

# BOWLS FOR PLEASURE

- **CLOTHING**

Shoes/Sandals – These should be *flat shoes* with no ridges and definitely no heels. This prevents possible indentations to outdoor greens and possible rucking and increased wear to indoor carpets. Shoes and Sandals may be brown, white, grey and (recently) black in colour.

Shirts/Blouses – These should be white, though club colours are now being allowed.

Trousers/Skirts – They are usually grey, but are sometimes white for special matches. Ladies are now allowed to wear trousers.

Ties/Neckware – These may be required by Clubs or Associations for representative matches, but for general matches are sometimes unnecessary – especially as they cannot be worn with tee-shirt type Club shirts.

Blazers – may be required for special events.

Wet weather gear – These are overjackets, overtrousers and overskirts, all in white for rainy or cold conditions.

Hats – For ladies in County Fixtures special hats are an essential, but normal headgear should be worn by both sexes on hot summer days to prevent sunstroke.

Bowls glove – Now allowed, some bowlers find that a glove helps in holding the bowl more firmly, especially in damp conditions.

- **ACCESSORIES**

Bowls measures – These can be any make or type, but NOT laser measures.

Chalk – can be ordinary chalk or the puffer type powder.

NOTE – FOR NON-OFFICIAL GAMES THE ONLY REQUIREMENT IS A PAIR OF FLAT SHOES.

- **BOWLS**

Bowls are available in different sizes, different weights, different colours and different degrees of 'bend' or 'bias'.

Sizes – These range from 00 (the smallest) to 6 (the largest). You should try different size bowls *before* you buy them by having a 'roll-up' with them. Ask other bowlers if you can try their bowls and find a size that suits your hands – too big and they will slip from your hands in wet weather, too small and you may find yourself overgripping. Ideally choose the largest bowls that you can comfortably hold.

Weights – can be *medium* (normally), *heavy* or *extra heavy*. This preference is again a personal thing, but players whose hands are getting smaller with arthritis and other complaints wishing to keep the same weight of bowls will go down a size or two. Hence they may change from a size 5 medium to a size 4 heavy or a size 3 extra heavy.

Colours – Some manufacturers are producing a wide variety of colours nowadays. A few years ago it was simply a choice of black or brown but now anything goes even *white* bowls and some colours are quite disgusting!

Degree of bias (bend) – It is not simply a matter of manufacturers adding more weights to the bias side of bowls – this is a popular misconception. There are *no weights* in bowls. It is the cutting and shaping of the bowls that enables bias to be applied. Each manufacturer produces a range of bowls with a choice of bias, each with different names for the set of bowls. Some are termed 'straight' bowls and these find a more direct route to the jack – you do not have to push them too far from a straight line to the jack for them to end up in line with the jack. Others are called 'big benders' that need to be pushed much wider than the straight line to the jack for them to end up in line with the jack. 'Straight' bowls are sometimes essential for indoor use as side ditches do not allow 'big benders' enough room to finish in line with the jack. Many players have two sets of bowls, one set for indoors and one set for outdoors.

Popular makes of bowls are Henselite and Thomas Taylor, though many other makes are being used.

When purchasing a set of bowls you *must* buy a set of four. And note – you can buy crown green bowls but they are usually in sets of two. Essentially you need to buy a matching *set* of bowls and not use 'oddmments'. In representative matches an umpire will inspect your bowls before a game to see if they comply with regulations and if they do *not*

then you will *not* be allowed to play with that set. More later on date stamping and regulations.

- **ETIQUETTE**

It is customary at the start and end of any game to shake hands with your fellow players.

You should not make critical comments about your opponent's bowls, but you can praise a good shot. You need to judge whether players like to talk during the game, most do but others prefer silence so they can concentrate.

You should stand behind the mat when other players are bowling and not make sudden noises that may distract them.

When standing behind the jack try to remain perfectly still when others are on the mat bowling so as not to distract them in any way.

Do not walk across other rinks when they are in use, step off the green and onto the path. If someone is bowling wait until he has delivered his bowl before moving across his 'head' as this can cause distraction.

- **TERMINOLOGY**

To a new player the terminology can take some getting used to....so here are some definitions.....

The **LINE** is the track selected to send the bowl to where you want it to go (which is not always the jack!)

Too **TIGHT** a line will send your bowl across an imaginary straight line from the mat to the jack, too **WIDE** a line will mean that your bowl will not come back in line with the imaginary straight line.

Too **MUCH GREEN** is the same as Too **WIDE** and Too **LITTLE GREEN** is the same as **TIGHT**

Too **HEAVY** means that your bowl ends up past the jack, Too **LIGHT** or **SHORT** means that your bowl does not reach jack length.

**JACK HIGH** or **GOOD LENGTH** means that your bowl has been delivered with sufficient strength to arrive at the same distance the jack is from the mat.

IF YOU ARE RIGHT HANDED a FOREHAND delivery means sending your bowl out to the RIGHT so that it bends back to the jack from right to left whilst a BACKHAND delivery means sending your bowl out to the LEFT so that it bends back to the jack from left to right.

IF YOU ARE LEFT HANDED then the opposite to the above applies

- **PLAYING IN MATCHES**

Games may consist of 4 players per team called RINKS, 3 players per team called TRIPLES, 2 players per team called PAIRS and 1 player per team called SINGLES.

RINKS – players have different ‘duties’ when playing rinks – the *lead* or *first wood* to bowl must place the mat, send the jack and straighten the jack before bowling the first of his two bowls, the opposition player then sends his first bowl, then they send their second bowls alternately. It is then the turn of the *seconds* or *second woods* to alternately bowl their two bowls. Additionally the *second woods* used to keep the scorecards up to date and change the scores on the scoreboards after each end, though a recent EBA ruling the skip must keep the scorecard!

Normally the *leads* and *seconds* are at one end of the rink and the *thirds* and *skips* are at the other end at the start of the end. The *thirds* or *third woods* then go down to the mat and deliver their bowls. The *thirds* duties are to keep the skip informed when he/she is not at the jack end and to agree with the opposing *third* after the final delivery of the end as to who is shot and how many shots have been scored. This may involve measuring distances from jack to bowls for which the *thirds* will need a bowls measure.

If the two *thirds* cannot agree they can ask their skips, an umpire or an impartial spectator for assistance.

The *skips* or *fourth woods* take ultimate responsibility for his team. The three players playing with him should follow his instructions as to what hand to play and what type of shot to play. The skip, being at the jack end for most of the time is in the best position to judge what is the best shot to attempt and players should follow his instructions. The *third woods* walk back up to the jack after delivering their bowls to direct his/her *skip* should anything have changed at the head whilst the *skips* bowl their two bowls. The skip remains at the end after bowling and the *thirds* walk down to join him for the start of the next end. The team that wins the end sets the mat and delivers the jack and the game continues.

TRIPLES – Three bowls per person are used in triples. The *leads* duties remain the same but the *seconds* now measure and direct the *skip* when

he is bowling. The *leads* and *seconds* are at one end of the bowling green and the *skip* is at the jack end.

PAIRS – Four bowls per person are used in pairs. The *lead* sets the mat, jack and also measures, the *skip* looks after the scorecard.

SINGLES – Four bowls per person are normally used though some games use two bowls per person. A non-playing marker is needed for these games to set the jack, measure and score and also inform players who is shot etc. BUT he must only answer specific questions and not give any other indications to either player unless asked.

- **THE JACK**

If the jack is delivered by the lead into the ditch (side or back) or it is delivered too short and is not a legal jack then the jack is given to the opposing lead to deliver, but the lead who sent the original illegal jack still bowls first. Should *both* leads send illegal jacks then the jack is manually placed at full length and the mat may be placed where the original lead wants it – so long as it is a legal jack length.

- **OTHER TOPICS**

WIND- If there is a strong cross wind blowing it is easier to take a straighter line to the jack using the hand furthest away from the direction in which the wind is blowing. The wind will keep the bowl straighter than normal, but only if the wind is blowing constantly. If you choose the other hand to bowl on then you must give your bowls more width to allow the wind to blow them into the jack. If the wind is blowing straight up and down the green then you will have to send your bowl heavier or lighter depending on the direction of the wind.

CHANGING CONDITIONS- As the sun starts to go down you may find that your bowls start to feel damp and they may pick up bits of loose grass as the dew rises. So it pays to have a duster or cloth to dry or clean off your bowls. Also you may need to add a bit of weight to your delivery to overcome the damper conditions.

THE LINE – Try to stand behind the bowler you are playing with or against to see the line that he/she is taking, then adjust your line to make use of this information. Remember, if you are a right handed bowler you will not be able to take the same line as a left handed player as they are delivering from a different position on the mat. Similarly if you are left handed you may not be able to follow a right handers line.

**FOOT FAULTING** – When you deliver your bowls you must have all or some part of your back foot on or above the mat during delivery. However, if you place both feet on the mat before you start your delivery you will be unlikely to foot fault.

**USING THE MAT OR JACK** – If you find your opposition are bowling particularly well to a certain jack length, when you get the jack, why not change the jack length or change the mat position to see if this makes a difference.

**COVERING OPPOSITION BOWLS** – If the opposition bowlers have sent a number of their bowls into a position behind or to the side of the jack it is essential to get one of *your* teams bowls amongst them, then if the jack is moved towards the opposition cluster you will not lose too many shots.

**FIRING** – A FIRE is a heavy bowl sent down to either move the jack or move an opponents bowl or bowls or to 'kill' the end. A dead end is where the jack is driven outside the boundaries of the rink. If the jack is driven into the back ditch it is still a live jack if it is still within the boundaries of the rink.

**TOUCHERS** – A TOUCHER is a bowl that has contacted the jack after delivery and should be marked with chalk to show this. However the TOUCHER must have come to rest within the boundaries of the rink for it to be a live bowl. Care must be taken NOT to move the bowl as it is being chalked!

**MEASURING** - This is only allowed at after the final bowl of the end has come to rest. It is essential NOT to move bowls when measuring. If a bowl looks as though it may fall when measuring then it should be chocked in place. Most times it is clear which bowl is shot, but if not then the third wood should measure. If possible measure the nearest opponents bowl the measure one or more of your own bowls against it. Remember it is ONLY the third bowler in a rink that can say who is shot and how many shots have been scored. First and second woods should stand aside and allow the third woods to decide the outcome of the end. When measuring from a jack in the ditch it is easier to reverse the bowls measure and put the pointed end on the jack to allow for the sharp angle made by the edge of the ditch and the playing surface.

**DISPUTING MEASURES** – If an agreement cannot be reached between the third woods then the skips should be consulted to see if they can come to an agreement. If, however, there is an umpire present the he should be asked for an official ruling.

**PLAYING IN ADVERSE WEATHER CONDITIONS** – Normally, an official match, once started has to be played to a conclusion i.e a fixed number of

ends or a time limit. However, by mutual agreement prior to the start of the game and if the weather looks potentially bad, the captains can agree on a shortened game. If a green becomes waterlogged then common sense or the green keeper will stop the game, which will then be classed as abandoned and can be played at a later date. Playing on wet grass can be dangerous as it is very easy to slip and lose your footing.

BOWLS STAMPING – See the attached sheet for requirements.

- **THOUGHT PROCESSES**

Bowls is not simply getting your bowl closer to the jack than your opponent, it is a social game. Try to interact with your fellow players and ENJOY the game. Remember, nobody in your team deliberately sets out to bowl a bad wood – it's all a matter of concentration and this must take place as you step on the mat to deliver your bowl.

So,

- Have you decided or been told by your skip which hand to play?
- Have you placed the bowl in your hand with the bias on the correct side?
- Have you got both feet on the mat?
- Are you mentally selecting the line that you want to bowl?
- Are you balanced ready to bowl?
- Is there anything in your line of vision that is distracting you? ...if so step off the mat and start again.
- Deliver your bowl and watch where it goes until it comes to rest.
- Did you notice any strange deviation on route to the jack? If so try to take a different line with your next bowl to overcome this.
- Do not get upset with yourself or playing partners if things do not turn out as expected – you will only destroy your confidence and your concentration.
- There is always a certain amount of luck in a game of bowls – it usually evens itself out over a season
- Try to 'read' a head – judge what is the best shot to play for yourself or your teammate – also try to anticipate what your opponents best shot would be and see if there is a way of preventing him playing that shot by blocking or covering. When you first start playing you will just want to get your bowls near the jack but that is only a fraction of the game. You need to keep thinking at all times!
- Try to maintain your balance when you send your bowls, try steadying yourself with your free hand on your knee.
- Do not be afraid to ask advice of other bowlers.
- And finally, when you are standing on the mat ready to send your bowl this is the CRITICAL moment – there is nothing you can do once the

bowl has left your hand.....other than pray or try talking to your bowl (neither of which have worked for me yet!). Essentially PRACTICE obviously helps and learning from your mistakes but what you must ALWAYS do is ENJOY THE GAME and help others to enjoy it with you.

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