

Upcoming Young Stars set to shine at Junior Lawn Bowls Event

Excitement is building as the next generation of lawn bowls talent prepares to take Centre stage at the Annual Bowls South Africa (Bowls SA) Junior Nationals Event, to be held in Bloemfontein from 29 March -1 April 2026.

District Teams from Provinces around South Africa will be competing in 3 different age group levels, the Under 15 and Under 18 Event, which will be held at Orangia Bowling Club, and the Under 25 Category which will be played at Oud Studente.

All finals will be played at Orangia Bowling Club on the 1 April 2026 at 09:00.

25 Teams (100 players) have been entered into the Under 25 age group, 104 in the Under 18 age group, whilst 16 Teams (64 players) have been entered in the U15 age group.

3 teams from Botswana have also accepted an Invitation from Bowls SA.

The event promises a vibrant showcase of skill, sportsmanship, and youthful energy. The event will feature a diverse field of competitors, ranging from emerging newcomers to already accomplished players who have begun making their mark at district level.

The Bowls SA event, funded by the Department of Sport, Art and Culture have placed a strong emphasis not only on competition but also on development. The event aims to nurture young talent, offering players valuable match experience while encouraging camaraderie and respect, values that lie at the heart of lawn bowls.

While competition will undoubtedly be fierce, the emphasis remains on enjoyment, learning, and the forging of lasting friendships.

2025 gold medalists in the Under 25 category, North West Bowls (NWB), have 3 players from their 2025 team, Thinus Van Zyl, Ronan Olivier and Janlu Myburg, defending their title. They will be accompanied this year by Nathan Short. NWB will however face fierce competition from 2025 silver medalists, Northern Free State, skipped by 2026 Bowls South Africa Junior Masters Champion Adrian Bookless. Natal Inland who has regularly medaled in the past few years, skipped by Caleb Janse Van Rensburg, would like to keep up their momentum. Other teams to be on the lookout are Sedibeng (Alex Badenhorst), Bowls Gauteng North, Johannesburg Bowls who have Lethabo Mathebela, playing in his 10th Junior Nationals skipping the side. The Bauristhene twins from Port Natal will be competitive, as too will be the strong Western Province side.

There will definitely be hometown interest in the U18 category, where defending champions, Southern Free State (SFS) will be defending their title. The winning team from 2025, Keegan Minopetros, Christian Botha, Karli Botha and Jayden Jansen Van Vuuren will be defending their title with only Ethan du Toit coming in this year to replace Christian. Bowls Gauteng North would like to go one step further this year by claiming a gold medal to go with their 2025 silver medal. The Under 18 event promises to be a closely contested affair with many sides giving themselves a chance.

The Under 15 Event often provides a vibrant and welcoming atmosphere for families, supporters and local community. Players as young as 9 will be competing in this age group. From early rounds to the anticipated finals, each match will deliver moments of tension, precision and excitement.

The 2025 Gold and Silver Medalists, Western Province and Southern Free both have new sides this year, with most of the U15 players moving up to the U18 Category. Sides to look out for, will be Bowls Gauteng North, skipped by MJ Castelyn, with young Parker Perry, son of Protea Wayne, in their ranks. The quartet from Johannesburg Bowls viz Caden Spence-Ross, (Great grandson of Springbok Noel), Tebogo Mathibela, Jack Kennedy and Taryn Guthrie will be playing in their third consecutive Under 15 event, receiving a bronze medal in 2024

As the countdown begins, all eyes will be on these young athletes as they step onto the green, each delivery carrying not just the hope of victory, but the promise of a bright future for the sport of bowls.

The event will be live streamed everyday from 08:30 on <https://www.youtube.com/@BowlsSouthAfricaOfficial/streams>



Lethabo Mathibela, playing in his 10th Junior Nationals will be skipping the JBA U25 side

Bobby Donnelly

Bowls SA COO