



You can't stand there – mate!

I recall a moment early in my national umpire career, whilst officiating at a county final, that stays with me as a key lesson on the practical application of the Laws of the Sport

It was a pleasant morning. There were finals of fours, triples and pairs on the green and all was progressing well. I could see no issues at all and indeed the atmosphere was one of friendship and keen competitiveness across all rinks. There was a good crowd, vocal and applauding the excellent standard of play. At about the half-way stage and completely out of the blue, a lady approached me and rather abruptly asked why I was not enforcing the rules. I was taken aback a little and politely asked what I was missing. She informed me her darling son's opponent was constantly wandering up the rink after delivering his bowl and was not at the head in time and not back at the mat before it was her son's time to bowl. Knowing that I really shouldn't be engaging with the spectators, I thanked her for her observation, asked her which rink and told her that I would keep an eye out for any indiscretion.

I watched for a few ends and could see absolutely nothing of concern; indeed, her son was doing exactly the same thing as his opponent. They were laughing, chatting, tapping their legs in appreciation of each other shots and generally being very pleasant with each other and the rest of the team. I had absolutely no concerns and eventually forgot the conversation with the lady. Within half hour of my initial engagement, I noticed her making a beeline for me once again. "You are a pretty useless umpire aren't you?" she said with fire in her eyes. "I'm sorry madam, but I can see nothing on that rink that is in breach of the laws" I replied.

She then proceeded to try and quote rink possession laws at me. Not wanting to rile her any further I went to my umpire's kit, took out a copy of the law book, handed it to her and asked her to please read the law on rink possession and then come back and tell me if I should be taking any action. Upon walking away from her, I turned and said: "Oh, and you are looking for three words!"

I am sure we are all generally aware of the laws that specify where players should be standing when in control of the head and where

they can or cannot be when their opponents are bowling. This graphic illustrates Law 12 Position of Players and I have reproduced the wording of the law in this feature.

LAW 12

What the opponent of 'darling son' was doing was not getting back to the mat or getting to the head by the time his bowl had come to rest as stated in Law 12. Indeed, 'darling son' was doing exactly the same. So, they were not meeting the requirement of that Law but neither was a blatant issue of hanging around in the middle of the rink either. Now you will see in Law 12.1.4 it states that if a player does not meet these requirements, then Law 13 will apply. That is also reproduced here for your reference. Now let's look for those three little words that I

asked 'mummy' to look for.

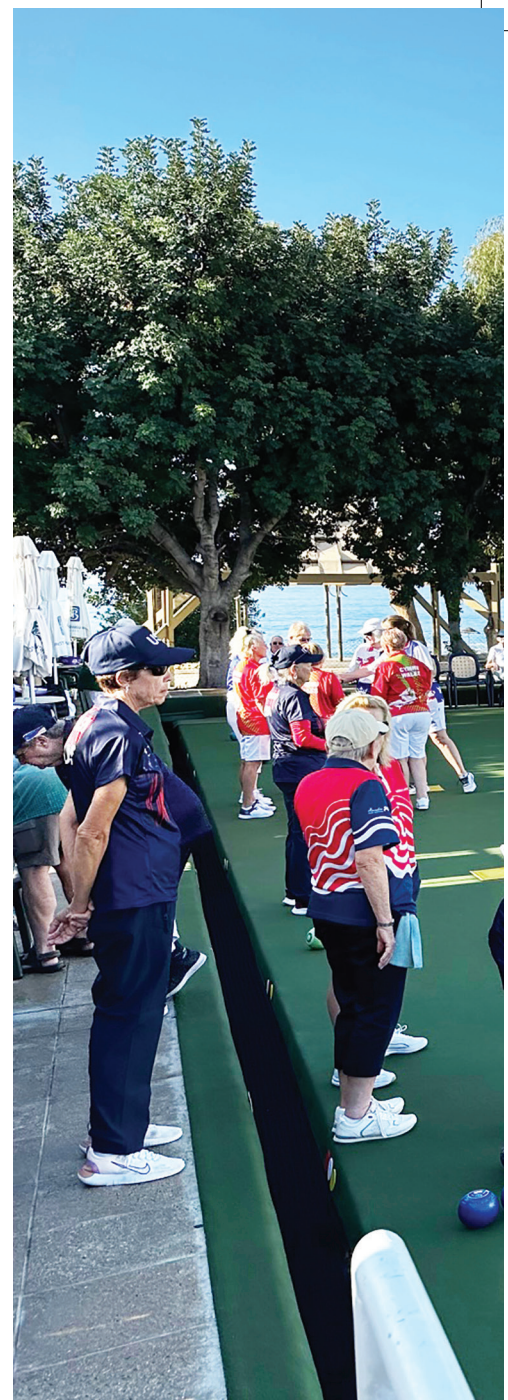
Law 13.4 states: If the umpire, either by their own observation or on appeal by one of the skips or opponents in singles, decides that a player has delivered a bowl before the previous bowl has come to rest, or the players in possession of the

rink are being interfered with, annoyed or distracted in any way by their opponents... the stated penalty will be applied.

The penalty is therefore ONLY applied if one of those three highlighted words is happening.

Unusually, the lady returned my law book at the end of the games and actually apologised. I have a feeling she may have been sitting with an off-duty umpire and discussing it with them. I said it was quite alright and I mentioned that it is one of the most common misinterpretations of the Laws and indeed why we spend some considerable time running through scenarios to illustrate it when training new umpires. We should only intervene if an opponent is interfered with, annoyed or distracted by their opponent. The very fact that those players were happy, enjoying the game and showing no signs of annoyance was an indication to me that I did not need to get involved.

"I'm sorry madam, but I can see nothing on that rink that is in breach of the laws"





ATLANTIC SENIOR FOURS

As I write, I am in attendance at the inaugural Atlantic Senior Fours event in sunny Paphos, Cyprus, and what a great event it is.

Due to some shenanigans by a well-known orange budget airline, Roger Black and I had to travel a day earlier than the other ITOs.

Now I am not complaining about an extra day in the sun and it gave us an opportunity to offer some training assistance to the excellent team of Bowls Cyprus NTOs that worked alongside us through the event.

We spent a pleasant relaxing day running through some basic practical laws, including rink possession and the scenarios I mentioned earlier, with two qualified umpires and seven markers who worked alongside us as umpires and paddle holders.

It was also an opportunity to focus on the conditions of play for the competition and their role during the games.

After some lunch, we spent the afternoon on the Aliathon Bowls Club green practising and demonstrating some measures and how we would

work together when officiating. All joined in enthusiastically and were an absolute pleasure to work with.

Our ITO colleagues, Dan Bluett, Angie Thompson, Huw Jones and Arthur and Pat Gammack arrived on the day we were at Aliathon and we met up with them following the training.

On Thursday, we attended the team meeting where Gary Smith as tournament director and I as Chief Technical Official ran through the conditions of play and arrangements with the teams. It was an opportunity for us to meet the players and the many familiar faces.

Play commenced on Friday, December 1, with the first two rounds of the gents and ladies' fours sectional games. These sectional rounds will continue for the next six days before the knockout stages. Then after a day off we will commence the mixed fours straight knockout.

The event culminates in a gala dinner when we will say farewell before heading back to a cold UK with I am sure fond memories of Cypriot friendship and a great event.

SILVER LINING AT POTTERS

I barely get my Christmas hat off and remove the new year streamers from my hair before heading up to the Norfolk Coast for my 25th World Indoor Championships.

I am sure it is going to be an incredible tournament again. Every game will be streamed live this year from the portable rink before the Beeb arrive for the final week. So please tune in to the World

Bowls Tour social media pages and YouTube to watch the end-to-end coverage. Remember, the only official streaming service is operated by World Bowls Tour, do not click on any other streaming links which demand money.

Just leaves me now to wish you all a very happy and prosperous New Year with good health and good bowling and officiating. ➤



LAW 12 AND 13

12 POSITION OF PLAYERS

12.1 In relation to the rink of play

12.1.1 Players at the mat-end of the rink who are not delivering a bowl must stand at least 1 metre behind the mat.

12.1.2 Players at the head-end of the rink and who are not controlling play must stand: 12.1.2.1 behind the jack if they are members of the team which is in possession of the rink;

12.1.2.2 behind the jack and away from the head if they are members of the team which is not in possession of the rink;

12.1.2.3 on the surrounds of the green if the jack is in the ditch; or

12.1.2.4 well clear of the head if it is not possible to stand on the surrounds.

12.1.3 As soon as a bowl is delivered, a player who is controlling play from a position that is either level with or in front of the jack, must take their position as described in law 12.1.2.

12.1.4 If a player does not meet the terms of this law, law 13 will apply.

12.2 In relation to a neighbouring rink

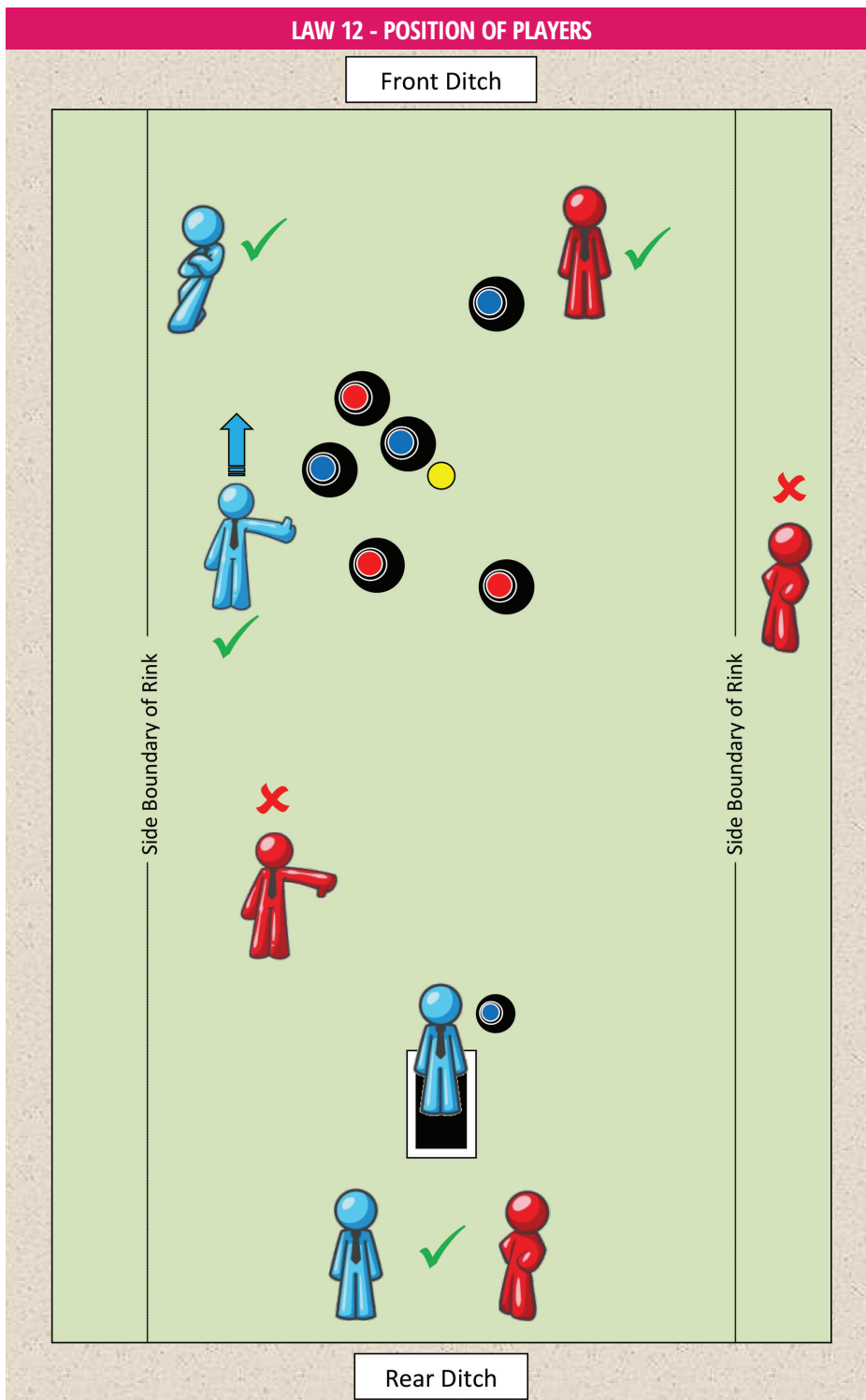
12.2.1 A player must not go into a neighbouring rink where play is in progress.

12.2.2 A player must neither go into nor walk along a neighbouring rink, even if it is not being used, while an opponent is about to deliver or is actually delivering a bowl.

12.2.3 If the rink of play is an outside rink (see law 49.6), a player must neither go into nor walk along the section of green that lies between the outside side boundary of the rink and the side ditch while an opponent is about to deliver or is actually delivering a bowl.

12.2.4 If a player does not meet the terms of this law, law 13 will apply.

LAW 12 - POSITION OF PLAYERS



13 POSSESSION OF THE RINK

13.1 Possession of the rink will belong to the player or team whose bowl is being played.

13.2 As soon as each bowl comes to rest, possession of the rink will transfer to the opposing player or team after allowing time for marking a toucher as soon as it comes to rest.

13.3 A player must not deliver a bowl before the previous bowl comes to rest and possession of the rink has transferred to the opposing player or team.

13.4 If the umpire, either by their own observation or on appeal by one of the skips or opponents in Singles, decides that a player has delivered a bowl before the previous bowl has come to rest, or the players in possession of the rink are being interfered with, annoyed or distracted in any way by their opponents,

13.4.1 the first time this happens the umpire must: 13.4.1.1 warn the offending player, while the skip is present; and

13.4.1.2 tell the coach, if they are present, that the player has received a warning.

13.4.2 on each occasion after this, the umpire must have the bowl last played by the offending player or team declared dead. If that bowl has disturbed the head, the opposing skip or opponent in Singles must choose whether to: 13.4.2.1 replace the head;

13.4.2.2 leave the head as altered; or

13.4.2.3 declare the end dead.