



Questions Answered

Winter has arrived up here in the northern hemisphere and we are fully embedded in the indoor game. Personally, winter is not my favourite season. Having to go to work in the dark and then come home in the dark, it feels like I am nocturnal. Oh, to be basking in the warmth of the southern summer. Don't feel too sorry for me though as I will be heading to the slightly warmer climate of Cyprus in December for the Atlantic Senior Fours event.

Our umpires have been extremely busy with the myriad of early stage national competitions that grace our rinks at this time of year. Add to that the various PBA qualification events around the UK and it doesn't take much to wear out the limited number of officials that we have available to us. I have spoken many times about the challenges of recruitment, and it is an ongoing battle. However, numbers in England seem to be increasing and with some good mentoring these new officials will be gaining some experience with the competitions. I was delighted to present an umpire training workshop on the south coast of Hampshire back in late September and was impressed with the quality of the new candidates, all of which qualified the following day. It was also notable amongst that new cohort, the number that were also qualified coaches. It provides a good level of knowledge about how the sport is played. Adding the intricacies of some of the laws surely helps coaches as well, so it is a win-win situation.

Whilst remaining involved in umpiring in England, I made the very difficult decision to resign my position as development officer. A tough decision as I have enjoyed performing the role since 2010, with a five-year break in between. Sometimes you have to move on and let new ideas come to the surface. Juggling



Players may visit the head at any time unless conditions of play restrict their movement

many roles is always a challenge and with that comes motivation.

Speaking of many roles, whilst my mortgage paying job is keeping me extra busy at the moment, at the time of writing I am waiting to hear if a voluntary application within the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) will be successful. You may have read that my wife and I are busy fundraising by visiting all 238 Lifeboat Stations in the UK and Ireland and we are approaching the end of that challenge in 2026. The visits have inspired me to try and volunteer at our local stations, so fingers crossed.

Back to the world of bowls and officiating. The World Bowls Laws Advisory Group, of which I am the chair, has been busy beaver away with various topics recently. Among the list of tasks is a review of the umpire development documents published on the website (www.worldbowls.com), a review of the ITO accreditation documents and reviewing various topics that potentially may see a tweak to some laws or some guidance to be published on the website. There is an increasing number of questions relating to modernising the sport and introducing new initiatives and it is important that the

Laws of the Sport are flexible enough to allow for such innovations. I will update you as things progress.

Moving on then to some of your questions from around social media and email correspondence.

The first of which comes from Pierre on Facebook who asks: "When warming up before a tournament, can you practice rolling the jack instead of bowls."

Practice before any game is covered in the Laws of the Sport under Law 4. There may also be some local variations contained within Conditions of Play for specific competitions.

Practice is not allowed on the same rink on the same day unless permitted by the controlling body



"Juggling many roles is always a challenge and with that comes motivation"

Here is the Law:

4 Practice

4.1 If a player or team that has not yet played is due to meet a player or team that has already played on the same day, the player or team that has not yet played can practise as long as:

- 4.1.1** the Controlling Body gives approval;
- 4.1.2** there is enough time available without delaying the competition; and
- 4.1.3** another rink is available apart from that on which the player or team has been drawn to play later that day.

4.2 If a player or team has already played on the same green on the same day, that player or team can practise in line with law 4.1 if they have a

'bye'. (A player or team has a 'bye' in any round of a competition if they don't have an opponent in that round.)

4.3 The Controlling Body must allocate the rink on which a player or team can practise.

4.4 If two players or two teams are entitled to practise:

- 4.4.1** they can practise together; and
- 4.4.2** the format of the practice and the number of bowls used must be decided by the players concerned.

Additionally in Appendix A relating to Conditions of Play we have a clause as follows:

A.1.4.6 49 Arrangements for practice

Pierre specifically asks about practicing with a jack

only. Whilst the laws do not explicitly mention bowls or jacks in this context, practicing with the jack would still be restricted by these laws.

Our next question comes from Tony and demonstrates how easy it is for traditional beliefs can sometimes get in the way of what is permitted within the laws.

He asks: "I seek clarification on the correct procedures for inspecting the head during the course of play. I recently watched a four-wood singles club final in the UK where a fully qualified umpire was on duty. A player asked the marker to inspect the head and did so but was accompanied by the opponent who remained at the head whilst the player returned to the mat to play their shot. After the bowl came to a halt, the opponent then went back down the green to play their next shot. Although nobody in the game objected, some of the spectators became

quite heated in claiming this should not have been allowed and that only the player on the mat can inspect the head and that the opponent must remain behind the mat at all times until it is their turn to bowl. What are the rights and wrong of this scenario please?"

The simple answer to this question is that there is no reason why players cannot visit the head at any time during the end and remain at the head end whilst their opponent plays their next bowl. The two laws that have to be adhered to are Law 12 – Position of Players and Law 13 – Possession of the rink.

However, if we delve a little deeper, we may find that some Conditions of Play introduce conditions to restrict the movement of players during play. These are detailed in Appendix A.4. Thank you again for the questions, always enjoyable seeing the discussions online.