



Parkinson's NSW

# “Yes you can” Play Lawn Bowls

Produced from experience playing bowls for over forty years;  
hoping it will enhance your enjoyment of lawn bowls *LES NORRIS*



## INTRODUCTION



*As a person who started playing lawn bowls over forty years ago (1958), I have been treated for Parkinson's disease for almost eleven years now and I believe that most people with Parkinson's disease can play lawn bowls. I had stopped playing for several years because I was so uncomfortable, unbalanced and generally unwell, lack of volume in my speech and probably suffering from depression. But diagnosis and treatment improved my well being, and so did getting out playing a game of bowls and being able to share the company of bowlers on the green. Many bowling clubs have "mixed bowls" that carers and people with Parkinson's disease can participate.*

*In the several years I have been playing since being treated for Parkinson's, I have experienced physical problems with stiffness in the legs, hips and back. But because of aids such as bowls lifters, adapting an alternative stance and delivery, I found it fairly easy to keep up with the exercise. Another side of bowls is that if you are not feeling all that well, there is time to sit and rest. Not everyone is a great player and many just play for the game. Most bowls organisers will group players into teams that will accommodate their level of experience. Most Clubs will have a person with Parkinson's playing with them, or know someone who has the disease. Club coaches generally are familiar with people with disabilities and encourage them to play.*

*I recommend the game as a great outlet, and of course is another way of taking a positive approach to coping with our complaint.*

*This book has been produced from my experience playing bowls over many years and not from being qualified as an "approved coach of the game of bowls". I hope it has some value and enhances your enjoyment of the game.*

*Les Norris*

*Member of the Central Coast Parkinson's Support Group*

## **THE FUNDAMENTALS OF BOWLS**

Bowls can be played as a team sport, four, three, two a side or singles on a specially prepared lawn called a “green”. Each game is on a marked out area called a “rink” played by both males and females. The bowls are various sizes and can be chosen to suit the size of each person’s hand. Sizes 3 and 4 mostly suit women and 4 and 5 for men, however there are larger sizes if required. Each bowl has a “bias”, that causes it to travel in a curved line from a mat on the green to a white ball called the “Kitty or Jack”. This is the skill of judgment, weight of delivery and line towards the Kitty. People who have played tennis, cricket, golf or any sport where such judgments are necessary, usually pick up bowls. Indoor bowls is similar, however lawn bowls is played over a longer distance and with larger bowls.

## **BOWLING CLUBS**

Most bowling clubs have accredited coaches, and a spare set of bowls for teaching. You will need a pair of flat soled shoes so that the green (grass) is not dented or cut up with a shoe with a heel. Both mens and womens bowls clothing is regulation creams or whites that can be reasonably purchased through speciality shops. Regular dress is often used called “mufti” and creams on official days. Bowls can cost up to \$350.00 a set, but there are plenty of used bowls with a bag or carrying case for as low as \$50.00. Membership of bowling clubs has a basic cost that goes to the State Association of about \$40.00 and then the Club fees need to be paid.

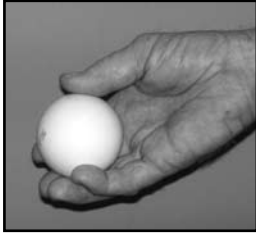
## **PARKINSON’S AND LAWN BOWLS**

So you have Parkinson’s disease, your hand may shake or you are a bit wobbly on the legs. But when you grip the bowl it is no different to shaking a hand or holding another object in your hand. The delivery can be modified by a fixed stance or using an approved apparatus available today. Bowls is played by the blind, from wheel chairs and some players with walking sticks with a specially fitted pad on the end.

Many new bowlers without disabilities need a few games or “roll-ups” and instruction from the Club coaches to get the feel of the game, so you will need to be patient and concentrate on the basic fundamentals of the game. It will not take long, and you will be enjoying the outdoors and the fellowship of bowlers who mostly help new players with the rules and etiquette of the game.

There are plenty of books on the game of bowls, some with many different views on playing the game. No matter what, the aim is still trying to get your bowls closest to the little white ball at the other end of the green. It is worth reading books or watching the game on television.

## PLAYING LAWN BOWLS



### THE “JACK”

Delivery of the “Jack” or “Kitty” determines the length of the “Head” (distance from mat to where the Jack lies). This is at least 20 metres.

*Left: The correct way to grip the Jack. Do not palm it, as accuracy will be lost*



(a)

### CORRECT STANCE

The bowl should fit comfortably in the hand, so that if you hang your hand down to your side it will not fall out. When delivered it should not be dropped on the green, causing dents or damage. The ball should run off the fingers reasonably close to the surface of the green. This means the body is stooped and legs bent. Of course, this may be a problem for one with a problem with balance, but the hand on the knee, (left knee if right handed or right knee if left handed), spreading the legs and feet creating a “fixed style of stance” can overcome this.



(b)

The feet should be facing the direction intended for the bowl to travel either to the ‘forehand or back hand’.



(c)

*Left: (a) A view holding the bowl, noting the thumb not on top of the bowl, and the little finger almost opposite underneath. This will help prevent the bowl wobble out of the hand. (b) Forehand delivery (c) Backhand delivery.*



## DELIVERY OF THE BOWL

The delivery of the bowl and weight (speed of the bowl) is influenced by the length of step and backswing. The arm swings in line with the eyes so that the hand and bowl is delivered in line with the eyes picking the line.

Your head should remain in the fixed line until the bowl is well clear otherwise a tendency to bowl short of the Kitty often happens. A bit like golf if you lift your head too quickly, you miss the ball or hit it short.

*Left: A view of the walking stance delivery, noting the stooped or crouched position to get the bowl close to the surface on delivery.*

## THE LINE OF BOWL

Picking the line of bowl to the Jack is often determined by the green playing narrow, normal or wide due to the speed, wind conditions and length of the Head.

Some players use methods of getting the "line of green" such as picking a point on the ditch bank, others a point about three parts of the way to the Jack, or where the bowl might start to bend towards the Head.

Using the ditch point, is often changed by the length of the Head, whereas the perceived line of the bowl or point of turn will be about the same on almost any distance.

## DIAGRAM DEMONSTRATING SELECTING THE LINE OF BOWL

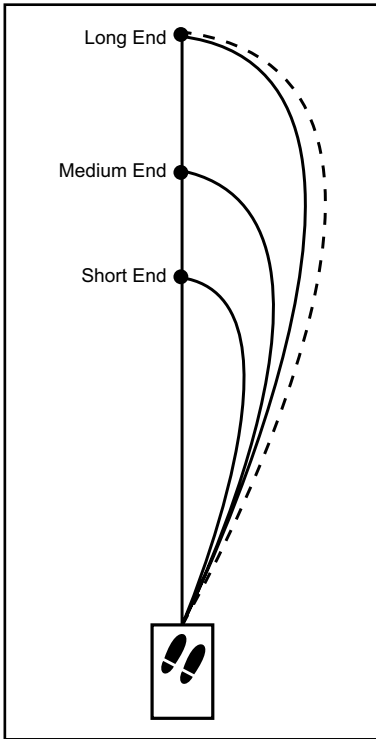


DIAGRAM 1: *A consistent angle from the mat showing the line on different lengths. Note: taking more grass on the longer end.*

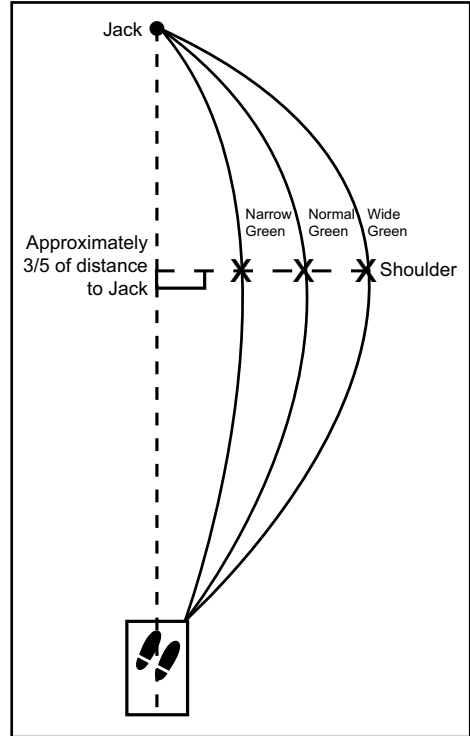


DIAGRAM 2: *The shoulder on a true surface should be on the same line on all widths of travel by the bowl to the Head.*

### THE BIAS

Putting bowls down on the “wrong bias”, that is the small ring on the inside of the bowl to create the curve to the “Kitty or Jack”, often causes a small penalty 20c to 50c just to acknowledge this important basic fundamental and not interfere with the rink next door. The small ring side of bowl or the large ring can have a more painted ring or rings to make it more obvious.

Even the most experienced of bowlers can play a “wrong bias” usually caused by concentrating on their shot or what they are planning to do to the bowls grouped around the “Kitty or Jack”.

## STYLE BREAKDOWN CHART

FAULT	LIKELY CAUSE	REMEDY
Dropping the bowl in delivery	Not getting down low enough	Try crouching a little. Bend your knees and take your weight on the balls of your feet.
Wobbled bowl	Little finger up the side of the bowl	Make sure all four fingers are between the big rings.
Consistently playing narrow or wide	Feet in wrong position	Point your feet directly at the shoulder of the line of bowl.
Playing wide on the backhand and narrow on the forehand	Arm is sweeping across the body	Make sure you hold the bowl to the side so you can swing it back straight – hence lessening the chances of a hooked delivery.
Repeatedly falling short with your first bowl	Trying too hard to dead draw	Aim at a point just behind the jack and be prepared to correct with your second bowl.
Repeatedly falling short on other deliveries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Getting up too quickly</li> <li>(2) Lacking confidence in the shot called for</li> <li>(3) Failing to make a proper back-swing</li> <li>(4) The pace of the green has changed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Stay down until the bowl reaches the shoulder</li> <li>(2) More practice with your coach</li> <li>(3) Make a larger swing</li> <li>(4) Always remember to make a fresh 'reading' of conditions at least twice in each match.</li> </ul>
Repeatedly playing too long	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Too large a backswing</li> <li>(2) The green has become faster</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Restrict the swing</li> <li>(2) Restrict the swing</li> </ul>
Inconsistent results with bowls played over same shoulder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Feet in different positions</li> <li>(2) Thumb in different positions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Correct your stance</li> <li>(2) Correct your grip</li> </ul>

## BASIC POINTS

1. Step on the mat without taking a grip on the bowl
2. When the Skipper calls the hand, or shot, then place the bowl in the hand making sure that the bias is correct, the small ring to the inside of the bowl to get the turn towards the Kitty. The grip and fingers are placed on the bowl.
3. Look directly at the finishing point and try to visualise about two thirds a spot in the distance to the bowl will begin to turn towards the Kitty.
4. Now note the wind and conditions of the green; slow, damp or fast.
5. Placing your feet in the direction that you want to take, either backhand or forehand, so they are facing towards this shoulder of the line of bowl, about two thirds up the distance to the Kitty or Jack.
6. Keep your knees together and bend them slightly so that you can actually “feel” a balance on your legs and feet
7. If you are right handed, drop your wrist, holding the bowl comfortably, the same with being left handed. This tends to relax the arm on the back swing and should prevent “flicking” the bowl and it should be running off the fingers cleanly.
8. Stay poised for a moment to consider how much pace, or weight you will need. Also if there has been any distraction, from the Skipper or any other type that may have affected your concentration.



*Incorrect stance*



*Correct stance*

9. You are ready to deliver your bowl; taking a step towards the line your bowl will follow, making sure your front foot is pointing in that direction. If the foot is “turned in” this will tend to cause your body to sway to the right if right handed and left if left handed. The result will be a narrow bowl. The bowl finishing across the Head or well to the back of the Kitty, but not on the Kitty. A turned foot causes the knee to move inward, but a straight foot in line with the direction needed, propels the whole body and shoulders squared towards the line of direction.



10. The body movement and arm delivering of the bowl will flow through so that the hand should be in line with the centre of your eyes that is taking the line at the point of delivery.
11. Stay down on the mat, head low, eyes set on the line with the hand pointing towards the line and shoulder of the line of bowl, perhaps until it reaches the turning point. This will often overcome a bowl being played short of the Head, because the delivery gets the full impact of your body, back swing and balance.
12. Make a mental note of the line and path of the bowl's delivery because if it needs any correction, you have noticed it. Now it is time to take a look at the "target" the "Kitty or Jack".

## **COMPETITION BOWLS**

Bowling clubs have many kinds of competitions including Club Championships in Singles, Pairs, Triples and Fours.

Singles have a Minor Singles Championship and a Major Singles Championship. A bowler winning a Minor Singles cannot compete in the event if they have won a Championship, but nominate in the Majors. In Singles, a marker is required to attend and conduct the game. The result is the first to 31.

Pairs use 4 bowls each and the Lead and Skipper play two bowls each from the mat over 25 ends.

In Triples each player has 3 bowls each over 21 ends.

In Fours each player has 2 bowls each off the mat over 25 ends.

Most clubs have social bowls, visiting clubs and Pennant Bowls, which are conducted in districts all over the state.

Visiting other clubs and socialising is to many the best part of bowls and the fellowship it creates.

**For further information on lawn bowls contact  
The Royal NSW Bowling Association Inc. on 9283 4555.**

**For further information on Parkinson's disease contact  
Parkinson's NSW Freecall 1800 644 189.**