

# Atlantic Championships – An Official's Perspective

Twenty-six nations arrived in sunny Cardiff to compete in the eight disciplines of Men's and Women's Fours, Triples, Pairs and Singles all vying for 12 qualification spots in each discipline for the World Bowls Championships in 2020. As CTO, I was appointed, with support from the DCTO, to assist the tournament director with the management of the ITO's and NTO's at AC2019. Yes, there are indeed more acronyms in bowls than AC12 must contend with in 'Line of Duty'. The role of Chief Technical Official is to coordinate the scheduling of the Technical Officials throughout the championships as well as adjudicate on matters of Law, should any arise.

The first two days after arrival were predominantly spent working with the World Bowls CEO and Tournament Director, Gary Smith, and visiting the four Cardiff area venues to distribute scorecards, timekeepers equipment and bowls stickers. Unfortunately, we were faced with early changes to the schedules due to several countries either not sending their full teams as stated or not actually being able to turn up at all.

Most of the issues were caused by Visa applications. Even up to the evening before the start of competition we were making final changes, the implications of which were wide ranging and, in some cases, adversely affecting teams that had made the commitment to compete as they were swapped between sections in order to maintain the balance.

Nineteen World Bowls International Technical Officials were appointed from around the UK. Scheduling of their duties across the four venues was no easy task.

They were to cover 178 individual sessions of play over the 14 days of competition. These appointments were made more challenging due to the spread of accommodation and some

officials not having cars.

It was like trying to build a big 3D Jigsaw Puzzle. In an ideal World it would have been great to have all officials in the same accommodation but as they had to pay their own way it was inevitable that a range of hotels and B&B's were used. Teams of four or five officials were allocated to each venue depending upon the number of sessions and marking duties. Wales's top Umpire, Eddie Williams, did an incredible job in the lead up to the event training markers and coordinating allocations of duties. It was one job I didn't have to worry about whilst it was in Eddie's capable hands and one that certainly would not have been covered solely by ITOs due to the 230 duties required to be filled - Eddie allocated a total of 55 Markers.

During the event, and with the changes due to missing players, he also managed to keep everyone in the right place at the right time which was no simple task.

First day of competitions got off to a nervy start with worries about players and officials being in the right place at the right time, but it all seemed to progress quite smoothly.

Together with the Tournament Director I was based at the headquarters club, Penylan. Arriving each morning at

around 7.30am, and with the ITOs often already in attendance and preparing the rinks for play, first order of the day was a Cuppa. Preparation of scorecards, stickers and rink allocations was completed well in advance of the first session bell. Matches played in the sectional rounds were to a 2 hour and 15 minute time limit.

Two ITOs were allocated to each session as timekeepers in the unlikely event that the Slow Play regulations were called upon.

As it transpired, they were not used at all for this purpose but certainly made themselves busy looking after their umpiring colleagues by providing refreshments during the sessions.

As games were being played at four venues it was important that we established a method of communicating final scores back to the Tournament Office.

For this reason I allocated one of the officials at each venue to take charge and coordinate the running of the day. Some of the more techno savvy ITOs managed to provide images of the scorecards via WhatsApp whilst others relied on phoning through the results.

Amazingly, on only one occasion did we find a scorecard that had a slightly different score to that phoned through. However, it was apparent that the ability to complete a scorecard was limited with some teams. On several occasions scorecards were received with no names on them, with the shots scored on each end missing and bizarrely two scorecards that showed the same score for both teams!

That one took us a little while to resolve and get agreement on who had actually won the game.

I made the effort to visit the four clubs each day to check that all was running smoothly and to ensure that the ITOs were as content as they could be.

There were no real issues to deal with from an officiating or laws perspective. However, a slightly unusual situation occurred when a singles player mentioned to the officials at the end of a match that they believed their opponent was not an eligible player.

On investigation it appeared that the player was indeed introduced as a substitute but was not actually a player in the team but the coach. This was not permitted under the conditions of play and the match was forfeited.

Unfortunately, the honesty of the opposing player backfired following a 21-3 shot victory.

As dictated in the conditions of play for a forfeited game, the average score is taken from the other games in that round and resulted in a 21-13 score

line a difference of ten shots. It is such a shame to see the consequence of dishonesty and effect it had on the innocent team.

Seeing some of the developing nations compete against the goliaths of the sport was gratifying and interestingly they achieved some great results.

The success story for the event was the athletic French team who qualified for the World Championships for the first time. Their professional approach and enthusiasm inspired many. Watching them take on the best Welsh Pétanque players at the Penylan Club in between their bowls matches showed how good their hand eye coordination really was. Praise must go to all established bowling nations for helping these developing teams to compete on a level playing field.

As the business end of the event loomed, the fatigue was starting to show after long days of officiating.

A renewed energy was evident at the playoff and finals days and it was so nice to see the team in good spirits and eager to help whenever possible. There was some great banter in the evenings as we hunted for places to eat, often late at night. Cardiff has some amazing restaurants and a great deal of variety.

I am extremely proud of the hard work and commitment the 19 ITOs showed during the two week event and it was a pleasure working with them. I hope I delivered to their expectations as Chief Technical Official as well. Well done to all the players for competing and congratulations to all that have qualified for the World Championships. Well done also to Wales for hosting the event and making a very good job of it.

## REPLY TO LETTER IN MAY 2019 FROM PAT TAYLOR

**T**hank you to Umpire Pat Taylor from Yorkshire for writing in May with some queries about the World Indoor Championships in January.

Pat asks about the unusual distance of the "T" position on the portable rink. The Laws of the Sport specify a distance of two metres from the rear ditch. In the World Bowls Tour and PBA format the "T" is positioned at three metres.

As far as I am aware this is unique to the WBT format and used at the World Championships, Scottish International and in the PBA qualifiers.

The second question from Pat was about indicating the shot bowl(s) after a measure- an interesting question as we did see variations at the recent Atlantic Championships.

Most umpiring bodies train umpires to turn shots away from the jack when they have measured. However, in some instances we see umpires move the shot bowl to the jack.

In my opinion, moving the shot bowl away is the preferred method and is often backed up by a clear verbal indication to the players.

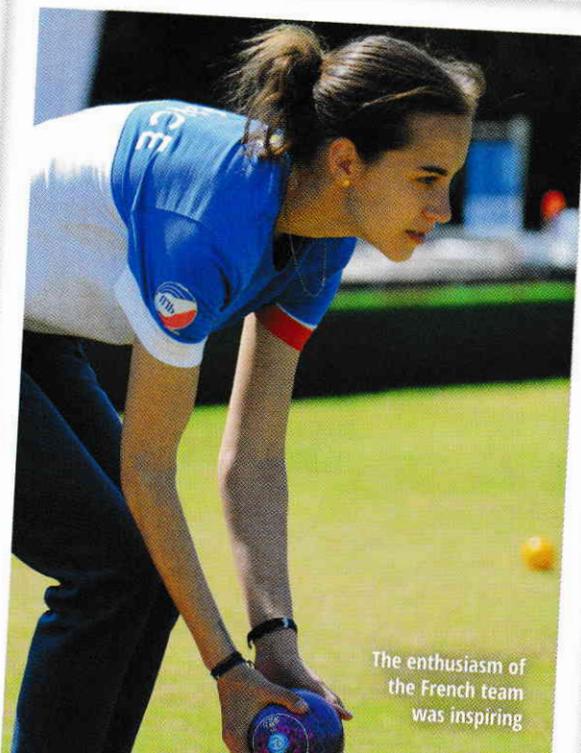
The final query from Pat related to the use of a string line to determine a live or dead bowl or jack on the rink boundary. At WBT events we have recently adopted the use of strings in preference to the "gunsight" scopes.

In our opinion the string, whilst it appears a bit "old fashioned" gives a much more accurate result which can be seen by everyone.

When seen on TV, the camera angles can often be misleading unless they are located directly above the action or in direct line with the boundary and this is often difficult to achieve.

The whole of the bowl or jack must be clear of the line to be declared dead. If any part of the bowl or jack cuts the boundary line then it remains in play. You may see the umpires place a set square against the string, bowl or jack if it is very close.

*I hope this answers your queries Pat and thanks again for taking the time to write in. Please keep your questions coming and I will be happy to answer them.*



The enthusiasm of the French team was inspiring