

THE ETIQUETTE OF BOWLS

Etiquette is mainly a code of behaviour whereby individuals treat one another the way they expect to be treated themselves. Breaches of etiquette are sometimes inadvertent. Injured parties should avoid over-reacting. Otherwise a breach of etiquette more objectionable than the original transgression could occur.

Bowls is a sport accessible to enthusiasts through a network of clubs. Welwyn and District Bowls Club is not a public green, consequently there are two facets of etiquette. There is etiquette associated with the obligations and privileges of club membership. Friends or appointed buddies of a new member should take the responsibility of providing instruction on this subject. Also there is etiquette associated with participation of the game itself. The club coach should take the responsibility of providing instruction about that.

CLUB ETIQUETTE

Friends or appointed 'buddies' should act as mentors for new members. They should provide information about clubhouse rules and customs, fees, and attire. They should introduce new members to club officials. They should also arrange to play with new members when they have their first game.

New members should remember that club officials are elected volunteers who willingly give their time for the benefit of fellow members. Officials act in good faith but sometimes make mistakes. Members are entitled to question decisions of officials that affect them, but in those circumstances not only the members, but also the officials themselves should resolve matters in contention in a courteous way. Members should be silent when officials are making special announcements.

Employees such as the green keeper is employed under contract. Certain officials in the club have authority to direct this person. In no circumstances should members attempt to give directions to such employees about their work.

Over the years the steadily increasing cost of seasonal and daily maintenance of club facilities always exceed amounts collected as fees. The cost of preparing facilities for bowling has always been subsidised by revenue from bar trading, raffles, fund raising events etc. Consequently bowlers have a duty to give the club's fund raising operations their reasonable support.

They should pay club membership fees on or before the due date. Their membership fees may include amounts specified as affiliation fees. The club affiliates with both the district and county association.

GAME ETIQUETTE

Club coaches and assistants should act as mentors in game etiquette for new members. They should ensure the suitability of members' footwear. They should explain the fragility of the edge of the green and why sitting on the bank, and dumping of bowls should be avoided. They should emphasise the need for punctuality for all games (*members are expected to arrive at least fifteen minutes before that start of a game, and report to the Captain of the day*) and for being properly attired. They should also endeavour to join with new members when they have their first game.

Bowlers should give their support to teams representing their club by attending inter-club events. As spectators they should demonstrate sporting bipartisanship in the fluctuating fortunes of the event.

At the outset of a game, the skip is responsible for introducing his own players to the opponents. Cohesive teams are often successful teams. Bowlers should address one another by their given names during the course of a game. They should fairly share the task of kicking bowls after completion of an end. Bowlers should give the skip their loyal support and comply with directions. If the skip's bowl remains in the ditch from the previous end, team mates should dust it and place it handily near the mat before changing ends. In changing ends, players should avoid straying on to neighbouring rinks or otherwise distracting play on them. Opposing leads should facilitate play by courteously handing the mat and jack to each other, as convenient. Players can similarly hand bowls to one another when convenient.

When a game is in progress NOBODY should converse with or in any way distract the players involved, nor, indeed, the marker if one is present. Spectators of other players in the vicinity of the green should be especially careful that their actions/conversations should not impinge upon the concentration of players on the green.

It is good sportsmanship to acknowledge displays of exceptional skill. Flukes are simply revelations of unrecognised opportunities. They balance out over time, so it serves no purpose to take too much notice of them.

When a player delivers a wood and follows it up the green, that player must be either behind the head or returned to a position behind the mat by the time their bowl comes to rest. Once the bowl has stopped, the

opposition has control of the head and you are not entitled to ask for any information or-in the case of a skip-offer any information until your opponent's next bowl has stopped and you have control of the head once more. The side controlling the head is entitled to expect that the member in charge at the head-usually the skip/number three- shall be granted full and unfettered access to the head and the leads and number two's of both sides as well as the opposing skip/number three should retire to a position where the controlling player's view is in no way obstructed.

The enjoyment of a game of bowls is diminished if either team indulges in gamesmanship. Inconsiderate distractions such as loud noises or conversation, visible movement of players, objects or shadows, impact of kicked bowls, etc should be avoided while a bowler is on the mat preparing for delivery. Bowlers should avoid delaying play by leaving the rink without consent. They should avoid asking to leave the green unless there is a reasonable necessity. They should avoid interfering with the head until the result of the end has been agreed. If an opponent has obviously not counted all the bowls the team is entitled to count, good sportsmanship should prevail.

No player should, by act or word, display displeasure at inadequate performance by a member of their own side nor overtly gloat over poor bowling by an opponent. They should avoid disparaging comment of any kind about or to team-mates or opponents. In this respect skips, in particular, should set an example by complimenting and encouraging their own players at appropriate times.

At the conclusion of an end, the number three should be left to measure and concede shots without comment or interference from the other members of the team.

Bowlers should shake hands at the end of a game. The graceful losers should congratulate the modest winners. Borrowed personal items such as tape measures should be returned to their owners with thanks. Mats and jacks should be collected and returned to the usual distribution point.

After games, players should sit with their opponents. Home team players should offer visitors refreshment. After domestic games, winners are normally the first to offer drinks. After singles matches, markers should be included in the invitation. Courteous losers normally reciprocate in turn. They should avoid making excuses for their lack of success on the day a topic of conversation.

As indicated in the introduction, etiquette is mainly about treating one another the way bowlers expect to be treated themselves. Considerate thought and common sense are the keys to acceptable standards. Try to ensure that at all times your conduct is such that it enhances the pleasure of the game for both your team-mates and your opponents. By carrying out their duties, by obeying the laws of the game and by observing the rules of etiquette, players will not only be a credit to their club and the game, but will set an example for others to emulate (**COURTESY IS CONTAGIOUS**).

Officials of the club shall be permitted to interrupt a game to inform a player or marker of any failure to adhere to the rules of etiquette or, indeed, the rules of the game.