

Ask the Umpire: December 2025

Tossing for the start of Play or an Extra End

It is of interest perhaps for players to note that the Laws of the Sport of Bowls are very specific that coaches. Managers or players must Toss a **COIN** to decide who plays first. We often see players rolling a bowl to decide the toss. However, in terms of the Laws this is not a legal toss.

Recording the finishing time for your games or matches

Skips are supposed to record the time every game finishes on the score card. Why is this needed? Well it's very simple really, the laws allow for teams to appeal a number of aspects of a game and in order to do this there is a time limit on when it can be done. Umpires and/or Controlling Bodies are not always aware of exactly when every game being played on a green finishes, which can make the determining the validity of appeals difficult. Challenges to bowls must be made within 10 minutes of a game finishing. Appeals for Deliberate non-sporting action must be made within 24 hours of the end of a game. So the recording of finish time is actually quite an important task and should be done with due care and attention.

Following Your Bowls Up the Green

It has been observed at all levels of the game that players are becoming very relaxed about adhering to the requirements of the Laws when following bowls up the green. Simply, if you follow your bowl, you must be either at the head, or you must be behind the mat line when your bowl comes to rest. If you are in any other position on the rink then there is a risk that your opponent could appeal to the umpire for deliberate interference, annoyance or distraction which could result in you losing your bowls if there are any subsequent infringements. Its safer just to make sure you follow these simple requirements when following your bowls up the green.

When is a leaning bowl that falls and touches the jack NOT a toucher?

Simply, a bowl is a toucher if it falls and touches the jack BEFORE the next bowl is DELIVERED. If a bowl that is leaning falls and touches the jack anytime AFTER the next bowl has been delivered – it is NOT a toucher. If the leaning bowl is the last bowl of an end it must fall within the 30 seconds that is provided for in the Laws for deciding the shots scored in an end.

There are also provisions around bowls that fall during the process of deciding the number of shots scored. Simply if the process has started and a shot or shots have already been agreed before a bowl falls of its own accord, the shots already agreed remain and the process of deciding shots continues with the fallen bowl left in its new position.