

Proteas Aiming High: South Africa's Quest for Indoor Gold in Malaysia

Sport is made of moments—those flashes when talent, preparation, and opportunity collide. For South African bowlers, that moment arrives this November in Kuala Lumpur. From November 4–8, 2025, the Bukit Kiara National Lawn Bowl Centre will host the first-ever World Cup of Bowls. For the Proteas, this is more than a tournament. It's a launchpad toward the 2026 Commonwealth Games, a test against the world's best, and a chance to inspire a new generation at home.

Malaysia Welcomes the World

The host nation, with strong government backing, has quickly become a force in bowls. By staging the event indoors—portable rinks, artificial lighting, and testing conditions—Malaysia signals it is ready for the big stage. Indoor bowls strips the game to its essence: skill, concentration, and mental toughness. No wind, no weather—just precision. Every bowl is a test, every end a pursuit of perfection.

“The World Cup is a defining moment for South African bowlers,” says Bowls South Africa President David Hamer. “Our Proteas stand ready to demonstrate their ability, their character, and to motivate a new wave of players to follow in their footsteps.”

Six Athletes, One Dream

The Proteas' squad of six blends veterans and rising talent, sharpened by months of training in Johannesburg and Cape Town.

- **Jason Evans – The Blacksmith**
The team's seasoned anchor, Evans has medals from past World Championships and a reputation for composure under pressure. His calm authority makes him the backbone of the squad.
- **Wayne Roberts – The Strategist**
Known as the “architect” of the end, Roberts' tactical brilliance sets him apart. At 32, he is entering his prime and could emerge in Malaysia as a global star.
- **Jarid James – The Young Gun**
Fearless and dynamic, James thrives under pressure. Bold shots are his trademark, and Kuala Lumpur offers him the perfect chance to announce himself to the world.
- **Anneke Scheepers – The Anchor**
Leader of the women's squad, Scheepers brings steady hands and calm resolve. A decorated bowler, she is determined to guide her side to a breakthrough.
- **Bridget Herselman – The Metronome**
With unerring rhythm and consistency, Herselman is relentless. She has also stepped into a mentoring role, reflecting the spirit of *Ubuntu* within the squad.

- **Margie Palmer – The Clutch Player**

Known for thriving under pressure, Palmer is the one who produces decisive shots when it matters most. Her cool nerves could be pivotal in Malaysia.

Behind them stand coaches Susan Nel, Johann du Plessis, and Denise Field, who have drilled the team in the unique demands of indoor bowls. “Indoor bowls is a unique challenge, but our preparation and unity give us confidence to aim for the top,” says Nel.

Building Beyond 2025

For Bowls South Africa, the World Cup is about more than medals. It’s part of a broader revival of the sport. With more than 200 clubs nationwide, Bowls SA is driving participation through schools, community leagues, and youth programs. Since 2023, membership has surged, proving the sport is shaking off the old stereotype of being only for retirees. The U35 circuit in particular is rewriting perceptions, with young players showing the intensity and tactical edge bowls demands.

The Proteas’ appearance on the world stage could become the catalyst for the next generation to take up the game, ensuring a sustainable future for South African bowls.

Rivals on the World Stage

Kuala Lumpur will gather the sport’s elite, making every match a battle:

- **Australia** remain the giants of bowls, with unrivalled depth and consistency. They arrive as favourites and the standard every team must measure against.
- **England** are proud, disciplined, and technically flawless—long-standing rivals of South Africa. Any clash carries weight beyond the scoreboard.
- **Scotland**, preparing to host Glasgow 2026, will treat Malaysia as their proving ground.
- **New Zealand’s Blackjacks** are creative tacticians, always dangerous and unpredictable.
- **Malaysia**, with home support and knowledge of the rinks, are no longer outsiders. Their recent results prove they are genuine contenders.

Other nations—from Canada and Ireland to India and the USA—will ensure no end is easy. Every shot counts, and every mistake could be costly.

A Legacy in Green and Gold

South Africa’s bowls history is rich. Since 2000, the Proteas have consistently returned with medals from World Championships, cementing their place as perennial contenders. Yet the inaugural World Cup of Bowls offers something new: the chance to make history. Victory in Malaysia would secure the first crown of a global event and prove that the Proteas can conquer indoors as well as outdoors.

Jason Evans captures the squad's spirit:

"We've battled the best, and we've beaten the best. We're not here to make up numbers—we're here to make history."

Anneke Scheepers adds:

"This World Cup is about more than us as individuals. It's about flying the South African flag and showing young South Africans that bowls can be a sport of heroes."

The Countdown Is On

In less than two months, the Proteas will step out in Kuala Lumpur with the weight of history and the hopes of a nation on their shoulders. Their preparation has been meticulous, their ambition clear. The world's best are waiting, and the challenge will be fierce.

But if there is one truth in South African sport, it is this: when the pressure rises, the Proteas rise higher.