



# The Etiquette of Bowls

# **THE ETIQUETTE OF BOWLS**

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Bowls is a competitive as well as a social game and enjoyed equally by men and women of all ages. It is a game played in an atmosphere of fellowship and sociability which is maintained by a traditional code governed through polite behaviour and common courtesy between team mates, club and technical officials, club members and spectators.

Etiquette resolves around maintaining the essential spirit and character of the game. There is absolutely no place in this great game for the use of foul or abusive words or negative body language before, during or after a game. Every game should be played in a sporting and friendly manner and the pleasure you derive from the game will be enhanced by observing this code. Always be grateful to participate and to enjoy the friendship of your team mates and opponents.

## **2. YOU AND YOUR CLUB**

2.1 Membership involves obligations. Study your notice boards regularly to see what is expected of you and when it is your turn for club duty.

2.2 Be appreciative of the office bearers and committee members. They unselfishly give their time and energy so that you can play and enjoy your game. Offer to assist wherever you can.

2.3 Be punctual and willing to abide by decisions. Actively support all social functions and competitions organized for your enjoyment and the benefit of the club. This expresses appreciation for the efforts put in by fellow club members.

2.4 No club can function without sufficient funds to manage and maintain the facilities. Consequently you are expected to accept your portion of the financial burden and to support fund raising activities.

2.5 Some experienced players do not put their tabs in at social sessions. Their action is harmful to the club, contrary to the etiquette of the game and a deplorable practice which should be strongly opposed.

2.6 The formation of cliques is not in the best interest of the club and should be discouraged. All members should welcome newcomers and encourage them to participate in all club activities. Special attention should be given to younger members as they are the future of the club.

2.7 It is good etiquette which foster club spirit for members to support their clubmates who have reached the final stages of any representative competition. On such occasions supporters should preferably be in bowling attire.

2.8 When attending the funeral of a bowler it is good etiquette to wear your highest honours blazer and attire.

2.9 Regard it as an honour to be selected in any position in a representative game for your

club. Respect the decision of the selectors. A team is not just made up of very good players, it is made up of very good bowlers with character.

2.10 Be proud of your club. Never do anything by word or deed that may reflect against it. Do your part to enhance the reputation of your club and be active in the recruitment of new members.

2.11 It should be an honour to serve your club in whatever position where your expertise may be required.

### **3. CLUB MANAGEMENT**

#### **3.1 The President**

Respect should be paid to the president. His job is not an easy one. For the term of his appointment he is the head of the club. They should not be expected to sort out petty differences that arise between members. Members themselves with a little give and take and a friendly handshake should resolve these differences. Presidents too have acts of

courtesy to perform by meeting and welcoming new members and making them feel at home.

### **3.2 The Secretary.**

The secretary who is the custodian of the clubs' constitution holds a very important position and is the link between the committee, club members, district and the public. By advising the secretary of any personal changes you will ensure that club records are kept up to date.

### **3.3 The Competition Secretaries**

This is perhaps the most thankless job in the club. Assist them by honouring your commitments and help them to complete their full programme. Acquaint yourself with the conditions of play for each tournament you enter.

### **3.4 The Selectors**

Selectors do not have an easy task. It is the selection committee's task to select teams on merit and compatibility and club member's should accept when they are chosen to play. If it is necessary to omit usually good players, or perhaps select them for a lower team, it is good etiquette for the convenor of the

selection committee to inform the players concerned and explain to them the reason for the committee's decision. It is etiquette for the players to accept the decisions made and not to discredit them in gossip.

### **3.5 Club Property**

Treat club property as your own. Ensure that mats jacks and water cans are returned after use. Waste paper, empty bottles or cans should be deposited into rubbish bins. Smokers should use the demarcated areas and cigarette butts to be placed in the ashtrays provided.

## **4. YOU AND THE GREEN**

The green is the most important asset of your club. The greenkeeper spends many hours endeavouring to give you a good playing surface. You can assist by:

4.1 Using the steps when stepping on or off the green. Not stepping up and down from the bank.

4.2 Carefully placing your bowls on the playing surface, and not dropping them onto the green.

4.3 By varying the position of the mat, ensuring an even wear over a large area of the green.

4.4 Not stepping into the ditch. If you do, you will transfer sand onto the green, which will damage the mower and the grass.

4.5 Wear heelless footwear which has either a smooth or ribbed sole (maximum depth of 2 mm) of the ribbed section of the sole making contact with the green.

4.6 Not sitting on the bank as this causes damage to the edge.

4.7 Place your bowls bag and any other utensils behind the rink number or scoreboard.

4.8 When using a bowls lifter device, place it safely aside on the green so that it will not become a dangerous obstacle for your fellow bowlers.

4.9 Not grumbling when play is called off for any reason.

4.10 Assisting in putting away the jacks, mats, scoreboards and water cans, if the green staff has gone off duty.

**4.11 Never blame the green for bad play. Part of playing the game is to master the green. It is the same for all players.**

## **5. BEFORE THE GAME**

5.1 **Be punctual.** Arrive before the scheduled starting time of a game and do not keep your opponent(s) waiting. If prevented by any unforeseen circumstance from being on time, send a message. Failure to arrive at the appointed time may cause you to incur penalties.

5.2 If you are drawn to play in a game and find it necessary to scratch, notify your opponent, the relevant tournament official and the club on whose green you were to play. Disciplinary action can be taken against you if you do not report your intention to scratch in advance to the controlling body.

5.3 When tossing, the home player tosses, and the visitor calls. Use a coin.

5.4 Start the game with introductions and a friendly handshake with your opponents and your teammates. At the end a handshake and thanks for the game will show proper courtesy.

## **6. LEADS AND SECONDS**

6.1 It is customary for a player in Singles, or a lead in Pairs, Triples or Fours to place the opponent's bowl alongside the mat, while he is centering the jack. In a more competitive game the opponent might choose to pick up his own bowl as part of his routine delivery. Check with your opponent first. This little act immediately places the two opponents on friendly terms. If your team has lost the end, handing the jack and mat to the opposing lead is one of the gestures that helps to make the game pleasurable.

6.2 Leads should await the directive of their skip before placing the mat and delivering the jack.

6.3 Seconds should never make up their mind as to what shot they are going to play. The second should wait for the skip's instructions before stepping onto the mat, and then obey them implicitly without suggesting an alternative shot.

6.4 After the leads and seconds have played their bowl and before going to the head, it is customary for the second of the team playing first, to place the third's bowl on the mat.

6.5 Leads and seconds should only offer advice through the player in charge of the head-skip or third. There is nothing worse than to see a lead or second indicating behind the third or skip's back.

6.6 Keep your attention on the game throughout. It is not etiquette to play your bowls and then to take no interest in the development and result of the head. Use the time between playing your bowls to contribute to the team through encouragement and mentally prepare for your next shot.

6.7 The scores have to be determined by the thirds. Leads and seconds should show interest in the results of the head without interfering. A quiet intimation from the lead or second that the third may be overlooking a shot will be welcomed by the third.

6.8 Do not move any bowl in the head before the thirds have decided on the result. This will avoid any arguments and unpleasantness which could lead to your team having to concede a shot or shots.

6.9 In a Fours or Triples game it is timesaving if the lead gets on with laying the mat and delivering the jack, whilst the other lead and seconds attend to the collecting of bowls and marking the scoreboard. In a Pairs game both leads should contribute to the collecting of bowls before attending to the scoreboard and placing the mat.

6.10 Never tell the third what shot to play at the crossover when you have failed. This adds more pressure in an already pressure situation as the third is busy preparing mentally for the shot to be played as agreed on with the skip.

## **7. THIRDS**

7.1 A talking third is a liability whilst a silent third is an asset to his team. Except when he is in control of the head the third should remain silent unless the skip asks for advice.

7.2 Discussions with the skip should take place at the head if the position is tricky. Never tell your skip what shot to play at the crossover. He/she has already mentally prepared for the shot to be played.

7.3 The third may advise the skip if the head has been changed, but he/she must not control his play. Should the skip decide not to act on the third's suggestion, he/she should accept it with grace.

7.4 The score has to be determined by the thirds who will measure if necessary. At the completion of an end do not walk around the head looking at it from different angles and arguing about which is the shot bowl. Get down right away and measure doubtful shots. The third of the team who is conceding the shots must remove the bowls from the head.

7.5 If your opponent, when measuring, happens to overlook a shot in his/her favour, suggest he/she measures that shot. This is a generous interpretation of etiquette and one much appreciated, for bowls is a game for gentlemen.

7.6 The third acts as the link between the skip and the rest of the team and at the crossover should encourage and compliment the lead and second for good play.

7.7 The Third should mark the touchers of his skip and remove any dead bowls.

7.8 After the thirds played their bowls and before going to the head, it is customary for the third of the team playing first to place the skip's bowl on the mat.

## **8. SKIPS**

8.1 Skips are the custodians of etiquette on the green, and are there for qualities of leadership, as well as for their playing ability. Skips who conform to the rules of etiquette contribute much enjoyment and pleasure, not only to their teammates but also to their opponents.

8.2 Skips should not allow themselves to become so engaged in conversation with their opposite number as to neglect their chief duty of giving their whole attention to the game and to ensure that their team enjoys the match and to have a positive influence on their play.

8.3 When directing the player on the mat, the skip must retire behind the jack as soon as the bowl has been delivered. When the bowl has come to rest stand back as possession of the rink is then transferred to the opposing team.

8.4 Once the bowl has come to rest no further instructions may be given, nor remarks made. Skips may only talk to their player at the mat while their team is in possession of the rink.

8.5 Skips are in charge of their team and their directions should be clear and concise and be followed without question. A skip should be gracious enough to confer with the third and his team as to the shot he intends to play. Respect is earned, not demanded.

A skip should decide which shot to call before speaking to ensure that the player on the mat is not in two minds about the shot to play when delivering. A skip should also only give positive directions to ensure that the player on the mat can concentrate on what to do during the delivery routine, rather than to concentrate about what not to do.

8.6 A lead or second may offer a timely comment on the situation at the head or point to a shot that has been overlooked. Leads and seconds have as much interest in the game as any other member of the team. Remember that your team consists of all the players and that team cohesion is a recipe for success.

8.7 Remember that the players in your team are as anxious to win as you are. It is poor etiquette to show annoyance or disappointment by waving or dropping your hands or duster should a teammate not perform. A wise skip will encourage the team with a complimentary remark. A pat on the back or giving a high five, instills confidence.

8.8 If necessary, a skip should indicate to the player the state of the head before the bowl is delivered. A skip should acknowledge good bowls from his/her team as well as from the opponents.

8.9 Provided the opposing skip has no objections, it is an appropriate gesture for a skip to pick up the opponent's bowl and hand it to him when he is about to get on the mat.

8.10 After a skip has played the last bowl in an end and it has come to rest, the opposing skip should pick up the mat.

8.11 Skips usually delegate the measuring of shots to their thirds. A skip is at fault if he interferes with the performance of the third's duty.

8.12 It is the duty of the skip who wins the toss to keep control of the scoreboard. The opposing skip is required to keep the score-card if both a board and card are being used.

8.13 Cohesive teams are usually successful teams. Players should give their skip loyal support and comply with directions. A happy team is a winning team and a winning team is a happy team.

## **9. TEAM ETIQUETTE**

9.1 If you wish to earn the respect of your opponents and your team, you in turn must extend respect to them.

9.2 While play is in progress, refrain from having conversations with someone on the bank or with players on adjoining rinks and keep still in the head when a player is on the mat, nor obscuring the number and boundary pegs.

9.3 When the lead has delivered the jack, players must ensure that the rink number plate is visible to facilitate centering of the jack.

9.4 Players not in the act of playing or controlling play must stand 2 metres behind the head or 1 metre behind the mat and ensure

that their shadow does not fall on the jack or across the player's delivery line. When a long end has been set, or the jack falls into the ditch, stand on the bank.

9.5 Players at both ends of the rink should refrain from unnecessary movement and talking when a player is about to play. Failure to avoid annoyance is one of the worst discourtesy in the game of bowls.

9.6 Never argue with the skip about the shot you have been asked to play as this shows lack of confidence in your skip's tactical abilities, and can harm team spirit.

9.7 Do not comment on any bad bowl delivered by the opponents, but acknowledge good play.

9.8 Acknowledge and become excited about good shots played by a teammate.

9.9 Concentrate on your own game for the duration thereof. Failure to do this can be most disturbing to your teammates.

9.10 Any disabled players should be assisted whenever possible.

9.11 Do not make excuses for bad play. If a green happens to be bad; play it – it is the same for both sides. As in most sports, you make your own luck. The good fortune will go to the team with the most bowls in the head and the team who mastered the green first. Be humble in victory, and graceful in defeat.

9.12 Never criticize the performance of your teammates during or after a game.

9.13 Do not complain when the opposition gets a good result through a fluke. Keep quiet. Do not say “well played” if your team gets a similar fluke. Admit a fluke openly.

9.14 Do not say “thank you” if your opponents happen to give the shot away. Rather say “bad luck”.

9.15 Avoid arguments with members of your own team or with your opponents. It takes two to invoke a scene, do not be one of them.

9.16 If you follow your bowl after delivery, do not obstruct the view of your opponent. Remember it is law that you must either be behind the head, or behind the mat, when your bowl comes to rest.

9.17 Know the boundaries of your duties as a player in a particular position. Never try to exceed them as you may interfere with the duties of others.

9.18 When crossing over to the head or mat all players should do so only after the last played bowl has come to rest. Confine yourself to your own rink and walk in the centre of the rink at a brisk rate. Taking your time when walking up to the head is unacceptable.

9.19 When an umpire [technical official] is called to measure, all players must stay away from the head. Umpires and markers render their services voluntarily, and they should be

treated with respect. If the umpire is called to measure or rule on any question, dispute or difference during a game, and he/she decides against you, remain a good sportsman and accept his decision. Extend a word of thanks to the officials after each game.

9.20 If an end should be restarted, or at the completion of a game, carry your bowls to the opposite bank.

9.21 If you borrow anything, remember to return it to the owner.

9.22 When playing against a visiting team, or player, at your club, extend your hospitality and attend to their requirements. To be engaged after a game with reciprocal refreshments fosters friendship and gives this great game its magnetic charm.

## **10. SINGLES**

10.1 In singles you will need a marker. Be ready to do your share of marking when called upon.

10.2 While your opponent is playing, stand well behind him/her, and do nothing to distract him/her or break his/her concentration.

10.3 You may not ask the marker for information once your bowl has come to rest.

10.4 If you wish to study the head, you may only do so when you have possession of the rink, and, if the conditions of play do not have any restrictions about the players visiting the head. It is customary to request permission from the marker to visit the head.

10.5 Remain within your rink, either behind the head or behind the mat when your bowl has come to rest.

10.6 Await your opponent's agreement on the number of shots before moving any bowls. In bowls you may not take shots. The opposition must concede shots.

10.7 Collecting the bowls is a joint efforts in singles – do not hesitate to do your fair share.

10.8 At the conclusion of the game, thank the marker, flip board operator and the umpire. The winner should offer refreshments to the opponent and marker.

## **11. SPECTATORS**

Spectators may not offer advice to players or interfere with the playing of the game. Applaud good shots of both sides. Do not engage in conversation with the markers whilst they are on the green.

## **12. SPORTSMANSHIP**

BAD sportsmanship, for example sledging, is considered unsportsmanlike conduct. Using unsporting terms or making unsporting comments that could upset an opponent, talking in a loud voice to a spectator when the opponent is in the act of playing, moving in the head, or doing anything intended to distract a player in an attempt to destroy their concentration, are examples of poor etiquette. Bad sportmanship conflicts with the spirit of the game and is unacceptable.

## **13. CONCLUSION**

13.1 The more players involved in a game, the greater the need for observing etiquette. The team that is considerate, good-humoured and having fun will have achieved harmony and will have gained respect. Observing etiquette makes friends, avoids friction and makes bowls a sport that everybody can enjoy.

13.2 Etiquette requires that you behave in a polite and friendly manner at all times. It is in this spirit and feeling of fellowship that every player loves and enjoys. Every game, no matter how competitive, is conducted in a sporting and friendly manner. At the conclusion, everyone shakes hands and leaves the green together to enjoy each other's company in the clubhouse.

13.3 This is etiquette and what bowls is all about. The spirit of bowls is seen in the harmony and genuine friendship that develop both on and off the green.

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