

Green Text (4th out of 7 drafts) 2011

Patrick l
O'LearyLindsey Fisher
Price

P) Let's welcome to the programme the bowls expert Lindsey FisherPrice,

L) Hello Patrick, lovely to be here in the Wimmera Region, the lovely grass on the green, it looks like unreal.

P) It is, isn't it Lindsey, we've been waiting for quite a while for this to eventuate.

L) Yes that's right, up until now it's been something that's only existed in our imagination as a proposed event, and so it's good to have a real audience, real bowlers and an actual situation

P) Yes it's one thing to talk about something happening but quite another for it to actually happen.

L) That's right Patrick. (Pause)

L) Patrick, how does one know that something has actually happened? Very often someone will say "this or that happened" and someone else will say, "no it didn't, you're wrong"... and on and on it goes and before you know it people are throwing rocks at one another

P)

It's sometimes hard to know what is real sometimes, don't you think? L) Not for me actually Patrick P) No really for example railway tracks look as if they merge on the horizon don't they? L) Oh that's just an optical illusion. P) Surely you mean illusion don't you Lindsey? L) What did I say? P) You said optical illusion this is a good point of departure and return (to the subject in hand) it makes me think of bowls for example, being an illusion to something else, it's the serenity and longevity of the game, it has a whiff of eternity about it. Elysian fields illuminated with golden sunshine, suffused with an ambient atmosphere made up of pleasantries and lighthearted banter as its participants gently move towards an inevitable demise, all the while playing on regardless. L) Perhaps we should, in a return to the real, mention that this dialogue is pre-recorded and therefore not really 'live' but described as live for the purpose of exploring an idea. P) Hmm perhaps it like an aural illusion.....

L) Perhaps we've gone off track. Patrick, can you tell the audience about Lawn Bowling, when did it start?

P) Well Lindsey no-one knows really, there are a number of ancient games related, like the Italian Bocce and the French Provençal's Petanque, it's clear that these games originated from a game played by the Romans in which stones were thrown at a target stone with the object of getting as close to the target as possible.

L) That's interesting, so instead of throwing stones at one other, people took aim at something else?

P) Yes, although it's quite possible that people were doing both at the same time, so they would be enjoying a game of stone throwing which was a very early version of bowls, and then this would occasionally lead to an argument about where the stone had landed or whose turn it was and in some instances people would end up throwing the stones at each other.

L) So something quite harmless and enjoyable might turn into quite a dangerous situation

P) Yes. And that's something we see in sport quite a bit to this day. Someone will be trying to kick a ball between the poles or into soccer net and someone else will get in the way or the umpire will dispute something and before you know it you've got a situation on your hands

L) Yes but we don't really see this in lawn bowls very often, do we Patrick?

P) You're right, it rarely happens in bowls.

L) But these situations aren't really dangerous are they? They are often a form of acting or bluff. I don't know if you've noticed Lindsey but in a soccer match if one player trips another player over (either deliberately or accidentally) the other player will drop to the ground and hold their knee or ankle as if they are in agony. Then the other player will try to defend himself in front of the umpire and he will do this in a very passionate way, he will try to point out that the other player was in the wrong or that the incident fits within the rules of the game. He will behave in an extreme manner as if his life depended on a penalty kick or a yellow card. Then the umpire will deliver his verdict and the player who has been lying on the ground in agony will get up as if nothing has happened. Of course everyone knows that this well-rehearsed routine is not real, however we accept it as part of the game.

That's not something we see happening in bowls either is it Patrick?

P) No, very rarely. I can't remember the last time I saw a faked injury on the field.

(Pause)

P) (As if commenting on the game) ...and we have a dead bowl there by the opposition, resting in the ditch outside of play

(Pause)

L) Patrick your comment about soccer makes me think about some of the early sports held at the Coliseum in Rome. As you probably know there were all sorts of gruesome events held in the name of sport in that arena, feeding Christians to the lions, the slaughtering of live animals etc. Around (need to find date) the Romans introduced a new sport that involved filling the Coliseum up with water and staging mock pirate battles. Apparently there was an outcry when this new sport was introduced, because there were no actual deaths in the game, the deaths were faked. This was disappointing for the crowd, who felt somehow let down by the lack of realism.

P) It's a good job we don't have that sort of behavior in Lawn Bowls now but who knows what happened earlier in its development
But Lindsey, we have digressed. How did lawn bowls develop from stone throwing?

L) Well Patrick, overtime the stones were replaced by balls and in France the game became known as boules which is from the Italian word for ball, and the English word bowl came from that French root. Amazingly the oldest known Bowling Green is in Southampton, England, it has been there continually since 1299, although other greens claim to be older. Just getting back to your point about digressing Patrick...

P) Yes Lindsey

L) It's interesting that you say that because...

P) (Interrupts) ..Someone put a spanner in the works didn't they Lindsey?

L) Well I think we're both responsible Patrick, digression is a normal part of conversation, it helps things flow...

P) No, I'm referring Henry the Eighth who played bowls himself, who didn't like commoners playing the game. The Eighth Henry needed the populace to concentrate on archery in their spare time and so he levied a fee of one hundred pounds on each bowling green (a lot of money in those days). It took a long time for the game to recover from this, but in Scotland unaffected by The Eighth's rule the game flourished and the rules developed in the 1840's have changed little today.

Nor has it changed since, the elite continue to tax the poor keeping them where they want them, doing what they want them doing, whilst being exempt from the "crisis themselves" P) There are a couple of ruling bodies in England aren't there?

L) Yes there are a couple of ruling bodies in England, which have evolved over time, particularly because of early stringent requirements of quality of green. However the major ruling board is called the English Bowling Association (EBA) founded in 1903.

P) How come it's the major one?

L) Simply because they affiliated themselves with other world bodies such as the World Bowling Board and the European Bowls Union for international competitions. It's a bit like Egyptian and Tunisian politics really you leave the tyrant without realizing you are involved in a military coo.

P) How does one play this ancient game?

L) The game is complex yet simple, it has unseen difficulties and unseen easiness, it depends on your attitude to the green and the bias of the bowls. It's not that difficult really, gravity and velocity play their part and risk of missing. The balls are not quite round; there is a slight bulge on one side, called the bias. When the ball is moving at high velocity it travels in a straight line, but as it interacts with the grass over time it slows and begins to move in the direction of the bias. The bowler can therefore make the ball curve in one direction or the other by positioning the bias during its initial delivery. Derrida asks, "Is this risk rather its internal and positive condition of possibility?"

P) What about the individual bias of the bowlers Lindsey, does that come into it as well?

L) Yes, to a certain extent and I'll give you an example. Let's say I agree to play a game of bowls with you but my attitude is such that I think you are an inferior player. I am certain that I will beat you and that I don't need to try nearly as hard as I would if I were playing the great champions Samantha Shannahan or Karman Anderson. Who do you think will win?

P) Samantha Shannahan

L) No, I mean who will win the game between you and I if I have a biased attitude about being a superior player.

P) Well, it's impossible to say really. You might have underestimated my ability.

L) Yes that's right, and my confidence might lead me to not concentrate either. I might become intoxicated by the thought of my superior game and lose focus.

P) A humiliating defeat

L) Yes. But then again I might deliberately lose the match because I think that it would do you the world of good to win a match for a change.

P) We often see that when adults play games with children, don't we. It's very poor form for an adult to win a game of snap even though the child might not recognize the difference between a square and a triangle. We might hold our adult hand above the cards in suspended animation, waiting for the child to put two and two together and make the 'snap' before us.

L) That's right, but it's very poor form to give in or to make dishonest concessions in sport. This sort of thing really enrages people; the effort in sport must be genuine.

P) Yes, because sport is a symbolic activity (sport is for Derrida a metaphor of life and its meaning, between being and nothingness; a place and a field in which people act, learn and educate themselves, deconstructing, the values and prejudices of their lives and understanding, through sport itself, their roles and responsibility toward themselves and the community in which they live) So sporting dishonesty is tremendously disappointing for the fans, they feel personally betrayed and deceived.

L) Well let's face it, steroids aren't good for lawn bowls are they Patrick?

P) You're right there Lindsey, I've seen a game of bowls quickly descend into shot put and that was very unpleasant.

L) But we hide all this from children for a while by losing card games and letting them beat us in running races. Occasionally we might go ahead and win something in order to educate the child, to show them that they are not the centre of everything and that disappointments are inevitable.

There is a difference between sport and play but originally the word disport was used to describe time out from work or serious matters, a form of recreation amusement for solace and disport. To disport still is to enjoy oneself unrestrainedly to frolic and be carried away. This definition suits both those who play and those who watch imagine a football crowd's reaction to a goal.

P) But what is it we expect from the Art of Bowling Lindsey?

L) Well Patrick that is an interesting question, like any other art it is difficult to define what we the viewers expect. I could try listing a few things, something that is life-like, something that is interesting and engaging, something that makes me think, something that informs me about life, something that is skillful, something that entertains me, something of value, something that has beauty, something that others recognize, the way a painting represents a scene from nature perhaps. Could we by framing this bowls game be representing a scene from nature? Could we be intervening in people's perception of the real, their appraisal of time, their ability to be in time and of it? Suddenly they are not just watching a tournament of bowls but they are watching art.

(Pause)

P) Says who?

L) What?

P) Who says they are watching art?

L) Well, we do. And the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art and the Horsham Regional Gallery. It's on their websites.

P) Well what about the players, what do they think?

L) I think you'll find that they are in agreement Patrick. In fact the bowlers are the art. I know they look relaxed and at ease on the field but appearances can be deceptive. These players are in fact bowling for art today. You and I would be lost without them. We'd be watching fake grass grow and we would quickly run out of things to say.

P) Speaking of which, shall we watch for a while?

L) Yes, enough talking

(Hey I had a thought that this might be quite a nice way to end? Obviously we need to flesh out the conversation much more though and also incorporate some of the text below)

What do you mean hey?

The bowling green is 120-ft square, which is divided into six rinks, each 20 by 120 feet. Balls are delivered from a rubbermat, 14x 24 inches, at one end of the rink. A bowler must have at least one foot on the mat when the ball is released. The people playing bowls are aware of this; they have agreed to be part of this artwork for your benefit. Although it seems that they are bowling for sport they are actually bowling for art today they have been reframed whilst keeping one foot on the mat, so that you might enjoy an artistic and cultural experience. Do not be fooled by their casualness and familiarity. They are part of a contemporary collaboration between the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art and Horsham Regional gallery. This project would not be possible without them.

In the event of the jack being driven off the rink, it will be replaced at one of two predefined points. If the jack is hit off the rink to the right it will be repositioned on the right predefined point, and similarly to the left.

The jack, when hit into the ditch within the rink confines, will remain in play as normal and not be repositioned.

The changes are sure to popular among some, while others are likely to be not so enthusiastic.

One thing is certain, the game has moved on considerably from the first world indoor championships at Coatbridge back in 1979, when ten players lined up chasing the title.

The current championship at Potters Leisure Resort, Great Yarmouth, has a forty-eight strong field with the first-place prize money standing at £25,000 from a total prize fund of £121,000.

P) How do you calculate the speed of a green Lindsey?

L) Put the mat on 2m mark then place a kitty at about 27m from the 2m, then get a stopwatch and time your bowl from the time it leaves your hand until it rests close to the kitty. This gives you a close estimate of how the green is running.

P) How do you play and what for?

L) Classically four people play as a team or rink each has a definite line up that rarely varies, the first bowler is called the lead and the fourth bowler is the captain and directs the others before taking their turn. Samantha Shannahan (19) took out the ladies singles championship. Played a big campaign in the pairs, and in the fours. Played 2 to qualify, playing Karman Anderson she played two sets and nine ends, winning with a couple of last minute shots, 4 down at the heads one bowl to go, she hadn't been lucky with the draw bowl so she thought she'd play with a bit of weight and hope for the best as there was nothing else to do, then she managed to get a side off one bowl and hit her opponents bowl and saved the shot, she said "it was a very lucky shot". In another doubles match as well as the gold, Shannahan and Tennent also collected \$2000 people who watched got money too through betting.

BBC Sport Online bowls reporter Gordon Dunwoodie discovers how the game of bowls is being given a face-lift. Dedicated bowls fans will suffer something of a culture shock at this years Championships, with a host of changes designed to make the game more viewer friendly.

The cosmetic changes include a newly designed portable rink that boasts a blue coloured playing surface.

Players will be competing with either red or green coloured bowls and wearing suitably coordinated attire.

However, the major changes come on the playing side with matches now decided over the best of two sets, each set consisting of nine ends.

If scores are tied at one set all the game will go into a 'best of three end' tie break shoot-out, but players can only score a single shot on each end.

Similarly 'killed' ends will be a thing of the past.