

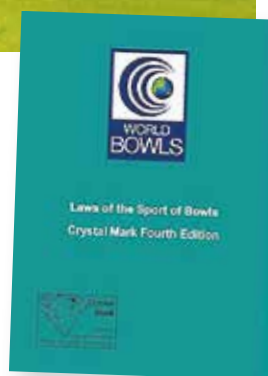
World Bowls rescind controversial displacement laws



Left: New laws designed to penalise a player who deliberately displaced their own team's bowl on its original course or lifted a bowl at rest to allow one of their own team's bowls to pass had been causing a great deal of confusion

Credit: Allen Simms

In August 2022, two new laws 37.1.3 and 37.1.5.3, were introduced to the Laws of the Sport Crystal Mark Fourth Edition. They were designed to penalise a player who deliberately displaced their own team's bowl on its original course or lifted a bowl at rest to allow one of their own team's bowls to pass



Despite a clarification document published on the World Bowls website in September 2022, it had become very clear from communications that the two laws were causing a great deal of confusion and had resulted in games being forfeited incorrectly following players innocently stopping bowls from entering the ditch.

Furthermore, the management of a side game and the resulting scoring or penalties after a team had been disqualified also caused a great deal of confusion within member nations and domestic controlling bodies.

Concern was expressed about

the severe penalty of forfeiting the game and clarity in the wording of the law itself. Taking the two clauses in isolation had led to much debate about scenarios that are quite adequately covered by other displacement laws.

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Suggestions to reduce the severity of the forfeit to penalising with shot deductions were made. This approach would be inconsistent with any other law and was not felt to be a suitable solution. Penalties have always existed for the displacement of a bowl by its own team players, but at the time of the 2021 laws review these penalties were not felt to be severe enough for what is considered an act of ‘cheating.’

Allan Thornhill, chair of the World Bowls Laws Advisory Group, told us: “Having considered several options to improve the wording to express the intent of these two laws, we concluded that they have created more issues than they were written to solve. We recommended to the board of World Bowls to take the unprecedented step to rescind them with immediate effect.”

The numbering of Law 37.1.4 will remain unchanged until the next review of the laws.

Displacement Law 37.1 still exists which deals with a player moving, stopping or lifting either their own bowls or their opponents. Whilst the penalties are not as severe the opponent still has the option to declare a bowl that is displaced, dead.

Communication has been sent to all member nations of World Bowls for dissemination to their regions and umpiring bodies. In addition, the statement from World Bowls has been published widely on their website and on social media.