

**Bowls USA -- Annual General Meeting
Sarasota, Florida
Friday, November 11, 2016**

Standing Committee Report of the National Umpire in Chief

To the Bowls USA Executive Officers and Councilors:

2016, my second year in this position, is full of umpires. The total count is 93.

Division statistics by number of umpires and Head Division Umpire (HDU):

Central Division: 2	HDU: Leif Andresen
Northeast: 6	HDU: Colin Smith
Northwest: 4	HDU: Richard Broad
Pacific Intermountain: 13	HDU: E.B. Parkell
South Central: 4	HDU: Dee McSparran
Southeast: 31	HDU: Bud Ricucci
Southwest Men/Women: 33	HDU: Kottia Spangler

Dee McSparran accepted the HDU position for SC in 2016, replacing Tom Benstead. Tom Benstead, an excellent umpire, no longer wishes to serve as an umpire.

Updating the initial 25-question test and 10-question recertification test is done. Inserting new questions and removing old ones is an ongoing task, based largely on questions submitted by bowlers and umpires, and through researching other Member National Authorities' questions contained in their tests.

This year's round of recertifications is under way; the period for recertifying limited to the months of November and December.

Challenges and ideas on how to address them

As our umpires age, the ability to measure is impacted by various impediments: inability to get down on their knees, shaking hands, etc. However, age does not mean that mental capacity is affected, and their years of experience is a great asset.

Consider a multi-level umpire system:

- Umpires for rules interpretation only

- Umpires able to measure and interpret rules

Non-playing umpires. In a volunteer organization, without monetary rewards for service, not only finding a way to encourage umpires to officiate rather than bowl, but also finding a way to recognize non-playing umpires is a big challenge.

Consider an award for the Umpire of the Year:

- Submissions for this award to be made by the HDU of each division

- Written logs required/maintained by umpires

- Small crystal award with plaque and/or special pin

- Photo and article in Bowls USA newsletter

By personal observation, measuring technique between bowls and jack -- abysmal.

Consider implementing the following requirements:

- All umpires to use the same measuring technique

- Watch the World Bowls video on proper measuring technique

- If HDU unable to demonstrate, appoint someone to do the demonstration

Reluctance by umpires to enforce rules as written; rather, defaulting to page 6, Introduction, in the Laws of the Sport of Bowls, which talks about unusual circumstances that cannot be anticipated and, therefore, umpires (and players and markers) must use their common sense and a spirit of fair play to decide on the appropriate course of action.

The reluctance to enforce rules that seem to offer an advantage to one player is a slippery slope because the non-enforcement could be used when the affected player is well thought of and the offending player is not.

Consider requesting clarification from World Bowls:

- Law 37.1.4, Displacement of a bowl at rest

- Law 38.1.3, Displacement of a jack at rest

- Law 25, Delivering the final bowl of an end

In closing, I would like to thank Bowls USA for this unique opportunity to serve as National Umpire in Chief. And, as is true of any organization, I owe a huge debt of gratitude to the Head Division Umpires and our National Umpires for their willingness to serve. The slings and arrows are many, but, hey, in the words of Monty Python -- it's merely a flesh wound. Speaking on behalf of all of our umpires and HDUs, we are all proud to serve in this great sport of bowls and look forward to many more years of service.

Melanie A. Vizenor
National Umpire in Chief