

National Umpire in Chief

For USLBA's Annual Meeting, September 5-7, 2012

Continuing attrition, a new grading process,
and NUIC resignation top the news for 2011-12

Inasmuch as I was originally appointed in 2007, I am now completing five-years of service as National Umpire in Chief. It has been a unique experience and with rare exceptions, I have enjoyed it thoroughly. But I have accomplished most of my goals and am ready, as the saying goes, to pass the baton. I will serve through the U.S. Open and be available to assist during the National Championships.

Recertifications: The problematical process of recertifications dragged on for months, as usual, and ended shockingly with an Assistant Head Division Umpire being decertified. This action was compelled for a number of reasons, the most important of which was to prevent charges of *favoritism and special privilege* that could have been the result, had I extended the time limit for completion of the exam any more than it already had been. Bottom line: we avoided a scandal, but the price — in losing an outstanding umpire and AHDU — was exceptionally steep.

In all, 21 people were up for recertification at the close of 2011, but only five actually recertified. Two were unable to pass the test; five were polite enough to respond to my communications and tell me that they were busy with other things in their lives, no longer interested in bowls, or too infirm to continue. Notably, nine of them were totally non-responsive to my communications, and five nationally known and respected umpires “resigned” at the end of 2011.

One of them was the Central's Head Division Ump, Joe Zinna. His departure left an unfilled hole in the organization. With only two other Umps in the Central Division, and both of them on record as not interested, I knew chances were slim, but I again asked them both to accept the responsibility. Unfortunately, neither responded.

Total Numbers: So our total number of umps (at press time, July first,) has dropped noticeably below our long time “normal” of about a hundred, to 87, with two people who have begun but not completed the testing process. An accounting, by Division, follows:

Central Division:	3	Head Division Umpire:	No one.		
Northeast:	8	HDU:	Colin Smith		
Northwest:	7	HDU:	Richard Broad		
Pacific Intermountain:	14	HDU:	E.B. Parkell;	AHDU:	Peter Knopf
South Central:	6	HDU:	Tom Benstead		
Southeast:	27	HDU:	Bud Ricucci		
Southwest Women:	9	HDU:	Kottia Spangler		
Southwest Men:	<u>14</u>	HDU:	Conrad Melton;	AHDU:	Vern Edwards
	87				

New Testing Procedure: The language and outline structure of the 2011 Laws was horribly confusing to bowlers, existing ump, and prospective ump. I received five consecutive written test failures from highly recommended applicants. It was clear that a new method for either testing or grading had to be devised. It was clear that the problem was the format of the new Laws. After a lot of deliberation, I settled on a system where I simply identified the questions that the test takers had missed and told them they had “a second chance” to find the correct answers and bring their score up to passing. Not everyone needed a second chance, and not everyone was successful for having been given the opportunity. But this system was extraordinarily successful in taking advantage of their desire to become an ump and usually resulted in their successful appointment.

After a few months of success, I contacted two outstanding tournament bowlers who had failed the written in previous months and who I personally knew would make excellent umpires. I emphasized to them that the testing process had been changed and I felt certain that they could be successful if they gave it another try; but neither of them were willing to retake the test.

Bottom line: I am well satisfied that the umpires who were given a second chance and passed are as qualified and capable as those who were certified without needing a second chance. I have incorporated this system into the Policy and Procedures manual.

The P & Ps: In fact, I made a total of nineteen small changes to the P&Ps, almost all of which are self-explanatory. However, one needs some information and discussion. The USLBA has only had one experience replacing its Chief Umpire. In 2007, several candidate-less weeks went by before I decided to seek the job. Given that little has changed that would make the job any more attractive, it may be difficult to find someone willing to step up.

To help alleviate that problem, I added a new contingency to the selection process. It will come into play if a NUIC does not want to commit for another five full years but is willing to make a commitment for a shorter period of time. Essentially, it provides an option for the outgoing NUIC who has completed his five-year first term, to *accept reappointment on a year-to-year basis*. (See Article II, A.2.) At one time, I considered this to be option for myself, but now I am looking forward to the conclusion of my service.

A final word: In closing, I would like to acknowledge and thank the men and women Umpires of America who have been gracious, supportive, and professional during my tenure. It is my feeling that Umpires are indeed the pillars of the sport, but since there is no easy way to thank them for the services they provide, it often appears as though they are taken for granted. I hope that my replacement will have some ideas how to fix that problem in the future. And who knows? Perhaps a meaningful demonstration of the organization’s respect and gratitude would have a spin-off affect on recruitment and recertifications.

Conrad Melton

National Umpire in Chief
July 1, 2012

United States Lawn Bowls Association

Standing Committee Report of the

National Umpire in Chief

For the USLBA's Annual Meeting, September 15, 2011

Transition from the 2007 Laws to those of 2011 was a bumpy road. But of the problems that occurred aren't particularly blatant and American lawn bowlers are so pleased that the "hammer rule" was rescinded that comments about the few glitches have been almost nonexistent. Rules Committee Chair Richard Broad has agreed to warehouse the copies which were not initially distributed, and his excellent stewardship causes most folks to think being Book Czar must be an easy job, which is not always true. Thank you, Richard.

The always problematical process of recertifications dragged on for months this year. Nineteen Umps were involved, twelve recertified without problem, and five decided to conclude their years of service. This year, at the end of December, twenty-two will become due for recertification. As in years past, our total number stays steady at about a hundred. An accounting, by Division, follows:

Central Division:	4	Head Division Umpire:	Joe Zinna
Northeast:	6	HDU:	Colin Smith
Northwest:	8	HDU:	Richard Broad
Pacific Intermountain:	19	HDU:	E.B. Parkell; AHDU: Peter Knopf
South Central:	11	HDU:	Ernie Adolphi; AHDU: Tom Benstead
Southeast:	28	HDU:	Bud Ricucci; AHDU: Linda MacDougall
Southwest Women:	11	HDU:	Kottia Spangler; AHDU: Patricia Cronshaw
Southwest Men:	15	HDU:	Conrad Melton; AHDU: Vern Edwards

With mixed feelings, we humbly accepted the resignation of George West, who has been a pillar of the National Umpires Club, serving for 22 years as Head Division Ump in both the South Central and Northwest Divisions. Thank you George, for your leadership, your expertise, your peacemaking, and your 73,468 measures.

George's departure led to a complete turnover in the South Central Division with Ernie Adolphi and Tom Benstead agreeing to share administrative duties. Welcome and thanks to these fine gentlemen.

The UmpStumper's Newsletter continues to be produced and circulated with its rule reviews, difficult calls and various newsy tidbits. The comments, discussions and dialogues it generates provides some evidence of its positive value.

In closing, I am proud to once again enter it on the record that our Umpires deserve more recognition, respect, and appreciation than it is possible to bestow. Even a customized certificate of appreciation for past years of service, sent with the letter asking them to recertify and serve for another five years, would require approximately a hundred dollars a year. But when our financial picture improves, I hope that the Council will endorse such an expenditure.

Respectfully submitted,

Conrad Melton

National Umpire in Chief
July 1, 2011

Standing Committee Report of the National Umpire in Chief For the USLBA's Annual Meeting, 2010

In my estimation, the Head Division Umpires and Assistant HDUs have done an excellent job in discharging their duties during the past year. I am very proud of their attitudes and their skills. I am particularly pleased to report that overall, the National Umpires Club (NUC) has not only maintained, but, I believe, enhanced, its stability and good reputation over the past twelve months. New umpires have exceeded attrition and (at press time) we have exactly 100 umpires, nine more than reported last year, which is a ten percent increase. They, and all Umpires, deserve more recognition, respect, and appreciation than they receive. An accounting, by Division, follows:

Central Division:	5	Head Division Umpire:	Joe Zinna;
Northeast:	4	HDU:	Colin Smith;
Northwest:	8	HDU:	Richard Broad;
Pacific Intermountain:	20	HDU:	E.B. Parkell; AHDU: Peter Knopf ;
South Central:	11	HDU:	George West; AHDU: Marty Schans;
Southeast:	27	HDU:	Bud Ricucci; AHDU Linda MacDougall;
Southwest Women:	12	HDU:	Kottia Spangler; AHDU Patricia Cronshaw;
Southwest Men:	13	HDU:	Conrad Melton; AHDU: Vern Edwards;

At the end of December, eighteen umpires will become due for recertification. In the past three years, recertifications have been numerically less than hoped for, but we shall see.

The Umpstumper's Newsletter continues to be produced and circulated with its *rule reviews*, *difficult calls* and various other matters of interest. Often it generates comments from umps around the country which I take as evidence of its positive value, because of the research, discussions, and eventual understanding that such participation produces.

In my opinion, the USLBA needs to immediately begin demonstrating our sport's sincere gratitude for the indispensable Umpire services we continually expect from our small pool of volunteer umps. I have never received a request from an umpire to be compensated. But every year it seems that there are noticeably fewer "yeses" when I send out requests for umps to donate (another) ten-to-twelve hour day plus pay for their travel and meal expenses to serve at major events. They are worth much more, but I am asking, through the Treasurer, for a budget that will allow us to compensate umps at \$35 per day when they serve at the U.S. Open, National Championships, or the MAP International Challenge. I thank the Council in advance for its positive consideration of this important matter.

Instructions for Markers were distributed in a "standard format" last year. Since then, most of the Divisions indicated that they were pleased to have a clear and "official" set of guidelines. The Instructions were generally mandated by World Bowls' (in some cases, surprising) clarification of the marker's required duties.

In June (2010) we received the "final draft" of a 2011 issue of the Laws of the Sport of Bowls from World Bowl's Law Committee that will be (either modified slightly or) adopted in October, 2010. The changes (from the 2007 LOTSOBs) are minimal in number and an analysis is ready for distribution, waiting only for final approval by the Member National Authorities in October. I hope that the Council will do everything it can to expedite the adoption of those laws and the Domestic Regulations that will be included with them, so that a new book may be published, distributed and declared *in effect* as quickly as possible. Again I thank the Council in advance for its positive consideration of this important matter.

Respectfully submitted,

Conrad Melton

National Umpire in Chief
July 6, 2010

**Supplemental Addendum
to the Standing Committee Report
of the National Umpire in Chief
for the USLBA's 2010 Annual Meeting**

Cost Analysis Projection

**For Compensating One Umpire per venue
at the U.S. Open, the National Championships and
The Michael Ashton-Phillips International Challenge**

The 2010 U.S. Open provided 19 venue/days of bowling;
At \$35 per day.....(19 X \$35).....\$665.00

The National Championships would require five days;
At \$35 per day.....(5 X \$35).....\$175.00

The Michael Ashton-Phillips International Challenge would require six days;
At \$35 per day.....(6 X \$35).....\$210.00

Total: \$840.00

United States Lawn Bowls Association

Standing Committee Report of the National Umpire in Chief

For Calendar Year 2009

The last twelve months for the National Umpires Club (NUC) have been a bit calmer than the previous twelve months. The number of umpires has declined, and I believe that feelings of connectedness to other umpires and greater feelings of national unity have increased. This is a result, I believe, of the substantially increased communications through the NUC Newsletter, *Ump Stumpers*, which, by the time of your annual meeting, will have distributed its eleventh or twelfth issue, sharing news and concepts of interest, and challenging umpires on resolving difficult Laws of the Sport.

Perhaps the most impactful event this past year was the discovery of the relatively recent World Bowls' publication of *Umpire Development*, a sixty-five page handbook about umpire organization, training, and related subjects. Although it was initially distributed in January of 2008, news of its existence did not reach the NUIC until March, 2009.

All USLBA Umpires have since been notified of its existence and informed how to secure a copy, (<http://www.worldbowlsLtd.co.uk/main.html> then click on Umpire Development). They also know that it contains "how to..." instructions and a wealth of information that is immediately, and will continue to be, very helpful for Umpires and Markers.

Umpire Development is divided into seven sections: two pages describing a sample organizational structure for *Member National Authorities* (MNAs) to follow when establishing a national infrastructure for umpires; eighteen pages describing umpire equipment and how to use it; three pages of guidelines, i.e., tasks to attend to before, during and after a game; twelve pages telling how to be a first-rate marker (including directives that have not, in recent years, been normal duties for a marker in the United States. For example, markers have an active responsibility for assuring that the matches they mark for are being played *in line with the Laws of the Sport of Bowls* (LOTSOBs); that the jack is long enough; and that they are providing reasonably complete, rather than "one word" answers when players ask questions.

Additionally there are six pages on how to use *Shot Indicators*; ten pages providing guidance on how to successfully cope with the officiating environment in a positive manner, (provided by the Australian Sports Commission); and six pages on the accreditation of New Umpires and *International Technical Officials* (ITOs). Some of these concepts have already been incorporated into usage here in America, and over time, the majority of this information will be making its way into the normal practices of the NUC and USLBA Bowls.

World Bowls' primary concern is about identifying a collection of International Technical Officials, their highest and most distinguished level of Umpires, to serve at the Commonwealth Games and other top-tier World Bowls' events, e.g., World Bowls, World Champion of Champions, World Cup, and World Junior Cup. A reading of the qualifications required for such positions provides a clear picture that no American could qualify to take that test.

As regards *Umpire Development's* sample plan for MNAs to use as their infrastructure, WB is talking about "apples" and we are clearly "oranges." World Bowls expects its Umpires to be committed professionals, financially compensated, trained by (also) financially compensated professionals, and

supplied with tools and training materials that are (again) professional quality and paid for by the Member National Authorities. We Americans are going to continue to be *oranges* for a long time. So it is clear that the USLBA cannot be expected to provide the program structure offered in their document. Notwithstanding our exclusion from that particular component of their comprehensive document, we have already begun to use their excellent information and intend to incorporate even more of their individual training concepts and programs.

State of the State....

In the July *Ump Stumpers*, (which was distributed to all U.S. umpires,) I reported the number of Umpires we have in each Division as follows: Central, 5; North East 5; North West 7; PIMD 15; South Central 10; South East 27; and South West 22, for a total of 91. At the end of December fourteen (14) of them will become due for recertification. In the past two years, recertifications have been well below the numbers hoped for, but we shall see.

Policy and Procedures Manual....

The National Umpires Club Policy and Procedures manual has been submitted (along with this report) to Secretary Keys for distribution to the council in two formats. The first has underlining, showing where changes were made, and the second is a "photo ready" copy with a revision date of July 8, 2009. As you will see, extremely few, if any, significant changes were made from the 2008 version; it is merely a fine tuning of that document.

Head Division Umpires and Assistant Head Division Umpires....

Some changes have occurred among the HDUs and AHDUs during the past year. In the PIMD, John Freestone resigned and has been replaced by former AHDU, E.B. Parkell. E.B. has not yet (as of July, 2009,) chosen a new AHDU. In the Central Division, John Devine has "retired" and Joe Zinna agreed to step up from his former position as AHDU. Bud Ricucci took over for Jeanne McLaughlin when she retired at the end of 2008, and Linda McDougall accepted the SED's AHDU spot in March.

I am very pleased to report to the Council that not only the folks mentioned above, but the other leaders of our Divisions: Colin Smith in the NE, George West and Marty Schans in the SC, Kottia Spangler and Patricia Cronshaw in the SWWD and Richard Broad in the NW have all done excellent jobs in handling their duties during the past year. I am quite proud of the level of professionalism provided by our Nation's Head Division Umpires and Assistant Head Division Umpires. It is my great pleasure to commend each and every one of them for their outstanding service to bowls and the USLBA.

Respectfully submitted,

Conrad Melton

National Umpire in Chief
July 15, 2009

United States Lawn Bowls Association

Standing Committee Report

National Umpire in Chief

2008

At the USLBA Annual Council Meeting of 2007, the Council appointed Conrad Melton, a thirteen year bowler, eight year National Umpire, and three year Head Division Umpire from the Southwest Division, as the National Umpire in Chief, replacing the resigning John Stewart.

Predictably, the first year of operation was spent in reviewing and, where necessary, revising the organization's various documents, operations, structural guidelines, examinations, forms, and, most importantly, assuring the accuracy of its personnel records.

Replacement of Head Division Umpires for the Pacific Intermountain and the South Central Divisions were required early in the year. My appointments of John Freestone in PIM and George West in the South Central have shown to be outstanding choices.

Shortly thereafter, with my encouragement, Assistant Head Division Umpires were appointed in five Divisions: George West in South Central appointed Marty Schans in February, and Jeanne McLaughlin appointed Bud Ricucci as her Assistant the same month. Kottia Spangler of the SWWD tapped Patricia Cronshaw in April and John Freestone (PIM) called on E.B. Parkell to assist him starting in May. John Devine of the Central Division appointed Joe Zinna his AHDU also in May.

Later this year, after the bowling season of 2008 has drawn to a close, AHDU Zinna will move up to become HDU, replacing a retiring John Devine in the Central Division, and Bud Ricucci will concurrently move up to replace Southeast Umpiring Legend, Jeanne MacLaughlin.

At the end of 2007 there were considerable email discussions about some of the Laws of the Sport of Bowls (LOTSOBs). I took a strong vocal position early on that "the rules are the rules" regardless of their popularity. There continues to be some emotion, particularly in terms of "the hammer" rule (Law 18.4,) but I believe every umpire in American now understands that they are expected to honor and enforce the Laws that were adopted

by the Council. In my public writings, I began using the slogan “Honor the Laws of the Sport of Bowls: they make the game the same.” It explains my philosophy and, I believe, provides both stability and congruity to USLBA bowls.

In instances where only two games are scheduled during a day, such as at the U. S. Championships, I have encouraged the National and Divisional Tournament Directors to not use Appendix A.4 (which restricts the number of trips a player may make to the head). I have also urged HDUs to be transparent and predictable over time in all their law enforcement actions.

A standardized set of “Markers’ Instructions” was distributed to all HDUs during 2008, as was the revised National Umpire’s Club Policies and Procedures Manual. I feel strongly that the new P&Ps provide greatly increased clarity and breadth over those which were in force when I came on board.

In terms of personnel, it took almost six months to clarify how many umpires were active in each Division, who they were, and what their phone numbers and email addresses were. When the dust finally settled they numbered 108, ninety-six of whom have email.

In March, I began sending a newsletter that included some Umpire puzzles to all umps with email. They have become popular, but even more, they have become an outstanding medium for understanding complex laws and assuring that all the umps in the country are making the same calls when those laws are involved.

I do have one disappointment to report: the position of National Umpire in Chief as one of the four members of the Rules Committee (as announced at the Council Meeting of 2007,) was revisited and deleted in May. I hope that sometime in the future this position may be restored. I believe it is in the best interest of the USLBA to have the NUIC as a contributing and voting member of that Committee.

In June, twenty-five umps were notified that their certification had expired. In the last couple of months of this year an additional twenty will receive the same message. Due to “press deadlines,” the responses can’t be reported in this document, but perhaps I can give the Council a verbal update in September.

Respectfully submitted,

Conrad Melton

National Umpire in Chief

Tuesday, June 17, 2008