

Welcome back Allan!



Bowls International is delighted to welcome back **Allan Thornhill** as our Ask The Umpire columnist. Do you have a laws of the sport or umpiring question for Allan? If so, please email Ceris Hewlings, *Bowls International's* editor at large, at ceris.hewlings@keypublishing.com and Allan will do his best to answer it in a future issue. We look forward to hearing from you!



The WBT officials at the World Indoor Championships. Standing (from left): Francis Fletcher, Neill Brice and Allan Thornhill. Seated (from left): Malcolm Rammage, Sue Mates and Bernie Hill. Dan Bluett and Mike Davies not in shot

As the dust settles on another World Indoor Championship at Potters Resort, I fall into 2022 knowing that it is going to be an extremely busy year.

For the past 22 years, I have barely recovered from Christmas and New Year celebrations before heading up the A12 to Norfolk.

It was great to see the spectators back this year and we often mentioned how different things were just 12 months before behind closed doors with just a handful of us rattling around in such a huge venue.

Back with a bang we were, and it was so nice to feel and hear the atmosphere that a large crowd creates in the arena.

There are times when we stand on the end of that portable rink with goosebumps and this year we were treated to a number of those thanks to a certain Wayne Wilgress and of course Les Gillett and Paul Foster MBE in that final. It is those occasions that really make the job we do so worthwhile. The cacophony of noise is something

that we don't always experience, and, in equal measure, we deal with the disturbances caused by complete silence and those caused by a boisterous crowd. Personally, I certainly prefer working in the noisy, adrenaline-filled environment.

Those of you that watched the championships via the excellent streaming service on Facebook and YouTube would have noticed a couple of new faces working with us in the first few days of the tournament. Oh, that job must be a piece of cake we hear, only one rink to think about, marking a few touchers, no lollipops to worry about and just two or four players to worry about. Well, I guess when its put like that then it should be a doddle.

The repeated comment from our new triallists, Sue Mates and Malcolm Rammage, was just how different and more intense everything is on that rink and how much more there is to think about in terms of presentation. I am pleased to say they performed well for the very first time stepping out on that rink. I am proud of the WBT team of officials, not only of their technical ability and resolve under pressure but also of their camaraderie and friendship. Nothing is too much trouble when any one of us is experiencing weak points or not feeling too well.

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One of the interesting aspects of being involved in the World Indoor Championships is the questions that we receive from bowlers and non-bowlers alike. We try and watch some of the live streams and add responses to comments to help those with a genuine interest to gain a better insight into the sport and how the championships operate behind the scenes.

I should think the most frequently asked question is: “Why does the ref spray the balls?” I find it satisfying knowing that I may have helped someone with their understanding of the sport.

Whilst at the championships, we take part in Q&A sessions with a player, one of the officials and one of the tournament committee members. Spectators can relax over a coffee and



ask whatever they wish and some of the questions are fascinating. Usually, the best questions arise when something unusual has happened on the rink that morning.

Speaking of questions and answers, the past couple of years have meant that our time out on the rinks has been limited and the opportunities to officiate have been a bit sparse. Social media has played a huge role in keeping us all in contact and given us the ability to quiz each other and discuss various aspects of the sport we love. There have been some excellent forums for discussing the laws and I have enjoyed getting involved in them in the hope that my input helps in some small way. It is inevitable that such forums can attract some robust discussion which often can get heated and quite frankly unfriendly. That in itself is fascinating to see how

we react to contentious discussions when hiding behind a keyboard.

BIRMINGHAM 2022

So, January and February have come and gone and my focus is now on the Commonwealth Games in late July. At the time of writing, the selection of the international technical officials for the games had just been completed. I am very honoured and proud to be appointed chief technical official. These will be my sixth consecutive games and I am looking forward to working with a fantastic team to help deliver a great showcase for lawn bowls. Congratulations to all the ITOs that have been selected.

For the past few months, I have been heavily involved in a review of the laws of the sport as a member of the World Bowls Laws Committee. Some interesting proposals were submitted by member nations and each was reviewed in great detail. The target is to seek approval for any proposed amendments in August of this year, but there is still a great deal of work to be done prior to that.

So, 2022 is shaping up to be a busy year with a number of other tournaments that I will be involved in either side of the Commonwealth Games plus the laws review.

I will try and bring you some ‘behind the scenes’ insights when I can.

As always, I will be happy to answer any laws related questions you may have through these articles. So please send them in to the editor and I will do my best to answer each one for you.

Have a fantastic spring and look forward to the start of some outdoor bowls in the coming months.

Left:
Birmingham 2022 will be Allan's sixth consecutive Commonwealth Games as an official

Below:
Allan on duty at Glasgow 2014

