

A Beginners Guide To Bowls

WELCOME To Nunthorpe Bowling Club. We hope this guide will answer all your initial questions and help you to quickly enjoy both the benefits of membership and also the Game of Bowls.

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1. Lawn Bowls - The Object of the Game

1.1. Playing the Game of Lawn Bowls

It is said that Lawn Bowls is a game that can be played by anyone aged from nine to ninety and you can encounter several nonagenarian players. The game does tend to have a crusty, "old people's game" image due largely to the use of sponsors like Saga and over 55's insurance companies. The reality is somewhat different and at county level the average player's age is probably somewhere in the thirties. Competitive bowling can be an tiring game and in local league matches players are expected to perform for two hours without a break. During these games they can walk around a mile and bend up and down about 50 times. It's no wonder that bowlers traditionally suffer from both back and knee injuries. Add to that the concentration and effort required and you can see why we need a seat and liquid refreshment after the match! The Game is played on a Bowling Green. The surface is generally grass but some clubs have greens with artificial turf. Whilst they may be used for club internal matched, these greens are usually not allowed for league matches. In countries with long winters, like the UK and Canada, many indoor bowling centres have sprung up where the game is played on a carpet-like surface. While the weight (effort) required to deliver the bowl changes on these surfaces, the rules and objectives of the game are essentially the same. Lawn Bowls are available in different sizes ranging from 00's, 0's through 1 to 7 sizes. They are made of a hard plastic material, which is able to withstand the

constant contact between bowls during play. They are generally available in two weights, medium and heavy, and available with differing biases. The weight of a bowl should not exceed 1.59kg. The rules allow bowls in virtually any colour and the manufacturers have taken up the challenge by producing bowls in just about every colour imaginable, even pink! Lawn bowls are not spherical; they are shaped on one side such that they follow a curved track to the jack. They carry a mark to indicate to which side the bias is applied, and have a test stamp on them indicating when a bowl needs retesting (although in local leagues these test dates are not applied). During a game players deliver (roll) their bowls up the green in turn, trying to finish closest to a smaller white or yellow ball called the "Jack".

1.2 The Green

A bowling green is normally square - the rules require it to be no less than 31 metres and no more than 40 metres in the direction of play. The green should be surrounded by a ditch, which should be between 200mm and 380mm wide and between 50mm and 200 mm deep. The green is divided into rinks (usually 6) allowing six games to take place concurrently. Each rink should be not less than 4.3 metres nor more than 5.8 metres wide. Surface wear is reduced by moving the rink settings (marked by colours on the bank) laterally and by changing the direction of play between morning/afternoon and evening sessions, playing either across the green (N-S) or up and down (E-W). Rink extremities are marked off by boundary markers with the centre of each being indicated by a "pin" which also carries a number for the rink. The rinks are numbered 1 through 6. Players deliver their bowls from one end to another during an "end" then, when the end is complete, they turn around and play back again.

1.3 The Play

The bowls can be delivered on the "forehand" or the "backhand" depending on the player's preference or the position of bowls that have already been played. The curved path helps the player to find a way past bowls that have been delivered short of the jack. Note that bowls may travel outside the boundaries of the rink during their course as long as they come to rest within these boundaries. Players must stand on a mat when delivering their bowl. The mat is placed on the centre-line of the rink with its front-end no less than 2 metres from the rear ditch or less than 25m from the front ditch. The player who bowls the Jack to start the end chooses the position of the mat. During an end the bowl nearest to the Jack is referred to as "the shot". You may hear players on the mat asking, "who is lying the shot?". The player who first delivers the jack must ensure that it is properly centred. If it comes to rest within two metres from the front edge of the ditch, it must be moved out to a mark at that distance. The player delivering the jack can choose the length to play it, but it must finish at least 23m in a straight line of play from the front edge of the mat. The players then take turns to deliver their bowls. When all the bowls have been delivered the number of "shots" is counted. A shot is a bowl that is nearer the jack than any of your opponent's bowls. For example, if you have three shots nearer the jack than any of your opponents' bowls, then you score three shots at that end.

1.4 Types of Lawn Bowls

Games and Matches Games of bowls can involve singles play or teams of two in pairs, three in triples or four in "rinks" games. Matches generally involve a number of 'teams' or 'rinks' from one club playing another club. For example a match could involve six rinks which involves 24 players (6 x 4) per team.

1.5 Touchers

The jack can be moved by the bowls during play. When a bowl moves the jack, the jack is left in the new position provided it remains within the rink boundary markers. It can also be pushed into the ditch by a bowl. In this case the jack remains in the ditch and the players must try to play their bowls as close as possible to the jack, at the edge of the green, without falling into the ditch. A bowl which, in its original course, moves the jack is marked with chalk and classified as a "Toucher". If the toucher falls into the ditch after touching the jack, it stays there, remains "live" and may feature in the final shot count. A toucher that remains on the rink and is later driven into the ditch by another bowl is also a live bowl. The position of both touchers and the jack when live in the ditch are shown by markers placed at their position on the top of the ditch. A bowl that goes into the ditch and that has not touched the jack is classed as being "dead" and it is removed. All bowls which finish outside the side boundaries of the rink are dead.

1.6 Lawn Bowls Tactics

Bowls is a highly tactical game. This is one of its attractions. It is not always about "drawing" closest to the jack. Players must constantly anticipate what shot their opponents may play. For example when a team has a few bowls behind the head (behind the jack), the opposing team may see the need to try to place a bowl amongst these to cover the possibility of the jack being moved. Similarly, if one side is already laying the shot, they may elect to play a guarding shot short of the target area to prevent their opponents from moving anything. These are only two examples and there are many other situations, too many to discuss here, where tactics come into play.

2 Types of Shots in Bowling

There are basically four different types of shot, or delivery, in Lawn Bowling:

2.1 The Draw

A Drawing Shot is the most common and it is really what the game is all about. This shot is one in which the player attempts to play with the exact weight required to finish closest to the jack or to a point on the green dictated by strategy or tactics. This shot is often considered to be the most skilful.

2.2 The Yard On

The "Yard On" shot is when the player plays his bowl with the weight that will carry it a yard or two past the target. The objective of this shot is usually to drag the jack away from the opponent's bowls towards your own or to push a bowl out of the "head" and take its place.

2.3 The Running Shot or Ditch Length Shot

The Running Shot is one that uses more weight than the 'Yard On'. The objective of this shot is to remove opponent's bowls from the head, to move the jack to the ditch or to seek some other result that requires the bowl to be played with weight. This can be a difficult shot to play as the line (bias) required to get to the target changes with different weight.

2.4 The Drive

The Drive (or firing shot) is probably the most spectacular shot on the bowling green. A drive is when the player delivers the bowl at high speed and with maximum weight so that he can strike the head or the target with full force. The objective of this shot can be to completely remove opponent's bowls from the head or from the rink or to drive the jack into the ditch. It is also commonly used when a player has a few shots against him/her. In this case the objective is to destroy the head or to "burn" or "kill" the end by driving the jack out of the rink. This can be a very effective and intimidating shot to have in your armoury, but many players have difficulty controlling their direction when concentrating their efforts on so much weight.

3 The Playing Season.

The outdoor season usually begins in April. The green is then open for bowling, and fixtures begin. The season ends early in September, although if the weather is good the green may be kept open for a week or so longer. During the season if the weather is bad the Green may be closed, in which case a notice will typically be posted to say 'Green Closed - No Bowling'.

4. Dress

Regulation bowling shoes with smooth flat soles must be worn at all times when on the green. White above the waist (club shirts/tops) is normally worn for all club matches, except if stated differently, together with grey below the waist (trousers), whichever is specified for a match.

5 Equipment for the New Bowler

The following is the basic equipment need for the new bowler; its total cost should be no more than £250. · A pair of bowling shoes. · A set of Bowls with club stickers. · A club shirt/white shirt, · grey trousers· A waterproof jacket(club colours), · A measure and marking chalk (liquid or solid). NOTE: For beginners the club has a selection of shoes and bowls that can be used on each visit. Also an auction site such as ebay has lots of pre-used bowls for sale.

6 The Green

The green at Nunthorpe is a square of six rinks' length each side. Play can be in either N-S (parallel to the clubhouse) or E-W (to and away from the clubhouse) and is set out by club players prior to a match or session. The rinks positions (known as 'colours' and marked on the banks), are rotated to give even wear of the green throughout the season. During the season the green is open for play each weekday (after 11.00am Mondays, Wednesdays and

Fridays, and after 9 am on all other days). Play can continue until dark each night. On the table inside the pavilion is a daily diary. To reserve a rink for a match, enter the match, players and start time on the page for the day you wish to book, however the diary will show the order that the rinks should be used on that day. This, again, is to ensure even usage across the green and applies to internal club competitions and roll-ups. Once a rink has been used the players should make a "tick" against the rink number in the diary so people following know which rink has already been used that day. For external competitions or league matches the team captain may select which rinks they wish to be used. Before making arrangements to play outside competitions at home, please make sure there will be a rink available, as at certain times during the season all rinks can be taken. To set up a rink for play you need a Jack, a mat, rink markers, scoreboard and the bowls 'pushers' (in the equipment building.).

7 Green Etiquette

Always take care stepping onto the green. When playing on the green it is advisable never to run. The green, especially in wet conditions, can be very slippery and you are wearing smooth-soled shoes. During a game when not 'on the mat' preparing to bowl, remain within the confines of your rink. Do not stand on adjacent rinks, and do not obstruct the view of the rink marker for a bowler on your own or on an adjacent rink. When a bowler is delivering a bowl (i.e. is 'on the mat', or 'in possession of the mat'), those at the head and those at the mat must stand quite still and quiet until the bowl has been released. After completion of your bowl, as you step back off the mat, note that the next bowler is stepping up to the mat and preparing to deliver his bowl. If you then make a comment to your fellow bowlers about the result of your wood, it is often the case that the timing of your comment will disturb the next bowler who is now 'in possession of the mat'. Be aware of this, and hold back your comment until the next bowler has delivered his bowl, to maintain your respect for the bowler 'on the mat', as you would wish others to respect you when on the mat. Be ready to step up to the mat when it is your turn, having already located your wood, to avoid delaying the game. When you are walking down the green to the head, walk as close to the centre line as possible; please be aware of players and bowls in progress on adjacent rinks and always walk around the head - never through the head, and do not stop at the head pointing at your and others' bowls. At the head, always stand behind the back-most bowl in the head, and at least one metre behind the jack. The skips need to see all bowls and it will stop you tripping over or moving a bowl in the head. If you move a bowl, your opponent has the right to place it where they thought it was (e.g. right next to the jack!). Do not move while a bowler is 'on the mat', preparing to bowl. If walking along the bank behind a head in progress, do not move across a rink when a bowler is delivering a wood towards you, to avoid distracting the bowler. If you are to play a bowl with extreme weight (i.e. 'firing') let all the players know. Players should then stand on the bank as bowls can do a lot of damage to ankles. If there are several players at the head, it is customary for two players to act as 'guards', standing at each side of the head to prevent scattered bowls being forced onto adjacent rinks, and interfering with another head in progress, or with a bowler on the mat.

8 Match Etiquette

Refreshments are usually provided by the home team, either during or after the match. Nunthorpe, now, do not charge members for this as a charge was built into the annual club membership subscription. External competitions generally charge an entry fee. Some of these competitions will also run raffles and players are encouraged to support club funds by buying raffle tickets.

9 Playing

9.1 Roll-Ups

Members may arrange their own Roll Ups when no organised games are in progress or booked. Players should check the daily diary to determine which rink to use and thereafter mark a “tick” in the diary against that number. Play can be for as long as the players are comfortable. Occasionally members may arrive to find all rinks in use. In this instance members are encouraged to invite these players to join their current roll-up.

9.2 Friendly Matches.

‘Friendly’ means just that! These games, though 'competitive' as are all matches, have no outcome beyond the enjoyment of the day. They cater for meeting and making friends and improving skill within a match structure. Even as a beginner you are encouraged to sign up to play in friendly matches. Put your name down on the match sheets posted on the club house notice-board; then check if you have been selected and confirm (by ‘ticking’) that you will play.

10. Competitive Bowling

10.1 In-Club Competitions

The Club, via the Competitions Secretary, operates a number of in-club competitions during the season. Entry to these competitions is made by putting your name on the entry sheets on the club noticeboard.

10.2 Club Competitions

The Club fields teams in the:

- Men's North Yorkshire Bowls League (4 rinks of 3)
- Ladies Teesside Ladies Bowls League (2 rinks of 3)
- Mixed Cleveland Afternoon's Bowls League (2 rinks of 3)
- Mixed Cleveland Evening Bowls League (4 rinks of 3)
- Mixed Middlesbrough Bowls League (3 rinks of 3) NBC have 2 teams in this league
- Mixed Spicer Mid-Week Triples Bowls League (3 rinks of 3)

- Mixed Teesside Veterans Bowls League (1 rinks of 4) NBC have 4 teams in this league

The Club may also enter a team in each of the Cup (knockout) competitions organised by the various associations

10.3 Outside Competitions

Members can enter as individuals (singles) or teams (pairs, triples and rinks) in the National, Yorkshire County, and league competitions. Entry to these competitions is usually upon receipt of invitations from the league Secretaries to the club Secretary.

11. Lawn Bowling Glossary

Bias Bias is the amount of curve that a bowl will take during its course to the jack. Bowls are available with several different biases.

Blocker A blocker is a bowl played to a position that restricts the opposition from getting to the target.

Bowls A bowl is made of a plastic composition, which is shaped to give a “bias”. It is not weighted in any way.

Dead End A dead end is one where the Jack has been moved outside the boundaries of the rink by a bowl in play. In normal competition dead ends must be replayed.

Delivery Delivery is the action of rolling a bowl. The development of a good delivery enables consistent performance.

Draw A draw is a bowl delivered with the correct weight and line to come to rest as close as possible to the target.

Drive A shot played with minimum bias and sufficient weight to open up the head, to rearrange bowls in the head or to destroy an unfavourable head.

End An end of bowls comprises the placing of the mat, the delivery of the jack and the playing of all the required bowls of all of the players in one direction of the rink.

Green The green is the curved route taken to the jack. e.g. “You are a yard short but your green was good”.

Head The head refers collectively to the jack and the bowls that have been delivered and that have come to rest within the boundaries of the rink.

Heavy When a player unintentionally delivers a bowl beyond the jack or the intended target it is described as being heavy.

Jack The jack is the small white or yellow ball that is the target in bowls.

Jack High A bowl which, when it comes to rest, is at the same distance from the mat as is the jack.

Rest To rest a bowl is to deliver it so that it gently comes to rest against another bowl to give you an advantage.

Short A bowl that does not reach the jack or the intended target is described as being short.

Shot Shot can have several meanings. The shot or shots are the number of points scored in an end. It can also mean the type of delivery, e.g. a drawing shot. During an end, 'shot' is the bowl currently nearest the jack.

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