



Coaching Basics

&

The Etiquette of Bowls

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Focus of this guide

Lawn bowls is a game of skill and over the years many books have been published with the aim of assisting both the novice and experienced bowler to improve their skills. This booklet provides information for both the beginner and new bowler. It concentrates mainly on the basics of the game; therefore, it is likely to be beneficial to relatively inexperienced bowlers. This booklet is not intended to be a substitute for club coaching but is likely to be a particular benefit to bowlers who lack access to coaching.

Delivery Technique:

The delivery is a controlled pendulum action of the arm with an even and continuous forward movement. The palm of the hand should follow the bowl or jack in a natural follow through. Delivery may or may not include a backswing.

This booklet describes some options available in delivery technique. Beginner bowlers should feel free to experiment with the suggested options and adopt the one that feels more natural and is more effective for them. Once bowlers settle on a technique, they should discontinue further experimentation with it.

Temperament:

A player's overall temperament can be broken up into the following facets.

Concentration is the ability to narrow one's focus to factors of immediate importance, and to ignore distractions. **Confidence** is the outcome of positive self-affirmation and of achieving improving personal bests rather than of winning at all costs. **Commitment** is the will to set goals for practice and competition. **Calmness** is the ability to neutralise stress in tight situations. **Creativity** is about 'seeing' the ideal shot and to recognise tactical opportunities. **Common sense** is the capacity to make intelligent corrections to poor deliveries and to avoid variations to controlled technique when faced with a difficult shot or during the excitement of competition.

Safety First:

Bowls is a sport that does not make great demands on physical conditioning. Good general health is an adequate level of fitness in most circumstances. However, competitive bowlers must be fit enough to perform at their best end after end, game after game and day after day.

To safeguard personal well-being, bowlers should:

- Avoid dehydrating and use shady hats and sunscreen lotions, particularly during the summer months. Remember Slip, Slop, Slap and Slurp.
- Precede bowling activity by warming up the major muscles with stretching exercises.
- Avoid creating obstructions with bowl bags along thoroughfares.
- Adopt sensible precautions before practicing or playing on a green recently treated with fertilizers or other control agents.
- Awareness of what is around you. Being aware of one's surrounds will help reduce the chances of falling or tripping over bowls or equipment.
- Avoid stepping onto loose mats when entering or leaving the green.

To safeguard the state of the green, bowlers should:

- Wear approved smooth-soled footwear.
- Avoid sitting on the edge of the bank, or otherwise submitting the green near the edge of the ditch to foot pressure.
- Avoid placing bags on the green surface to pack or unpack bowls.
- Release their bowls close to the green surface (avoid 'dumping').

Placing the Mat:

Start a game by mat placement prior to the delivery of the jack. Care must be taken to see that the mat is correctly placed. The correct method is to take hold of the corners on one end of the mat—face the number plate at your end of the rink on which you are playing, with your back to the far or skipper's end and place the mat lengthwise along the centre line of the rink. (Diagram 1) The lead can place the mat anywhere along the centre line providing its front edge is 23 metres from the front (or skippers end) ditch.

Mat Laying Procedure

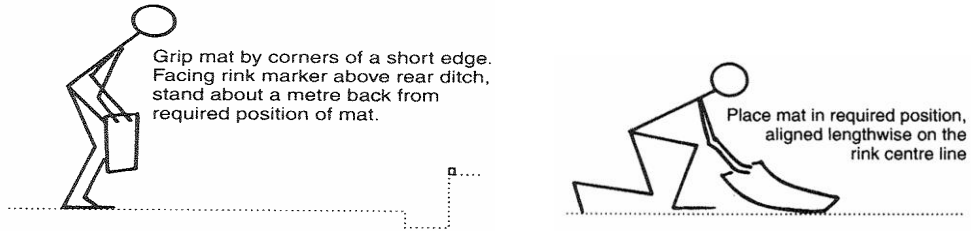


Diagram 1

Jack Delivery:

In a sport demanding so much concentration and application, it is curious that one of the most obvious fundamentals of bowls is so over-looked and given so little attention.

The simple act of delivering the jack, to start a match, or an end, controls much of the game, yet most bowlers merely step on to the mat without thought, and even with haste, deliver the jack so that there is no control of length or direction.

Choosing your required length is the foundation of building a favourable head and so careless delivery of the jack, may result in it going out of bounds, into the ditch or to your opponent's favourite length. The bowler who errs in this respect has handed the control of the length to his opponent and thrown away any advantage.

The importance of delivering the jack straight and to a required length cannot be over emphasised. The following principles if followed should ensure the correct delivery of the jack.

Grip of the jack

Place the jack toward the front of the fingers of the hand (the fingers forming a platform) with the long finger under the centre of the jack and the pad of the thumb on the top of the centre of the jack. This forms a comfortable grip. The wrist should be firm to prevent any flicking of the wrist when delivering. Do not cup your fingers around the jack as this will force the jack above the wrist and make control difficult. (Diagram 2)

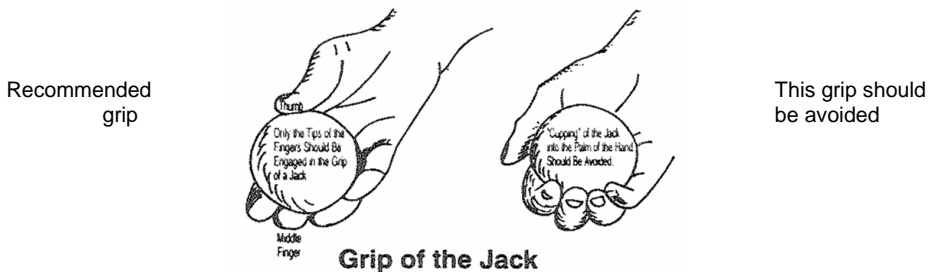
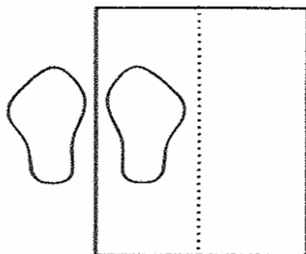


Diagram 2

Position of feet

Place your right foot in the centre of the mat but to the left of the centre line- bring the left foot up parallel to the right foot so that both are pointing straight up the green with the body relaxed and comfortable. This is for a right-handed player. (Diagram 3) As the jack is perfectly round and does not have any bias it means that when you deliver the jack it will follow your hand and go straight in the direction you have delivered it.

Diagram 3



Delivering the jack

You are now standing correctly on the mat, feet pointing straight up the green, jack correctly held in your right hand, arm relaxed and your skipper standing at the length to which they want the jack delivered. Take a normal straight walking length step, with your left foot, bending the right knee towards the left heel and deliver the jack with a smooth follow through of the hand and arm straight towards the aiming point (Diagram 4), and bring the right foot up to the left foot after the jack has travelled 3 to 4 metres. This should bring you to a standing position and stand still until the jack has stopped rolling. With practice you will soon find that you are able to deliver the jack with confidence and accuracy. Leave your left hand to rest on the knee and obtain better balance. For beginners you will note that all reference is to deliver the jack, not throwing. Many bowlers take the word throw literally and do in the fact throw the jack with disappointing results. Many a game has been lost through poor delivery of the jack.

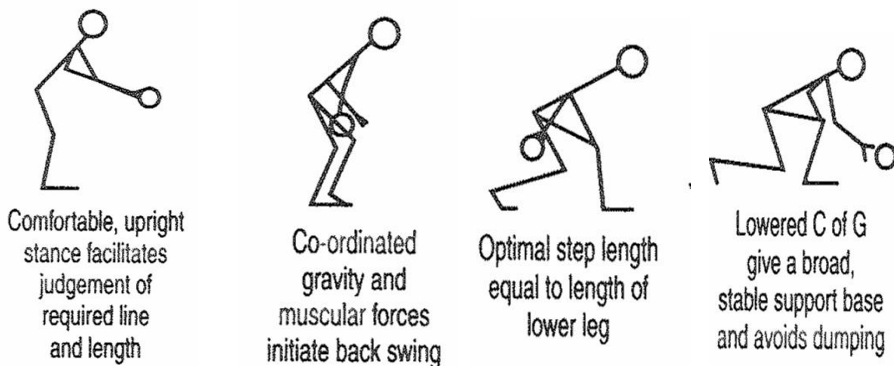


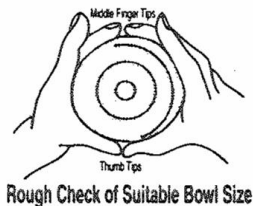
Diagram 4

C of G: Centre of Gravity

Characteristics of Bowls:

Bowlers can ascertain a suitable bowl size by encircling a bowl so that the tips of the middle fingers and thumbs can touch (As per diagram 5). This is a rule of thumb exercise. In some instances, bowls that are too large cause greater difficulty than bowls that are slightly smaller than the measured size. The bowl should feel comfortable in the hand.

Diagram 5



Bowls have bias because of their asymmetric shape. The side of a bowl identified by the smaller engraved ring (smaller logo) is the biased side as a result of factory machining (Diagram 6). This causes the bowl to follow a path that curves inward towards the biased side. It provides separate forehand and backhand approaches into a jack or head, according to which side of the bias faces when the bowl begins its run. Furthermore, by varying the delivery line and delivery speed combination, the bowl will turn to a greater or lesser extent in its course to the head.

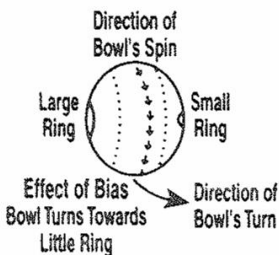


Diagram 6

Diagram 7 shows the general form of the path of a bowl. Note that if a bowl is to come to rest in the head or near the jack a bowler must deliver the bowl at an angle that allows for the effect of bias to take place. The shoulder of the bowl path is the segment where the bowl begins to turn back towards the centre line. Depending on the profile of the bowl, the shoulder is 55% to 70% of the distance to the head or jack.

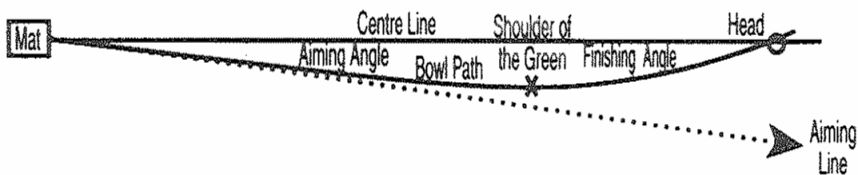


Diagram 7

Mechanics of bowling:

There are only two dimensions in bowls, length, and width.

Width is the bias on a bowl which is constant and therefore can be gauged and controlled. Bias, curve, grass, green are all terms meaning the same thing in the bowling world. For this discussion, it is proposed to use the term "Grass" when referring to the line which the bowl is to be delivered. Amongst players there are many ways of determining this, but for the beginner it is considered advisable to have some practical method of fixing the line on which the bowl is to be delivered.

Length must come with practice, experience through training on the green. Length cannot be taught other than by adopting a good style and obtaining a mechanical action to impart the correct velocity to the bowl in accordance with the pace of the green.

Pace

This is all important- so let us understand the term "pace of the green." This is measured in time, or the number of seconds a bowls takes to travel from the time it leaves the hand until it comes to rest, at 27 metres. If this takes 13 seconds then we have a 13 second paced green, and so on. Thus a 12 second green is considered a slow green while a 17 second green is fast. The average green, on which we play, day in, day out, could be rated at about 14 to 16 seconds. However, the pace or velocity at which a bowl is delivered is directly related to the distance the jack is from the mat and the pace of the green.

On a true green without wind, for a draw shot the angle of the grass line to the centre line of the rink is constant for any length of end (Diagram 8) and is relative to the pace of the green. A fast green will require a lot more grass (the bowl will travel further) than a slow green (Diagram 9). Look at diagram 12, you will note that it shows the mat and ditch with the grass line indicated with a dotted line, and it should be noted that the grass line does not alter with the length of end, but will alter with the pace of the green, i.e., as the pace of the green increases, so more grass will be required as the bowl will travel further (Diagrams 12 & 10). Diagram 9 shows the approximate grass required for various paces of green.

Diagram 11 indicates the approximate adjustment of grass line as the mat is moved up the green. When selecting your grass line face a point on the bank then bring the eyes back along a straight line between this point and the right foot until you feel comfortable. This is your aiming point and should be where the eyes are looking at the moment of delivery. This aiming point will vary with the physical stature of everyone.

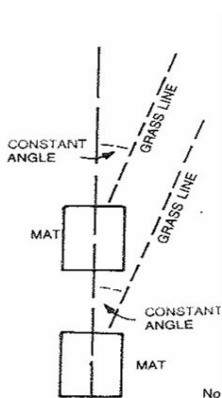


Diagram 8

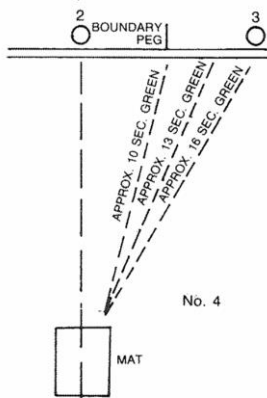


Diagram 9

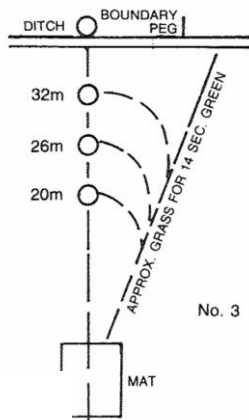


Diagram 10

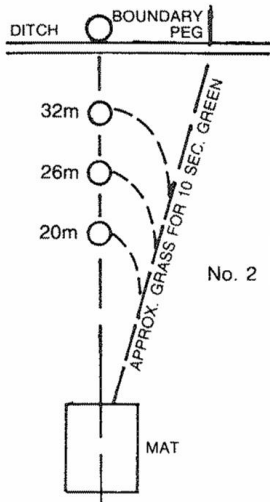


Diagram 12

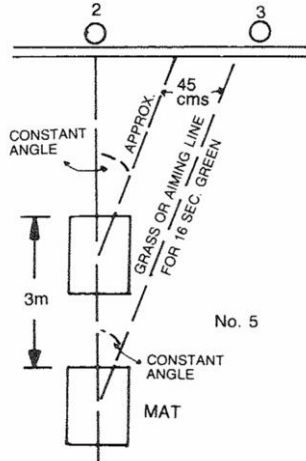
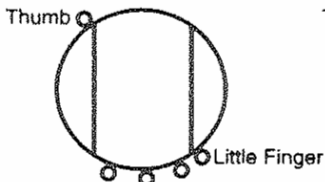


Diagram 11

These angles will vary according to the type of bowls used

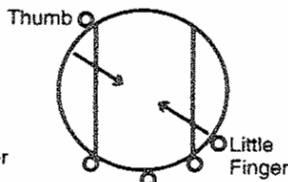
Bowl: Grip, Stance, Swing

Common Bowl Grips Compared



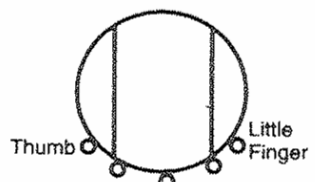
Middle Finger
Centred on Running Sole

Finger-Tip Grip
Weight of Bowl
Supported on Finger Tips,
Allowing Fine Tactile Control



Middle Finger
Centred on Running Sole

Claw Grip
Pressure Between Thumb
and Spread Fingers Claws
the Bowl into the Palm



Middle Finger
Centred on Running Sole

Cradle Grip
Bowl Cradled in
Palm of Hand

Diagram 13

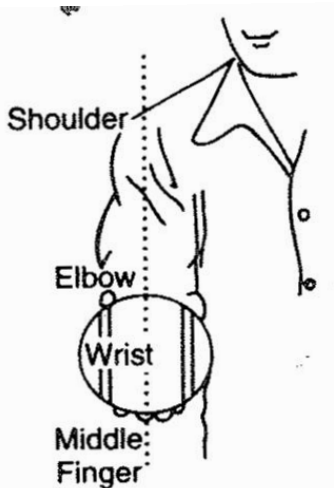


Diagram 14

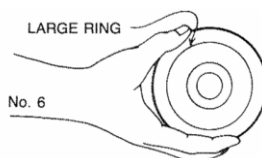
Alignment of Delivery Arm

Grip (for the right-handed bowler)

Take the bowl in the left hand. Players are instructed to do this as once the bowl comes into the right hand; the urge is to deliver the bowl without paying attention to placing the feet in the correct position. Hold the right hand out in front of the body on a line just outside the right hip with fingers slightly apart, take care to allow the hand to lie with the palm facing up, the wrist in a natural position, not twisted. Having obtained this relaxed position with the right hand, now transfer the bowl from the left to the right hand, taking care to have a line passing through the centre of the running surface of the bowl pointing through the wrist to the right shoulder (As per diagram 14), the bowl to rest on the fingers, not back in the palm of the hand. The wrist should be firm, not tensed, with the back of the hand approximately in a straight line with the forearm, do not allow the wrist to bend or cock. (Diagram 15)

To ensure that a bowl will run free of wobble, a bowler should avoid a grip that causes its engraved rings to cock or tilt, as in the diagram 14. The diagram 13 shows options for gripping a bowl. The main differences are the positioning of the thumb and the separation of the fingers. The finger grip provides good 'touch' for play on medium or fast greens. A claw grip is a secure grip for fast shots and for play on slow greens. The cradle grip suits players with small or weak hands. However, a cradle grip fails to secure a bowl in the back swing without awkward articulation of the wrist.

The most common used grip is where the thumb should be placed in a comfortable position on or about the large ring, but do not strain the thumb to grip the bowl (Diagram 15).



The bowl, elbow and forearm should be on a line just outside the right hip, viewed from the front (Diagram 14).

Diagram 15

Stance

(Diagram 16) Feet together, right foot, pointing along the line on which the bowl is to travel, knees relaxed and elbows slightly bent, body leaning forward slightly from vertical, bowl held out in front of body on a line just outside the right hip to allow a clean swing down the outside of the right leg, eyes looking along the delivery line to a convenient point on the green, weight forward on the balls of the feet, not back on the heels, with most of the weight carried on the right foot. Now having got the correct relaxed posture, let us transfer to the mat for a forehand draw.

Note:

Some anomalies can occur in the stance depending on the individual.

Diagram 16



Footwork

The importance of footwork cannot be too strongly stressed. Like all other ball games, the feet play a vital part in direction and consistency.

Irrespective of the type of delivery, taking a step, or adopting a fixed stance, the feet and body must be facing the grass line or the aiming line.

If a step is taken, it must be along the grass line or aiming line, if a fixed stance, then the feet must be placed along the grass line or aiming line.

When delivering a bowl, the hand will naturally follow the front foot, if the foot is placed in the wrong direction, the hand will want to follow that foot, and thus an ill-directed bowl will result.

With the bowl in the left hand, step on to the mat and place the right foot on the centre line of the mat towards the grass line pointing to the aiming point (Diagram 17). With the right foot in this position, pointing along the line on which the bowl is to be delivered, bring the left foot alongside the right (Diagram 17), feet together but not strained, now the feet and body should be facing towards the aiming point. On occasions players feet may be separated a fraction for better balance on the mat.

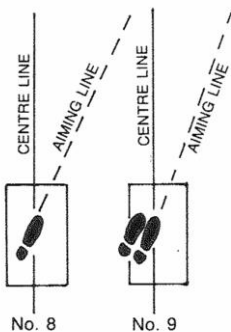


Diagram 17

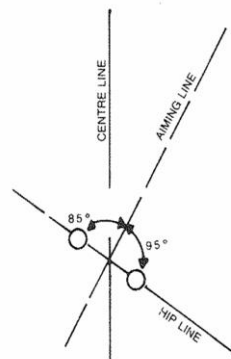


Diagram 17A

Transfer the bowl from the left to the right hand and proceed as described under **Grip**. Having achieved this position (As per diagram 15), see that the right hip is slightly behind the left (As per diagram 17A). This can be achieved by placing the left toe approximately 8 centimetres (3inches) in front of the right toe. This clears the right hip out of the way and allows for a clean swing down past the right leg, this also places the body in position for the step forward with the left foot. If the right hip is held too far forward, the left foot will be forced narrow of the grass line and a narrow bowl will result.

Back swing

Now we are ready for the down or back swing. The pace of this is regulated by the position in which the bowl is held, i.e., low for a short end, just below hip-high for a medium end, and hip-high for a long end, of course considering the pace of the green(Diagrams 18,19,20)

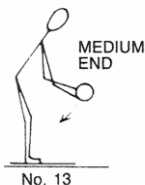
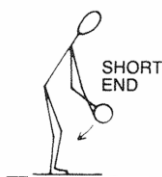


Diagram 18

Diagram 19

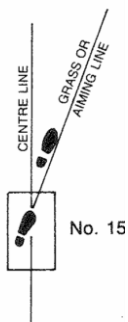
Diagram 20

If possible, allow the bowl to drop under its own weight, this will ensure a smooth back swing—don't drag the bowl back.

Start the back swing by allowing the bowl to drop under its own weight. The swing should only travel as far as its own weight will carry it. Don't force the bowl back, the arm must be as relaxed as possible, and the back swing kept to a minimum.

At the same time as the bowl starts to drop, start moving the left foot forward along the line of delivery or grass line, take a natural walking step, no longer(diagram21)

Diagram 21



As the left foot finds its position along the grass line the back swing should be completed with the weight of the body transferring to the front foot by bending the right knee towards the left heel. As the forward step commences the left hand is transferred to the left kneecap (Diagram 22). The arm should be relaxed and not taking the weight of the body but used only as a steadying factor.

Forward swing

As the forward swing is carried out the right knee is bent low behind the left heel, weight of the body over the front foot. The bowl is delivered or grassed just ahead of the left foot; the fingers should almost touch the green at the point of delivery. The right hand follows through along the line after the bowl. At the completion of the follow-through the palm of the hand should be facing upwards with the fingers pointing along the grass line (Diagram 26).

To complete the movement, when the bowl has travelled some 3 to 4 metres up the green, bring the right foot up to the left foot. This should bring you to a standing position.

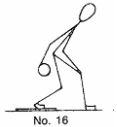


Diagram 22



Diagram 23

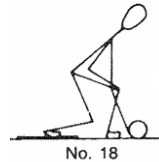


Diagram 24



Diagram 25



Diagram 26



Diagram 27

Follow Through

A smooth follow-through is a must and at the finish of the swing the palm of the hand should, if possible, face upwards, the fingers pointing along the line of delivery. This ensures that the bowl will travel on an even keel without wobble and will travel along the selected line. As the bowl is grassed the head should be steady and over the foot and grass line. Don't lift the head until the bowl has travelled some 3 to 4 metres along the green.

For the backhand draw (mirror image forehand draw) take up your position on the mat in the same manner as for the forehand draw, with the right foot in the centre of the mat and in line with the grass line pointing to the aiming point (Diagrams 28,29,30)

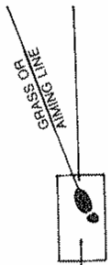


Diagram 28

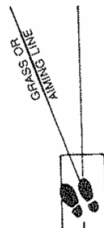


Diagram 29



Diagram 30

Foot Faulting:

Before delivery a player should be standing on the mat with one foot fully on the mat. At the moment they deliver the jack or bowl, the player should have all or part of one foot on or above the mat. A player using an approved wheelchair should have one wheel on the mat and, at moment of delivery, should have all or part of one wheel on the mat. If an opponent draws the umpire's attention to foot faulting, the umpire must apply the penalties provided in the laws. Beginners should adopt a routine that avoids any risk of infringing. They will thereby avoid incurring unsettling penalties at crucial times in important games.

Tradition: Bowls Queensland

Since its inception in Queensland the game has a reputation for being recognised as a game played in a friendly but competitive atmosphere. The conduct of players always should be exemplary. The prestige of bowling clubs within the community has always been recognised and it is up to all members to see the tradition built by our predecessors continues. Everyone can play their part in honouring this tradition by conducting our affairs within our sport to the highest principles of sportsmanship, loyalty, and general good fellowship. In this way we can pass on to future generations a game that is admired by all.

The Club:

The club you have now joined has an administration with various committees which perform the everyday functions required to maintain the operational standard that is required in any organisation. As well as being a bowling member it would be of great benefit to your club if you made yourself available to assist with any volunteer duties and in the future, you made yourself available to assist with the administration of your club by standing for one of the committees that are an integral part of the club.

At all times be respectful to the administrators of your club and assist them by being punctual for any appointment you may have organised, and by appreciating the voluntary tasks they do on behalf of the club.

The maintenance of the club and the green on which the game is played is an unenviable task for all club administrators, and assistance with regard to supporting social functions etc, for the raising of the financial requirements of the club should also get your support.

Always be aware that you are known throughout the fraternity by the name of the club of which you are a member, therefore do nothing that will reflect badly on the club, and therefore on the other members. When representing your club always be appropriately dressed when participating in a game.

Bowling green:

This is the area where you will be spending a major part of your time and it is well to remember that all members use this facility. Always be aware that damage can occur to a green if it is in any way abused.

There are two types of green surface: grass and synthetic. The grass type takes specialised care and maintenance so that the surface can be acceptable for play during the season. Synthetic greens are more durable with respect to damage but still must be treated with respect as they require regular maintenance to the playing surface.

Etiquette:

This subject is a major part of the conduct of lawn bowls and has been part of the game since the game began.

One definition of the word etiquette is "code of behaviour." First and foremost, adhere to the old cliché.

"Do unto others as you would others do unto you."

- Do not behave in any way that would bring you, your club, or the game into disrepute.
- Do not wander around or move about the head when a player is about to deliver a bowl, and particularly do not stand in the line with the boundary pegs.
- Do not converse loudly whilst a player is about to deliver a bowl.
- Standing behind the player and shouting compliments or encouragement to a player, or players, on another rink is certainly distracting and should not take place when any player is preparing to deliver a bowl on your rink.
- Do not intrude onto an adjacent rink.

- Be always courteous.
- It is customary to invite your opponent to join you in a friendly drink on completion of the game.
- Always remember that good sportsmanship in relation to your teammates and opponents; in turn this will be reciprocated.
- It is customary to pick up the mat in any game whenever your opponent has delivered the last bowl of the end.
- You must not be in the opponent's area of play after your bowl comes to rest (this is the head or the mat area). The rule states that the possession of the rink is in the control of your opponent when your bowl comes to rest.
- The lead in a team game, or opponent in a singles game, is to pick up the jack and hand to their opponent at the start of an end.
- When you play against an opponent on your own green, remember you are the host and must treat that player and team as guests, be always sociable and display a friendly manner.
- Always be gracious in defeat and humble in victory.
- Do not blame outside influences for your defeat, such as the green, the weather conditions, your opponent's lucky shots, the umpire, or spectators.
- No matter how good you are, or think you are, all players have the capabilities of playing well on a given day. Accept the defeat and give credit to your opponent in a sportsman like manner.
- Do not show your displeasure by being ungracious to your opponent. Be the first to offer your hand in congratulations for a game well played.
- When an umpire is requested to decide a measure situation, indicate the bowls in dispute and retire from the area so the umpire can complete his/her job. Accept the decision without displaying signs of disagreement.
- Ensure you follow the dress regulations. Clubs should have regulations displayed in a prominent position.
- When you have the services of a marker, it is of utmost importance that you extend your thanks and appreciations for the services rendered and offer a refreshment on completion of the game.
- Bowls should not be dropped onto the green.
- Don't abuse the privileges of the club.

There are many forms of etiquette and the above is an outline of some to help you. Remember bowls is a friendly game. Let the exercise of consideration for others, courtesy and good sportsmanship add charm to a skilful and rewarding sport.

As indicated in the introduction, etiquette is mainly about treating one another the way bowlers expect to be treated themselves. Considerate thought and common sense are the keys to acceptable standards.

Frequently Asked Questions

What size bowls do I need?

The theory to choosing the right size bowls is to play with the largest & heaviest bowls you can comfortably handle, the advantage with this is that they are less affected by the wind and its easy for you to move your opponent's bowls and harder for your opponent to move yours. It is best to consult with your club coach regarding this matter if you have not already.

Do I need special shoes to play bowls?

Yes, you need flat soled shoes to walk on the green. Even running shoes with a small amount of tread can damage the bowling green.

We hope this publication has been of some assistance to you in understanding the basics of delivery of your bowl and how you should conduct yourself when at a bowling club.

It is recommended where available; you should avail yourself of the services of your club coach. They will be more than happy to assist you in playing this great game of lawn bowls.
