



Conditions of play

The competition season is well in progress now, so I thought I would share some thoughts on competition rules, or conditions of play as they are called in the Laws of the Sport

We all know that the laws provide a framework for playing the sport and dealing with issues that arise. However, individual competitions in different countries may require a little bit of flexibility to allow for specific formats and scoring conditions.

Before I delve into what can or cannot be included in conditions of play, it is worth noting that there are other conditions that nations may apply for as variations to the laws of the sport. These are called domestic regulations and are covered by Law 57.1. There are 22 regulations that can be included for domestic play, and these range from the requirements for playing or practicing on

the same rink on the day of a competition, specifying the minimum width of rinks and the most common, specifications of the date stamps of bowls that can be used in competition. For domestic regulations to be included in a nation's playing conditions, an application should be submitted to World Bowls for approval. These are normally frequently changed and are simply reviewed over a period of years to suit. Just recently an application was received from Falkland Island Bowls Association following the construction of a new playing surface. Due to its length, an application was made to reduce the minimum distance of a delivered jack to 21 metres instead of 23 metres. Several countries have this regulation, and it was duly approved. Most countries include a copy of their approved domestic regulations in the back of



Falkland Islands have a new green which requires a domestic regulation for 21 metre minimum jack length

their locally produced law books or on their websites.

So now to the subject of conditions of play. Law 57.2 deals with this by adding two caveats to what can be included, one for club competitions that are purely social or recreational with no reward or title associated with them and, one for other competitions that do not come under the first category. The latter having to comply with the detail in Appendix A.1 of the Laws. I have reproduced Law 57.2 here for you.

57.2 Conditions of Play

57.2.1 Controlling Bodies must decide what Conditions of Play are necessary to govern their competitions.

57.2.2 Controlling Bodies that govern club competitions which are purely social or recreational (that is, competitions that do not directly or indirectly lead to the winners being awarded a club title, qualifying to compete

for a district, national or international title, or receiving financial rewards within limits set by the Member National Authority) can set Conditions of Play which include aspects of play that are different from those described within the Laws of the Sport of Bowls.

57.2.3 Controlling Bodies that govern competitions other than the types of club competitions described in law 57.2.2 must make sure that their Conditions of Play are in line with the requirements described in appendix A.1

Appendix A.1 provides the meat on the bones for writing conditions of play. In an ideal world, it would be great to see such conditions for all competitions but sadly that is often not the case. The lack of conditions of play actually means that the competition must be played to the Laws of the Sport without variation, something that often catches controlling

bodies out when running such events. The first couple of clauses in the appendix state that conditions of play must be decided before the event is published and that all entrants and officials must receive a copy or at least be able to view a copy. These documents do not need to be long, complex and full of jargon. Concise instruction is the key to understanding the intent of the competition and how it will be played.

We then get into the detail of what should be included so let me guide you through some as a minimum requirement.

There should be a statement about the type of event, for example, is it an invitation event, an open event, is it singles, pairs, triples or fours or a combination of those? Dates and times should be published where relevant. Is it going to run throughout the season with multiple

rounds on different play dates? What date is the final and what times do each round or sessions start?

Details of the venue or venues should be included. Are neutral venues being used for later stages, where are the finals being held? Quite an important one – what are the entry requirements and eligibility? Is there an age limit for example an Under 25s event? Are the entries open to everyone or do the entrants have to belong to the same club, county, state or region?

An indication of the format of play is important. Does the competition start with sectional play with several teams playing against each other in a group before progressing to a knockout stage? Is the competition purely knockout with an open draw at the start of each round?



Conversations on the rinks may delay play – note they didn't on this occasion

multiple games on one day does each game start with trial ends, is there only one trial end or none at all? Specify the type of clothing and footwear. This will include any sponsor requirements. There are additional appendices specifically for these two items.

What are the requirements for date stamping on the bowls? Do they have to have the current year or later or will the competition allow for older bowls to be used?

There should be a statement that all games are played in line with the Laws of the Sport. And finally, the method used for drawing rink numbers and opponents. There are many other conditions that can be added if appropriate to the competition or event.

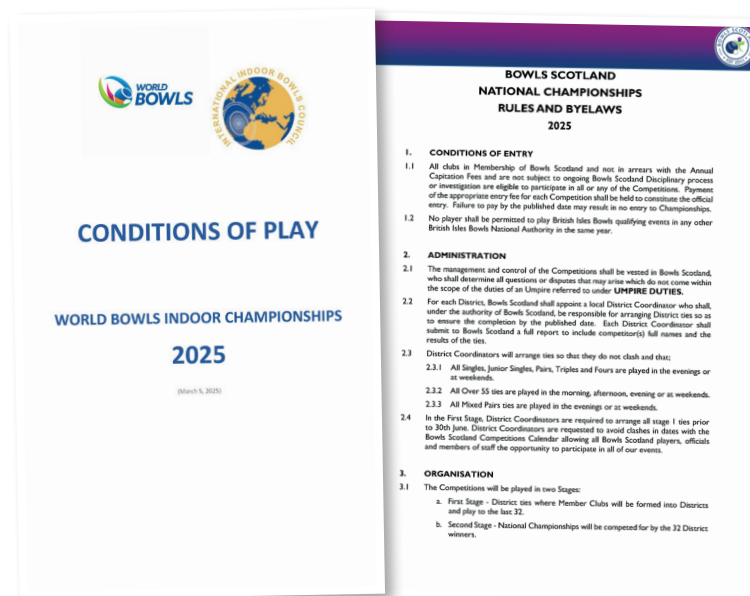
It is these 'optional' conditions that are often forgotten and can lead to confusion and disputes. For example, what if a game has to be stopped due to inclement weather? Can it be resumed on another date or does a certain number of ends have to be achieved to constitute a completed game?

Conditions for introducing substitutes and their

eligibility can be included especially useful in long tournaments or competitions that are played over the course of a season.

One important consideration that is finding its way into conditions of play now, especially for those events that have multiple sessions per day, is slow play and restricting the movement of players. Are the leads and seconds in fours allowed to visit the head? How many bowls must the third or skip play before they are allowed to visit the head? Then, how do we control the long conversations in the middle of the rink which result in sessions overlapping and games not being completed in daylight? However, with this one, there must be a method of sanctioning any slow play. It is not sufficient to simply say in four-bowl pairs: "The skip cannot visit the head until after the delivery of their second bowl," unless you follow that with a sanction if they should visit after their first bowl. These are often forgotten and leave players to visit whenever they wish knowing that there is nothing the officials can do about it. There is some guidance on restricting

movement of players and slow play in appendices A.4 and A.5. Other elements that may need to be included are, policy on tobacco and alcohol, arrangements for drug testing, code of conduct and disciplinary processes and the make-up of a disputes committee or jury of appeal. All serious stuff but highly relevant in high profile events with significant prize money or those that lead to qualification for international or world events. I hope that gives some insight into what should, and what can, be included in conditions of play. These are vital for officials that, not only have to enforce the Laws of the Sport but also, have to ensure that conditions are adhered to. So, if you are an administrator involved in organising and running competitions of any kind, please take a moment to review the appendices in the back of the Laws of the Sport and consider carefully how your competition will run and who will be responsible for ensuring all conditions are met. Enjoy the season and remember to give the conditions of play a glance before turning up to play. **BI**



Left: The recent World Bowls Indoor Championship in Aberdeen had comprehensive conditions of play. Right: Bowls Scotland publish robust conditions for their national championships on their website