

Coaching Corner - Tip 2

After determining the siting and size of the circle, what should your considerations be in throwing the jack - given the limitations of the piste?

If you know your opponents well, you may already be aware of the relative strengths and weaknesses of the respective players involved, but let's assume no previous knowledge and go from there.

For your pointer it is important to have a good piece of ground to land on and whoever throws the jack should bear that in mind when selecting length or direction from the circle. The length may be much more critical for the shooter (hence the convention in many teams that the shooter throws the jack) and the jack should be placed to maximise their skills. To test the opposition, most pundits would recommend throwing a medium length jack in the first instance and adjusting later - assuming that you get the opportunity, of course!

If you find yourselves outgunned on shorter jacks then, obviously, you go longer. If your pointing and shooting game is more adaptable than your opponents', then constantly change lengths to keep them 'off balance' and, if there are slopes which they find harder to cope with, then use those to your advantage in terms of placement.

John Snell, former World Bowls champion, maintained that if an opponent selected their favourite length and he beat them on that end he would throw a jack at the same length on the next end. In this way he gained a psychological advantage because he had displayed the confidence to beat the opposition at their own game and they would have nowhere else to go.

Pointers also have their preferred lengths and should have a range of shots to cope with the ground conditions between themselves and the jack but the key point is to learn from the opposition's tactics and responses and to use them to your advantage.

Being able to throw the jack where you want it - well that's another story.