



Lawn Bowling

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About the Tutorial

Lawn Bowling is a game of speed and tactics. This game is played on both open and closed fields. The main objective of this game is to place the ball as close as possible to the target which is like a billiard ball whose colour is white. That target is called as jack. Though the “how to play” section is not very detailed, yet is sufficient enough to supplement the necessary protocols of this game.

Audience

This tutorial is aimed at giving an overall knowledge to a person on how to play Lawn Bowling successfully. There is step by step illustration as well as other guidance that will help the beginners build their basics about this game successfully.

Prerequisites

If you have the eagerness as well as the zeal to learn this game, this tutorial will serve as a good reference material to start with.

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1. Lawn Bowling – Overview

Lawn Bowling is a game that demands both your presence of mind and heavy concentration to win a match. Though, from outside, the game seems easy, but it takes several years of practice for the players to become champions.

The balls used in Lawn Bowling are biased which means they are unsymmetrical in nature. It is a very challenging game as one side of the ball is not proportioned and the ball travels in a curved path. The main objective of the game is to place the ball as close as possible to the target which is called as jack.

History of Lawn Bowling

The history of Lawn Bowling is very old. It is believed that this game was played in Europe during the 12th century. It became very famous in England because in lawn bowling, physical stress is minimum. Since in those days there was always a war with the neighbouring countries, the same proved to be a stress reliever.

As there are different types of lawn bowling, the short mat bowling made lawn bowling very famous. Short mat bowls can be played in hotels, schools and colleges, social clubs and even in village hills because of its versatility. Short mat bowls is famous in such areas because there is a space restriction and this sport is perfect for such a situation. It is also seen that this sport is played at the North Sea oil rigs where the space is very less.

As the game of Lawn Bowling became famous, it eventually came under a ban by the order of King and the Parliament because they feared that the game of bowling may jeopardise the practice of archery and other war-related sports.

At that time, England was always in battle with the other countries so archery was considered as a major sport in that era. But eventually the ban was lifted from this sport and it was played by every part of the society.

The first association of lawn bowling was the National Bowling Association, which was established in the late 1800s. In Australia, Victorian Bowling Association was the first association which was formed in 1880. Today, there are more than 50 countries who are participating in Lawn Bowling matches.

Participating Countries

We have already mentioned that lawn bowling has stood with time. After its invention, it became so popular in England that the king and the parliament passed a law to ban the game because archery was considered as a prime sport during that era. But currently it is very famous and is being played in more than 40 countries.

Other countries like USA, UK, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Belgium, Netherlands and Germany are at the top in this sport. As this game is a prime sport in the Commonwealth Games, maximum teams from the subcontinent also play lawn bowling which includes India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka.

2. Lawn Bowling – Equipment

The equipment needed in this game are listed as follows along with a brief description for each one of them for better understanding of its usage.

The Bowls or Balls

Lawn Bowling is played in sets and there are four balls in each set. Each set is not only unique but also has its own special symbol which is etched in the center circle on both sides. In lawn bowling, the game is played with four balls. We can either call it as balls or bowls.

In Lawn Bowling, the bowls are biased and these are not perfectly round bowls. So, when a player rolls the bowl, it moves in a path which is curved in nature. It means it curves when we roll the ball. So this forces the player to roll his bowl in an outward direction with an angle to reach the target.

Lawn Bowling is much like alley bowling where the players or the bowlers roll the ball towards a target or a goal. In lawn bowling, the target is a small white ball, whose size is like a billiard ball and is known as 'jack'. The points are awarded to the player who can locate his ball as near as the jack. This is the main aim of the game as to roll the bowl and get as close to the jack as possible.

The Jack

As we have mentioned above, the target is a small white ball which is as big as a billiard ball. This ball is known as the jack. Before the match starts, the jack is rolled out on the field where the match will be played and it becomes target for the game.

Then each player will roll the ball on the field and will try to place the ball as close to the jack as possible. The lawn bowls are biased but the jack is unbiased. The person who begins the game will roll the jack on the field in a straight line, unlike the bowling balls the jack's movement path is straight line as it is unbiased.

When the jack stops, it becomes a target for the players. The players while rolling the ball are allowed to hit the jack with their own bowl and can also move the jack. So this little white ball is the center of the play.

Measuring Tape

As many players will roll the ball in the competition and they all have a competitive approach, so there might be instances where more than one ball will be placed near the jack.

At such times, it will be impossible to tell which is the closest with a naked eye. At this moment, this equipment the measuring tape plays a big role in finding who the winner is.

The Score Cards

As this is a very famous club game in North America and Europe, each club has its own method for displaying the score cards.

Normally, on pre-printed cards the score of games is kept. Many clubs have stands with clips, which hold the score cards in place. A red can is used to collect chips and these chips are used to determine where and with whom a player will play.

3. Lawn Bowling – Basics

The main objective in lawn bowling is to roll a biased ball and try to put the ball or place the ball as near the target as possible. Here the target is a small white ball whose shape is like a billiard ball. This ball is known as the jack or kitty. Before the match starts, the jack is rolled out on the field where the match will be played and it becomes a target for the game. Each player will roll the ball on the field and will try to place the ball as close to the jack as possible.

Lawn Bowling is basically an outdoor sport. At some places it is played in indoor venues but it is basically an outdoor sport. The outdoor surface on which the ball will be rolled is either natural grass or artificial turf. In lawn bowling, the bowls are biased and these are not round bowls as used in other sports.

So when a player rolls the bowl, it moves in a curved path. This forces the player to roll his bowl in an outward direction with an angle to reach the target which makes the game very critical because the scoring will depend on the player's assumption and practice of rolling the ball.



The person who begins the game will roll the jack on the field in a straight line. Unlike the bowling ball, the jack's movement path is straight line as it is unbiased. When the jack stops it becomes a target for the players. And the players while rolling the ball are allowed to hit the jack with their own bowl and can also move the jack.

So this little white ball is the center of the play. The players try to roll their bowl and place it near the target. And according to the placing the players are awarded points. A measuring tape is used to measure the distance between the ball and the jack. Sometimes the ball touches the jack and removes it from its original position.

Biasing of the Bowls

It is earlier mentioned that the balls used in Lawn Bowling are biased in nature. So, while travelling it follows a curved path. Initially to bias the rolling balls, the manufacturers used to insert weights in one side of the ball. But with the passage of time this rule has been changed and instead of putting weight in one side the biasing of the bowl is now produced entirely by the shape of the ball.



Initially, by seeing the ball, one could understand which side the biasing is done but now players either have to dimple it in their hand or can observe the symbol on one side in order to determine the bias direction of the bowl. Earlier, the lawn bowls were made up of lignum vitae but it was costly. So now all these balls are made up of hard plastic composite material, which makes it cheap and highly durable. These balls were available in black or brown but now in the market these are available in various colors.

The number of teams can be three to four or more, so to differentiate between the balls, stickers are used by the teams. To indicate the biasing of the bowl, there is a circle mark on the ball and the side of the ball with a larger symbol within the circle suggests that the side is unbiased.

Types of Delivery

- **Draw** – In this type of delivery, the ball is rolled to a specific location or position by trying to avoid any disturbance to the balls already in the head.
- **Forehand Draw** – This is normally executed by the right-handed bowler. This delivery is called as **finger peg delivery** which is initially aimed to the right of the jack and when it rolls it curves towards its left. This shot is very tricky and widely used in the game.

- **Backhand Draw** – This type of delivery is simply the opposite of forehand delivery. It is widely executed by the left handers. Its other name is **thumb peg delivery**. The same bowler can also bowl it from their right hand. Here the ball, after being rolled is curved towards the right direction, while aiming towards the left of the jack.



Whether it is a forehand or a backhand draw, the main aim behind the rolling of this ball is to get as close to the jack as possible. Lawn Bowls are also played by blind and physically handicapped people. Though they are blind or physically challenged but it has been proved by them that they are more skilful players than the normal ones.

4. Lawn Bowling – Variants

In this chapter, we will discuss the various types of Lawn Bowling played across the world and their format.

Short Mat Bowling

Short mat bowling is a part of lawn bowling, which is played all the time during a year. This game is not affected by any weather conditions and short mat bowls also do not require permanent location because the mats can be rolled up and can be transferred to any other venue. So small communities show interest in this type of a format.

These short mat bowls because of its versatility can be played in hotels, schools, colleges, social clubs, and even in village hills. Short mat bowls is famous in such areas because there is space restriction and this sport is perfect for such locations.

Tra Bowls

Tra means 'hollow road'. Tra bowling is a game where the rolling path is curved. This game is very famous in Belgium and Netherlands and is also one of the most popular lawn bowling games in all the Scandinavian countries. Other lawn bowling normally has flat or smooth terrain but Tra bowl's track is completely different which allows the ball to curve in its path greatly. The bowls used in Tra bowling are bigger than the normal bowls. The length, thickness, and the weight of the ball is different from the normal bowling ball as well.

The scoring of Tra Bowling is slightly different from the normal lawn bowling. Here, the points are awarded for every shot which brings the ball closer to the target than any other player's ball, so pure blocking strategies are less effective.

5. Lawn Bowling – How to Play?

The balls are unsymmetrical in nature and travels in a curved path. The main objective of the game is to place the ball as close as possible to the jack. There are different techniques used by the players while rolling the ball on the ground. Before throwing the ball, the player has to hold the ball strongly in his hand. He must feel the bowl and understand which side of the bowl is biased. The player must position his middle finger along the edge of the ball so that he can get the grip.



The edge or the running edge is the line that directly runs between the shaved sides and the face of the bias. If a player grips the bowl perfectly then he can throw it in a perfect direction. While getting into the position to roll the bowl, the player must stand in a perfect position. The player must keep his shoulders square and aim to the line on which he is going to roll the bowl.

Rolling the Ball

Before rolling the bowl, the player should step forward a little towards the throw line. He must bend his legs and roll the ball smoothly on the grass. For stability, he can lean his free arm against the leg. This Lawn Bowling might look like a simple game but it requires every part of your body to get involved in the work. By following the steps, the player can reach to his maximum and with utmost stability, he can score with ease. But this is not the end. The player must use his index finger and thumb to keep the bowl stable on each side.

Before the match, the players used to practice a lot on the playing ground. This is a very useful technique as by practicing on the same ground a player can understand the field a lot. If the grass on the ground is short, the bowling ball will move very fast and also if the ground is wet the ball will move fast. The player should first judge the distance of the target or the jack from his position and try to bowl the ball accordingly. There are two types of throwing the ball, one is forehand bowl and other is backhand bowl.

Forehand Delivery

A forehand draw is normally executed by the right-handed bowler. This delivery is called as finger peg delivery, which is initially aimed to the right of the jack and when it rolls, it curves towards its left. This shot is very tricky and widely used in the game.

Backhand Delivery

This type of delivery is simply the opposite of the forehand delivery. It is used by the left handers. It's the other name of thumb peg delivery. The same bowler can also bowl it from their right hand. Here the ball after being rolled is curved towards the right direction aiming to the left of the jack.

Scoring System

The scoring system in this Lawn Bowling varies from tournament to tournament. If it is a singles game, a target number of shots are there for the players and that target is normally 21 or 25. For a team, there is a higher score after a specified number of ends.

If a draw has occurred, then the opponents may be required to play an extra shot to decide the winner because in the lawn bowl games, the games may be drawn to a specified number of ends. In lawn bowling singles game, the first player to score 21 shots is the winner.

In pairs, doubles or triples the team is declared a winner who after 21/25 ends of play has scored the most shots. A set scoring system is often used in some competitions where the first to seven points are awarded in a best-of-five or in a best-of-three set match.

In the singles competition, a team may consist of two or three or four players. In this situation, teams bowl alternately. If there are four players in a team, then each player within a team will bowl all their bowls then hand it over to the next player. The captain of the team is called the **skip**. The captain always plays last.

The current method of scoring in a professional tourney is sets. Each set is of nine ends and the competitor or the bowler with the most shots wins the set.

6. Lawn Bowling – Rules

Every country has its governing body to make and update the rules of lawn bowling. Some of the important rules that one should know before playing the game are as follows.

- Lawn bowling is played either on natural grass or on an artificial turf. But it is normally played on a large, precisely levelled, manicured and rectangular field which is also known as **bowling green**.
- This rectangular field is also divided into rinks (also known as parallel playing strips). In a normal competition, one of the two opponents will flip the coin to decide the winner of the mat.
- The one who wins the toss wins the mat and he rolls the jack to the other end of the mat to set it as a target. After sometime, the jack will come to rest due to the friction and it will be aligned to the center of the rink. After everything is set, the players take their ball and roll it according to their turns.
- The players roll the ball towards the jack to build up the **head**.
- A ball normally curves in its path outside the rink but it has to come to rest within the rink boundary so that it will remain in play.
- A ball which falls into a ditch is treated as a dead ball and is removed from the game. But if the ball touches the jack and after touching it falls into a ditch then it will not be treated as a dead ball.
- The balls which touches the jack are called **touchers** and they are marked with a white chalk. This ball remains alive in the play even if it falls into a ditch.
- Similarly, if the jack or the kitty is knocked by a player into the ditch it is still treated as alive. According to the international standards, the jack will be again placed at the center of the rink.
- After each player has rolled down all of their balls, the distance between the jack and the balls are measured. In this process, the minimum distance between the ball and jack awards a point to the bowler.
- Each bowler has to roll four balls if it is a singles or doubles match. Each player will roll three balls in a triples match and two balls in fours.
- After the game, the distance between the balls and the jack is measured and the player whose ball is at a minimum distance from the jack is awarded with points or in lawn bowling it is called **shots**.

7. Lawn Bowling – Champions

Lawn bowling is organized every year in different parts of the world through many championships and tournaments. The list of some of the most prominent championships is as follows.

- World Indoor Bowl Championships
- Commonwealth Games
- World Outdoor Bowl Championships
- USA Lawn Bowling Championships
- European Lawn Bowl Championships

Let us now have a look at some of the champions of Lawn Bowling and their careers.

Steve Glasson

Steve Glasson is a lawn bowler from Australia who was ranked first from 1997 to 2005. In his full career, Glasson participated in the Australian Championships and won it 19 times. These wins also include nine National Indoor Championships.

He won a gold medal in the World Bowls Championship and became the World Singles Champion. He is the first Australian to become number one. Now he works as a coach for the Australian lawn ball team.

Robert Weale

Robert Weale is a lawn bowler from Wales. Robert made his debut in 1982 and became the youngest bowler in 1984 in the outdoor championships. In the year 2000, he won the Welsh Outdoor Singles title. In 2005 and 2012, also he won the same title. He also won Welsh Indoor Singles three times.

In 2005, he won the outdoor as well as the indoor titles thus becoming the only player to win both the titles. As far as the world titles are concerned, Robert won the World Indoor Bowls Championship in 2000.

He has also taken part in the Commonwealth games and has won silvers and golds. In 1986 and 2010 Commonwealth Games, he won the gold medal. In 1994, 1998, and 2006, Commonwealth games, he won the silver and a bronze medal in the 2002 Commonwealth games.

Willie Wood

Willie Wood is a Lawn Bowl player from Scotland who has won two gold medals in the Commonwealth Games and two runner-up medals in the World Bowl Championships. In 2007, his name was included in Scottish Sports Hall of Fame. In 1966, Wood represented his country for the first time in an international competition.

In the 1974 Commonwealth Games, he won a bronze medal. In the 1978 Commonwealth games, he won a silver medal, while in 1982, he won a gold. He has also participated in the World Championships and has won 15 medals.

David Gourlay

David Gourlay is a lawn bowler who represented Scotland and Australia in the international indoor and outdoor championships. In his full career, he has won eleven World Bowls Tour Titles. From 2005 to 2009, he played for Australia and also coached the Australian team.

He also coached the Scotland team for the 2014 Commonwealth Games and the team won four medals. He won the singles title in 1997. He also won the World Indoor Men's Singles title in 1996 and the pairs titles in 2000, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, and 2012.

Paul Foster

Paul Foster is a lawn bowler from Scotland who is currently a taxi proprietor. In his bowling career, he has won the World Indoor Championships in the years 1998, 2001, 2005, and 2011. Another achievement includes winning 9 major WBT titles.

As far as the Commonwealth Games are concerned, he won three gold medals out of which two were in pair with Alex Marshall in 2006 and 2014 and another in 2014 in fours event. The pair of Paul Foster and Alex Marshall also won World Indoor Pairs title in 2011, 2012, and 2013.

Rebecca Field

Rebecca Field is a lawn bowl player from England who had started bowling at the age of eight. She is the member of the Norfolk Bowling Club and competed in junior international championships and won many titles.

As an international senior player, she represented England first time in 2011. In 2012, she participated in the World Indoor Bowls Singles Championships. In 2013, she defeated Alison Merrien and won the World Indoor Bowls singles title. She won her first outdoor title in 2014.