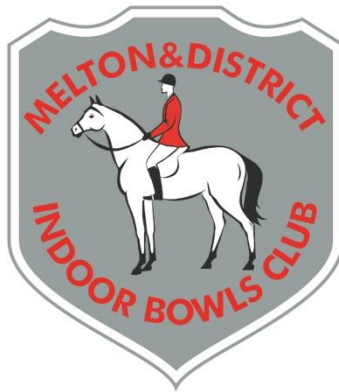




MELTON & DISTRICT INDOOR BOWLS CLUB

Key Laws of the Sport of Indoor Bowls

A guide for new members

The Recruitment & Retention Team

Issue 7, May 2025

Recruitment & RetentionTeam Booklets

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How are we doing?

Our aim is to make your introduction to Indoor Bowls to be as simple and pleasurable as possible. We welcome / need your feedback on your overall experience as new joiners in order to help us continue to improve the welcoming package. Your feedback will help us to lead the way on recruiting and retaining new members into the sport of Indoor Bowls here at M&D IBC.

The Recruitment & Retention Team

Introduction

This booklet is intended to give you a **guide** to the laws of the game. It is not a full explanation, but will cover the key rules that you will need to know in order to compete in social or internal Club games. You will find that the Club operates some variants to the rules used in some external competitions, but if so these are highlighted on notices on the competition boards along the side of Rink 1. Should you feel that you need a full set of rules, then ask the session coaches how to obtain up-to-date rule books from the EIBA.

You will have been introduced to some of the definitions of player positions, and duties within a team, in Booklet 2 “New to the Game of Indoor Bowls”. You are also reminded that Booklet 2 includes the very important Rules of Bowls Etiquette. It is assumed that you are now familiar with the rink, bowls and other regularly used equipment.

Finally, a quick note on bowl marks – a frequently asked question. Every bowl (wood) has an oval stamp denoting manufacturer/tester and a date of expiry. An “expired” bowl can be used at Club sessions – an important consideration should you prefer to opt to buy second hand bowls at this time in your playing career. You will need to have them retested, or buy new bowls with a valid expiry date, only if should you enter external competitions.

Arranging a Game

- i) Competition and league team games are normally played as two hours or 18 ends long. Singles games are the exception to this rule – playing first to 21 shots (and a 2 shot margin) or as 9–game sets (best of three sets). The Competition notice board has rules confirming the duration required, or any specific sets format.
- ii) In Club competitions, it is the first named player/team that is responsible for arranging the game and booking rinks etc. Contact details for Club members can be found in the directory at the Bar. In League matches and Competition finals, a rink will be allocated for you. The scorecards for league matches are printed ahead of the date and provided at the rink.
- iii) You must not practice on the rink to be used for competition matches in the 24 hours before your arranged date/time.

Before the game

Normally trial deliveries on the allocated rink before any game starts are not allowed, except before the finals of competitions.

The Skips toss a coin to decide who has the first mat, i.e. cast of the jack and plays the first bowl. The toss winner has the option to accept the toss or ask the opposition to have the mat. The opposition is not allowed to refuse.

Placing the mat

The starting/winning lead player places the mat lengthways along the centre line of the rink. The mat must either cover the “T”, or be no further forward than having its front edge to the fifth spot in front of the “T”.

The mat must not then be moved during play, except in the following circumstances;

- i) The mat slips out of alignment with the centre line, or is accidentally moved. It can then be straightened (without lifting off the surface) and replaced to its original position.

N.B. The legality of the position of the mat, or jack, cannot be challenged once the first bowl of the end has been played.

At the finish of each end’s play, the mat should be put out of the way of play (not covering any rink markings) on the bank carpet at the end of the rink ready for the next end to be played. The mat should not be thrown so that it covers the bank edge.

Foot–Faults

A player delivering the jack or a bowl must have (all or part of) one foot within the confines of the mat area. The foot must be in contact with, or above, the mat.

Casting the Jack

The jack must travel at least 23 metres from the front edge of the mat. For example, for a mat on the “T” at the delivery end, the Jack must travel beyond the first spot met (bank marked) at the head end. The player casting the jack must ensure that the jack has been properly centred on the rink before playing the first bowl of the end.

If the cast jack comes to a stop on the rink behind the “T”, it is repositioned onto the “T” for that end.

Should the casting of the jack be obstructed or deflected by anyone other than a member of the casting team, then it shall be recast by the first player.

Should the casting be obstructed or deflected by a member of the casting team, or does not meet the required 23 metre distance, or comes to a stop outside the rink or in the gutter, then it shall be recast by the first player of the opposition, who will also be able to reposition the mat to their own choice. The original first player retains first shot now using the opposition’s choice of mat position and length.

Should the opposition’s recast also fail to meet the rules, then the jack shall be placed on the “T”, and the first player may again move the mat to their own choice.

Once the first bowl is played, the mat position cannot be challenged.

Bowls in Play

Live Bowls

A bowl, that has travelled at least 14 metres from the mat, is **LIVE** if any part of the bowl remains within the limits of the rink, e.g. a bowl touching the boundary line (as defined by the bank markers) is **IN**.

Dead Bowls

A bowl which travels less than 14 metres from the mat, or comes to a stop outside the confines of the rink, or leaves the rink obviously under the influence of a wrong bias, is considered **DEAD**, and can be removed/stopped with the agreement of the opposition Skip. (In the last case, efforts must be made to prevent the bowl from disturbing bowls in play on the adjacent rink.)

N.B. If a bowl enters your rink from a neighbouring rink and is travelling towards your head (but on its natural correct bias), it is your responsibility to lift any of your bowls vertically to allow the incoming bowl to travel through on its correct path to its own head. You replace your bowl to its original position. (See Later)

A bowl travelling into the ditch, which has not touched the jack and has already passed the head, may be stopped and lifted onto the bank before it drops into the ditch.

Touchers

A bowl which touches the jack on its original course, even though it might subsequently end up in the ditch within the confines of the rink, is considered both **LIVE** and a **TOUCHER**.

A toucher should be clearly marked with chalk. This must be done immediately and before the next bowl played comes to rest.

The position of a toucher which has dropped into the ditch is marked with a red or white (home or away) marker attached to the ditch wall. (N.B. The jack that is knocked into the ditch is similarly marked by a yellow marker.) If it is subsequently moved by a non-toucher dropping into the ditch, then it is the original marked position that is counted, and the toucher should be repositioned below its marker.

If the jack is already in the ditch, a bowl dropping into the ditch and touching the jack is **NOT** a toucher – and the bowl is removed, and the jack returned to its original position if it has been displaced.

When the end is complete, including the scoring process, all chalk must be removed from any touchers before being used in the next end, and all ditch markers removed from the end wall.

Unintentional Movement (Displacement)

Bowls at rest. If a played bowl (at rest) is moved by a player of the same team, it shall be declared **DEAD**. Any part of the head that has

been subsequently disturbed by the movement shall be repositioned.

If a played bowl is moved by a player of the opposing team, it should be replayed. If the head has been disturbed by the moved bowl, then the skip of the team that played the bowl has the option of either repositioning the head and replaying, or to declare the end as dead.

Bowls in motion. If a bowl in motion is touched by a player, the opposing skip can move the bowl to where he believes it would have come to rest or declare a dead end.

A bowl at rest on the rink, if in danger of being moved by a bowl played from an adjacent rink, may be lifted by any player at the head to allow the neutral bowl to pass, and then repositioned.

Order of Play

In all team games;

The order of play within a team cannot be changed after the first end has been played.

Players not in the act of playing shall stand at least one metre behind the mat, or behind and away from immediately behind the jack at the head end. They should not distract the player at the mat. All players must stay within their own rink at all times. Players should not sit on the end wall.

Fours (sometimes called Rinks)

The players are designated as lead, second, third and Skip. Players have **two** bowls each end. The leads shall play their **two** bowls alternately, and so on, each pair of players in succession to the end.

The Skip is in charge of the team. When the Skip is playing, the Third will delegate for him/her at the head in all measuring duties. The Second acts as scorer unless another player is nominated. The Lead has the task of casting the jack at the start of the end, and a losing Lead normally helps clear the bowls after all scoring has been completed.

Triples

The players are designated as One, Two and Skip. Players have **three** bowls each end. The One's shall play their **three** bowls alternately, and so on, each pair of players in succession to the end.

The Skip is in charge of the team. When the Skip is playing, the Two will delegate for him/her at the head in all measuring duties and acts as scorer. The One has the task of casting the jack at the start of the end, and a losing One normally helps clear the bowls after all scoring has been completed.

Pairs

The players are designated as One and Two. Each player has **four** bowls each end. The One's shall play their **four** bowls alternately, followed by the Two's in succession to the end.

The One is in charge of the team. When the Two is playing, the One at the head acts in all measuring duties and as scorer. The One has the task of casting the jack at the start of the end, and a losing One normally helps clear the bowls after all scoring has been completed.

There is a variant of the Pairs game called **Australian Pairs**. In this game, at the outset the One's play just two of their four bowls alternately, and then move to the head end. The Two's then play their four bowls alternately, and then move back to the head. The One's then play their last two bowls. The Two's are now in the position to act as measurers and scorers. The Two's now lead off the next end, and the roles are reversed. The ends alternate in this fashion through the game.

Scoring

In all matches, it is required that a paper copy of the score sheet is maintained through the game by the first named (home) team. After each end, the agreed outcome is recorded on the sheet, and should reflect the score shown on the electronic scoreboard. The score sheets are signed by both teams after the game.

Marker Duties

It is possible that you may be asked to perform the role of marker for a competition singles game. Here is a brief summary of the duties involved.

- i) The marker must establish the duration of the game at the outset, e.g. 2 hours or 21 shots.
- ii) The marker must have a measure and chalk.
- iii) The marker introduces him(her)self and shakes hands with both players before doing the coin toss.
- iv) The marker ensures that, for every new end, each jack is centred, and has travelled at least 23 metres from the mat.
- v) The marker stands to one side of the rink, and to the rear of the “T”.
- vi) The marker, **when asked**, will tell or show the position of the jack to the player in possession of position of the jack. Similarly, the position of the shot bowl or answer any other specific question about the state of the head.
- vii) The marker shall mark all touchers **immediately** they come to rest.
- viii) The marker will remove any dead bowls from the rink or ditch **after the agreement of both players**.
- ix) The marker shall not move jack nor bowls **until both players have agreed a score**.
- x) The marker shall measure carefully all shots when requested by **either** player.
- xi) The marker will ask for an Umpire (neutral player) in the case of a dispute. The Umpire’s decision will be final.
- xii) The marker shall enter the score on the card after each end, ensure the scoreboard is in agreement, and indicate to the players the state of the game.

- xiii) The marker will permit only one visit to the head, per player, per end.
- xiv) The marker will ensure the mat is removed from the rink at the completion of an end.
- xv) At the end of the game, the marker will ensure that the scorecard is signed by both players, a time of finish is recorded, and the card then deposited as required by competition rules.

Want to know more?

As stated in the Introduction, this booklet is not intended to be more than a guide to the key rules of the game to get you started in match play. Within the Club, different variations to the rules may apply depending on the League or competition in which you decide to play – if so, then these rule variants will be notified on the notice boards (along the side of Rink 1) for that particular competition.

A full set of rules, shown below, may be purchased from the English Indoor Bowling Association Ltd.

World Indoor Bowls Council

Laws of the Sport of Bowls – Crystal Mark Third Edition

There may be updates to these rules, and the EIBA will advise you of the latest edition

The EIBA offices are housed in the building next to the Club on Bowling Green. Ask in the Office, or one of the coaches, for contact details.