

RUNNING OUT OF TIME



Discussions on shot selection are vital for team play but may result in issues of slow play in timed games

With an increase in the number of competitions being played, it is inevitable that scheduling is becoming increasingly challenging. Controlling bodies are having to find methods of restricting the movement of players to speed up the game and setting time limits on matches.

Whilst this may solve the problem of scheduling, it also brings some negative effects most notably, in my opinion, the chance that a game may not be played to the prescribed number of ends and delaying tactics by some unscrupulous individuals.

No matter what process is put into place by the controlling bodies to ensure that all games are played within daylight hours, there must be clear and robust conditions of play in place to mitigate some of the negative aspects of timed games.

There are essentially two issues, ensuring that players keep the game flowing and managing any slow play that may occur. It is quite easy to allocate a fixed time to a game no matter what format. There are no complex algorithms to work out how long it will take to complete an end. A known pace of green plus a little fudge factor to deal with interventions such as toilet breaks and umpire measures will give you a rough idea.

Appendix A.4 and A.5 of the Laws of the Sport provide some good guidance to controlling bodies on what to include in their conditions of play. There will of course be some variation to this to suit the event, the session times available and the possibility of having to reschedule games due to unforeseen circumstances.

Dividing the available playing time during the day will give you the timings of the sessions. For example, at the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham last year, four sessions per day were scheduled with start times of 8.30am, 11.30am, 3pm and 6pm with 15 minutes allocated





Right: The start and end of play are often signalled using an airhorn as here at the Bowls Canada National Championships.

Credit: Bowls Canada Bowlingrin

prior to these times for trial ends. At the recent World Championships in Gold Coast there were three sessions allocated due to the available daylight hours, 8.30am, 11.30 am and 2.45pm with some slight variation during the knockout stages. Actual game times at both events were two hours and 15 minutes during sectional play with no time limit on knockout games. This allowed for a short break between games.

One huge advantage of setting fixed times for the commencement of games is that the timing can be monitored centrally. A bell, airhorn or similar loud indication will signal the start time and end time for all games, with the start of the game being the delivery of the jack as defined in the laws.

This now brings us on to the end of the game. If all goes well, then the allocated number of ends will generally be completed before the time limit. However, sometimes the full number of ends may not be completed. In these situations, an end is in play when the time is up. It is now important to understand when an end starts and completed and we turn to the Laws of the Sport for that definition and in particular Definition C.7 “End: delivery of the jack, delivery of all bowls required to be played by all the opponents in the same direction on a rink and deciding the number of shots scored.”

If the allocated time limit is up, then the end in play must be completed as defined above. Remember that if that end is killed, and re-spots are not being used, then the end must be restarted and of course this could



continue to happen. Re-spotted jacks almost guarantee that the game will be completed no more than one end after the finish time.

An end commences from the delivery of the jack, so if the time limit is up before the jack is delivered, then the game is over. There is a slight complication if, in a knockout game, the scores are equal when the time limit is up. In these situations, if an end is still available to be played then it should be started or, if it was the final end of the game being played, then an extra end will be needed outside of the time limit as described in Law 28. It is important to make this clear in the conditions of play because it is not always obvious to the players that these scenarios are covered by the Laws of the Sport.

A word on the movement of players and, as shown in Appendix A.4, there are some options that can be used. Whatever restrictions are put in place, it is important to be clear in the conditions of play what also constitutes a visit to the head.

Does playing second or thirds up constitute a visit for example. Do the skips have to walk back to the mat from the head together? All of these movements need to be considered and documented to avoid any confusion and disputes during the game.

It is all well and good putting these restrictions and time limits in the conditions of play, but there has to be some sanction if these things don't go to plan. What if a team spend a significant amount of time discussing shot selection on each end? What if this action may result in the game not being completed to either teams advantage or disadvantage? Having a mechanism for appeal and subsequent monitoring of slow play is important to avoid any conflict. Of course, this monitoring needs resourcing and at events such as the Commonwealth Games and World Championships, officials are allocated to the role of timekeeper should the need arise. Clearly this is not practical at domestic events where there are often barely enough officials to cover the umpiring and marking duties required.

So, in summary, if slow play and time limits are to be implemented in competition play then the guidance and sanction must be clear and concise in the conditions of play. The appendices in the Laws of the Sport give some steer to what should be included. Consult with your national umpiring body if you require help with drafting conditions of play, especially where you may not be familiar with some of the details covered in the Laws of the Sport. **BI**

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A.4 Restricting the movement of players during play

If a Controlling Body decides that it is appropriate to restrict the movement of players during play, provision for this must be included within the Conditions of Play. Controlling Bodies can adopt or adapt the following.

- A.4.1 After delivering their first bowl, players will only be allowed to walk up to the head under the following circumstances.
 - A.4.1.1 Singles game
 - A.4.1.1.1 the opponents: after delivery of their third and fourth bowls.
 - A.4.1.2 Pairs game (each player playing four bowls)
 - A.4.1.2.1 the leads: after delivery of their third and fourth bowls; and
 - A.4.1.2.2 the skips: after delivery of their second, third and fourth bowls.
 - A.4.1.3 Pairs game (each player playing three bowls)
 - A.4.1.3.1 the leads: after delivery of their third bowl; and
 - A.4.1.3.2 the skips: after delivery of their second and third bowls.
 - A.4.1.4 Pairs game (each player playing two bowls)
 - A.4.1.4.1 the leads: after delivery of their second bowl; and
 - A.4.1.4.2 the skips: after delivery of each of their bowls.
 - A.4.1.5 Triples game (each player playing three bowls)
 - A.4.1.5.1 the leads: after delivery of their third bowl;
 - A.4.1.5.2 the seconds: after delivery of their second and third bowls; and
 - A.4.1.5.3 the skips: after delivery of each of their bowls.
 - A.4.1.6 Triples game (each player playing two bowls)
 - A.4.1.6.1 the leads: after delivery of their second bowl;
 - A.4.1.6.2 the seconds: after delivery of their second bowl; and
 - A.4.1.6.3 the skips: after delivery of each of their bowls.
 - A.4.1.7 Fours game
 - A.4.1.7.1 the leads: after the second player in their team has delivered their second bowl;
 - A.4.1.7.2 the seconds: after delivery of their second bowl;
 - A.4.1.7.3 the thirds: after delivery of their second bowl; and
 - A.4.1.7.4 the skips: after delivery of each of their bowls.
- A.4.2 In exceptional and limited circumstances, a Singles player can ask the marker for permission to walk up to the head, or a skip can ask that a player walks up to the head earlier than described in law A.4.1.
- A.4.3 When a player at the head walks up to the mat to deliver their first bowl, their direct opponent can remain at the head until that bowl has come to rest before walking up to the mat to deliver their own first bowl.
- A.4.4 If a player does not meet the terms of this law, law 13 will apply.

A.5 Delaying (slow) play

If a Controlling Body decides that it is appropriate to include regulations for dealing with slow play, provision for this must be included within the Conditions of Play. Controlling Bodies can adopt or adapt the following regulations (which are based on a 15-end game being played within a two-and-one-quarter hour time limit). Players must play without undue delay and in a way which does not prevent their opponents from being able to complete the required number of ends within the time limit decided by the Controlling Body. The following conditions will apply in cases where players fail to meet this requirement.

- A.5.1 If one of the opponents in Singles, one of the skips or one of the coaches makes an appeal that, due to the actions of their opponents their team or player is being prevented from playing all their bowls within the time decided for the game, the umpire will tell the offending team or player that they are being 'put on the stopwatch' when any end in progress has been completed. This will also happen if the Controlling Body appeals as a result of its own observation.
- A.5.2 Once the offending team or player has been put on the stopwatch, they will be required to deliver all their bowls in each of the remaining ends within a two-minute time period (Singles, Pairs and Triples games) or a two-minute and 15-second time period (Fours games). A technical official specifically allocated for the purpose will time the ends.
- A.5.3 In each end, timing will start as soon as the jack has been properly delivered and centred (if the offending team or player is the first to play in an end) or as soon as the non-offending team's or player's first bowl has come to rest (if the non-offending team or player is the first to play in an end). From then on, timing will start when each of the non-offending team's bowls has come to rest and will stop when each of the offending team's bowls has been delivered.
- A.5.4 Timing will stop during any interventions by the umpire (for example, to check a short jack or a line bowl) or any interventions by a coach.
- A.5.5 The timing official will tell the offending team or player when the time remaining in any end reaches one minute.
- A.5.6 At the end of the time period stated in A.5.2, the offending team or player will forfeit any bowls remaining to be delivered in that end. However, the non-offending team or player will deliver their remaining bowls to complete the end.

