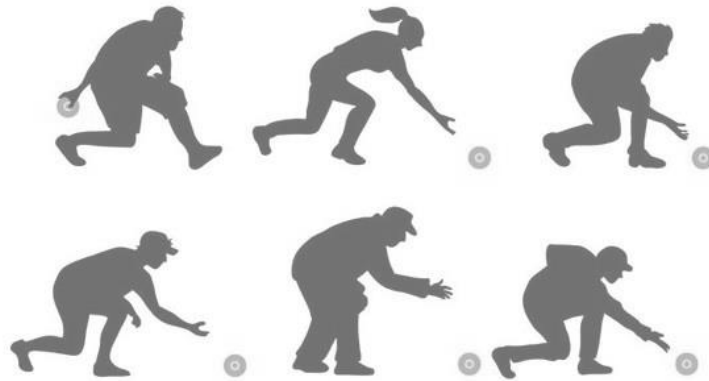




**FROM THE DESK OF THE  
KRUGERSDORP BOWLING  
CLUB'S COACHES  
IN CONJUNCTION WITH  
THE SABLES ACADEMY**



**“HOW TO PLAY BETTER BOWLS”**



**“DON'T DO WHAT WE DO”**

**“DO WHAT WE TRAIN YOU TO DO”**

## Building the Head

How many times have you played in a game where your opponents always seem to be “lucky”? Wherever the jack moves to, they seem to have bowls in the right places and keep getting shots.

**You need to ask yourself the question; is it “lucky” or is there more to it than just pure luck.**

To understand the term, “building a head” Let’s first look at what the “head” actually is and what “building the head” means in bowling terms,

- ✓ “The head is the area around the jack, wherever the jack might be (remembering that the jack can move during the game). There is no set standard or rule as to how large this area is, but it is normally about 1 meter
- ✓ Building the head is a systematic way of positioning your bowls in the correct areas, to take advantage of whatever might happen during a game
- ✓ Imagine “building the head” as setting up the scene for the rest of the team to be able to get the shot or multiple of shots
- ✓ Imagine you are trying to build situations where you can get the shot, while taking into consideration what your opponents are trying to do

### **The role, players have in “building the head”**

Before a skip can actually “build a head”, it is imperative that each player knows their role and what is expected of them, as well as where to position their bowls

Traditionally we, as bowlers, have always talked about the front rank and the back rank, and the old saying that “front rank wins games, back rank saves games” comes to mind.

But what if we changed it up a bit and instead of having just two distinctive parts to a team, the front & back ranks, we introduced three parts? 1) The set-up, 2) The execution and 3) The finish.

Where:

- ✓ the lead would be setting up the head
- ✓ the 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> would be executing the changes to the head
- ✓ and the skip would be finishing off the head

After watching so many games of bowls I have come to the conclusion that, I disagree with the saying that “leads win the game”. I am a firm believer that the game is won at 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>.

I am not for one minute suggesting that the leads role is less important! All I am suggesting is that no matter how well the lead plays, the “executioners” (2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup>) make the changes that are necessary to win or lose the game.

Having said that, let’s have a look at the different roles each player has in “building the head”, and the way a skip should be thinking about each shot he calls a player on.

### **The lead (the set-up)**

The lead is a very special person, they have to be as “dogmatic” as a person can be, and their role is to consistently get bowls in an area which is known as the scoring area.

The leads role within the team structure remains the same in all disciplines, and traditionally it was to get as close to the jack as you can.

The problem that I have with this is that when trying to “dead draw” the jack, we inevitably end up short, which in turn hinders the rest of the team from playing the required shots.

I would like to suggest the following instead:

- ✓ Leads need to attack the jack more
- ✓ They need to be trying to move the jack off the centre line
- ✓ Their aiming point should be 500 mm to 1 meter behind the jack
- ✓ Rather have bowls behind than in front of the jack

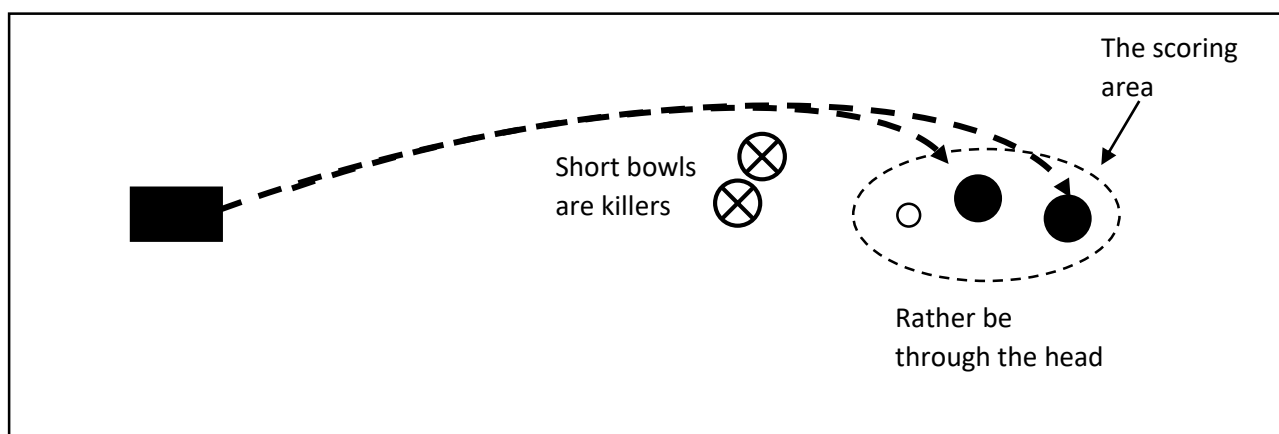
The reason for bowls behind the jack, rather than short of the jack, is to give the players following the lead the opportunity to play positive shots rather than defensive shots.

### ➤ Building the Head

An example of a hypothetical “building a head” and an “ideal” leads bowls is in the sketches below:

- = your bowls
- ⊗ = opponents bowls

#### Sketch 1



At this stage of building the head, the skip, needs to organize the bowls in such a way that they cover or complicate any shot that their opponent may be trying to play. They need to get into the opposing skips head to see what they will try and do, and combat it.

- He / she already has the leads bowls in the scoring area, so what next?
- Do they draw more shots and put the opponents under more pressure
- Or do they cover possible areas that the jack may move to

#### The 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> (the executioners)

The second's job is to be able to play bowls to areas that the skip feels they need to cover or to make a head change, so the 2<sup>nd</sup> needs to be:

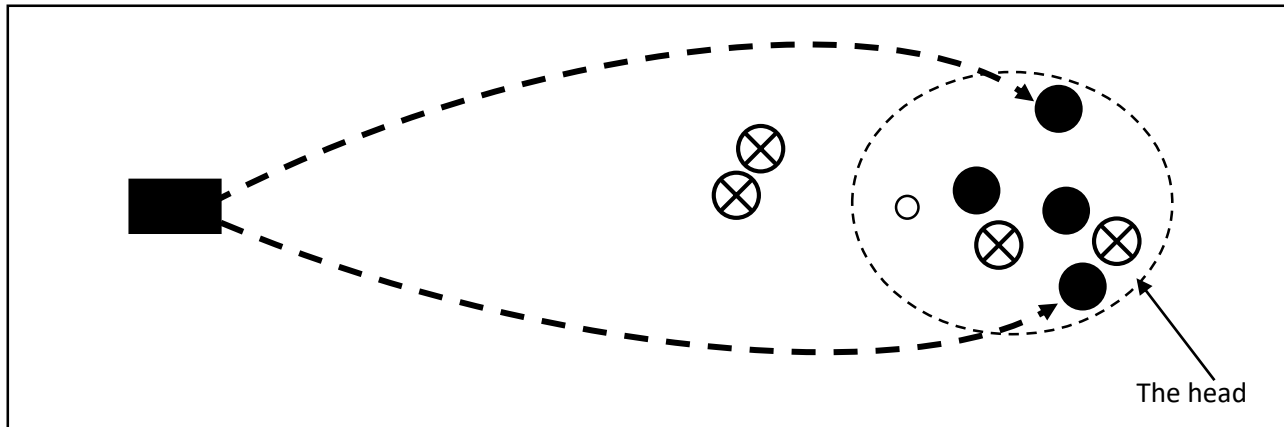
- Accurate at positional drawing
- And competent in controlled weighted shots

➤ **Back to building the head**

As a skip you can't be too greedy. You are already holding 2 shots, and so ensuring that you have covering bowls is the best option (get bowls in covering positions).

By doing this you limit the opposing skip's options

**Sketch 2**



Although you now only hold one shot, by positioning your second's bowls in the correct areas, your third can still play a positive draw, to rest the opponents bowl, and regain 2 shots

**The 3<sup>rd</sup> of a team** needs to have:

- Exceptional weight control,
- They must be able and competent in both drawing to rest bowls through the head as well making changes, if needed.
- They must also have a sound knowledge of where opportunities or dangers lie while building the head

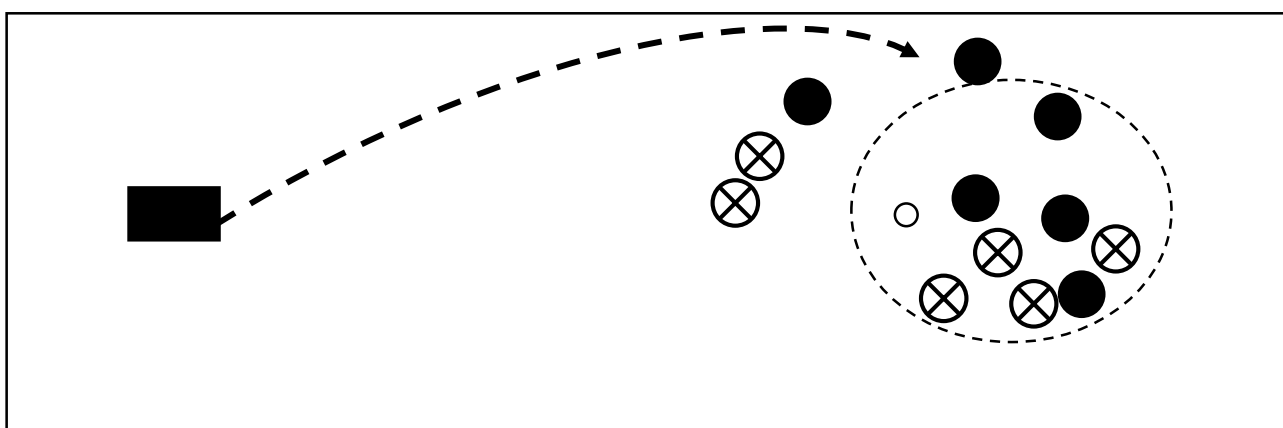
➤ **Back to building the head**

As I have said, you now only hold one shot, but by your second's bowls in the correct areas, your third can still be positive, and rest the opponents bowl, and regain 2 shots

Or

You can have them play to a covering area, on the opposite side of the head

**Sketch 3**



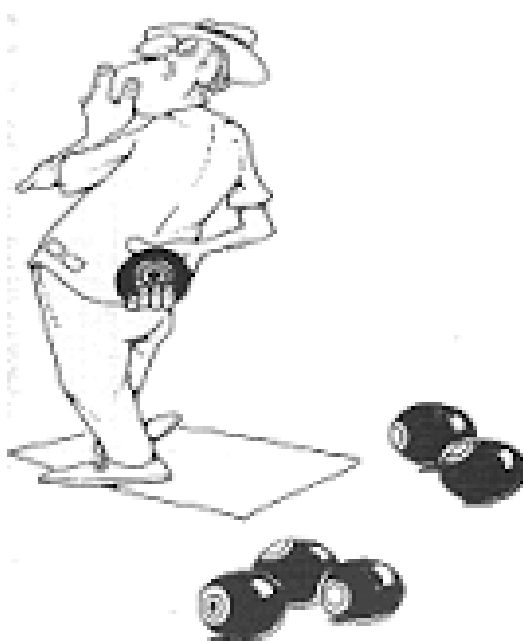
With only 4 bowls to go and you now look at the way you (as skip) have built this head and you will notice the following:

- You have left yourself with options on both hands
  - Trail the jack to your bowls or
  - Rest the opponents bowl or
  - Cover the “best back”
- You have limited the opposing skips options of what shot to play
  - He has to have perfect weight or
  - He gives multiples of shots away
- He cannot run the jack because of the 2 short bowls

Finally, “building the head” is only half the battle won. You also need to be able to “read the head”. Understanding what shots your opponent is planning and how to react, is vital to the way you build your head.

### Conclusion

- ✓ “building the head” is all about getting bowls in good positions in term of close to the jack as well as covering positions
- ✓ It is an art, rather than a science
- ✓ so, as much as I have tried to help you understand how and why the need to “build heads” is important, you will learn (over time) the best way for you to achieve the best results



## Reading the Head

As it is in “building the head”, “reading the head” is more of an art than a science, it is a skill that is perfected over a period of time, and comes with experience.

However,

Simply put “reading the head” is the ability to understand the state of the bowls game now, and how it might change over the next couple of shots. The ability to read the head, starts with the understanding of the fundamentals of “building the head”

### Reading the head

Before you start to read the head, there are 3 areas that need to be checked, so as to have the “**state of the head**” in your mind before considering what shot to call. These 3 areas are, namely, **front; jack and back** (as detailed in the sketch below)



- **Front** – is the area in front of the jack, that needs to be navigated before reaching the jack, and includes all the bowls, either yours or the opponents that might be blocking the hand you want to play
- **Jack** – this is the area around the jack, and includes which bowl is shot, is it yours or against, and who holds second and third shot. It also includes how the shots are sitting in relationship to the jack
- **Back** – is the area behind the jack, including the ditch area. It also comprises of what would happen if the jack is moved, as well as how many bowls you or your opponents have back there. It would also include who has the best back.

### **Where to start?**

Probably the best way to start reading the head, is with an idea of what your objective is and what you want to achieve out of the shot about to be played.

Then break it down to specifics surrounding the shot, for example: what type of shot would achieve the desired result.

But, before all the above can happen, you first need to understand what types of shots there are and when they are used.

- The draw shot
  - Draw to the jack
    - Used if you need bowls in the head or just trying to draw the shot
  - A covering shot (draw to an area other than the jack to cover)
    - Used when you are holding shot and you need to cover an area behind the jack
  - A positive draw (just over the draw, weight wise)
    - Used to make a slight change to the head

- The weighted shot
  - Conversion shots (about a meter through the head)
    - Used when you are shot down, but you don't have the back bowls
  - Controlled weight (about 1,5 to 2 meters of weight to make changes in the head)
    - Used when you have the best back bowls, and are holding 2<sup>nd</sup> / 3<sup>rd</sup> shot, and a head change is needed
  - The drive (weight enough to make significant changes in the head)
    - Used when you need to remove an opponent's bowl to pick up a multiple of shots or to break up the head
- The percentage shot (sketch 1)
  - The "percentage shot" can be easiest described as follows:
    - Does the shot called, and the hand it's called on, give me the best chance (percentage wise) of succeeding
    - If the shot goes wrong, what type of shot and what hand will give me the safest percentage or the least amount of damage that will be done
- Risk v/s Reward (sketch 2)
  - The easiest way to explain what is meant by "risk v/s reward" is to ask yourself the following:
    - Is the shot I am about to play a risky shot, if so, is the reward of getting it right worth the risk (keep in mind where you are within the context of the game)

**Sketch 1 (percentage shot)**

Your bowl: ●  
 Opponents bowl: ○



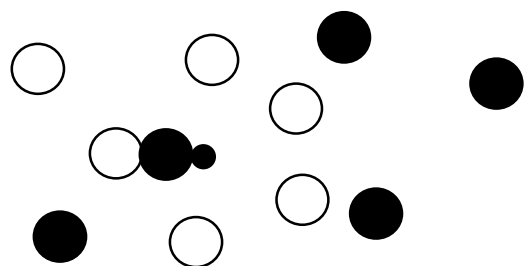
✓ The shot choice is a draw, but which hand do you play it on?

**Sketch 2 (risk v/s reward)**

Your bowls: ●●  
 Opponent's bowls: ○○



✓ Game score: you - 14  
 Opp - 15



D  
I  
T  
C  
H

Game Scenario (trips)

It's the last end, you are 1 shot down on the game, you have the last bowl

What shot do you play?

**At this stage, you need to recognise that reading the head, does not just entail the above. There are also other important questions to ask yourself before selecting the shot you are about to call.**

Consider the following questions:

- What are your opponents trying to achieve?
- What shot do you think they will play next?
- Are you clear minded about the shot you are calling?
- Will the shot you are about to call achieve the objective?
- Is the shot being called, correct within the context of the game as a whole?
- Is it the right time within the game scenario, to play that shot you have called?
- Is it the “percentage shot”?
- Have I weighed up the “risk v/s reward” factor?
- NB
  - Does the green,
  - the persons capability,
  - and bowls they use,
  - **Allow me to call the shot I want to call?**

#### **Conclusion**

- ✓ “Reading the head” is all about understanding what you as well as your opponent are trying to achieve,
- ✓ Use what you have learned, and be confident in your calling
- ✓ Finally, as much as I have tried to help you understand how and why the need to “read the head” is important, you will learn (over time) the best way forward for you

**REMEMBER THAT NOT EVERYONE READS THE HEAD THE SAME**

**AND**

**YOU WILL NOT SEE EVERYTHING GOING ON IN THE HEAD**

**THEREFORE**

**YOU NEED YOUR TEAM’S EYES AND HELP TO LOOK FOR DANGERS AND OPPORTUNITIES**

**“KEEP YOUR TEAM INVOLVED”**